



FACT SHEET

USAF Explorers Fact Sheet 35-396B

396TH ATRS --- HISTORY

The 396th Aircrew Training Squadron, USAF Explorers trace their roots to March 1999. At that time, two officers, LTC Calvin Lowrie and 1LT Ron Smith discussed the possibility of forming a unit based on research by COL Lowrie on past military Boy Scout units. In the early 60 through the 80's military reserve units had chartered Explorer units to teach young men & women about the military (See also USAF Explorers Fact Sheet 35-41A).

So, with the initial planning all ready to go, COL Lowrie approached the 161st AREFW, AzANG with the idea of forming a unit under their command. MAJ Khris Greene was already working as a Liaison with the BSA, and the CO COL John Rix was very enthusiastic about the idea.

396th ATRS Activation Cadre

Lt. Col.'s Calvin Lowrie & Harvey Miller
Capt.'s Boyd Guayante & James Cannon
1Lt.'s Gary Niki & Ron Smith
C/Lt. Col. David Crusoe
C/Capt. Carrie Russell
C/2Lt.'s Adrian Hawtin, Neil Maguire & Zach Smith

161st AREFW Activation Cadre

Col. John Rix
Maj. Khris Greene
MSgt. David Castro
MSgt. Eric Webster

1999

The unit was officially activated on 1 May 1999 at the 197th ARS Copperheads of the 161st AREFW. Meetings had been held at the 161st since mid-March and Saturday meetings at LT Smith's residence. After activation, more cadre was recruited to establish the curriculum, operations and training. Most of the cadre came from SQ 301 Sky Harbor Composite Squadron of the AZ Wing of the Civil Air Patrol. Some other cadet cadre came from various AF and Army JROTC units in the Valley.

Throughout the summer the staff worked to perfect the working environment of the cadets to ensure that it was a model of what they wanted to do and not what had already been used in other youth programs. Setting new boundaries with a much revised military style based on the Military Service Academies.

First Open House was held 9 September with over 125 personnel in attendance. Interviews were held at Cutter Aviation just down the block from the ANG.

The first class of Officer Candidates to begin training was Class 99-01 in September of 1999. OIC of this class was C/LTC Crusoe. He helped shape and mold these individuals into a team of military cadet officers. 25 cadets were chosen from a pool of 32 candidates. The first Warrior Pamphlet was 20 pages in length.

In NOV, the class was able to assist with the first Scout-O-Rama at Tempe Diablo Stadium soccer fields. That same month, personnel traveled to Luke AFB for an Open House. With cooperation of the 161AREFW, the unit had their booth in front of a unit KC-135E.

C/2LT's Evans and Aldridge along with C/OC's Crenshaw, Fox and Larrick awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letters.

Graduation was held in DEC of 1999 with subsequent Commissioning Ceremony with 18 cadet officers receiving their 2LT rank. The Dining-In was the highlight for this class of Cadet Officers being held at the Left Seat Restaurant at KPHX.

Each Class chooses a Distinguished Graduate, one who displays the talent, character, integrity and ability of performing as a professional military officer. The first Distinguished Graduates of Class 99-01 were C/2LT's Robbins and Goddard. More on the OCS Distinguished Graduates can be seen in USAF Explorers Fact Sheet 35-396H.

The first refueling sortie taken by officers of the 396th occurred on 22 Dec after participation in a Salvation Army Christmas Angel community service project during the Toy Distribution project. This became a cornerstone in the unit's effort of community service support in the coming years. The refueling took place over the New Mexico landscape with a B-1B

Lancer from the 7th BW Dyess AFB, TX. This night refueling exercise was the highlight of their Christmas Holiday. More on Military Training and Exercises can be seen in [USAF Explorers Fact Sheet 35-396F](#).

2000

In FEB, the next Class, OTF 00-01 began training under C/2LT's Goddard and Plath. The grueling fifteen week program took its course and finally commissioned officers in June with C/2LT Nieves awarded the DG. Yellow Warrior Handbook makes their appearance with 50 pages.

In MAR, personnel attended a training course on the 56FW TAC ACES Fighter Engagement Simulator with MSG Webster. Cadets were also trained in a C-172 piloted by CPT Guayante out at Cutter Aviation. At least 5 cadets were flown. Several cadets also attended a CAP Desert Training Exercise held by SQ 356 Luke AFB.

APR 7-9 was the first on several Cox Communications Airshow & Air Races held at Williams-Gateway Airport. Unit sponsored a food booth to help raise unit funds. Recruiting was also a major theme for personnel attending the Deer Valley Airport Open House. Later that month, cadets went to the TAC ACES Simulator again with MSG Webster.

The first anniversary of the unit came in MAY with a celebration held at Indian School Park in Scottsdale. A huge celebration which drew many officers, parents and guests attended this event, which is now held annually sponsored by the Parents Committee.

In JUNE, the first cadet officer accepted to the USAF Academy Preparatory School from the unit was C/2LT Robbins. He reported to Colorado Springs in June to start the Prep School. C/1LT Geoffrey Bilas was accepted for USAFA Summer Program and C/2LT Jose Sosa was accepted to the USNA Summer Program.

15 JUL saw the first passing of an officer of the 396th; LTC Harvey Miller departed the pattern after a heart attack. The former commander of the 301 SQ in CAP, this charismatic leader was a cornerstone in the development of the USAF Explorer project. He is much missed to this day.

JUL also saw the first Aircrew Water Survival Training conducted at the ANG facility. The 3 phase event qualified and re-qualified in open ocean and land escape and evasion scenarios. A very successful training operation conducted in very realistic conditions under simulated enemy combat engagement.

Unit Color Guard participated with Task Force Omega at the Diamondbacks Bank One Ballpark on 17 Sep 00 for POW/MIA Recognition Day. The unit was the only youth group represented and raised a new POW/MIA flag on the flagpole outside the ballpark.

The first change of command ceremony saw C/1LT Crenshaw relieve C/LTC Crusoe so he could become an Associate Advisor with subsequent promotion to 1LT and assignment as Advisor to the Commander. LT Crenshaw oversaw the development of the unit to progress further in training. He led deployments to the Desert FTX and other programs as well. One successful event was Aircrew Water Survival Training.

Personnel deployed to Scout Heard Pueblo in OCT for the annual Explorer Day. The day was one of fun and recruiting for SQ members. The same month saw personnel at the Scottsdale Air Fair Airshow. Unit Color Guard opened the show with the posting of the colors. Unit personnel attend the Scottsdale Airshow with booth and assist with airfield operations.

The next OTF, Class 00-02 began training in OCT 00 under C/2LT's Plath and Nieves. C/CAPT Geoffrey Bilas assumed command in NOV 00 from outgoing C/1LT Jason Crenshaw. Also a member of the first OTF, CAPT Bilas brought his own unique style to the billet. Blue Warrior Handbook shows a definite improvement toward the ultimate USAFA Contrails edition with 82 pages.

LTC Fletcher, CMDR Simpson and C/2LT Fox receive AFX Commendation Medal. C/2LT Rico awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

Unit personnel participated in their first Scout-O-Rama in NOV. Cadets set up a recruiting booth along with manning an A-7D cockpit mounted on a trailer courtesy of the 161st FW in Tucson.

He assisted with training at the first CSAR Exercise PUEBLO FIRE, held in DEC. This exercise tested the skills of personnel in a simulated combat environment utilizing military escape and evasion methods.

Unit personnel assisted the Salvation Army with duties at the Phoenix Civic Center setting up holiday meals for the homeless people. Unit also went to assist with the Christmas Angel Program at the main distribution warehouse on Washington Street. This annual event closes out the year with their Toy Distribution to families.

2001

JAN 01 was a festive month with the unit marching in the Martin Luther King Day Parade. C/1LT Crenshaw led the march in honor of the celebration.

LTC Lowrie met with AFOTC Det. 025 Commander COL Scott to discuss arrangements for future operations allowing 396th personnel to get more acquainted with ROTC operations and scholarship opportunities.

Class 00-02 was commissioned in MAR of 01 with C/2LT Brandon Grone as the DG. These individuals also were eligible for a Base Trip during their spring break. The 57th Wing at Nellis AFB in Las Vegas, Nevada was the Base Trip in Mar 01. Our personnel toured the USAF Thunderbirds, 414th CTS RED FLAG, 57EMS Armament Section, Control Tower and 547th IS Threat Training Facility. The last tour was the best according to all. A thorough briefing was given, then the officers toured the many Soviet and enemy weapon systems on the campus. Among them were a Soviet MiG-29 and MiG-21; Iraqi MiG-23 and SU-7; N. Korean MiG-17 and numerous armored vehicles, SAM's, and helicopters.

Unit notified of award of the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2000. This award is similar to the BSA Quality Unit Award. Only 5% of units nation wide normally qualify for this prestigious award. Since there is no Explorer insignia equivalent, HQ EAC authorizes use of the BSA Quality Unit Award for personnel to wear.

The unit worked the Cox Communication Airshow at Williams Gateway Airport in MAR to raise unit funds. One highlight of the airshow was an A-10 demo display by LTC Lowrie of Davis-Monthan AFB. No relation to the commander.

Combat Arms training began with orientation and range qualification in MAY 01. As the summer rolled on, various training kept the personnel busy. Combat Arms training conducted at the Caswell Shooting Range in Mesa. With assistance from unit Life Support section, 11 cadets qualified on the M9 Beretta handgun.

CDT Wayne Robbins was appointed to the USAFA from the USAFA Prep School heading up the hill in JUNE to become part of the Class of 2005. C/2LT Jose Sosa was appointed to the USNA Prep School reporting to RI in June. C/2LT Humberto Nieves was accepted to the USAFA and USMA Summer Programs.

C/CAPT. Bilas stepped down in the fall as Cadet Commander due to an increase in academic load with demotion to C/1LT as no other officer was appointed Cadet Commander due to unit restructuring. 1LT Block awarded AFX Commendation Medal.

A few cadet officers went to Luke AFB Tactical Air Combat Environment Simulation (TAC ACES) for training in F-16 multi-bogey flying training in AUG. Also in the same month, Water Survival Training Phase I, II and III were conducted at the ANG facility. Cadets both qualified and re-qualified in open ocean and land escape and evasion scenarios. Water Survival training included a new twist by having base security personnel act as aggressors. This training allowed personnel to practice day evasion tactics. The infamous pink flamingo water flotation device made an appearance.

11 SEP 2001 will always be a date to remember. That evening, LTC Greene took a KC-135E airborne for Combat Air Patrol refueling of F-16 fighters protecting AZ airspace. This is a significant event as Copperhead 2 heads to vacant skies with a CONUS wide emergency airborne alert with all aircraft grounded. The KC-135E is the first aircraft airborne during this emergency over AZ. During an emergency phone recall of all personnel, the unit stood down from normal operations for only one week. The unit returned to the ANG for operations while other youth groups DOD wide were still affected by the ban months later.

Due to SEP 11, no OTF Class was scheduled.

Exploring/Venturing Day at Head Scout Pueblo was a blast for our unit attending. As always we take a majority of personnel to have fun, soak up some rays and eat as much as we can. BBQ was great!

NOV was a busy month starting with Scout-O-Rama. The unit sponsored a Run for Osama obstacle Course which was a big hit with both parents and kids alike. Casa Grande was the next destination for the unit in NOV. Participating in the EAA Warbirds Fly-In, personnel were able to fly in a variety of aircraft for the day. The remaining part of the weekend was taken up with escape and evasion training during OP KHANDAHAR CSAREX. The daytime exercise validated team aircrew training preparing various forms of extraction. The night brought about simulated evasion techniques with aggressor forces playing the role of Afghanistan militia forces and Taliban military forces in an Afghanistan type operation.

2002

JAN 02 saw the induction of OTF Class 01-01 with 13 hopefuls wanting C/2LT rank under command of C/1LT Grone and C/2LT Hayden. Also the debut of the new improved spiral bound Warrior Handbook produced in color under 1LT Block with 118 pages.

13-14 MAR saw personnel attend briefings and training with the 944FW and the 302FS at Luke AFB for a mini military training. Briefings at the Control Tower, Fire Station and Life Support with training on SERE, F-16 Emergency Cockpit Ground Egress Procedure, Virtual Reality Parachute Training and F-16 operations. Watching the Vipers on the ramp was a highlight for all. In the same month, the unit returned to Williams Gateway Airport for the Cox Communications Airshow for fund raising and recruiting duties.

OTF 01-01 held their Commissioning Ceremony in MAY announcing that C/2LT Buckholtz as the DG. C/1LT Nieves received word on his appointment to the US Military Academy at West Point, NY Class of 2006. He was also selected for the USAFA Prep School. C/2LT Jose Sosa was accepted an appointment to the USNA Class of Class 2006. C/2LT Geoffrey Schultz was selected for the USAFA Summer Program.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2001. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

Cadets assisted in an Eagle Project in MAY at a Flag Burning Ceremony after gathering over 300 flags flown in memory of SEP 9/11 at Falcon Field, AZ. On 25 MAY 02, representatives from the 396th assisted Valley wide Scout organizations in planting over 37,000 U.S. flags at gravesites at the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona in remembrance of Memorial Day. The unit pulls this duty annually to support the Veteran's Administration.

JUL saw C/1LT Wenz assisted with his Eagle Project at the Phoenix Bird Aviary putting together another bird sanctuary for the recovery and care of injured birds.

In AUG of 02 Unit personnel had a base orientation visit to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. The visit started with a tour of the 162nd FW ANG Snowbird Facility. During this same timeframe, the Israeli Air Force had brought in 4 F-15C's from 133 SQ and 2 F-15I's from 69 SQ Hammers for training over the Goldwater Range. On a historic note, the 396th ATRS was the only public unit authorized a briefing by these elite combat fighter pilots. These aircraft continued their North American visit on to Nellis AFB with the F-15I's participating in their first ever RED FLAG.

The trip continued with the cadets touring: the 354th TRS with their Hog simulator; the 354th FS "Bulldogs", with an actual hands-on "A-10" tour on the ramp; the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center (AMARC) or "Boneyard." At Tucson IAP, personnel were hosted by the 162nd FW (AZ ANG "F-16's") PA Office, with briefings and tours including 162 FW, (including everyone flying Combat Sims), Fire Station, Hush House & Life Support. The trip ended with a tour of the Titan Missile Museum, and the Pima Air & Space Museum.

AUG also saw the first cadet officer to finish college and receive a commission in the military. 2LT David Crusoe, USAF was commissioned at ASU AFROTC with orders for Navigator training at Randolph AFB, TX. Unit members attended the ceremony.

WO Berry along with C/2LT Bilas and C/WO Klosterman awarded AFX Commendation Medal.

Water Survival Training was also conducted in AUG with Phase I & II completed during daylight hours, while Phase III worked during night operations. The first ever Combat Dining-In was seen at the ANG with cadets enjoying a good meal under simulated combat conditions.

OTF 02-01 was sworn in 7 SEP 02 with C/CAPT Grone and C/1LT Bilas commanding the new officer candidates. Another Explorer Day occurred at Scout Heard Pueblo with many in the unit participating in scuba, rifle shooting (22 cal) archery, and general obstacle course.

OCT was the time for unit participation in the GCC annual Law Enforcement Pistol Shooting Competition at Rio Salado. Even though four officers competed in this event C/1LT Bilas 5th, C/2LT Fox 2nd, C/1LT Grone 3rd, and C/2LT Treadway 7th they showed others in Law Enforcement that the unit can compete.

Aircrew from the unit including LTC Lowrie, LT Crenshaw and C/CAPT Grone traveled to Palm Springs CA for the annual AOPA Convention for briefings and updates in the General Aviation arena. They continued on to Disneyland for R&R.

The unit held a Recruiting Booth at Falcon Field for the CAF Veterans Day Fly-In and Airshow. The annual Scout-O-Rama in NOV gave the unit an opportunity to show case their training. With support from the 161st CES, the public was able to see the military training the unit was providing. The 396th was the sole military unit represented.

The annual Unit Christmas Party was held at the Grone residence. Many staff, cadets, parents and family members enjoyed the always popular gift exchange. A highlight was Cadet Silvester drawing the footed pajamas to wear at the party and hold on to for the next year. LTC Greene made an appearance with family.

2003

JAN 03 kicked off with Operation TALON EAGLE CSAREX with cadets simulating downed aircrew and POW's in an Iraqi combat environment. On 16 JAN OTF 02-01 commissioned a new class of 10 Cadet Officer Candidates with C/2LT Travis Holdren awarded the DG honors. Subsequent Dining-In occurred on 16 Jan. The first Cadet Officer of the Year is awarded with C/1LT Chris Wenz accepting an A-10 Warthog model as his reward.

OTF 03-01 began in FEB under the direction of C/1LT's Bilas and Jungeblut.

On 15-16 MAR the unit deployed to Luke AFB again for the LUKE DAYS Open House. The unit did not set up a recruiting booth as in previous years. But they did augment the Task Force Omega POW/MIA Booth with much success. Personnel talked with an F-15E Aircrew from the 391FS Bold Tigers about their exploits over Afghanistan. We also met their unit SNACKO to exchange geedunk with them. Another highlight was meeting and talking with GEN Newton, USAF Ret. about his career.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2002. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

Memorial Day weekend saw the unit assist other BSA units in the annual planting of flags at the Arizona Memorial Cemetery in Cave Creek. Over 30,000 flags were planted to honor those who served in our nations armed forces. Congressman Hayworth was also present and talked with unit personnel about their sacrifice and commitment to our country. Water Survival Training Phases I, II and III were again conducted to help aircrew understand the importance of training under realistic conditions.

This class of was commissioned in JUN with C/2LT Eric Straub taking honors as DG. Several other cadets received word on appointments to USAFA, C/2LT Matthew Merritt Class of 2007 and the USMA, C/1LT Chris Wenz Class of 2007. LT Wenz turned down the appointment accepting an AFROTC Scholarship to Embry-Riddle University in Prescott. MIDC Sosa also received an appointment to the USNA Class of 2006. C/1LT Robert Buckholtz was selected for the USNA and USAFA Summer Programs.

C/2LT Bogert awarded AFX Commendation Medals, while C/2LT Wiener awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

11 JUL was the official winging ceremony of 2LT David Crusoe upon completion of Specialized Undergraduate Navigator Training (SUNT) at Randolph AFB, TX. LTC Lowrie and 1LT Crenshaw traveled to San Antonio TX to represent the unit. Dave continued on to Offutt AFB, NE for training as an EWO on board EC-135W. While at SA, LTC Lowrie met an old acquaintance in the form of a T-41 26F. Pilots never lose their love for an airplane.

In AUG, the unit paid another visit to the 944FW at Luke AFB. Treated to many different briefings, cadets experienced the day-to-day ops at Luke. From the Fire Department to the Control Tower, cadets enjoyed their overnight stay, which included billeting on base. Visiting the TAC ACES simulators allowed some stick time shooting down their wingman in combat. Another briefing at the 302 FS showed highlights during night mission over Afghanistan in support of OEF. The night sorties showed bombing missions of various Taliban targets in the AOR. Water Survival Training was again conducted at the ANG.

LTC's Greene & Lowrie played golf with the Grone Boys out in Mesa. Greene saw a new side of Golf which tested his senior abilities on the course. He lost to C/CAPT Grone by 10 strokes. His friends at the 161st never let him live it down he lost to a cadet.

OTF 03-02 was kicked into gear in SEP 03 under the command of C/CAPT Grone and C/1LT Wiener. Operation THIRD LIEUTENANT was seen at the 161st ARW allowing cadets to mentor and learn in a variety of different jobs over the weekend UTA. Very successful and hopefully becoming an annual event in the future. This mentor based program allowed cadets to observe and train alongside their ANG counterparts from Command, to Security Forces, Fire Protection, Maintenance, Safety and other sections. It was a huge success.

The penultimate Warrior Handbook made its appearance in SEP for OTF 03-02 with 296 pages. WO Buckholtz awarded AFX Commendation Letter.

OCT saw the unit support the 161st at their annual Fall Festival. A Halloween type carnival designed for families to have some fun. The unit was an integral part of the success of the evening. 2LT Berry was instrumental in handling unit participation with the ANG. WO1 Geoffrey Bilas soloed at Williams-Gateway Airport in Mesa. C/2LT Tyler Thompson soloed at Mesa Falcon Field.

BSA Scout-O-Rama in NOV proved fun for the 396th as our personnel deployed to Tempe Diablo Stadium for the daylong event. Highlight for some personnel were the appearance of the Phoenix Cardinals Cheerleaders. The unit also supported Veteran's Day festivities at the Confederate Air Force at FFZ. This mini-air show was a huge success and was going to become an annual event.

PVT Bobby Treadway, AUS was deployed in NOV for operations in Iraq. He was used on a USAF Bomb Damage Assessment Team for security and also used as reaction scouts for enemy employment. C/Capt Wenz attended the National Youth Leadership Forum of Defense, Intelligence and Diplomacy in Washington D.C.

The annual Unit Christmas Party in DEC hosted by the Grone family was again a success for all who attended. One highlight was some of the OTF who insisted in showing up dressed in the PT gear. Unit personnel again deployed to the Salvation Army for the Christmas Angel Toy Distribution program. The Copilot was born to the Lowrie family.

2004

Another Operation TALON EAGLE CSAREX was executed in JAN 04 as the largest and most extensive training. Aggressor forces used K-9 patrols to increase their effectiveness. Aircrews made significant progress toward their objectives while enemy forces used interrogation and prisoner tactics in an Libyan combat environment.

JAN was also the month in which OTF 03-02 graduated one of the largest OCS classes on record. DG for the class was C/2LT Tyler Wilson. OTF 04-01 held Induction Day ceremonies on 31 JAN under the command of C/1LT's Silvester and Bogert.

In FEB, the unit was used as casualties with the 944 Aeromedical Staging Sq at Luke AFB during a Mass Casualty Exercise. Some cadets used mol aged injuries, with burns and wounds from combat or normal operations, while others played insane, mental or just plain dead corpses. The unit commander said that our participation was critical to the success of the whole exercise. C/1LT's Arden, Bogert and Currie with C/2LT Muchow attend the National Youth Leadership Forum of Defense, Intelligence and Diplomacy in Washington D.C.

Combat Arms training under 2LT Fox was conducted at Rio Salado Range in east Mesa to allow personnel to qualify and also annual re-qualify on the M9. Many cadets achieved Sharpshooter and Marksmanship ratings.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2003. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

On 27-28 MAR, 30 unit personnel under CAPT Block participated in the 2004 Thunderbird Balloon & Air Classic at Glendale MAP. Responsibilities and tasks completed those two days were surveillance and security of the "Hot Ramp", as well as crowd control & aircraft display-area security. Special briefings and aircraft tours were provided to 396th personnel of Aerobatic Pilot Air Show participant Jon Melby and his Pitts S2B Bi-Plane as well as from an F-15C Eagle Crew from Tyndall that also participated in the show. High praise for our outstanding performance came from the Balloon Fest Air-Boss, Ramp Supervisor, as well as the Red Baron's and B-17 Aircrew and ground crew.

MAY saw the unit deploy once again to the Veteran's Memorial Cemetery to help place flags at the graves of our military brethren. This annual event is a source of great pride within the unit. Over 40,000 gravesite markers are placed with flags.

MAY also saw the announcement of C/2LTSophia Volz attending the USMA Class 2008; C/2LT Aubrey Aldridge attending the USAFA Prep School and C/1LT Buckholtz attending the USNA Prep School at Newport RI. C/1LT Arden was selected for the USAFA Summer Program. C/CAPT Wenz transfers from ERAU in Prescott to Binghamton University in NY, still on AFROTC scholarship. C/2LT Flores accepted for ERAU in Prescott AFROTC.

In MAY, the unit celebrated their Five-Year Anniversary with a huge party at the ANG. During the ceremony, the unit was presented with their Fifth BSA Quality Unit Award. This award is presented to the top 5 percent of all BSA units in the Country. This was the 396th fifth consecutive year of winning this coveted award. C/2LT Stephanie Neville was awarded the DG for OTF 04-01 in ceremonies held in MAY. C/Capt Wiener and C/2LT DeAvila awarded USAFX Commendation Medals. Mrs. Terry Raleigh awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

At the Dining-In for OTF 04-01, C/CAPT Wenz was presented an A-10 Thunderbolt II of the 23FW of the 75FS England AFB, LA in Tiger Shark mouth markings for his selection as Cadet of the Year for 2002.

The first Physical Abilities and Stamina Test (PAST) Exam was held at the ANG pool and weight room by MSG Kultala, retired USAF Pararescueman in JUN. This proved to be an eye opening experience for personnel desiring to go into USAF Special Operations field.

In AUG, the unit formally unveiled a new curriculum, which now saw the addition of another training tract along with the Aircrew tract. The Special Tactics tract was formed to give personnel the opportunity to train as AF Combat Controllers and Pararescue. The combined training gives a cadet a glimpse into AF Special Operations and training. With the new training came a down for transition to the new curriculum. This unfortunately saw the cancellation of OTF Class 04-02.

C/1LT Silvester soloed in a C-172 at Falcon Field in Mesa. C/CAPT Grone soloed at Falcon Field in Mesa in a C-172. These solo pilots achieved their event in SEP.

In OCT, unit personnel assisted the 161st ARW Family Readiness with their annual Fall Festival. The unit help set up various venues, food booths and other activities. Cadets also assisted with the Haunted House playing various characters. Everyone had a good time.

6-7 NOV saw our personnel deployed to FFZ for CAF Veterans Day operations again. During the air show, the display was marred by the crash of a CAF pilot and passenger. Our cadets assisted with crowd control allowing swift and excellent response by emergency crews. The CAF pilot was a dear friend to the unit and a CFI for one of our cadets' in the SQ.

DEC the Currie family played hosts to the unit for the annual Christmas Party. One noteworthy event occurring was when the cadets gathered around the pool table to try and play Crud (a favorite sport in the fighter pilot community). At the party, Cadet Grone was finally presented his model of an F-15E Strike Eagle of the 391FS Bold Tigers in 9/11 markings from Mountain Home AFB, ID for representation as Cadet of the Year for 2003. This award is normally presented at the Dining-In earlier in the year. C/CAPT Weiner was announced as the Cadet of the Year for 2004 with a KC-135R model of the 161ARW being presented to him for his achievement.

Unit personnel again deployed to the Salvation Army for the Christmas Angel Toy Distribution program.

2005

As 2005 arrived, news was received that several cadets had been nominated to the Military Service Academies. Instead of the normal one or two nominations, four cadets were nominated for attending this coming summer. C/2LT Aldridge for the USAFA Class 2009; C/1LT Arden for the USAFA Prep School; C/1LT Buckholtz for the USNA Class 2009 and C/2LT Raleigh also for the USNA Class 2009. We are proud of their accomplishments. C/CAPT Grone was selected for a 3YR AFROTC Scholarship at ASU while C/2LT Wright was awarded a 4YR AROTC Scholarship at University of San Francisco. C/2LT Flores selected for 3YR AFROTC at ERAU Prescott.

Personnel were briefed by 12AF 612th Intelligence Sq for a simulated target planning session under OP BLUE LIGHTNING. Cadets planned a targeting of Drug Cartel positions in the SOUTHCOM AOR. Assets used during this operation were all from 12th AF.

On 29 JAN saw the start-up with the usually challenging Day 1 for OTF 05-01 under the command of C/CAPT Chambers.

Personnel deployed to Luke AFB Operation PATRIOT HEALING HAND in MAR with the 944 Aeromedical Staging Sq (944ASTS) at Luke AFB during a Mass Casualty Exercise. Cadets were dressed up with injuries, burns and wounds from combat or normal operations, while others played insane, mental or just plain dead corpses. The unit commander said that our participation was critical to the success of the whole exercise.

Luke Days rolled around in MAR for the unit to set up a joint booth with Task Force Omega and the 396th. Unit personnel had fun through the weekend as always.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2004. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

OTF 05-01 DG was awarded to C/2LT Michael Wilson during ceremonies held in MAY. The subsequent Dining-In was a great affair for all who participated.

C/1LT Chambers awarded AFX Commendation Medal with MSGT Kultala AFX Commendation Letter, with C/2LT Jobski awarded a 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

MAY saw the return of the unit to the Arizona Memorial Cemetery to help plant flags for use during Memorial Day ceremonies. 2LT Wayne Robbins, USAF becomes the first cadet alumni to graduate from a Military Service Academy with ceremonies at the USAFA. He heads to Keesler AFB for training.

6th Year Anniversary Party held at the 161st ARW. Over 80 personnel attended this event.

In JUN, unit personnel held OP TIGERSHARK Water Survival Training 05 with many cadets qualifying and re-qualifying in this demanding aircrew environment. First time participation from elements from the Special Tactics section.

30 JUL saw personnel travel to the Titan Missile Museum and the Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson for a much needed break and R&R. Many cadets had never seen the Titan Missile Museum.

SEP saw the OTF 05-02 begin training under C/CAPT Chambers.

SUN 7 AUG was the solo date for C/1LT Straub in a C-172 at Stellar Airpark. C/2LT Tyler Wilson also flew his solo flight from Stellar Airpark in a C-172. Both cadets are students at the same flight training facility.

SAT 20 AUG Personnel were briefed by 12AF 612th Intelligence Sq for a simulated target planning session under OP BLUE LIGHTNING. Cadets planned a targeting of Cuban insurgents positions in the SOUTHCOM AOR. Assets used during this operation were all from 12th AF.

OCT was a busy month with C/1LT Silvester getting his Pilot Wings upon completion of training at Falcon Field, while 2LT Bilas finished his training at Chandler Municipal Airport.

CAPT Block again deployed personnel for the Thunderbird Balloon Classic at Glendale Airport 29 OCT.

In NOV, Cadets traveled to Nellis AFB, NV for their annual Aviation Nation Airshow. For many this was the first opportunity to see an F-22 fly. Personnel also got a trip to the Strip to enjoy some time on R&R. Unit personnel were also briefed by another AVT Explorer Post 747 at North Las Vegas Airport. OTF 05-02 continued training in late Fall for a scheduled completion in late JAN 06. Several more pilots soloed and some even got their Private Pilot License.

DEC again saw the annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. The Raleigh family was our gracious host for this gala event. C/CAPT Chambers was announced as the Cadet of the Year for 2005 and presented a model of a B-52H Stratofortress from the 2BW, 13BS from Barksdale AFB, LA.

2006

2006 saw the unit enjoy some of the fruits of their labor. Another aerial refueling sortie took cadets to New Mexico to refuel EC-130's of the 41st ESC, 355th Wing from Davis-Monthan AFB. OP TALON EAGLE rounded out the month of January as cadets practiced their Escape and Evasion (E&E) techniques during the CSAREX. This was the first time that actual Pararescue training techniques and operational procedures were tested in exercise conditions. OTF 05-02 saw C/2LT Kimberly Twohig as only the second female officer to be awarded the DG in unit history.

Unit personnel supported 161st ARW Family Day in MAR with food and game venues. Cadets also get to see other operational sections up close and talk with Guardsmen about their jobs. The petting zoo is a crowd favorite as the rock wall as well.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2005. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

OTF 06-01 held their Commissioning Ceremony in MAY with the announcement as well of C/2LT Jeffre Wood as the DG. 2LT Bilas awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

In truly amazing fashion never seen in the SQ before, C/2LT Jeffre Wood Soloed in a C-172 and then became a Private Pilot in the span of only 40 days! Such dedication and determination in the aviation community is rarely seen all while still a student in High School.

C/1LT Eric Straub left for the Air Force Academy joining C/1LT Charles Arden graduating from the USAFA Preparatory School, both Class of 2010. C/1LT Thomas DeAvila left for the US Military Academy Preparatory School at Ft. Monmouth, NJ just weeks later. 2LT Nieves commissions from the USMA heading to Ft. Knox, KY for Basic Armor Officer School.

C/CAPT Chambers awarded first ever AFX Meritorious Service Medal.

In JUN, the unit participated in the annual BSA Flag Day at Chase Field home of the Arizona Diamondbacks. C/2LT's Wood and Benetiz form part of a joint giant Color Guard composed of Scouts from throughout the Valley. We are the only military representative at the event.

JUL saw officers deploy to Nellis AFB for intense briefings and training with the 57WG. Among the tours attended were USAF Weapons School; 64th & 65th AGRS; 66th RS launching HH-60G aircraft; 11th & 15th RS with Predator operations; 414th CTS RED FLAG and the 57th ATG. While in Las Vegas, the unit visited another Aviation Explorer unit, the 747th Air Venture Crew at North Las Vegas Airport. While there, C/2LT Jeffre Wood was presented Pilot Wings by the Commander and Cadet Commander of the unit. Coming in late JUL was OP TIGERSHARK, Water Survival Training 06 hosted by the Life Support section.

In SEP, OTF 06-02 began training in the OCS curriculum looking at their fifteen weeks ahead as interesting and challenging with C/1LT Wood as commander.

OCT saw LTC Lowrie and Bill Buckholtz travel to Colorado Springs and the USAFA to see fellow cadets C4C Arden and C4C Straub and MID Buckholtz at the Navy vs. Air Force football game. Navy won the game, but the fly by of AF F-15E's and B-1 left the audience in awe.

In NOV, the unit began operations with the Salvation Army Christmas Angel program but with a twist. Officers served at two different mall locations, Scottsdale Fashion Square and Chandler Fashion Square under CW2 Klosterman and C/2LT Wilson respectively. Cadets also took part in their annual trek to Nellis AFB open house, Aviation Nation, and enjoyed themselves on the Vegas Strip as well.

DEC also saw the first Pearl Harbor Day Memorial Remembrance at the 396th ATRS. Headlining the event was LTC Betty "TACK" Blake, USAAC WASP. She brought the house down with her talk about her fascinating life. DEC saw the unit also support normal Toy Distribution operations at the main warehouse as well with C/CAPT Chambers leading this effort. Also occurring in this month was a Parents Meeting with emphasis on AFROTC Scholarship opportunities.

The annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. The Wilson family was our gracious host for this gala event. Alumni visiting from all over made this a truly great event. There was no award for Cadet of the Year for 2006.

2007

OP TALON EAGLE 07 took on a new flair as Iranian targets were presented as the AOR and the first full use of Cadet Combat Rescue Officers (CRO) were seen in this annual JAN exercise. Some new training and tactics were also exercised for the first time. Later in the month, OTF 07- 01 was inducted into the OCS for their fifteen week training under the command of 1LT Bogert.

The training cycle for OTF 06-02 was completed in early FEB with C/2LT John Stropko announced as the DG. Work continued through officer cycle as the new lieutenants enjoyed time becoming staff officers. The SQ was notified that some alumni were heading to the Iraq for OP IRAQI FREEDOM as SGT Bobby Treadway; LCPL Jason Muchow and CPL Andy Trog were heading overseas.

MAR was an interesting month with a flurry of activities at Luke AFB. The bi-annual LUKE DAYS Open House was again a good recruiting ground for the unit. Cadets also assisted Project Omega POW/MIA organization with whom we share many good times and stories with.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2006. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

Three cadets took to the air flying F-16's on two different training sorties. C4C Eric Straub and CDT Tyler Wilson flew as RED AIR support against 4 other student flown F-16's with the 61FS Spikes. CDT Brandon Grone flew a low level strike sortie with the 308FS Emerald Knights just days later during a Large Force Employment exercise (LFE).

MAY saw OTF Class 07-01 Commissioned with C/2LT Erik Lozoya taking home DG honors for the class. The next month in JUNE, 07-01 attended their Graduation Dining-In. Many officers said this was one of the best yet as C/1LT Wood took care of Mr. Vice activities. CW3 Bogert awarded AFX Meritorious Service Medal.

C/2LT Thomas DeAvila was appointed to the USMA Class of 2011 while C/1LT Jeffre Wood was selected for both the USAFA and USNA Summer Programs. 2LT. Matthew Merritt, USAF commissions at USAFA. He is headed to Maxwell AFB for training to become a Contracting Officer. 2LT. Humberto Nieves is commissioned at USMA heading to Ft. Knox, KY for Armor Officer Training with assignment to M-1A or M-2B.

Officers headed out to Kirtland AFB, NM during late July for briefings and training at the 58SOW. Briefings and training included the 58SOW; 512RQS with HH-60 and HH-1N helicopters; USAF Nuclear Weapons (U); 342TS, Det 1 Pararescue School and Combat Rescue Officers Course; Defense Threat Reduction Agency Foreign Weapons (U); FAA Air Route Traffic Control Center, (Operation RAINCHECK); Among the many opportunities afforded these young men was also a flight with USAF Aero Club in T-41C aircraft. Unfortunately the weather did not cooperate. Another briefing occurred with the local New Mexico Wing Cadet Composite Squadron, which proved to be an eye opening experience for all personnel attending.

Special Tactics officers began their official training in the Cadet Combat Rescue Officer's (CCRO) Indoctrination Course, or what is called INDOC, began on 2 AUG. Under the leadership of CW3 Bogert, along with CW2 Klosterman and assisted by C/CAPT Chambers and C/1LT Kultala, six trainees began training (Barrett, Bennett, Jobski, Mitchell, Powers, Stanley). This very physically demanding, mental challenging phase of training took its toll on everyone involved. On 23 AUG, four trainees completed INDOC for the first time in unit history. During the same ceremony, the unit awarded the first Combat Rescue Officer badges to CW3 Bogert and CW2 Klosterman after two and half years of training.

Other significant announcements in AUG included C/WO Hamann receiving his Private Pilot Rating becoming the eighth cadet awarded a USAFX Pilot Badge. C/2LT Spence was accepted into ASU Army ROTC with a 4 year Scholarship beginning this fall. LT Spence also soloed at Mesa Falcon Field in a C-172.

Operation TIGERSHARK Water Survival Training was held 25 and 30 AUG under pretty extreme conditions. North Korean and Iranian targets and intelligence was used during this combat simulation at the ANG. CW2 Klosterman along with C/LT's Jobski, Kultala and Wood handled duties during the exercise.

During SEP, C/1LT Wood received a letter announcing his Early Acceptance into the United State Naval Academy for the Class of 2013. Then in OCT, Lt Wood also received an Early Letter of Acceptance to the United States Air Force Academy. The cadet chose the USAFA over USNA due to career flying opportunities.

The unit deployed to Falcon Field in Mesa to support the first ever Helicopter Fly-In for the Valley in NOV. Cadets ran into Young Marines as well pulling recruiting duties. Seeing some civilian helos up close was fun for personnel.

NOV brought interesting visitors to the unit in the form of cadet alumni. 1LT Nieves, AUS from Ft. Hood, TX. The Calvary Platoon Ldr was on R&R before his deployment to Iraq in support of OP IRAQI FREEDOM. The USMA grad also spoke of Army opportunities, deployments and the endless training that goes on. 2LT Wenz from Hanscom AFB was in Yuma, AZ for testing of equipment on board some C-130 aircraft. He also spoke about AFROTC and AF life in general.

Also during NOV, CW3 Klosterman handled unit Salvation Army Christmas Angel sign up at San Tan Mall in the East Valley.

DEC opened with the second annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Remembrance hosted by the unit. LTC Betty "Tack" Blake former WWII WASP entertained guests with her wit and humor as she always does.

The annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. The Wood family was our gracious host for this gala event in Phoenix. C/1LT Jeffre Wood was announced as the Cadet of the Year for 2007 with award of a MiG-29 Fulcrum, the first adversary model awarded in unit history due to Sharkbait/MiGbait's great Orientation Briefing eagle eye.

Unit personnel volunteered for annual Christmas Angel Toy Distribution down at the Salvation Army.

2008

Activation of the 405th Aircrew Training Group (405ATR) at Phoenix ANGB aligns units in AZ. The subordinate units include the 396ATRS Tigers at Phoenix ANGB, 397ATRS Cheetahs at Luke AFB and the 398ATRS, as yet unnamed. The 397th is in caretaker status until activation at a later date pending command approval.

OP TALON EAGLE 09 saw aircrew and Cadet Combat Rescue Officer's (CCRO) candidates evaluated in a combat scenario. SERE training for Aircrew and CCRO personnel using a Russian Naval target, with Russian Army and Air Defense units as well. Lt. Chambers used Russian phase cards used by the OPFOR, Russian music and Defense Ministry propaganda. CCRO's were not only evaluated by officers, but also used senior cadet personnel again as trainers/evaluators.

Warrior Knowledge Flash Cards debut with OTF 08-01 with 10 pages. Due to unit expense, outlay of funds and production issues, the Warrior Handbook was shelved. CW3 Klosterman awarded bronze device for second award of the AFX Commendation Medal. C/1LT Wood awarded AFX Commendation Medal.

The Grand Canyon Council announced that two officers had been selected for the BSA Young American Award for 2007, C/1LT's Chris Wilson and Jeffre Wood. They are two of 10 chosen from over 50,000 scouts in the Valley. The award is resented at the U.S. Airways Arena by Kent Dana of local CBS Station Channel 5.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2007. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

C/1LT Jeffre Wood received two appointments; one with the USNA Class of 2012 and accepting the USAFA Class of 2012. C/2LT Kimberly Twohig was selected for USAFA Summer Program. 2LT Sophia Volz is commissioned at USMA with her heading to Ft. Leonard Wood, MO for Engineer Officer Training.

JUN starts off OTF 07-02 Dining-In being held later than normal. Four officers are commissioned C/WO to begin their staff training. C/1LT Wood takes to the air at Deer Valley Airport with LTC Betty "TACK" Blake, WASP USAAC from WWII as his co-pilot.

The 2nd INDOC Class of the Special Tactics officers began their official training in JUN in the Cadet Combat Rescue Officer's (CCRO) Indoctrination Course, or what is called INDOC, began on 2 AUG. Under the leadership of 2LT Bogert, along with 2T Klosterman and assisted by C/CAPT Chambers C/2LT's Mitchell and Stanley, five trainees began training (Barrett, Guerra, Kaufman, Mosegard, Lozoya). This very physically demanding, mental challenging phase of training took its toll on everyone involved. Several trainees had to succumb to the elements to allow four to complete their training: C/2LT's Guerra, Kaufman and Lozoya.

Unit takes trip to Tucson for the Titan Missile Museum and the Pima Air & Space Museum in JUL.

Officers perform Honor Guard and Color Guard Detail for the funeral of COL Earl Hopper. Dear friend of the unit through ties with the Task Force Omega team in Glendale.

In AUG, unit operations shift to OP TIGERSHARK WST to allow both aircrew and combat rescue officers perform their training under realistic combat conditions. LCPL Trog, USMC assists with the training. C/CRO personnel are also deployed for the first time to train during this exercise.

In SEP, OTF 08-02 begins training under the command of C/2LT Hahn. C/OC Torge awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

OCT sees the return of the Fall Festival with the 161st ARW. Many staff and cadets support the activity.

Scout-O-Rama returned to the unit in NOV allowing personnel to showcase our training. C/2LT's Bostdorff and Carli play the role of downed aircrew while C/2LT's Mitchell and Stanley student C/CRO's showing the public the units training. It is a great event showing the public our outstanding ability to train young people in a demanding combat role.

The Annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Remembrance brought more personnel to the unit as well as LTC Betty "Tack" Blake and SGT Joe Kellwood, USMC WWII Navajo Code Talker. Both veterans showed the audience true meanings of dedication and service to their country.

The annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. The Wilson family was our gracious host for this gala event. Many alumni again show up for this event. There was no award for Cadet of the Year for 2008.

2009

OP TALON EAGLE 09 saw aircrew and Cadet Combat Rescue Officer's (CCRO) candidates evaluated in a combat scenario. SERE training for Aircrew and CCRO personnel using a Russian Naval target, with Russian Army and Air Defense units as well. Lt. Chambers used Russian phase cards used by the OPFOR, Russian music and Defense Ministry propaganda. CCRO's were not only evaluated by officers, but also used senior cadet personnel again as trainers/evaluators.

Combat Arms training was conducted by 1LT's Fox and Crenshaw for staff officers for initial and requalification on the M9 Berretta pistol. For some cadets, it was their first time to handle a sidearm, much less actually fire the weapon.

The Grand Canyon Council announced that another officer had been selected for the BSA Young American Award for 2008, C/1LT Eric Mitchell. He follows in the footsteps of other award recipients the previous year. He is one of 10 chosen from over 57,000 scouts in the Valley. Presentation was made by ASU Alum and Dallas Cowboy QB Danny White.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2008. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

Commissioning is an important event for any officer in the USAFX program. Fifteen weeks of intense training for a moment on the stage in front of parents, family and friends. OTF 09-02 Commissioned 6 C/2LT's and 2 C/WO's. Under the command of C/2LT Hahn, these cadets showed how to stick with it. C/2LT Mercer was presented with DG honors. Dining-In just days later proved that you must have a sense of humor to be a good officer.

C/1LT Mitchell and Stanley awarded first AFX Achievement Medals. 1LT Chambers awarded 396ATRS Commendation Letter.

OTF 09-01 Induction Day began in FEB with four cadets ready to tackle their fifteen weeks of fun with much exuberance. This class would make history in MAY. Command of this group fell to C/1LT Mitchell. The 161ARW West Mitchell JROTC Invitational Drill Meet at the Phoenix ANGB in late FEB. Some of the competitors were also cadets from the unit.

MAR saw officers from the unit traveled to Pima Air & Space Museum in Tucson for the SR-71 Blackbird Reunion. Many marveled how these military and civilian engineers from the Cold War days made a weapon like the Blackbird. This event is now a hallmark activity for the unit every 2 years that it is hosted at the PASM. As long as aircrews, support crews, maintenance and engineers are alive to tell this story, we will send personnel down for this historical activity.

During his Spring Break from the USAFA, C4C Wood completed a sortie in an F-16D with the 61FS Top Dogs at Luke AFB. His sortie was a normal surface attack training sortie 2 ship to the Barry Goldwater Range.

History was again made when more officers completed training for award of the Cadet Combat Rescue Officers Badge. C/1LT's Eric Mitchell and William Stanley were presented with numbers 3 and 4 C/CRO badge. After over 2 years of training, these officers showed that hard work and perseverance pays off when you continue to work toward your goals.

In APR, five officers from the unit participated in the 5th Annual Pat's Run in Tempe. It was the first time for the unit to run/walk the event with both SMACK's and Officers. Staff hopes to make this an annual event to increase our public awareness.

ENS Robert Buckholtz is commissioned in ceremonies at USNA with Bucky heading to NAS Pensacola for Naval Aviation Training. 2Lt. Aubrey Aldridge is commissioned at USAFA with Aubrey heading to Vance AFB, OK for JSUPT.

Memorial Day weekend was again spent at the AZ National Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix. C/1LT Mitchell served as OIC for the event ensuring the unit handled their duty with other scouting units placing over 43,000 flags at grave site markers. Our personnel returned the following TUE to pick up the flags. This signature event is an honor for the 396th to participate in. We also pay respect for 396th personnel buried there: CMDR Jack Simpson, USCGR.

C/2LT Kimberly Twohig was appointed for both the USMA Class of 2014, but accepted appointment for the USAFA Class of 2014. She joins other 396th Alumni at C-Springs; C1C Arden, C1C Straub and C4C Wood. She is the first female at the USAFA, third female in unit history to attend a Military Service Academy.

In MAY, OTF 09-01 16th OTF Flight would make history in MAY by commissioning 100% of their class. Command of this group fell to C/1LT Mitchell. This was the first class to graduate all cadet recruits who started Induction Day.

The first ever Airmanship Aviation Preflight Indoctrination or API began concurrently with SPEC TAC INDOC. This first ever API began with officers C/1LT's Carli and Wilson with C/2LT's Bedient, Bostdorff, Carli, Haupt, Hellan, Krupczynski and Neville.

Special Tactics officers began their 3rd training class of the Cadet Combat Rescue Officer's (CCRO) Indoctrination Course, or what is called INDOC, began on 5 AUG. Under the leadership of 1LT Bogert, along with 1LT Klosterman and assisted by C/1LT's Mitchell and Stanley with C/2LT Guerra. Two trainees began training. This very physically demanding, mental challenging phase of training took its toll on everyone involved.

On 25 AUG, two trainees, C/2LT's Bills and Richardson completed INDOC with a first ever Combat Dining-In also held with Airmanship API graduates C/2LT's Bedient and Neville with Class 09A. WO1 Mark Hellan arranged the details and duties for the Combat Dining-In.

In AUG was scheduled OP TIGERSHARK Water Survival Training (WST) Phase I & II, but due to training, the inept skills and study habits of several cadets, the whole operation had to be scrubbed and re-scheduled for SEP.

C/2LT Erik Lozoya was awarded an AFROTC Scholarship at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Prescott Det. 027. He will be an incoming freshman in AUG.

SEP brought about more recruiting and training, but no OTF Class due to cadet issues. And since they had to reschedule WST, OP TIGERSHARK again showed just how difficult the training is when you do not pay attention. Aircrew and CCRO personnel trained hard during Phase I & II. Then the night Phase III was completed and another ticket punch was administered for several of the cadets.

DEC is always a busy month for the unit with the Salvation Army Christmas Angel Toy Distribution being our event to assist in Community Service. Two days are spent helping personnel at the warehouse from 0700 to 1600 every day handing out gift packages to the families. This tradition has continued since unit formation in 1999 every December to assist the Salvation Army in this annual holiday event. Family members, friends and even alumni attend this activity giving back to the community.

The annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. The Hellan family was our gracious host for this event which included many alumni back to share in the holiday spirit. Notable were 2LT's Grone from Malmstrom AFB, MT, Flores from Randolph AFB, TX currently PCS to Robins AFB, GA and C1C Straub USAFA Class of 2010. There was no award for Cadet of the Year for 2009.

2010

Activation of the 405th Aircrew Training Group (405ATR) at Phoenix ANGB aligns units in AZ. The subordinate units

OP TALON EAGLE 10 continued to provide quality SERE training for Aircrew and CCRO personnel with a Russian target set again. LT Chambers pulled out all the stops to repeat last year's successful exercise with Russian phase cards used by the OPFOR. CCRO's were not only evaluated by officers, but also used senior cadet personnel again as trainers/evaluators.

In JAN, several aircrews attended the annual AOPA Safety Seminar held for pilots in the Valley of the Sun. Over 500 pilots attend this seminar for refresher topics and information on flight safety. This event was held in Mesa.

OTF 10-01 Induction Day rolled in on SAT 23 JAN with C/1LT Eric Mitchell in command. This would be his second time in command of an OTF Class after his OTF 09-01 in CY09. With only four Cadet Officer Candidates, the class would be one that strived for perfection throughout their training cycle. The next weekend, cadet officers pulled security detail for the AZ Military Vehicle Show at the Papago Military Reservation at the 285th Engineer Company. Officers also handled recruiting duties as well.

C/1LT Bostdorff attends the National Youth Leadership Forum of Defense, Intelligence and Diplomacy in Washington D.C.

Alumni checked in to report their progress. LTJG Buckholtz was in Phase I training of JSUPT with the 71FTW at Vance AFB, OK. He was doing well through ground academics awaiting flying training with the T-6A Texan II. 1LT Flores reported that he had survived USAF Survival School at Fairchild AFB, WA then handled Water Survival Training at NAS Pensacola, FL. He was enroute to his duty station at Robins AFB, GA with the 116ACW with J-8C JSTARS training as an Airborne Controller.

Personnel from the unit handled recruiting duties at the 161ARW West Mitchell JROTC Invitational Drill Meet at the Phoenix ANGB in late FEB. Some of the competitors were also cadets from the unit. C/2LT Krupczynski Navy JROTC Armed Drill Team took home second place overall from the competition.

Unit awarded the Explorer Excellence Award for CY 2009. Personnel are given the BSA Quality Unit Award for significant achievement.

MAR was an important month for the unit. For the first time, the SQ manned a recruiting booth at the Davis-Monthan AFB Open House in Tucson. Many interested cadets and parents took time to sign up for the first Orientation to be conducted outside Phoenix. Plans were underway for the formation and activation of a second USAFX Squadron, the 398th ATRS "Panthers." The unit held their first Orientation in early APR with 95% of the support coming from TDY 396th personnel.

APR saw personnel participating in the first ever Grand Canyon Council Jambo-Rama in Chandler. Special Tactics personnel under the command of C/1LT Bostdorff manned the booth for the weekend showing many Scouts from throughout the Valley the USAFX mission. The following weekend, 12 officers from the unit participated in the 6th Annual Pat's Run in Tempe. It was only the second time for the unit to run/walk, but this year under WO1 Hellan, it was even more significant. He provided each runner a unit commemorative t-shirt and baseball cap to show others unit pride. Many in the crowd made comments that the Air Force was here. At the end of the month, OTF 10-01 conducted their FIRE DRILL using many skills they thought they had forgotten. Staff was there to remind them.

In MAY the 18th OTF Class Commissioned providing many officers with joyous memories of their past experiences. The Dining-In that followed reminded them of their commitment to quality training which a USAFX valued asset is. More alumni checked in with events. 2LT's Charlie Arden and Eric Straub both received their commission from the CJCS ADM Mullins at the USAFA. Both are headed to SUPT with Arden going to the 71FTW at Vance AFB, OK; while Straub is heading to 14FTW at Columbus AFB, MS. Both want to fly fighters and we hope they get their choices.

CAPT Block awarded the AFX Achievement Medal. WO Hellan awarded AFX Commendation Medal. CW2 Garrels, C/1LT's Neville and Mitchell awarded 396ATR's Commendation Letters. The 396ATR's Davis-Monthan Recruiting Team awarded 405ATR's Commendation Letters.

Memorial Day weekend was again spent at the AZ National Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix. C/2LT Richardson served as OIC for the event ensuring the unit handled their duty with other scouting units placing over 45,000 flags at grave site markers. Our personnel returned the following TUE to pick up the flags.

C/2LT Kyle Richardson was awarded an AROTC Scholarship to attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University this coming fall. He will join CDT Lozoya in Prescott. Other notable alumni attending ERAU include: CDT Sykes, AROTC; CDT Flores, AFROTC and CDT Wenz, AFROTC. WO1 Jobski also announced he had been accepted to attend ERAU this coming fall as well.

JUNE is a month of travel for several cadets. C/2LT Kamil Krupczynski and C/WO Matthew Sergeant attend the USNA Summer Program Session I at US Naval Academy Annapolis, MD. LT Krupczynski then attends the NJROTC STEP Program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University at Daytona Beach, FL. C/2LT Chase Hellan attends the USAFA Soccer Camp returning there for his second year. CWO Chad Hellan attends the USNA Soccer Camp becoming the youngest officer ever to attend this sports camp from the unit.

In JULY Officers attend the Titan Missile Museum and the Pima Air and Space Museum. Both tours are highlights for the summer schedule. Titan offers one of only two decommissioned USAF ICBM sites in CONUS to tour and view. Pima holds the largest outdoor display of aircraft in the world.

SEPTEMBER sees the unit attend the First Grand Canyon Council (GCC) Exploring Patriots Award Dinner in downtown Phoenix. The event highlighted the service of our Explorer Posts in the GCC over the past year. It also serves as a focal point for remembrance of the sacrifice of our nation for duty on September 11, 2001. The unit was a major event coordinator with many officers serving in several different capacities. The emcee for the evening was C/1LT Chris Wilson; CW2 William Stanley served as the Multi-Agency Honor Guard Commander; CW2 Eric Mitchell and C/2LT Brian Bills served as Honor Guard Members; along with various other officers filling key roles. The unit was the inaugural award recipient as the Explorer Post of the Year. The unit had one of the highest numbers of personnel attending the event with 29 officers, family and guests enjoying the evening.

Unit Color Guard participates in the Phoenix Republican Fund Raiser event sponsored by the Joe Foss Institute. This fund raiser has many notable citizens attending including AZ Sen.'s John Kyl and John McCain; AZ Gov. Jan Brewer with former AK Gov. and Vice Presidential Nominee Sarah Palin. Under the command of CW2 William Stanley, other personnel include CW2 Eric Mitchell, C/2LT's Chase Hellan, Blake Gaughan, Brian Bills and Chad Hellan. The detail performed admirably during the evening showcasing again the talent of our young people.

OP TIGERSHARK WST is executed with the normal operational expertise that is a hallmark of AFX exercises. Several new rookie cadets make their mark by passing each of the three phases of training well. C/2LT's Blake Gaughan, Chad Hellan and Matthew Sergeant graduate from this training.

OCTOBER sees the return of the Fall Festival with the 161st ARW. Many staff and cadets support the activity. Without the help of the 396th, the activity would fall short of manpower requirements. The 161st Command is very appreciative of our help with many accolades from the Family Readiness Office.

DECEMBER brings on the Unit's Annual Christmas Party held at the Hellan's for the Second Year in a row. The annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. Notable attendees were MAJ Crusoe and his family from Offutt AFB, NB where Dave is an EWO working on the staff of the 343rd RS and C2C Wood USAFA Class of 2012. There was no award for Cadet of the Year for 2010.

The unit is always busy with the Salvation Army Christmas Angel Toy Distribution being our event to assist in Community Service. Two days are spent helping personnel at the warehouse from 0700 to 1600 every day handing out gift packages to the families. This tradition has continued since unit formation in 1999 every December to assist the Salvation Army in this annual holiday event. Family members, friends and even alumni attend this activity giving back to the community.

2011

Announcement of a new course of instruction being added to the course curriculum being The Air Intelligence Officer. This pipeline will give prospective cadet personnel an arena to learn about the Intel Officer and how this fits into the military environment. C/1LT Ariel Neville and C/2LT Matthew Sergeant become the first cadets assigned in this new curriculum.

405ATRG announces that the 396ATRS has been awarded the Explorer Excellence Award (EEA) for CY 2010 for Superior Achievement. This marks the eleventh year of presentation of this award to the 396th. As such, personnel assigned to the 396th are authorized to wear the BSA Quality Unit Award as well as an AFX Outstanding Unit Award signifying the EEA and QUA.

TALON EAGLE CSAREX 11 begins the New Year in JAN providing both Airmanship and Special Tactics personnel excellent training to their respective pipelines. Continued emphasis of behind enemy lines Survival, Escape, Resistance and Evasion techniques are put to the test by both cadets and instructors in this multi-day combat exercise. Iranian Target set. Intense OPFOR training in the Russian techniques within the POW camp allows realistic resistance training under the command of 1LT Alex Chambers.

Explorers Community Support Senior Citizen Cleanup project

Community Service Support Scottsdale Pima Elementary School Carnival. C/2LT Matthew Sergeant leads cadets on this endeavor to assist a local school in set up, site security and break down after the event. Cadets receive many accolades for their support and assistance.

Nominations and Appointments occur for cadets at the 396th. C/2LT Kamil Krupczynski receives appointments for all three Military Service Academies choosing the USNA for him to attend. Joining him this summer is C/OC Bryce Fronstin. Heading off to New York for the unit's first cadet attendee at the Merchant Marine Academy is C/1LT Matthew Sergeant. C/2LT Jarod

Haupt accepts an AFROTC Scholarship for Arizona State University. Other college announcements continue with C/2LT Alexis Nachman choosing ASU AFROTC for the Fall 2011 Freshman session.

In MAY the 19th OTF Class Commissioned providing many officers with joyous memories of their past experiences. CW2 Eric Mitchell OTF/CC graduated 3 newly minted C/WO's into the unit to assume their duty as staff officers. The Dining-In that followed reminded them of their commitment to quality training which a USAFX valued asset is.

In MAY, Memorial Day weekend was again spent at the AZ National Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Phoenix. C/1LT Sergeant served as OIC for the event ensuring the unit handled their duty with other scouting units placing over 45,000 flags at grave site markers. Our personnel returned the following TUE to pick up the flags.

JUNE again sees C/2LT Chase Hellan attends the USAFA Soccer Camp returning there for his third year in attendance. C/2LT Chad Hellan attends the USNA Soccer Camp for his second year in a row. They keep the string of cadets attending Military Sports Camps.

In SEP, OP TIGERSHARK WST Phase I & II are executed with the normal operational expertise and professionalism that is a hallmark of AFX exercises. Phase III of OP TIGERSHARK is completed in early OCT with SPEC TAC Flight handling Combat Rescue duties of the operation. Both instructors and students are involved in the training. Student Cadet Combat Rescue Officers (CCRO) under their instructors involve themselves with small unit patrol and recovery of downed student aviators. Several new rookie cadets make their mark by passing each of the three phases of training well. C/2LT's Adam and Omar Collett graduate from this training. Using Libyan targeting information, the OPFOR Flight under command of C/1LT Matthew Sergeant makes strides in handling enemy duties and brings the OPFOR to a new area. Alumnus Army SGT Bobby Treadway participates in the OPFOR Flight bringing recent combat experience from Iraq and Afghanistan to the fold.

The unit is always busy with the Salvation Army Christmas Angel Toy Distribution in DEC being our event to assist in Community Service. Two days are spent helping personnel at the warehouse from 0700 to 1600 every day handing out gift packages to the families. This tradition has continued since unit formation in 1999 every December to assist the Salvation Army in this annual holiday event. Family members, friends and even alumni attend this activity giving back to the community.

DECEMBER brings on the Unit's Annual Christmas Party held at the Hellan's for the Third Year in a row. The annual Unit Christmas Party was held after the Christmas holiday so that cadets and alumni from around the globe could come and enjoy the camaraderie in the unit tradition. Notable attendees were MAJ Crusoe and his family from Offutt AFB, NB where Dave is an EWO working on the staff of the 343rd RS and C2C Wood USAFA Class of 2012. There was no award for Cadet of the Year for 2010. Announcement of the Cadet of the Year Award for 2011 of C/1LT Matthew R. Sergeant taking home this award in the shape of a MiG-21 Fishbed. Only the second adversary aircraft awarded in unit history and only the sixth award recipient in the past twelve years.

2012

405ATRG announces that the 396ATRS has been awarded the Explorer Excellence Award (EEA) for CY 2011 for Superior Achievement. This marks the twelfth year of presentation of this award to the 396th. As such, personnel assigned to the 396th are authorized to wear the BSA Quality Unit Award as well as an AFX Outstanding Unit Award signifying the EEA and QUA.

In JAN, for the first time in unit history OP TALON EAGLE was not scheduled due to resource allocation and manpower issues.

OTF 12-01 was inducted into the unit at the end of the month marking the twentieth Officer Candidate School Class to begin training under the command of 1Lt. Justin Klosterman.

Point of Contact

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