



Photo by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Adam Johnston, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group

Cleared to land ...

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgts. Michelle Elgin and Ed Bruce, air traffic controllers, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group, talk via radio to ensure the runway's clear for another A-10 landing at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan Sunday. Elgin and Bruce are both normally assigned to the 245th Air Traffic Control Squadron at McEntire Air National Guard Station, S.C.

Vets manage food, animals

By Pfc. Debralee P. Crankshaw
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — Dogs and soldiers in Afghanistan have something in common; the 109th Medical Detachment, a reserve unit from Stanton, Calif., provides, in some way, for all of them.

The 109th main missions include providing veterinary care to military working dogs, controlling animal population and inspecting food for soldiers.

Currently, the 109th provides care to nine dogs. They provide veterinary care for all animals in theatre that support the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, to include U.S. military working dogs, Coalition Forces, and Civilian Contracted Companies.

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Bagram chapel offers services for variety of beliefs

Pfc. Christina Carde
11th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — When soldiers are away from home, they may find it difficult to worship the way they want, or to find someone to talk to in a time of crisis. Services they attend in the states may not be available overseas and they may feel awkward talking to someone other than their spiritual mentor. For situations such as these, the Combined Task Force 82 and Bagram Base Chapel offer a variety of services for all troops as well as different

spiritual leaders to confide in.

“The chapel is open seven days a week with services ranging from Catholic to Protestant, and Islamic to Jewish,” said Sgt. Tarvick Linder, chaplain’s assistant, 229th Aviation Regiment, Fort Bragg, N.C. “There are also Bible studies and the Bagram and Gospel choirs which are open for anyone to attend.”

In addition to the different services offered, there are many different spiritual leaders available at unit and base level to provide support to soldiers in need.

“A chaplain has a duty to



Photo by Pfc. Christina Carde

Bagram troops gather for the weekly Protestant Service at the Bagram Base Chapel, Sunday morning. This is one of seven services held at the chapel on Sundays.

the Army and the troops to provide a place where people of all religious backgrounds can worship freely,” said Lt. Col. Richard Pace, CTF-82

chaplain, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C. “A chaplain is on call 24 hours a day,

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)

Bombings kill 23 in Tel Aviv

TEL AVIV, Israel — Two nearly simultaneous suicide bombings rocked central Tel Aviv early Sunday evening, killing at least 23 people and wounding more than 100 others, Israeli police said.

The explosions happened around 6:30 p.m. (11:30 a.m. ET) — the peak of rush hour — near a closed bus station.

The neighborhood is home to a large number of immigrant workers and was the scene of another suicide attack in July that left five people dead.

Just hours later, Israeli forces fired rockets at targets in Gaza.

Israeli police spokesman Gil Kleiman said the Tel Aviv explosions went off about 150 meters (165 yards) apart and were timed “very close.” Police said 103 wounded people were evacuated from the scene.

Frankfurt threat ends safely

FRANKFURT, Germany — Police arrested a man when he landed at Frankfurt airport Sunday after he took a small plane at gunpoint and threatened to crash it into the European Central Bank skyscraper.

The man, who was alone in the plane, told German television network NTV he wanted to draw attention to his “big idol” Judith Resnik, a U.S. astronaut who died in the 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. Before landing, he spoke with Resnik’s brother.

Police Chief Harald Weiss-Bollandt called him “a 31-year-old man from Darmstadt who evidently suffers from a psychological disturbance.”

NTV, a CNN sister network, identified him as Franz-Stefan Strambach, who is listed as the organizer of a Web site devoted to Judith Resnik.

The man seized the single-engine motorized glider at 2:55 p.m. (8:55 a.m. ET) in Babenhausen, about 50 kilometers (31 miles) southeast of Frankfurt, police said.

The plane circled downtown Frankfurt for more than an hour, at times coming close to skyscrapers and flying low to the ground, as authorities spoke to the pilot from the control tower at Frankfurt International Airport to persuade him to land.

He demanded to speak with NTV, and au-

thorities put him in contact with the network. He complained that Resnik never received the recognition she deserved, “probably because she was the first Jewish astronaut,” he said.

Militia in Baghdad war games

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A people’s militia in the province directly south of Baghdad has been practicing defending the capital, an Iraqi newspaper says.

The civilian troops in the province that could be a bulwark in defending the capital against a possible U.S.-led invasion carried out a combat exercise designed to confront an enemy force attacking from several directions, the official daily Al-Iraq said Sunday.

In Baghdad U.N. inspectors Sunday spent several hours at the compound of the National Monitoring Directorate — the Iraqi agency in charge of overseeing the inspectors.

In Mosul, meanwhile, a team of U.N. arms inspectors operating from a just-opened base searched one of the northern city’s hospitals. Other teams visited four sites in and around Baghdad and in the southern city of Basra.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein will deliver a televised speech on Army Day today, the Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported.



Iraq youth in militia exercises.

Navy dispatching hospital ship

BALTIMORE — About 300 sailors were preparing Sunday to board the USNS Comfort, a Navy hospital ship scheduled to leave port Mon-

day to aid in a possible war with Iraq.

The crew of 225 Navy personnel and 61 civilian medical staffers were to be bused Sunday from the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda to Baltimore, where the ship was docked, Lt. Cmdr. Ed Austin said.

The Comfort was scheduled to leave Monday morning for the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia.

The 1,000-bed ship is part of a broad mobilization of air, land and sea forces for a possible invasion of Iraq. It has two operating rooms and is equipped to handle troops injured in biological and chemical attacks.

The Comfort last deployed for war during Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991. It also sailed to New York to assist emergency crews after the collapse of the World Trade Center.

Landmarks digitized ... in case

NEW YORK — A team of architecture experts say their digitized model of the Statue of Liberty could be used to rebuild the national landmark if it is damaged or destroyed in a terrorist attack.

Using a high-tech laser scanner to measure its surface from all angles, the team from Texas Tech University has been working for nearly two years to create computerized, three-dimensional drawings of the monument.

Officials with the National Park Service, which administers the statue and Mount Rushmore, called on the team to create the model it says could help create an accurate replica if any section of it were ever destroyed, the Daily News reported in its Sunday editions.

“Until September 11, the only time we ever faced battles on our soil was in the Civil War, so most of our preparations, historically, were for natural disasters,” said John Burns, deputy director of the Park Service’s documentary division.

“Since we now face threats to the touchstones of our heritage, our history and our civilization, we are also now looking at new possibilities in terms of reconstruction,” he said.

A copy of the map will be placed in the Library of Congress. Additional copies will be stored in the National Archives and a government vault at an undisclosed location.

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MWDs from the United States include two working security at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and four working security at the front gate here.

The only Coalition Forces animals the 109th cares for are three Estonian working dogs, trained in tracking explosives. These dogs support the military police by assisting with routine duties.

Previously, the 109th provided for over 30 dogs for an international demining company, Ronco Consulting Corp. The dogs were used to clear some of Bagram's mine-infested areas.

"Clearing the mines is dangerous for the dogs; it's pretty dangerous for the handler, too. It's a tool. They can smell four inches in the dirt. If they smell something they sit down," said Spc. Joseph Thomas, animal care specialist. The Ronco dogs were redeployed in December and will return in late February.

"The dogs went home because snow affects their smell and we were expecting to get some snow," said Thomas.

Taking care of dogs is not the only mission for the 109th, they also are in charge of animal control.

"We don't actually catch stray animals. If they are caught and brought to us we put them to sleep, but we have no means of catching them," said Thomas.

The 109th may not be able to catch strays, but they do catch spoiled food that comes into Bagram and Kabul.

The most involved mission for the 109th is food inspection. They inspect all U.S. and Coalition food.

"We inspect everything that comes in including fresh fruits and vegetables, heat and serves, UGRs (Utilized Group Rations), MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), meals without pork and any other subsistence the U.S purchases," said Staff Sgt. Steve Flores, 109th, non-commissioned officer in charge.

The team checks the temperature of the products, fungus, bruises and mold. They also ensure the refrigerators and freezers have not broken down, and the

frozen foods are still frozen and nothing has been refrozen.

They check expiration dates and that the packages have not been tampered with.

"Most of it is common sense," said Flores.

"We take a lot of samples. We try the food. My rule is if I wouldn't eat it, I won't pass it. I eat in the same chow hall as you," he added.

If a product is condemned, it is destroyed at the dump sight by burning.

"Summer causes the biggest problems to food," said Flores.

"Heat will take 60-70 percent off the shelf life of a product," said Sgt. Edward Gonzalez, 109th, NCO food inspector.

"In 100 degree weather, a one to two year shelf life can be

decreased to three months," said Gonzalez. "That's why it is so important to check to temperatures of the food and the refrigerators and freezers.

The 109th keeps soldiers and dogs healthy. They are an important asset to the soldiers deployed here.



Photos courtesy 109th Medical Detachment

A military working dog checks a vehicle for explosives.



Soldiers vaccinate Afghan livestock.

CHAPEL, from Page 1

seven days a week to help any soldier who is having a problem.”

Even though soldiers face problems at home, the problems they face while deployed are different and can be more challenging.

“Soldiers I talk to are usually troubled by homesickness, separation from family and fidelity issues,” said Pace. “The hardest time for a deployed soldier can be when there is a crisis at home and they can’t be with their families.”

Even though issues such as these are often unavoidable, Pace said there are things a soldier can do to make the situation better or at least bearable.

“Communication with family is the best way to handle common deployment anxieties,” said Pace.

“Calling home and using email to talk to loved ones as often as possible will help ease the pain of separation and keep a soldier from slipping into depression,” he added.

Another problem troops face while deployed is using the wrong type of recreation to occupy themselves and keep their minds off of problems at home.

“Even though the restrictions placed on soldiers during a deployment may limit them from finding trouble, it is still out there to be found,” said Pace.

“Use of illegal drugs and alcohol are examples of things soldiers get caught up in, (it) can make whatever troubles they are trying to forget worse,” Pace explained.

Even though it may be hard to resist temptation, there are things to do to help pass the time.

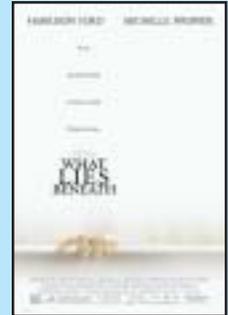
“It is important to keep busy. Use the gym and Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities as much as possible,” said Pace. “Know who your unit chaplain is. If you are feeling down and need someone to talk to, your chaplain and the chapel is always a good resource.”

The chapel is open from 0400Z to 1800Z seven days a week. For more information on chapel services and activities call – (DSN) (303) 640-8022.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR building: “What Lies Beneath.” Norman Spencer, a university research scientist, is growing more and more concerned about his wife, Claire, a retired concert cellist who a year ago was involved in a serious auto accident, and who has just sent off her daughter Caitlin (Norman’s stepdaughter) to college.

Tomorrow’s movie will be “Blade II.”



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER REPORT:

	<i>Today</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>
Bagram:	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 46F L: 25F	<i>Partly cloudy</i> H: 46F L: 23F
Kandahar:	<i>Haze</i> H: 54F L: 30F	<i>Dust</i> H: 57F L: 41F
Kabul:	<i>Haze</i> H: 41F L: 24F	<i>Haze</i> H: 52F L: 27F
Uzbekistan:	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 43F L: 34F	<i>Mostly cloudy</i> H: 42F L: 34F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

Freedom Watch falls under the supervision of the Combined Joint Task Force - 180, and is published daily, Monday - Saturday.

- CJTF-180 Commander — Lt. Gen. Dan McNeill
- CJTF-180 Command Sergeant Major — Command Sgt. Maj. Steven R. England
- Public Affairs Officer — Col. Roger King
- Public Affairs Sergeant Major — Master Sgt. Kelly Tyler
- Freedom Watch*, an Army newspaper



publication, is produced by the 11th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

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- NCOIC — Staff Sgt. Christina Bhatti
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In accordance with AR 360-1, this Army newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military overseas.

Contents of *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

All submissions are subject to editing for size and content by the 11th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Motel 6, CJTF-180, Bagram Air Base.

Visit the CENTCOM Web site at www.centcom.mil and click on the CJTF-180 link to get the latest editions of the *Freedom Watch*.

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

Giants' season ends with bad snap

SAN FRANCISCO — The way the New York Giants were suddenly spiraling, holder Matt Allen issued a warning to kicker Matt Bryant: Prepare for another bad snap.

Seconds later, the ball came low and to the left from newly signed snapper Trey Junkin, and the Giants never got off the field goal that could have been the game-winner in their 39-38 NFC wild-card loss to the San Francisco 49ers on Sunday.

From 24 points ahead to elimination in less than 20 minutes.

"This is about the worst loss I have ever felt in my entire life," said Giants coach Jim Fassel, whose team won its final four games, including the last one of the season on an overtime field goal by Bryant. "I am not going to get over this one for a while."

Despite blowing the big lead, the Giants nearly made a comeback of their own. They drove to the San Francisco 23 in the final minute. Then, with 6 seconds left, New York (10-7) gave Bryant another big chance.

Allen's warning had come true. Bryant never got it.

"I told him 'Just be aware, go ahead and trust me and to go ahead and expect the ball to go down,'" Allen said. "I told Junkin to get it right. I told him 'You've been playing in this league for 19 years, you've got to come through for us.'"

When the snap came and Allen couldn't control it, he scooped up the ball. Many of the Giants sprinted toward the end zone and Allen heaved a desperation pass that fell incomplete.

Flags were thrown because New York had linemen downfield, so even if the pass had been caught it wouldn't have mattered.

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Hines Ward (11 catches) was instrumental in the Steelers' rally.

Steelers stunned by own comeback

PITTSBURGH — Forty-five minutes after a mind-numbing victory over Dan Rooney ranked behind only "The Immaculate Reception" in terms of comebacks, Hines Ward leaned against his locker, shook his head and conceded he had "no earthly idea" of how the Pittsburgh Steelers rallied to defeat the archrival Cleveland Browns on Sunday.

"You know what?" said Ward, who spent the afternoon catching passes and exhorting some hang-dog teammates. "For once I really mean it when I say I'm going to have to look (at the videotape), because I can't tell you how we did it. A lot of character, I guess, and perseverance. But when it comes to X's and O's, man, I'm a blank. I just don't know."

Fact is, when it came to explaining the 36-33 victory, fashioned with a 22-point fourth quarter explosion and culminated by a 3-yard touchdown run from reserve tailback Chris Fuamatu-Ma'afala with just 54 seconds left, the dearth of lucidity was epidemic in the Steelers' locker room.

It was as if the entire Pittsburgh roster required a group pinch, just to assure the players that what had just transpired on the Heinz Field quagmire was for real, and not merely some playoff fantasy.

Most of the veterans echoed the incredulity Ward displayed and, while there were plenty of wide-eyed Pittsburgh players, there were lots of glassy stares as well. There did emerge, however, one buzz word from players and coach Bill Cowher. And in the absence of football explanations, that word will have to serve as the most essential element for why the Steelers were able to rally from a 17-point third-quarter deficit.

2003 Playoff Schedule

Divisional Playoffs:

Saturday, Jan. 11
Steelers and Titans
Falcons at Eagles

Sunday, Jan. 12
49ers at Buccaneers
Jets at Raiders



Conference championship

Sunday, Jan. 19
NFC Championship game
AFC Championship game

Superbowl XXXVII
Sunday, Jan. 26

SPORTS, from Page 5

Packers: Favre wasn't himself down stretch

Packers quarterback Brett Favre recently has said he will play next season, but there was a smattering of speculation inside Green Bay's locker



Packers have noticed quarterback Brett Favre hasn't been himself this last half of the season.

room following Saturday's wild-card playoff loss to the Falcons that he is contemplating retirement.

A Packers spokesman said Favre will be available to the media on Monday.

Though Favre is expected to continue playing, several Green Bay players, coaches and front-office personnel have noted he's been fairly lethargic for much of the season's second half.

Regardless of Favre's status, the Packers have all but decided to use their first-round draft pick on a quarterback.

One quarterback on their radar screen is Florida's Rex Grossman, who confirmed Saturday that he is skipping his senior season and headed for the NFL draft.

Former Packers GM Ron Wolf, a consultant to the team, told me this week that Grossman reminds him of Favre more than any college quarterback he's seen in the past 10 years.

The Packers are picking in the bottom of the first round, but it is a quarterback-rich draft, so the idea of Grossman being available isn't far-fetched.

Grossman to make formal announcement

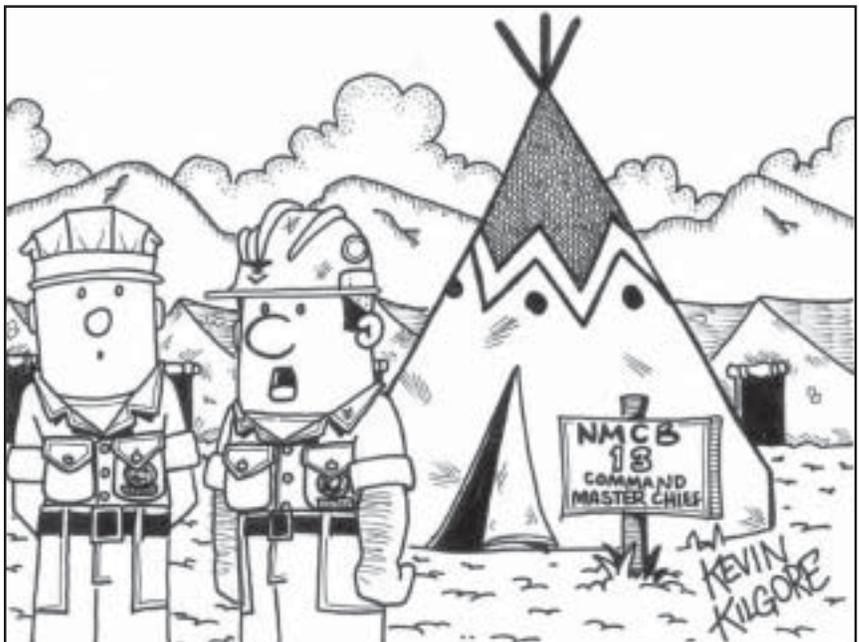
University of Florida quarterback Rex Grossman has decided to forego his final season of college eligibility, ESPN.com has learned, and will formally announce that intention next week.

One of the leading passers in SEC history and a starter for most of the last three seasons, Grossman informed coach Ron Zook of his decision within the past two days, and will not reconsider.

Solution from Saturday's *Hitting the ball* Crossword in the *Freedom Watch*



"The master chief takes his rank seriously, huh."



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By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support