



Air Force TogetherWeServed.com Newsletter - April, 2009

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From the Cockpit



Quotable Quote

"They're impossible men doing an impossible job, and they did the impossible with me...They're at the point of the sword every day, doing an impossible job every day."



- Captain Richard Phillips
Ship's master, MV Maersk-Alabama on his at-sea rescue by US Forces



April is the Month of the Military Child and we here at TWS join those around the world in recognition of the important role military children play in the armed forces community. Please take a moment to recognize the sacrifices military families and their children make daily and the challenges they overcome.

Photo Source: dodea.edu

Why Full Membership on TWS?

TWS is rapidly becoming one of the most efficient military personnel locators on the planet. Please see this recent comment received over on the Navy side of the house:



AIR FORCE

- Vice President Visits Whiteman AFB
- RAAF Exchange Pilot Helps Strengthen US, Australian Ties
- To Elmendorf Airman, It's Not Grafitti...It's Art!
- 'Hero of the Hudson' Visits His Alma Mater
- AF Officials Modernize Mentoring Program
- Foreign Aircrews Train at Altus for Multi-National Mission



SURPRISE IRAQ VISIT - President Barack Obama steps out of Air Force One on a flight line in Iraq, April 7. During his unexpected stopover, Obama addressed a crowd of nearly 1,500 service members, federal employees and civilian contractors at Al Faw Palace on Camp Victory to thank them for their service. It is his first visit to Iraq since being sworn in as commander in chief.

- DoD photo by SSgt. Amanda Currier, USAF

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

- SECDEF: America Must Protect Conventional Capabilities
- Gates Cites Need to Learn From Past Drawdowns
- Chairman Emphasizes Need to "Get It Right" for Soldiers, Families
- America's Servicemembers Deserve Nation's Gratitude, Biden Says
- SECSTATE Clinton Observes Continuing Promise at Work in Haiti
- National Security Personnel System Goes Under Microscope



To Whom It May Concern:

Not sure how often you get positive comments but need you to know the impact this site made on a Sailor in-country.

I'm the Senior Watch Officer of a Combat Ops Center in Kandahar, Afghanistan. About a week ago we received a phone call from the Red Cross as they were a bit frantic because they couldn't locate someone over here. It was not a good message and we had to explain to them the member they were looking for was not within our command nor any of our subordinate commands.

So, my proactive Watch PO starts trying to find this Sailor through NKO (Navy Knowledge Online, the 'sister' to AKO), command websites, you name it but, nothing. Then he pulls up your website "TogetherWeServed", found the member, found his current command and was able to relay this info to Red Cross who was able to contact the member. How fantastic is that? Keep it up as it's much appreciated. You now have one Senior Chief who's added this site to his list of resources. I'm sure it will help the Command Sponsor Programs as well.

Thank you.

Senior Chief Petty Officer (E8) Jake (LAST NAME WITHHELD)
Kandahar AF, Afghanistan

Sincerely,

Maj Wesley T. Prater (USMC/Ret)

Co-Founder/Administrator
TogetherWeServed.com

Featured Update

Personal Video Gallery

For some time we have hosted a gallery of selected Military Videos (shared between all TWS sites) on the Home Tab. Now you can upload your own video footage directly from your profile and feature it for others to view.

To upload a video click the "+Add Video+" link in your Gallery button (Profile Left Page):

<p>60 Wingmen</p> <p>Listed by 961</p>	<p>Visited 0</p> <p>74989 Visitors</p>	<p>401 Photos</p> <p>0 Videos +Add Video+</p>	<p>1237 Pending</p> <p>540 (+2) Joined</p>
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When you upload a video you can choose between marking it as a Military Video (in which case it will be shared with all members of all sites on the Home Tab) or not (in which case it is viewed from your Profile only).

Videos can be browsed in a Gallery similar to the photo gallery, which permits sorting by Date, Size or Title.

Member Groups

We have launched our new Interest Groups feature, now appearing on your right hand Profile Page, which allows TWS Members to quickly identify other Members with similar interests and interact in a more focused environment with better communication tools.



SKIPPER RELEASED - Richard Phillips (right), the captain of the US-flagged cargo ship MV Maersk-Alabama, poses for a photo with Navy Commander (O5) Frank Castellano, commanding officer of USS Bainbridge (DDG 96). Phillips was rescued by US naval forces off the coast of Somalia after being held hostage for four days by pirates.

- USN photo

NAVY

- [Navy's Rescue Mission 'Textbook,' But Piracy Still Looms, SECDEF Says](#)
- [CJCS Mullen Promises Broad Review of Antipiracy Operations](#)
- [UK's First Sea Lord Embarks USS Ronald Reagan](#)
- [Some PCS Moves Delayed Until October](#)
- [Navy to Commission New Guided Missile Destroyer Stockdale](#)
- [Newest Carrier Successfully Completes Acceptance Sea Trials](#)
- [PACFLT Commander Reaches Out about Outreach -- on Facebook](#)



MOVE OUT! - US Marines conduct an air raid exercise at Basa Air Base, Republic of the Philippines. The air raid exercise is being conducted with Philippine Marines as part of Balikatan 09, a bilateral exercise with the Armed Forces of the Philippines, hosted by US Pacific Command (USPACOM).

- USN photo by MC1 Daniel R. Mennuto



RETURNING FIRE - Airmen are "ambushed" by snipers while on patrol during a Deployment Ready Expeditionary Skills Training course at Camp Rattlesnake aboard Buckley AFB, CO. The course is designed to teach Airmen basic combat skills.

- USAF photo by TSgt. Jeremy K. Cross

Here is just a small sample of the Groups we have installed:

- * Automobiles - Performance Tuning
- * Computers and Internet - Help and Advice
- * Family and Relationships - Divorce
- * Hobbies - Firearms and Shooting
- * Motorcycles - Harley Davidson
- * Music and Bands - 70's and 80's
- * Parenting - Babies and Toddlers
- * Sports - NFL
- * Veterans Affairs - Benefits and Claims
- * Work and Careers - Unemployment

When you click on the Add button in the Interest Groups section, you can select a Group to join from an extensive list of diverse interests which will then be displayed on your Profile Page. An Also There link instantly lists all other TWS Members who have elected to be a Member of the same Group.

Each Group has its own dedicated Forum which is only viewable to Members of that Group. If you wish to request a Group not listed, please contact the Administrator of this site.

Let us know how you like this new feature and as always we appreciate your comments and suggestions.

Graphical Medal Selector

Tired of building your ribbon rack from a drop down alphabetic list of medals? Well now you can click on the medals you wear instead with our new graphical medal selector:

Medal Gallery

Display: **Air Force** Order By: **Sequence** Medals per Page: **16**

1 of 102 Air Force Medal of Honor	2 of 102 Air Force Cross	3 of 102 Defense Distinguished Service Medal	4 of 102 Air Force Distinguished Service Medal
5 of 102 Silver Star	6 of 102 Defense Superior Service Medal	7 of 102 Legion of Merit	8 of 102 Distinguished Flying Cross

Please Welcome to TWS - Col Leo K. Thorsness (USAF/Ret), Medal Of Honor, Vietnam 19 April 1967



TWS is honored to welcome Col Leo K. Thorsness aboard AirForce.TWS!



GOING OUR WAY? - Air Force Airmen and US Coast Guard aircrew load two Coast Guard H-65 Dolphin helicopters aboard a C-17 Globemaster III at Charleston AFB, SC. The helos were destined for Central America to assist in missions there. The C-17 aircrew is assigned to the Air Force Reserve's 315th Airlift Wing.

- USAF photo

MARINE CORPS

- [Pendleton Marines train to become the hunters](#)
- [Marine Corps University symposium examines critical issues, exchange of ideas](#)
- [Motorcycle training to help lower Marine death toll](#)
- [Combating growing identity threat: Safeguarding personal, private information in a digital world](#)
- [UAV operators put eyes in the sky](#)
- [Congressmen push for a 'Department of the Navy and Marine Corps'](#)



GUIDING LIGHT - Lightning strikes behind the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis as she steams through the Gulf of Thailand. Stennis is on a scheduled six-month deployment to the western Pacific Ocean.

- USN photo by MC3 Jon Husman

COAST GUARD

- [Coast Guard Station Boston reveals new search and rescue boat](#)
- [Smugglers get combined 55 years in federal prison](#)
- [Sector San Diego pays tribute to fallen Hawaii aircrew](#)
- [Joint Homeland Security Agency boarding touted as a success](#)
- [Coast Guard continues flood response operations in North Dakota](#)



Leo Thorsness earned the Medal of Honor for one of the epic solo battles of the Vietnam War, but didn't know the Air Force had awarded it to him until years later. The award wasn't announced publicly; as Thorsness was a prisoner of war.

He was born in February 1932 in Walnut Grove, Minn. Thorsness enlisted in the Air Force in 1951 and earned his commission three years later through the Aviation Cadet Program. His first operational flying was in F-84 Thunderstreaks with the 31st Strategic Fighter Wing in Albany, Ga. He later flew the F-100 Super Sabre before transitioning to the F-105 Thunderchief.

By 1966, the air war in Southeast Asia had taken on new dimensions as the Soviet Union supplied the North Vietnamese with surface-to-air missiles. The Air Force countered the buildup of SAMs with the "Wild Weasels," aircrews flying F-105s. The Weasel's job was to precede a strike force into a target area, entice enemy SAMs and anti-aircraft radars to come on the air, and knock them out with bombs or missiles that homed on the radar's emissions. In other words, they offered themselves as targets for enemy gunners so they could locate them and take them out. The presence of MiG fighters made the job even more harrowing.

Thorsness, then a major, was "Head Weasel" of the 357th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Takhli Air Base in Thailand. On April 19, 1967, he and his backseater, Capt. Harold Johnson, fought a wild 50-minute duel with SAMs, anti-aircraft guns and MiGs. They set out in a formation of four planes. Their target was an army compound near Hanoi, heavily defended. Thorsness directed two of the F-105s north and he and his wingman stayed south, forcing enemy gunners to divide their attention. After initial success at destroying two SAM sites, things turned for the worst. First, Thorsness' wingman was hit by flak. He and his backseater ejected. Then the two Weasels he had sent north were attacked by MiGs. The afterburner of one of the F-105s wouldn't light, so he and his wingman were forced to return to Takhli, leaving Thorsness alone to fight solo.

As the F-105 circled the parachutes, relaying their position to the Search and Rescue Center, Johnson spotted a MiG off their left wing. The F-105, though not designed for air-to-air combat, responded well as Thorsness attacked the MiG and destroyed it with a 20-mm cannon, just as another MiG closed on his tail. Low on fuel, Thorsness broke off the battle and rendezvoused with a tanker.

In the meantime, two A-1E Sandys and a rescue helicopter arrived to look for the crewmen. Upon being advised of that fact, Thorsness, with only 500 rounds of ammunition left, turned back from the tanker to fly cover for the rescue force, knowing there were at least five MiGs in the area. As he approached the area, he spotted four MiG-17 aircraft and initiated an attack on them, damaging one and driving the others away from the rescue scene. His ammunition gone, he returned to the rescue scene, hoping to draw the MiGs away from the remaining A-1E. It could very well have been a suicidal mission, but just as he arrived, so did a U.S. strike force and hit the enemy fighters.

But Thorsness' day wasn't over yet. Again low on fuel, he headed for a tanker just as one of the strike force pilots, almost out of fuel himself, radioed him for help. Thorsness knew he couldn't make Takhli without refueling, but he quickly determined he could make it to Udorn, 200 miles closer, so he directed the tanker toward the strike fighter. Once across the Mekong Delta, he throttled back to idle and "glided" toward Udorn, touching down as his tanks went dry.

Eleven days later, on his 93rd mission, just three short of returning home, Thorsness and Johnson were shot down by a MiG. Both men ejected at high speed, Thorsness suffering severe injuries. Both men were captured and



VEEP VISIT - Vice President Joe Biden speaks to Airmen at Whiteman AFB, MO. Biden visited Whiteman to show administration support for the troops.
- USAF photo by SrA Jason Huddleston

Still using your government e-mail address on AFTWS?



Are you using your "@af.mil" email address in your AFTWS profile? If so, you might want to consider getting a free, non-military address.

A couple of reasons to *not* use your official email address here at AFTWS: Should you get transferred and forget to log in after your PCS, you may experience some difficulty in logging back on to our site. Or, if you get an email from a long-lost buddy from basic, technical school, or previous assignment, you won't get the notification they're trying to contact you. Nor will you receive the **The TALON** -- the monthly AFTWS Newsletter.

Besides, the Chief just might smack you about the head and shoulders for abusing the computer at work...and we wouldn't want that.

If you don't already have a civilian email account, we suggest getting one from of the many free web-based email providers (*Hotmail, Yahoo!, Google Gmail, etc.*). Sign-up is painless, and you'll have an alternate email addy to throw-around wherever you go. Just pick the free email service that suits your needs.

To change the email address on your profile, click on the EDIT button in your Personal Details section and insert your new email address there. Just remember to click SAVE below the text area when you are finished.

One more email-related item: If you have a spam guard program on your email, please configure it to allow messages from admin@togetherweserved.com to come through and not treat it as spam. This allows us to send you messages without any hassle.



Recently left the Air Force? Looking for a new post-military career, or planning on going "in a different direction" from your present civilian job?

Welcome to the **AFTWS Job Board** which is on the left hand Home Page just as you log into AFTWS and contains lots of job

positions!

spent the next six years in North Vietnam prisons. Because of his "uncooperative attitude," Thorsness was denied medial attention, spent a year in solitary and suffered severe back injuries under torture.

On March 4, 1973, both men were released from prison, Thorsness on crutches. President Nixon presented the Medal of Honor on Oct. 15, 1973, to Thorsness for his heroism on that busy April day in 1967. Johnson was later awarded the Air Force Cross. The MOH had actually been awarded by Congress while Thorsness was still a POW. To keep the Vietnamese from using the information against him, it wasn't announced publicly until he returned home.

Thorsness completed 23 years in the Air Force and retired in 1973 as a colonel. He later served as a Washington State Senator. Sources compiled from Air Force History Support Office, Air University and the POW Network.

Source: [Air Force Link](#)

CITATION

The President of the United States in the name of the Congress takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor to

LIEUTENANT COLONEL LEO K. THORSNESS
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

for service as set forth in the following citation:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. As pilot of an F-105 aircraft, Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness was on a surface-to-air missile suppression mission over North Vietnam. Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness and his wingman attacked and silenced a surface-to-air missile site with air-to-ground missiles and then destroyed a second surface-to-air missile site with bombs. In the attack on the second missile site, Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness' wingman was shot down by intensive anti-aircraft fire, and the two crewmembers abandoned their aircraft. Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness circled the descending parachutes to keep the crewmembers in sight and relay their position to the Search and Rescue Center. During this maneuver, a MIG-17 was sighted in the area. Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness immediately initiated an attack and destroyed the MIG. Because his aircraft was low on fuel, he was forced to depart the area in search of a tanker. Upon being advised that two helicopters were orbiting over the downed crew's position and that there were hostile MIGs in the area posing a serious threat to the helicopters, Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness, despite his low fuel condition, decided to return alone through a hostile environment of surface-to-air missile and anti-aircraft defenses to the downed crew's position. As he approached the area, he spotted four MIG-17 aircraft and immediately initiated an attack on the MIGs, damaging one and driving the others away from the rescue scene. When it became apparent that an aircraft in the area was critically low on fuel and the crew would have to abandon the aircraft unless they could reach a tanker, Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness, although critically short on fuel himself, helped to avert further possible loss of life and a friendly aircraft by recovering at a forward operating base, thus allowing the aircraft in emergency fuel condition to refuel safely. Lieutenant Colonel Thorsness' extraordinary heroism, self-sacrifice and personal bravery involving conspicuous risk of life were in the highest traditions of the military service, and have reflected great credit upon himself and the U.S. Air Force.

All positions, described in detail, are posted by fellow AFTWS Members who are familiar with the credentials and experience offered by former Wingmen.

Here is just a small sample of the many new jobs recently posted:

[Firearms Sales/Instructor](#)

Location: Houston, TX

Salary Range: \$11-\$15/Hr

[LAN/Security Administrator](#)

Location: Hampton Roads, VA

Salary Range: DOE

[Industrial Electrician](#)

Location: Memphis, TN

Salary Range: \$60-\$80K

[Correctional Facility Supervisor](#)

Location: Mount Pleasant, IA

Salary Range: \$61,201-\$123,406

[Logistician](#)

Location: Southern Indiana

Salary Range: DOE

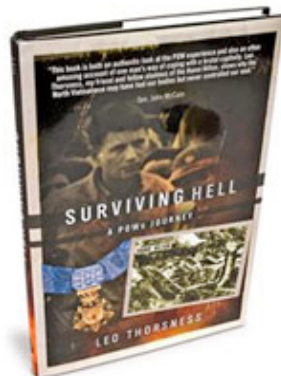
If your company has any positions suited to Marines seeking employment, you are very welcome to post these on the Job Board. This is a FREE service to TWS subscribers [Post a Job on TWS](#) Currently Posted Positions.

Does the jobs board work? Please see these comments submitted by a recruiting professional:

"[TWS]..Thanks for the note and the opportunity to give you feedback. We think of the TWS board as a vital piece of our recruiting capabilities. As a business yourself you know that it is a cardinal sin to refuse work. We do it daily and we are glad to do so! When we look at a company that is asking us to recruit for them, we look first at why they are asking specifically to help them. After all, there are no shortage of recruiting firms. If they are not offering long term stability, we would never recruit for them. If they are just trying to get publicity for hiring a vet, we would never help them. Our vets ARE NOT circus performing monkeys. They are men and women that have been trained to excel while others are running for the door. They are taught to never give up until the battle is done and they are taught others before self. If a company doesn't mirror that philosophy, they are not worthy of having our brave men and women in their ranks. Wal Mart recently asked us to recruit wounded warriors to act as greeters in their stores. We declined, our wounded warriors can do far more than offer a shopping basket to a patron. A key reason that we are able to be selective is because we have been able to keep our overhead low in part because the TWS job board is a integral part of our recruiting tools. The thing that makes the TWS board different from other services is that because it doesn't cost us to post, we charge a much lower fee to firms when we get the resume from TWS. We have 3 people that we are placing that found us through TWS. As such, we are going to make a \$500 donation to the Wounded Warrior Project and cite TWS as the reason. It is a joy for our company to place service members and it is even more rewarding to us when these folks find us through together we served because it

Featured Book Review - "Surviving Hell, a POW's story

From Combat to Captivity



A strong religious faith and a love of country and family helped him survive six years of torture, isolation and neglect.

Two hundred and forty-six Americans received the Medal of Honor for valorous service in the Vietnam War. One hundred and fifty-four of the medals -- more than 60% -- were awarded posthumously. Of the servicemen who lived to accept their medals, Col. Leo Thorsness, U.S. Air Force, experienced an unusual delay: He had to wait for more than six years as a "guest" of the North Vietnamese before he finally received his. He describes that interlude in "Surviving Hell: A POW's Journey," an unsparing personal memoir of life in communist captivity. It is a modest recital of his own experiences and a paean to the courage and endurance of his fellow prisoners of war.

A "Minnesota farm kid" born during the Depression, Mr. Thorsness found his calling in the Air Force and had become an experienced fighter pilot by the time the Vietnam War began heating up in the mid-1960s.

In 1966, he was sent to Southeast Asia to fly an F-105F "Thud" -- a fighter with a two-man crew -- in support of the American bombing campaign in North Vietnam. Operating from Takhli in Thailand, he and his "backseater," Harry Johnson, carried out "Wild Weasel" missions to identify and destroy hostile radar, flak and surface-to-air missile installations, clearing the way for fighter-bombers to attack vital targets in the communist homeland. On one such mission, on April 17, 1967, they took part in the action for which Mr. Thorsness was recommended for the Medal of Honor.

While escorting a flight of attack bombers, they were jumped by several Russian-built MiG-17 fighters. Though his F-105 was not designed for aerial dogfighting, its great speed, the formidable gatling gun that it carried and Col. Thorsness's superb airmanship proved more than a match for the North Vietnamese. When the scrap was over, he was credited with downing two MiGs against nearly impossible odds.

Just 11 days later, on their second mission of the day -- their 93rd over North Vietnam -- Col. Thorsness and "backseater" Johnson were attacked by an enemy MiG fighter, which scored a direct hit on their plane with an air-to-air missile. They ejected at 10,000 feet at a speed of nearly 690 miles per hour, far faster than the maximum safe velocity. Both men suffered extensive injuries in the ejection but survived to land safely in the jungle about 70 miles west of Hanoi -- where they were taken prisoner.

At that point, as Mr. Thorsness observes in "Surviving Hell," he was about to embark on "an ordeal that would brutalize me . . . and also allow me to become a better and fuller person." A strong religious faith and a love of country and family helped him to survive the next six years of torture, isolation and neglect. It was not until 1969, two years into his captivity in Hoa Lo Prison -- the notorious "Hanoi Hilton" -- that he learned from a newly captured pilot that he had been recommended for the Medal of Honor, and not until October 1973 was it finally awarded by President Richard Nixon.

The Code of Conduct and the Geneva Conventions -- the one requiring Americans to conform to certain standards while in captivity and the other demanding civilized standards of their captors -- were the rocks upon which prisoners of the communists took their stand and upon which many foundered as they were subjected to unremitting torture and deprivation. Mr. Thorsness says of the Vietnamese that "they hadn't improved much on

proves that the fellowship and brotherhood that binds servicemen and women is one that transcends what color uniform you wore, what your rate or MOS was or is, or what your race, gender or economic status is. We are all brothers and sisters in arms. Our company only focuses placing veterans and the spouses of active duty service men and women. My team is very focused on finding a great match for them with a company that will value them as valuable contributing member of their team. Every email that our team sends out to potential job candidates and or transition counselors has a reference to the Together We Served website. I think that if someone leaving the military maintains ties to active duty folks as well as join a network of prior military, it will make their transition back to civilian life much smoother. If we as a company are able to play a part in helping them find positive careers using TWS to do it, that is much better for everyone involved. Military.com approached me about 3 weeks ago about becoming a partner for military transition for some new thing they are trying to do. I thanked them for the call but told them they had lost focus on what they had originally wanted to do and that they needed to take the TWS model and copy that because their model isn't working anymore. I have assembled a very strong board of advisors including a former assistant attorney general, a retired Navy Captain, a retired Navy 2 star and very soon, we will have a retired 3 star Army General. All of them are impressed with what you are doing for our service men and women. None think that Military.com is anything more than a site that is out to just make a buck. Keep doing what you are doing. You are doing great things for our veterans and for that, I say thank you very much."

Kevin Dunlap

President/CEO

Vetrecs Services Corporation

a Veteran Owned Business 1005 Warren Drive
Westminster, MD 21157

If you have had success with either finding employees or with locating employment on the TWS Jobs Board, please let us know! This is a valuable FREE service to all TWS Members and employers and we're always interested in hearing your success stories. Please email me with the details of your success stories! wtpater@togetherweserved.com



Email your reunion announcement as early as possible to:
wtpater@togetherweserved.com

3rd RSM Naknek/King Salmon, Alaska radio ops from 1953-1954

Reunion at Memphis, TN, April 30 to May 3, 2009.
Contact Sherm at 3rdasm@amerytel.net.

C-7A Caribou Association 21st Annual Reunion.

3 – 6 September 2009, at Lodge of the Ozarks in Branson, MO. Go to our website www.c-7acaribou.com for registration information.

Hillis "Al" Cunliffe
Secretary

the devices of the Spanish Inquisition" and that after he finally broke under torture and gave more than name, rank, service number and date of birth, "it was the lowest point in all my six years of captivity." Only later, did he find comfort in the assurance of another POW pilot that "everyone who goes through that type of interrogation . . . either they broke or died -- some did both." Ironically, he notes, torture wasn't really intended to get useful military information so much as to elicit propaganda statements from American officers.

During much of his first three years in captivity Col. Thorsness was in solitary confinement or in a cell with one or two other prisoners. Then, after the failure of America's superbly executed Son Tay raid, which had been intended to rescue POWs from a prison camp deep inside North Vietnam, the enemy began concentrating its prisoners in or near Hanoi. When Col. Thorsness was eventually put into one cell with a large group of fellow airmen, he and his fellow POWs began holding rudimentary classes, church services and even pre-commissioning training for the three Air Force enlisted men who were in the group. The three had been shot down in a helicopter in 1965 and, as Mr. Thorsness says, had been "tortured just like the officer pilots and kept the faith." Their fellow prisoners decided that they should be commissioned second lieutenants, and they were taught military and leadership subjects to prepare them. When all were released in 1973, the commissions were ratified by President Nixon.

It is stories like the commissioning of the enlisted POWs that make "Surviving Hell" such an enriching appendix to the chronicle of the American experience in Vietnam. Or take the case of Mike Christian, one of the author's cellmates: He made a small American flag out of scraps of cloth, which he laboriously dyed and sewed together, only to have it discovered by the guards, who then beat him mercilessly. As soon as he recovered from the beating, he began to make another flag.

Such was the character of the men who served their country by being true to its principles while in the hands of a cruel enemy. Men who in many cases were held captive longer than any other prisoners of war in our history. And it is their story, even more than his own, that Leo Thorsness tells so engagingly.

Wall Street Book Review by C. Wyly Watson. Lt. Col. Watson, U.S. Army retired, served two tours of duty in Vietnam

Order "Surviving Hell" from Amazon at [this link](#).

SECDEF: People Are His Top Budget Priority

Story by John J. Kruzel
American Forces Press Service

QUANTICO - Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said that servicemembers and military families were his primary concern when formulating the fiscal 2010 defense budget recommendations.

Speaking recently to a group of 30 students and faculty at the Marine Corps War College, Gates said he and Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, shared the same top priority.

"The chairman and I were in agreement that our first priority should be the people," Gates said. "If we didn't get the people part right, none of the rest of the decisions would matter."

The meeting here was the first stop on the defense secretary's round of visits this week to each of the military services' war colleges, where he is expected to discuss the strategy underlying his fiscal 2010 defense budget

C-7A Caribou Association
Cunliffe, Hillis (AI), SMSgt USAF(Ret)



Email your reunion announcement as early as possible to:
wprater@togetherweserved.com

Membership

Airforce.Togetherweserved is your website - please help secure its future by upgrading to [Full Membership](#).



There is no charge to join AFTWS and remain a Free Member, however there are considerable benefits to becoming a Full Member. By upgrading to Full Membership, which is modestly priced and very simple to do, you not only have access to premium areas of the website but, in so doing, you also help support the ongoing development, maintenance and promotion of

[Airforce.TogetherWeServed.com](#) and keep it **advertisement free**.

Please invite an Airman and help more AFTWS Members reconnect!

If every AFTWS Member invites one or more active, reserve or retired Airman to join AFTWS, this dramatically increases the chances of Members being able to locate other Airmen they served with.

As a way of saying thank you, for every 5 (five) new Members who join from your personal invitations, we will extend your Full Membership by 6 months. Click [here](#) to invite an Airman.

AFTWS Fallen Airman Memorial Project



TWS is a place to honor the service history of all Airman who served including those who fell in combat. So that they will not be forgotten, we have created a special facility where

proposal.



Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates talks with students and faculty of the Marine Corps War College during his recent visit to Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA.

Gates announced his recommendations last week, distributing the funds in accordance with what he characterized as the type of "complex hybrid" warfare he expects will be increasingly common. He allotted roughly half of his proposed budget for traditional, strategic and conventional conflict, about 40 percent for dual-purpose capabilities and the remaining 10 percent for irregular warfare.

In addition to the unique breakdown he outlined, the defense secretary's proposal seeks to move funding away from supplemental budgets and into the baseline budget. Gates said his suggestions were derived from his experience as defense secretary over the past two years.

"Everything that I found that needed to be done for the warfighter had to be done outside the base budget and outside the regular bureaucracy of the Pentagon," he said. "It seemed to me strange that the Department of Defense engaged in two wars, had to do all this stuff, in essence, off the cuff and not as part of a regular program."

Supplemental budgets accounted for the funding required to remedy problems at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC; fielding more mine-resistant vehicles, or MRAPs; providing more intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets to warfighters; and countering threats from makeshift bombs. These additional, ad hoc, budgets also supported family programs, research and medical care for post-traumatic stress (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other quality-of-life programs, Gates said.

"I couldn't understand why the building was so consumed with preparing for wars in the future and was so incapable of fighting the wars we were in," he said. "They were being funded in supplementals -- they weren't a part of the permanent budget of the Department of Defense. And so when supplementals went away, they would all be at risk."

Accordingly, Gates recommended the fiscal 2010 budget include \$11 billion to increase the Army and Marine Corps end strength and to allow the Navy and Air Force to stop reducing the size of their ranks.

The other thrust of his proposed budget was institutionalizing the warfighters' needs by putting more funding in the baseline budgets of the individual services, Gates said.

The secretary recommended increasing funding for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance for each service branch, a 5 percent increase in special operations forces, a \$500 million increase for helicopter crews, maintenance, and other programs.

"People have said I'm too focused on the wars of today and too critical of those with 'next-war-itis,'" he said. "And what I tell them is I'm just trying to get the guys who are in the wars of today a seat at the table where the money is handed out."

Meanwhile, Gates said, the US military needs to adopt a 21st-century outlook.



any TWS Member can post a Remembrance Profile for a Fallen Airman they knew or would like to honor, and this can be accessed via the "Remember an Airman" link on the Left-Hand Home page. We have also developed an important feature

which will enable TWS Members to adopt the Profile of a Fallen Airman already posted on the site. To adopt the Profile of a Fallen Airman, please click on the Adopt a Fallen Marine Profile link on the left hand Home Page after you log in or click [here](#)

Free Drivers Licenses for Georgia Vets



Most Georgia veterans, who served on active duty or active duty in a reserve component; including the National Guard, during wartime or any conflict when personnel were federalized by the President, are eligible to receive a free Georgia driver's license.

A veteran must first present a copy of their DD 214 to staffers at one of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service field offices for review (NOTE: the STATE veterans agency, not the FEDERAL VA). The staff will review the DD 214 and issue a Certificate of Eligibility (DPS516) to qualified veterans.

The veteran then takes both documents to any of the state's Department of Driver Services offices for any required test and issuance of the free license.

The Georgia State Commissioner also reminds veterans who qualify that Georgia law now makes a veteran's free drivers license good until age 65. State law requires all drivers age 64 and older to pass an eye exam at a licensing facility every five years.

From the "Flights of Fancy" Humor Board

Guy and his wife are asleep in bed when the doorbell rings.

Husband gets up to answer the door.

Guy at the door, obviously drunk, and standing in a rain storm, tells the husband he needs a push.

Husband replies you idiot, its 3am in the morning, raining like hell and you want a push. Go sleep it off.

Husband returns to bed and his wife ask who was at the door?

Husband replies some drunk wanting a push

The days of World War II thinking and Cold War strategy have given way to an era of conflicts that blend conventional and irregular capabilities into a complex, hybrid warfare, Gates said. He cited Russia's use of special forces and cyber warfare before invading Georgia in August as an example. "They used all these aspects before their ground troops began moving into Georgia," he said.

Hezbollah also exemplified the concept through its ability to use makeshift explosives and launch small-scale terrorist attacks, all while possessing "more missiles than most countries," he said.

Gates' message to students and faculty members here was clear: "The service culture and mentality has to keep modernizing," he said.

"The Army can't keep thinking about how it's going to fight the Fulda Gap or Desert Storm all over again. The Marines have not had a major amphibious landing since 1950. The Navy keeps wanting to fight (the Battle of) Midway again. And the Air Force just loves to fly with pilots in the cockpit," he said.

While no one is proposing a dramatic departure from the past -- such as completely abandoning manned aircraft -- the United States does need to think about how to combine its various means, Gates said.

"I think trying to figure out how you structure a military that provides you with the maximum flexibility for the broadest range of possibilities of conflict seems to me the challenge that faces the department and the services today," he said. "Because the kind of traditional conflicts we've experienced are, as the kids would say, 'So 20th-century.'

"And it's partly a matter of beginning to think about it, and beginning to budget for it," he added.

Member Comments

"Since joining TWS about a year ago I've hooked up with several lost buddies. Great to see what folks did after we got separated oh so many year ago. Also did the "shared profile" thing. Have heard from several relatives who had no idea what was involved with 22 years of my life. Showed my 16 year old grandson my profile this past sunday. He was extremely impresses and wants to go over the whole thing in detail. This site is an absolute winner in so many ways. Sure hope more people sign up and that those who have signed up will complete their profiles..."

[Scoggins, David \(Dave\), SMSgt](#)

>>>>

"My name is Chuck Mincks. I am currentlty a Lt. on the Cedar Rapids, IA police dept. I was in the USMC 1976-1980 and worked on/around helicopters (my MOS was actually ground support mech). I just joined TWS today at the invite from one of my fellow officers who also was Marine.

I grew up in Iowa City, IA, and went to school with Darrell Hamlin. We lived close by and ran the neighborhood as kids, although we did not have close contact after junior high school. I do remember the radio announcement of Darrell's death in Iowa City while working one day. It was several weeks after his actual death.

I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to maintain his TWS site. I have been to the Wall in DC and scratched off Darrell's name, which I continue to keep in my personal records. Your attention to his TWS site has made it possible for me to look back in other ways on memories that still provide me with great feelings about a childhood filled with friends and fun, beside the ultimate sacrifice that so many of our brothers and sisters

husband replies some drunk wanting a push.
 Wife ask aren't you going to help him?
 Husband replies,hell no,its 3am,raining like hell,I am going to bed.
 Wife replies,I am really disappointed in you.Don't you remember two months ago when we broke down on the road in the dark
 and those two guys spent 2 hours to help us get going. You should be ashamed of yourself!
 Husband feeling bad gets dressed and goes out in the dark,rain still coming down hard.
 Ask into the dark "Do you still need a push"? Voice out of the dark says yes,I sure do.
 Husband ask "Where are you at"?
 Drunk replies "Over here on the swing!!!!"
 You have to love a drunk.

posted by: [Lamirand](#), [Gerald \(Jerry\)](#), [MSgt USAF\(Ret\)](#)

have made. Thanks again."
Marines.TWS Member Sgt Charles Mincks

>>>>

"I visited the MTWS site the other day and found the Fallen Profile of a very close friend, who lived across the street from me when we were kids. I left a message for my buddy, Frankie Hutzell, and received the below email a couple of hours later. I just thought I would pass it on, as I feel the same way when someone leaves a message about one of my profiles. It's a nice reminder that TWS works in many, many ways. Gary

"Thank you for stopping and leaving a message for Frankie. I have done almost 1200 fallen profiles and am always gratified when some one who knew the Marine or Corpsman stops by.
 HM3 Neale Turner"
[Banzhoff, Gary \(Old AP\), Sgt](#)

>>>>

Thank you. I just noticed that when you post a clip and mark it "Military Video" it appears on all four sites, Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force. Nice job Admin.
 Steve Loomis (SaigonShipYard)
<http://navy.togetherweserved.com/profile/345951>

Member submitted photos of the month

AirForce.TWS now hosts more than **202,000** member submitted photos! Here's a sample of some of the thousands of photos you added this month...

Video of the Month

Ambassadors Needed!

Vet Topics



VA Secretary Expects Big Impact From Post-9/11 GI Bill

*Story by Donna Miles
 American Forces Press Service*

WASHINGTON - All systems are on track for this summer's rollout of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, which Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki said he expects to have as monumental an impact as the original World War II-era GI Bill of Rights.

Shinseki, who served as Army chief of staff from 1999 to 2003, told American Forces Press Service he understands the excitement over the new program that goes into effect Aug. 1.

The new GI Bill will provide the most comprehensive educational benefits since the original bill, officially called the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, was signed into law.

Many veterans who served after Sept. 11, 2001, will be eligible for full tuition and fees, a new monthly housing stipend and an annual stipend of up to \$1,000 for books and supplies. Reservists and National Guard members who have been activated for more than 90 days since 9/11 will have access to the same GI Bill benefits.

And for the first time, those enrolled in the Post-9/11 GI Bill program will be able to transfer unused educational benefits to spouses or children.

"It has been a long time since we've had an

education initiative that includes tuition fees [and a] housing allowance, [and] takes care of all of the requirements required to go to school," Shinseki said of the program. This will enable veterans to focus on their studies, he said, without the distractions of figuring out how to pay for them.

Shinseki said he expects the Post-9/11 GI Bill to have as big an impact as the original GI Bill. That law provided college education or vocational training for millions of returning World War II veterans, loans so they could buy homes or start businesses, and unemployment compensation while they looked for jobs.

By the time the original GI Bill ended in July 1956, 7.8 million World War II veterans had taken advantage of the education and training programs it funded, and another 2.4 million had signed up for VA-backed home loans.

"What that bill did for the country was to change the course of our history and the latter half of the 20th century," Shinseki said. "When those veterans went back to their communities with their college degrees, they ended up being our leaders in religion, education, business, government - you name it."

The Post-9/11 version "has the opportunity to create in the 21st century the same kind of impact for development, ... social change [and] leadership across a lot of institutions," he said.

The program will be administered and funded by VA, and represents a "huge investment" by the United States in its veterans, Shinseki said.

This, he said, sends a strong, unmistakable message.

"I think young veterans who come back and participate in [in the Post 9/11 GI Bill] will begin to understand how much they are valued [and] how much their service is valued, just by the opportunity here," he said.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates advocated expanding education benefits as a way to recognize troops' service while supporting both recruiting and retention. Gates first heard the transferability concept floated during a meeting with a military spouses' group at Fort Hood, Texas, and pitched the idea to then-President George W. Bush. Bush promoted the idea and ultimately signed the Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008 into law on June 30.

A whopping 97 percent of servicemembers surveyed in August said they plan to take advantage of the new benefits provided in the Post-11 GI Bill, said Bill Carr, deputy undersecretary of defense for military personnel policy.

"Enormous interest has been expressed in the



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Maj Wes Prater (USMC/Ret)
TWS Admin

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DeAntonio, John (Tony), MSgt USAF(Ret)
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transferability provision and how it would work, because so many in the force have families," Carr said. He noted that half of the military force is married. By the time troops have served six years of duty, about two-thirds have families.

To qualify for transferability under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, servicemembers must have served six years on active duty or in the Selected Reserve, and must commit to another four years. But Carr said the rules could be tweaked soon to allow mid- or late-career troops to qualify, even if they can't sign on for another four years of duty due to service restrictions.

Center for Women Veterans Hosts Screening of Indie Documentary 'Lioness'

Story by SSG Michael J. Carden
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - In April 2004, at the height of the insurgency in Iraq, five female soldiers unwittingly found themselves fighting alongside Marines in the battle for Ramadi and Fallujah.

Their story is told in a documentary film bearing their unit name, "Team Lioness," which has been shown in private and public screenings throughout the United States and Europe in the past year. The Center for Women Veterans hosted the film at the Department of Veterans Affairs headquarters here recently



"These stories are

important to us at VA, because women veterans are coming to VA in great numbers, and we need to make sure we understand their experiences," Betty Moseley Brown, associate director of the VA's Center for Women Veterans, said as she introduced the film to an audience of about 50 viewers. "They became the first female soldiers in U.S. history to be sent into direct ground combat."

Since the American Civil War, women have played important roles in the US armed forces during war time -- as nurses, journalists, pilots, engineers, logisticians and much more. But what they're not, still, is infantry, armor or artillery -- combat-arms specialties.

Still, many female servicemembers have been wounded and killed as a result of enemy fire. But it wasn't until the start of the Iraq war in 2003 that women began finding themselves engaged in direct fighting.

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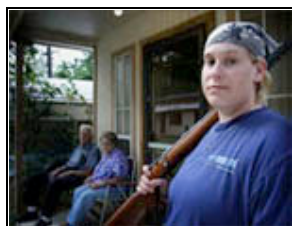
Quick Overview

Team Lioness pioneered women in direct fighting, although somewhat unintentionally. The women were intended to augment combat-arms platoons to search Iraqi women for money, weapons and drugs smuggling at checkpoints and on patrols. But eventually, their new roles in the ranks of combatant units led to ground combat alongside infantrymen, cavalrymen and artillerymen on the frontlines.

The film opens in a wilderness setting with trees and damp leaves lining a still-flowing creek. The only sounds for several seconds are crickets chirping in the background. The tranquil silence of Mena, Ark., is suddenly broken by the boom of several shotgun rounds fired at a turtle in the creek.

The documentary's introduction of Shannon Morgan, a former Army mechanic and Lioness, shows her innocence as a country girl, but with an obviously troubled past. Much of the film follows her around her family's farm as she hunts squirrels with her shotgun and shares emotional testimonies of her time in Iraq.

"I don't watch the news. I don't read newspapers," Morgan says in the film. "But the memories of war never go away."



SPC Shannon Morgan, tracked vehicle mechanic: "Women are evolving into roles that have been previously closed to us in the military and we are more than capable and ready to meet this challenge head on." - *Photo courtesy PBS*

Morgan and the other Lionesses said they never expected to have to fire their weapon. But they quickly found themselves performing combat patrols, raids and house-to-house searches with the Marines in what was considered the most dangerous region of Iraq during what was arguably the most dangerous period of the entire campaign.

The Lionesses talk about their first enemy encounters and the stress of seeing dead bodies for the first time, while fighting to stay alive. Morgan recalled battling with the darkest side of war just before shooting an insurgent in a firefight. "It's something you learn to deal with," Morgan said. "I don't regret what I did, but I wish it had never happened."

The soldiers also talk about the difficulties of learning the tactics and vocabulary of the Marines they worked with. The transition from their Army ways, plus the frequency of enemy engagements

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News stories from our allied military partners

Bedouin Soldier Paves the Way for Others

Story & photo by Israeli Defense Force Spokesperson TEL AVIV -

The IDF (Israeli Defense Force) is an 'army of the people,' and as such, all sects of Israeli society are able to serve the State of Israel. Secular people, religious people, Arabs, and Jews can join the IDF, and people from all groups do indeed.

With this being the case, it may even seem normal that at the IDF Officers' Course, a Druze, a Bedouin, and a Jew slept side by side in the same room. "Room of the minorities," said Second Lieutenant Muhammad Hudai Irati, with a smile in his face. "We are best friends and have formed a meaningful connection amongst ourselves."

Perhaps it's not surprising to hear that Muhammad is also the first Bedouin (nomadic tribesman) medical officer in the IDF, now serving as an officer in the Department of Medicine (*Ka'ar*), in the Bedouin tour battalion; he's very proud of this, and rightfully so.



"When I began my examinations in order to become an officer, they told me, 'Did you know that there has never been a Bedouin before you?' And I responded, 'Oh really? Never knew that.'" This gave Muhammed the necessary motivation to excel. "I got the motivation that I needed and now I try to pass that motivation on to others as well," he explains. Now people are saying, "Wow, he is not only the first, but he is also very good at what he does."

Muhammad was born in a Bedouin village in Northern Israel. He says that it has been clear to him that he would join the IDF since childhood, mostly because his family and the rest of his village were supporters of the army and served in the IDF as well.

"My little brother followed in my footsteps and is now a commander of a Bedouin force." He noted and jokingly added that, "Our village tells everyone that is going to the army that if they don't advance to become

ways, plus the frequency of enemy engagements, didn't allow for much of a learning curve to make up for their lack of knowledge of various weapons systems, Army Captain Anastasia Breslow, a Signal Corps officer and former Lioness, said in the film.

"If everyone [in the platoon] had been hurt, I would have had no idea how to get back to the forward operating base," Breslow said. "I didn't know how to use the biggest casualty-producing weapon we had. I felt we needed to know more."

Although the film takes place primarily on the home front with Lioness and family interviews, it brings to light the realities today's generation of military women, and all combat support troops, face in Iraq and Afghanistan. The line that separates the front from the rear is blurred by the urban and guerilla warfare troops encounter fighting terrorism within the Middle East.



CPT Anastasia Breslow, Signal Corps officer: "...when I got home

I wanted to go back; it was great to be home, I appreciated everything so much more. But everyday life seemed so average and there was still more work to be done over there." - *Photo courtesy*

PBS

The nature of modern warfare -- fighting counterinsurgencies in random locations, as opposed to nation states on prescribed battlefields -- has made it difficult to define what constitutes a combat-arms military specialty and what doesn't.

Military women today still cannot legally serve in combat-arms positions, but they serve competently and are trained in a variety of roles and capacities in Iraq and Afghanistan because of the lessons learned from the original Team Lioness. Their experiences prompted training for women that was never done before. They learn infantry tactics, qualify on more weapons, and are better prepared for the chance they may have to engage the enemy."

As a result of their experiences, now each military service trains female servicemembers to be Lionesses, training that was not offered whenever this documentary was actually filmed," Brown said, referring to the weapons and tactical training female military members now receive.

officers, they're just embarrassing themselves. If you come to our village on a Sunday and look at the bus stop, you'll see that everyone is a soldier."

Since he was very young, Muhammad has known that he wanted to study medicine, but was not able to pursue a career as a doctor because his examination scores weren't high enough. However, Muhammad joined *Givati*, a combat unit. During basic training, officers from his unit told him that they were looking for a medic in a specific Bedouin unit. Two weeks after arriving to the unit, he underwent training courses at the Medical Corps military base.

The course was very difficult and he completed it successfully. "I learned interesting things; I loved the material, the work, and the on-the-job action in which you sometimes have to function under a lot of pressure." In a conversation with Muhammad, it becomes clear that being a combat soldier comes naturally to him, as his favorite tasks are done while under pressure and in the field.

He totally discards the question of whether his origins present a problem while serving in the IDF. "What is a Bedouin? We are all brothers in the army, regardless of anything else." He continues: "I believe that the army is a small world in of itself; when you join, you meet lots of different folks with different beliefs and traditions."

After returning from the unit at the end of his course, Muhammed began to serve as a platoon medic and during *Rosh Hashana*, he received an honorary Certificate of Excellence from the Southern Division Commander.

"When I received the award, I realized that they recognized my hard work and I then requested to go to the Commanders' Course," he recounted. "I was very motivated and in addition, friends of my father convinced me to go to the Officers' Course. I loved the idea, and they saw that I was a good soldier and allowed me to participate."

After he finished the Officers Course, Muhammad asked to return to his original battalion even though there was no position available. "I wanted to go back to become an officer in my battalion and to improve the unit that supported me until the end," he said. Within the framework of his position, he visits the Cadet Medical Course of the battalion in order to motivate, encourage, and offer guidance to the soldiers there.

As for Muhammed's future goals, he wants to see his Bedouin units full of medics until all the positions are filled.

And on a personal level?

When we asked if he wants to become the first Bedouin to be the Chief Medical Officer of the IDF, he laughs and points out that this is a very distant thought. "If I become a doctor, I will call you and let you know."

To Bedouin youths, his message is clear: "I want all of the young men to join the IDF and see what it is about; the army is a place where you can succeed and move forward."

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member number and instructions for your invitees to credit you with the invitation. **As a reminder, you get 6 months of free premium access for every 5 members you invite that create a profile page.**



There's also a new feature in the registration process as now new joining members are asked to include the member number of the person that invited them while they are registering. If you simply write your member number on the invite card, your invitees can enter your member number as they register and you'll automatically be credited for the invite.

These cards are a great ice-breaker to start conversations with other Airman and they're the perfect tool to help Spread The Word about TWS. We've mailed out thousands of these cards in the last year. Please drop us a note to share any success stories you've had using these cards to meet other Airman. If you'd like to receive a batch of these cards, please send an email to admin@airforce.togetherweserved.com and tell us how many you'd like to receive and where to send them.

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ADAMS, JAMES (VEJA), LCpl (from Marines. TWS)

AFTWS Forums - Your Sounding Board!



What was your best duty station or assignment, and why? What is the recipe for that wonderful dish you make for a holiday or other occasions? Do you have any tips about keeping healthy, or things to watch out for if you have a disease.

These are but a few of the topics that are covered by the many Forums on AFTWS. These forums provide you, the members, a variety of places to discuss with other members the many topics we have in common.

Those members still on active duty would probably like to know about good assignments when they make out their "dream sheets" or talk to their career planner NCO. Those who have worked as service record specialists might want to provide a few tips for members in preparing to negotiate orders to their next assignment.

If you have a disease like diabetes, what tips can you give others about the disease and things to watch out for? Encourage a fellow Airman on AFTWS to keep on top of a health problem so he stays with us for a long time.

These are but a couple of topics that are available for you to offer advice, warn others about, discuss with other AFTWS members, or just vent your frustrations about. So check out the many Forums and start a lively discussion about a topic that interests you!

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Did you know?



Off Duty

Story by SPC Howard Ketter
20th Public Affairs Detachment



Actor Zachary Quinto, who portrays Spock in the J.J. Abrams-directed "Star Trek," places a call to a young fan back in the US while her father snaps a picture. The cast of the new big screen sci-fi adventure recently visited GIs in Kuwait and premiered the movie at an exclusive showing.

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait - Service members were excited as the cast of the new J.J. Abrams produced and directed film visited Camp Arifjan, Kuwait for a premiere of the movie, April 11.

"We feel privileged to be here and to meet the people who are working hard on our behalf," said John Cho, who stars as Sulu in the new big-screen "Star Trek" movie.

Actors Zoe Saldana (Uhura), Bryan Burk (executive producer), Karl Urban (Dr. McCoy), Zachary Quinto (Spock), Chris Pine (Kirk) and Eric Bana (Nero) also accompanied director/producer J.J. Abrams to exclusive premiere.

"It's so easy for people to take for granted, the fact that [service members] are here doing work that makes this possible," said director Abrams, who also helms and co-creator of the hit sci-fi thrillers "Lost" on



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[The Pentagon Channel](#) -- 24-hour broadcasts of official military news and information for members of the US Armed Forces through select stateside cable systems, and overseas via American Forces Network (AFN).

[My AFN.mil](#) -- American Forces Network (AFN) provides multi-channel, broadcast-quality radio and television services and expanded internal information products to all DoD members and their families stationed overseas, on contingency operations, and onboard Navy ships around the world.

[Military Homefront](#) -- A DoD Web portal for reliable Quality of Life information designed to help troops and their families, leaders and service providers. Whether you live the military lifestyle or support those who do, you'll find what you need!

[myPay](#) -- myPay allows you to manage your pay information, leave and earning statements (LES), W-2s and more...putting more information and services at your fingertips. Brought to you by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).

[TRICARE Portal](#) -- Information you need about your TRICARE health benefits. Includes details on eligibility, plans, medical, dental and vision coverage. Also details on TRICARE operations, guidance, manuals and policy.

[Stars & Stripes](#) -- The DoD-authorized **UNOFFICIAL** daily newspaper for US Forces overseas, printed in European, Pacific and Mideast editions.

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[Space Available Travel fact sheet](#) -- Answers to the most common Space A travel questions, courtesy of the 60th Air Mobility Wing, Travis AFB, CA.

ABC, and "Fringe" for the Fox TV network. Abrams' Bad Robot Productions also produced the successful ABC prime time spy series "Alias", and two recent box office hits, "Cloverfield" and "Mission Impossible: III."

The crew stopped and visited service members in the US Army Central Headquarters building before heading to the theater. They exchanged friendly conversation with BG James T. Walton and several other headquarters staff leaders. Then they took time out to greet service members, sign autographs and take photos.

"It struck us that there was an opportunity to not just have it be about the movie, but to have it be about something that's more important than all that stuff," Abrams commented.

Once it was time to show the movie, due for release in US theaters on May 8, the stars went to the Zone 1 movie theater for the premiere. Once the showing was over, service members asked questions and commented on the film to the cast.

Chief Warrant Officer Earl Hemminger, Regional Computer Emergency Response team from the Virginia National Guard, asked actor Zachary Quinto, who played Spock in the film, to speak to his daughter Katherine, who is a very big fan.

"Your dad told me to say this was hotness," laughed Quinto as he spoke to her via cell phone. Quinto is best known for his role as the enigmatic Syllar on the hit NBC series "Heroes."

Abrams talked about how he and the writers came up with the concept of the new film and Eric Bana, who portrays the character Nero, talked to service members on how he prepared for his role and shot his parts separate from most of the cast.

After the Q & A, service members were able to take photos and get autographs with the stars before they headed off to the LSA, Kuwait to continue to promote the movie.

"It's an honor to come here to say hi and shake hands with the people who protect us," said Abrams.

Cast member John Cho said having the warm reception for this film by the service members was really moving. Cho is best known for his starring roles in the comedies "Harold and Kumar Go To White Castle," and "Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay."

"We had fun making the movie and we hope the [service members had] fun watching it."

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This month's download:

10` Fold "Sleeping Giant"

10 Fold's E. Lee Conley is currently serving in the Rhode Island Army National Guard.

Song Description


The song "Sleeping Giant" is my American statement to every "militant jihad-jackass" on the planet that tries to commit an act of war upon American souls. We will go to great lengths, cross huge oceans, and chase them to every corner of the earth with our drones, satellites, GPS guided bombs & missiles. On December 7th, 1941, Japanese Admiral Yamamoto stated, "I fear we have awakened a sleeping giant." This time, our enemies are so insane; I don't think they have ever read a history book. Those who ignore the past are doomed to repeat it. This song is not meant to be politically correct, and if you are offended, then you are obviously not an American. My mission is to play this song for every allied soldier worldwide as a rally cry to keep us on track, and let them know why we are fighting today.

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Maj Wes Prater (USMC/Ret)
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