

Deployed CCs consider PAs 'hot capability'

By Brig. Gen. Ron Rand
Director of public affairs

There sure is a lot happening in our Air Force.

Our Nation may soon call upon us to fight the war on terrorism on another front, to protect the United States and our many allies from weapons of mass destruction, and to defend America's freedoms.

Operation Enduring Freedom has been like no other, with asymmetric warfare, an enemy often hiding in the shadows, and no big victory parades



Rand

or grand medals ceremonies.

Telling the Air Force story throughout this global war on terrorism has also been different than anything we have ever done. That's what this note is about.

As you can expect, our career field's deployment commitment has increased greatly as the Air Force

deploys units, aircraft and people to forward bases. This deployment comes on top of steady state requirements in places like the Balkans, Turkey and southwest and central Asia. Home-station operations are busier as the

American people ask for more information about their men and women in uniform.

Public affairs continues to be a hot capability with deployed commanders. And over the past several weeks, we have been deploying more PAs and broadcasters to support current real-world operations throughout the area of responsibility.

The end result is we will have well more than 100 PAs and broadcasters deployed at the same time — about 10 percent of everyone we have loaded in the Air and Space Expeditionary Force.

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PAs encouraged to be prepared, serve

By Brig. Gen. Tim White
Mobilization assistant, director of public affairs

"May you live in interesting times" is said to be an ancient Chinese curse. These times are interesting indeed — interesting, challenging and dangerous.

Never have your skills as communicators been more needed by our Air Force, and never has your willingness to serve been more critical.

Mobilization is on the mind of every reservist. We have all seen the pictures of families hugging a uniformed loved one at the airport or dockside.

Public affairs professionals have been among them, and there will be more.

How can you prepare yourself?

First, talk again with your family and employer about your IMA status and what may lie ahead. Stay in close touch with your active duty supervisor. Make sure your medical records, personal affairs and uniforms are in order. Contact your base IMA administrator, or military personnel flight — they know what it takes to be prepared.



White

It is important that you understand the various ways you may be called to serve.

You can serve by being mobilized, but that is not the same as being deployed. Mobilization is a tour that flows directly from special presidential authority; since 9/11, President Bush has used that authority to call up Reservists and Guardsmen for the war on terrorism. If you are mobilized, you may serve in your regular IMA billet for up to two years.

Of course, you can also be deployed while mobilized. If you are interested in volunteering for deployment, contact Col. Marty Hauser, SAF/PA, at DSN 223-9349 or commercial (703) 697-9349.

There are many ways to serve without being mobilized: annual tour, inactive duty training (both pay and nonpay), and extended mandays. Please assess your schedule, and try to help out if you can. The taskings on active duty public affairs offices will be heavy. Personally, I began an extended tour at SAF/PA in February when Brig. Gen. Ronald Rand deployed overseas.

Our nation is facing a great challenge. The role of public affairs is to help create "informed support" in both the Air Force and the American public. We can do that if we all work together to meet this challenge. Your skills are vital; your patriotism invaluable.

I am proud to serve with you.

Briefs

AT orders requests due

Reminder that May 1 is the last day to file for annual tour orders. IMAs should work the details out with their supervisors and apply for orders now. Orders can be amended if needed.

PHAs can affect participation

Many IMAs have outdated periodic health assessments, or PHAs.

Members who have not had a PHA in more than a year will not be allowed to perform duty of any kind after May 1 unless the PHA is completed.

Members should get a notice in the mail during their birth month. As always, members are encouraged to keep a copy of the PHA in case ARPC doesn't receive it from the clinic.

War trophies prohibited

People planning to bring home "war trophies" might want to read up on Air Force Joint Instruction 31-217, *Control*

and Registration of War Trophies and War Trophy Firearms and any general orders for the area of responsibility.

Failing to abide by the rules that govern possessing and registering such souvenirs could lead to serious consequences, including fines and jail time.

A war trophy is any item of enemy public or private property used as war material acquired within a combat area or zone.

For items not prohibited by the instruction or a general order, members must have an approved Defense Department Form 603-1, *War Trophy Registration/Authorization*, from the theater commander. (Courtesy AFRC Commander's Call Topics for February)

BoA to be paid directly

Starting this spring, Air Force government travel card holders can expect to file split disbursements on their travel vouchers.

The Air Force is making the current optional process mandatory to combat

delinquent government travel card payments to Bank of America.

To use split disbursements, account holders select the option when filing their travel voucher and enter how much they want Bank of America to receive toward their bill. The payment is sent directly from their finance office to Bank of America. (Courtesy AFRC Commander's Call Topics for January)

Airline changes luggage allowed

American Airlines has changed their policy concerning free checked luggage and associated fees.

The free weight allowance for checked luggage on flights within the United States has been reduced from 70 pounds to 50 pounds per piece, for example.

However, the airline has agreed to grant military travelers a waiver allowing up to 70 pounds per bag.

For more information, members can contact their local travel office or John Lundebly, HQ AMC/LGTP, at DSN 779-4592 or commercial (618)229-4592.

Opportunities

PACE seeks master sergeant

The Public Affairs Center for Excellence, or PACE, at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., has a master sergeant opening. The job is primarily working with the war gaming section.

For more information, members can contact Maj. Robin Grantham at DSN 493-8523 or commercial (334) 953-8523.

PACE also needs volunteers for the spring war games.

Moody seeks IMAs for backfill

The 347th Wing commander, Moody AFB, Ga., is looking for IMAs who would like to backfill the public affairs officer, Capt. Jill Whitesell, in the event she deploys. The 347th will pay the bill.

Interested members can contact Whitesell at DSN 460-2400 or commercial (229) 257-2400.

Reservists needed for TDYs

Air Mobility Command is looking for 5-levels and above and captains and above for stateside temporary duty at Charleston, AFB, S.C.; Fairchild, AFB, Wash.; Grand Forks AFB, N.D.; McConnell AFB, Kansas; Pope AFB, N.C.; Scott

AFB, Ill.; and Travis AFB, Calif. AMC will provide funding and mandays.

For more information, members can contact CMSgt. Janice Conner, HQ AMC/PA, at DSN 779-7815 or commercial (618) 229-7815.



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Deployment offers tax options; not filing is not one of them

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Mobilized reservists deploying overseas are not automatically excused from filing their federal income tax return, according to Air Force Reserve Command staff judge advocate officials here.

Deploying reservists have four options when it comes to filing taxes. They can file before they leave, authorize their spouse or trusted friend to sign and file for them, have their non-military or non-deploying spouse sign and file their joint tax return on their behalf, or use an extension if authorized.

Before deploying: If reservists have not received their Form W-2 in the mail, they can access it online by using a personal identification number via “My Pay Account” on the Defense Finance and Accounting Service Web site at <https://emss.dfas.mil/mypay.asp>.

Most active-duty locations offer a tax assistance program.

Members can electronically file their returns and opt for direct deposit of any refund into their checking accounts.

Authorizing another to file: To allow someone else to sign and file their return, reservists must:

- ♦Be unable to sign the return because of disease or injury,
- ♦Be absent from the United States for a period of at least 60 days before the due date for filing the return, or
- ♦Get permission from the Internal Revenue Service office in their area to have another person file on their behalf.

They can authorize their agent to sign and file by using a special power of attorney or by using IRS Form 2848.

Filing a joint return: In this situation, a special power of attorney or IRS Form 2848 is not required. Married couples filing separate returns cannot take advantage of this option.

Using an extension: Deployed military people can usually take advantage of a filing extension for service in a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area. Before claiming these extensions, reservists should check with a tax preparer or a legal assistance officer to ensure that the area where they are deployed has been declared a combat zone or qualified hazardous duty area. (*Courtesy AFRC News Service*)

Emergency data kept on Web

Reservists can now update their emergency data contact information from any Web-connected computer rather than visiting their military personnel flights.

All they need to do is log onto the virtual military personnel flight on the Air Force Personnel Center’s Web site.

Called the Virtual Record of Emergency Data, or vRED, the form provides the Air Force with information needed to contact family members if an airman suffers a serious illness or injury, or dies while on active duty.

The vRED replaces the Department of Defense Form 93, Record of Emergency Data, and will need to be kept updated individually.

For more information about the vMPF, call the Air Force Contact Center at (866) 229-7074. (*Courtesy AFRC Commander’s Call Topics for March*)

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An important piece of the deployment mix is a public affairs operation at U.S. Central Command Air Forces, or USCENTAF, in southwest Asia.

This forward PA team — 14 people led by me — will have a single-minded focus of enabling and empowering Air Force people at all levels to tell the story of America’s Air Force in the war on terrorism.

What this means is we will work host-nation issues to grant media access when possible; we will work technology issues to ensure deployed PAs can send timely stories, photos and video to home-station PAs and news media; we will work with Information Operations to ensure there is synergy between our important missions; we will advise commanders and decision makers and let them know how important it is to tell this story within the bounds of operations security; and we will push the envelope to show the world how relevant

air and space power is in this 21st century.

This is the first time — going back to operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm — that deployed Air Force commanders and PAs will have a strong headquarters and advocate right there in southwest Asia.

It’s important to note that leading up to this deployment, we followed the policies and procedures set out by the Air Force for selecting those who will deploy. First, USCENTAF and the unified commands established their requirements. Then, career field planners in concert with the AEF Center validated and filled those requirements using the AEF system.

If you weren’t tasked to deploy at this time, don’t worry, your time will come. For now, you need to know to which AEF pair you are assigned, get the training required, and ensure you’re physically and mentally prepared to deploy when called upon.

Whether you are deployed or not, I need you to focus on our PA core competencies and build public trust and support for the greatest Air Force in the world. This career-field effort will be one requiring teamwork from those deployed, wing PAs at home station, MAJCOMs, SAF/PA, and AFNEWS, which will be the center of much of our efforts to tell this story.

Finally, many of our people face great sacrifices today. The Air Force froze AEFs 7/8 in place to free up assets for this real-world crisis, and our leaders may need to take other steps to ensure we’re ready for whatever we’re asked to do.

So we need every one of you in this fight. You’re making a difference, and I’m so very grateful for what you do every day for America’s Air Force and our great nation: I salute you for your selfless service!

Godspeed to all of you, and God bless this great country of ours!