‘One click, one call’ arrives for pay, personnel issues

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas — A one-stop customer service phone number and Web page are up and running, linking several call centers and online resources Air Force people use when managing personnel and pay information.

A single phone number and a companion Web site now make it easier for Air Force active-duty and reserve-component military personnel, as well as U.S.-appropriated-fund civilian employees, to find what they need quickly, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

Customers can find answers to questions by calling toll free (800) 616-3775 or visiting www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cst. Until now the burden had been on Air Force people to determine which agency handles a particular issue before contacting customer service by phone or via the Web. Customers will be able to access any of the following support services by using the new number and Web site:

— Air Force Contact Center for general military personnel inquiries, including discrimination and sexual harassment concerns and assistance in navigating the virtual military personnel flight application
— Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver for Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard personnel inquiries
— Defense Finance and Accounting Service’s Cleveland Contact Center for Air Force military pay inquiries and assistance with the myPay application
— AFPC Technical Assistance Center for technical support for applications such as vMPF, assignment management system, AFPC Secure and PC-III
— AFPC Recruiting Service Center for civilian job openings
— AFPC Benefits and Entitlements Service Team for civilian appropriated-fund benefits and entitlements.

This latest evolution in customer self-service is the product of cooperation between different agencies inside and outside of the Air Force, officials said.

“A substantial partnership between military and civilian personnel, Air Force financial services (military pay) and Defense Finance and Accounting Service — years in the making — is making one-stop customer service possible,” said James Short, the Air Force’s deputy assistant secretary for financial operations.

“It goes beyond just a phone number and a Web page,” said Roger Blanchard, assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel. “What our customer service transformation team is beginning to do is actually combine customer service efforts behind the scenes to serve customers faster and more efficiently.”

Several of the linked call centers reside at the personnel center, where leaders have been facilitating the consolidation of Air Force customer-service operations.

“We are making sure that customer service is a lot more than a 1-800 number,” said Maj. Gen. Tom O’Riordan, personnel center commander. “Our focus is making sure we meet the needs of the field, and that we accelerate those changes which make life simpler for the commander and our airmen.”

Customers calling from international locations and hearing-impaired employees should continue to dial the number they currently use to access support for personnel or pay matters, officials said. The new toll-free number should begin accommodating foreign area calls early next year, officials said.

Ky. airman receives Silver Star from SECAF

By Capt. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

A Kentucky Air National Guardman received the Silver Star from the secretary of the Air Force here Nov. 1 in recognition of the airman’s heroic acts while deployed to Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Tech. Sgt. Keary Miller, a pararescueman in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, was lauded by Dr. James G. Roche for his bravery under fire during a mission on a remote Afghan mountain in 2002.

“When faced with the well-entrenched and committed enemy force, when faced with the reality that men around him were receiving mortal wounds, when confronted with the prospect that he, too, might suffer the unfortunate fate that others endured on that 10,000-foot mountain, he courageously stepped into the breach to risk his life to save his fellow warriors,” Roche told an audience of nearly 450 who gathered in the Base Annex.

“Because of the actions of this intrepid airman, Keary Miller, with his teammates on the mountain, 10 gravely wounded Americans came home — home to their units, home to their families and home to an ever-grateful nation.

“Our nation is so very blessed to have professionals of his character and courage.”

Miller, the first Kentucky National Guardman to receive the honor while assigned here, distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against al-Qaeda and Taliban forces near Marzak, Paktia Province, Afghanistan, on March 4, 2002.

On that date, Miller was the Air Force combat search and rescue team leader assigned to a Quick Reaction Force tasked with recovering two American servicemen evading capture in austere terrain.

Just before landing, his MH-47E helicopter received rocket-propelled grenade and small-arms fire, disabling the aircraft and causing it to crash land.

Miller and the remainder of the assault force formed a hasty defense and immediately suffered four fatalities and five critical casualties, according to Miller’s award citation.

Despite intense enemy fire, Miller moved throughout the battlefield, crossing open danger areas on numerous occasions in order to assess and care for critically wounded servicemen.

As the battle drew on, Miller removed ammunition from the deceased and, in multiple acts of extraordinary courage, pro- ceded through some of the day’s heaviest rocket-propelled grenade, mortar and small-arms fire while distributing the ammunition

See MILLER, Page 5
Rebuilding a country is complex, difficult and takes time.

Col. Michael Harden
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

Col. Michael Harden
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

As it turns out, we have no plan, that it will become a quagmire like Vietnam. I even read an article the other day saying we are getting our rear handed to us by the Iraqis. But the facts are: This is not about money or oil. It is about the security of the United States of America.

The regime of Saddam Hussein was — and notice I said “was” — a sworn enemy of the United States. Think of how many times he jereled our chain by massing troops at the Kuwaiti border. Think of how many times he defied demands for inspections. Think of how many times he violated United Nations resolutions requiring him to do this or that. It is not about oil or money, it is about accountability. Hussein had many chances to comply. He didn’t, and he is paying the price.

The notion that we don’t have a plan is equally misguided. It’s as simple as this: We take down the regime, neutralize the opposition and stabilizing the infrastructure. It will take some time to get it all accomplished, and those who say we should be out by now simply have no idea of the complexity and difficulty of what we are trying to do. War is a dirty, grimy and deadly business. People get hurt and die — even the good guys.

About getting our heads handed to us: I submit that Uday and Qusay would not agree to that, nor would members of the vaunted Republican Guard, who either died or simply quit in the face of our troops. Any American casualty is unfortunate, but we must remember that even at the present daily casualty rate, it would take years before it added up to the 100,000 folks who died in the attack on Sept. 11.

See REBUILDING, Page 4

Federal govt. grants leave to demobilized Afghans

Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON — In a Nov. 14 memorandum, President George W. Bush directed executive departments and agencies to grant five days of unpaid, administrative leave from civilian duties to federal employees returning to reservist status from active-duty.

“The federal government will continue to be the model for employer support to the Guard and Reserves,” the president wrote in the memorandum. “We are the guarantors of the security that is so important for an everyday Iraqi to live in and function in.”

Bush also directed the National Guard and Reserve components to continue to provide emergency and humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, USAID and the State Department.

The president’s memorandum also directed the Department of Defense to provide support to the Reserve Forces, as requested by its leaders.

The supplemental bill to improve quality of life by K.J. Vantran

Américas Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — Part of the $87.5 billion supplemental appropriations bill for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan signed last month by President George W. Bush will go toward improving quality of life for servicemembers there.

“We want people to have air conditioning,” said Dov S. Zakheim, undersecretary of defense (comptroller) and chief financial officer. “We want them to have running wa-
ter. We want them to have decent facilities to sleep in.”

The notion of improvements in military housing has been around for years, speaking here Nov. 17, said the servicemembers who deployed to Afghanistan started out in “pretty miserable condi-
tions.”

He said he has visited the country sev-
eral times and can testify that things are improving every day.

“We want to do the same for our forces in Iraq,” he said.

“The good guys.

“We want to create the environment of se-
curity that is so important for an everyday
Iraqi to live in and function in.”

Billions of dollars will be spent on ele-
tricity, water and health initiatives, as well as getting the oil industry “up to speed,” he said.

“If they are to recover economically,” he said, “they’ve got to have some kind of wherewithal to do it with. That is what we’re focusing on.

“This is the way the country gets on its own economic feet.”

We have heard the criticisms of the international community, but that is not new.

“Many of our employees have endured great disruption to their families and their normal lives as a result of their service in the war against terrorism,” James said.

“Thus, one project has been the road from Kabul to Kandahar. It used to take 30 hours to get from one city to the other. Now it takes six, he said.

“Business as usual.”

“We want it to get to two,” he added. “This is the way the country gets on its own economic feet.”

This includes funding various security forces — civil defense forces, facilities pro-
tection forces and the new Iraqi army.

“We want to build up the judicial system,” Zakheim said. “We want to build up the con-
istutional system. We want to build up a pris-
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“This is the way the country gets on its own economic feet.”

We have heard the criticisms of the international community, but that is not new.

“Many of our employees have endured great disruption to their families and their normal lives as a result of their service in the war against terrorism,” James said.

“Therefore, I join the president in urging that agencies do everything possible to ease their return to civilian life.”

The five work days of excused absence covers employees who were activated for military service in connection with operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.
Promotions, retirements & separations

The following individuals have been promoted to the rank indicated as members of the Kentucky Air Guard and reservists of the United States Air Force:

**SENIOR AIRMAN (E-4)**
- Derek Cummins, 123rd Maintenance Sq.
- Stephen Kirkpatrick, 123rd Maintenance Sq.
- Michael Moore, 123rd Maintenance Sq.
- James Sneed, 123rd Logistics Readiness Sq.

**STAFF SERGEANT (E-5)**
- Amanda Blackburn, 123rd Airlift Wing

**MASTER SERGEANT (E-7)**
- Theodore Bothur, 123rd Mission Support Ftl.
- Kevin Kaufman, 123rd Civil Engineers Sgq.
- Eric Mills, 123rd Special Tactics Sgq.

The following individuals have separated from the Kentucky Air Guard:

**TECHNICAL SERGEANT (E-6)**
- Dana Corbin, 123rd Medical Sq.
- Norma Kern, 123rd Mission Support Ftl.
- Cary Mendelsohn, 123rd Special Tactics Sq.
- James Powell Jr., 123rd Civil Engineers Sq.
- Carla Quarles, 123rd Airlift Wing

**2004 Drill Dates**

Next year’s unit training assembly dates for the Kentucky Air Guard:

- **January**: 10-11
- **February**: 7-8
- **March**: 6-7
- **April**: 24-25
- **May**: 15-16
- **June**: 12-13
- **July**: 17-18
- **August**: 14-15
- **September**: 18-19
- **October**: 2-3
- **November**: 6-7
- **December**: 4-5

All KyANG members must participate in scheduled UTAs unless attending a split or rescheduled UTA as authorized by their commanders.

**KyANG dedicates memorial to retirees**

By Capt. Kirk Hillbrecht
KyANG State Headquarters PAO

The Kentucky Air National Guard dedicated five memorial plaques to the unit’s 725 retirees during a ceremony here Nov. 14.

The plaques, which list the names of every individual who retired from the unit between 1960 and 2002, were unveiled in front of a crowd of more than 400.

“This is a great way of publicly recognizing and thanking those who have sacrificed and served in the Kentucky Air National Guard,” said Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin, a board member of the 5th Static Group, which was created to honor individuals who represent the collective heritage of the Kentucky Air National Guard.

The memorial is, he said, a fitting tribute to the airmen who served the Commonwealth and their country 20 years or more, sacrificing time away from their families and civilian jobs.

Col. Michael Harden, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, agreed.

“This memorial is a visible and permanent way to recognize the airmen who made this a great organization over the years... those airmen who went before us and selflessly served the Kentucky Air National Guard,” Harden told the crowd just prior to the unveiling.

“This day is a culmination of a process started over six years ago when Gen. (Verna) Fairchild and I decided that we needed a way to recognize the accomplishments of not only the unit as a whole but also its individual members who turn the wrenches, fly the jets, cook the meals, publish the orders, pay the bills and do all of the millions of other things necessary to make the unit great.”

Four of the plaques were donated by the 50th Static Group, whose membership includes current Kentucky Guardsmen and retirees.

The other plaque was donated by the Louisville Monument Co., which created all five of the etched, black granite memorials.

Names of subsequent retirees will be added to the plaques each year.
Civil engineers depart for Iraqi Freedom

By Tech. Sgt. Amy Mundell
Cargo Courier Editor

More than 50 members of the Kentucky Air Guard’s 123rd Civil Engineers Squadron departed here Nov. 11 for the Persian Gulf region in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terror.

The airmen, who deployed on a Kentucky C-130, include firefighters, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, heavy equipment operators and land surveyors.

Col. Tom Marks, commander of the 123rd Support Group, said he is extremely proud of the unit’s members and the work they do.

“This is just another trip in a long line for these professionals,” Marks said. “I’m confident they’ll do a great job.

“They are always willing to go and do their mission without complaint.”

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Kentucky Air National Guard has deployed more than 500 airmen around the world, many more than they will ever know,” he said.

“Excellent warriors. You are the most powerful force the world has ever known.”

The airmen who participated in Operation Iraq Freedom and the Global War on Terror

Continued from Page 2

Rejoice in holiday gift giving

The holiday season beacons us to go back to our childhood days when life was simpler. We anticipated good things to come from the red-suited guy. He always looked like my dad with a beard and was a little over the maximum weight allowed. The cold did not dampen our dreams of warm nights, hot chocolate and time off from school.

Still today, fir trees, baked turkey and the aroma of fresh bread are quick reminders of holidays at home long ago. This year our holiday dreams can come true again, even if but for a day or two. Home is not just a place where we used to live. Home is where you make friends and family feel welcome around the hearth of good will.

Warmth, laughter and time off with good friends make the holidays feel like home again.

As children we thrilled to gift-giving, but now we rejoice in gift-giving. So, what are your plans for the holidays? Avoid the holiday blues and get it done. I don’t think that will dampen our dreams of getting, but now we rejoice in gift-giving.

Chaplain’s Column

The only way we can lose is if we somehow show a lack of political will to stay the course and we will be engaged there for some time to come.

You and our entire military have performed superbly and have proven once again the we are the most powerful force the world has ever known.

The way only we can lose is if we somehow show a lack of political will to stay the course and get it done. I don’t think that will happen, so stay ready and know that your efforts are important and greatly appreciated.

Have a safe and joyful holiday — and thanks loads!”

—Lt. Col. Tom Curry
Wing Chaplain

Rebuilding

We are winning this war but it will take some time to complete the task of setting up a democratic Iraq, and we will be engaged there for some time to come.

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Continued from Front Page

Miller receives Silver Star for actions in OEF

From position to position.

Shortly thereafter, another attack erupted, killing one pararescueman and compromising the casualty collection point.

Miller braved the barrage of fire in order to move the wounded to better cover and concealment.

His courage and skill led to the successful delivery of 10 gravely wounded Americans to lifesaving medical treatment and to the recovery of seven servicemen killed in action, the citation said.

“If we are to prevail in this global war on terrorism, it will be because of the bravery and selfless sacrifice of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who are cut from the same cloth as Keary Miller and his colleagues in the 123rd STS,” Roche said.

“And we will prevail.”

Kentucky’s adjutant general, Army Maj. Gen. D. Allen Youngman, expressed his appreciation for what he called “the personal valor and professional excellence of a great warrior.”

Youngman also praised the other members of the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, which has been actively engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom and combat operations in Afghanistan.

“What you do and what you have done, and the support and sacrifices of your families, makes more of a difference to most Americans than they will ever know,” he said.

To date, the Air Force has approved just 18 Silver Stars for airmen who participated in operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

TOP: Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche and Tech. Sgt. Keary Miller ascend the stage for Miller’s award ceremony, which was held Nov. 1 in the Base Annex. Miller received the Silver Star for his heroic acts in Afghanistan, where he distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against al-Qaida and Taliban forces.

BOTTOM: Among those joining Roche and Miller for the ceremony were (left to right) Col. Michael Harden, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing; Maj. Gen. D. Allen Youngman, the adjutant general of Kentucky; Miller’s wife, Gina; Kentucky Air Guard Chief of Staff Col. Robert Yapple; and Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray.
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The airmen, who deployed on a Kentucky C-130, include firefighters, electricians, carpenters, plumbers, heavy equipment operators and land surveyors. They will support Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terror.

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“They are always willing to go and do their mission without complaint.”

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the Kentucky Air National Guard has deployed more than 500 airmen around the world, many more than ever known.

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Cargo Courier Editor

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Continued from Page 2

The Cargo Courier
Dec. 6, 2003

Chaplain’s Column

Rejoice in holiday gift giving

The holiday season beacons us to go back to our childhood days when life was simpler. We anticipated good things to come from the red-suited guy. He always looked like my dad with a beard and was a little over the maximum weight allowed.

The cold did not dampen our dreams of warm nights, hot chocolate and time off from school.

Still today, fir trees, baked turkey and the aroma of fresh bread are quick reminders of holidays at home long ago. This year our holiday dreams can come true again, even if but for a day or two.

Home is not just a place where we used to live. Home is where you make friends and family feel welcome around the hearth of good will.

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So, what are your plans for the holidays? Avoid the holiday blues and get it done. I don’t think that will happen, so stay ready and know you have done, and the support and sacrifices of your families, makes more of a difference to most Americans than they will ever know,” he said.

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As children we thrilled to gift-getting, but now we rejoice in gift-giving. So, what are your plans for the holidays?

Put some coins in the Salvation Army bucket at Kroger. Volunteer for a day at the V.A. hospital. Send a card to someone you haven’t heard from in years.

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Bake something you really like and share it with friends. Hershey’s chocolate is always a holiday hit. The holiday spirit you enjoyed as a child was God’s gift to you. Keep it going for others.

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Rebuilding

Continued from Page 2

We are winning this war but it will take some time to complete the task of setting up a democratic Iraq, and we will be engaged there for some time to come.

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The only way we can lose is if we somehow show a lack of political will to stay the course and we somehow lose. If we are to prevail in this global war on terrorism, it will be because of the bravery and selfless sacrifice of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who are cut from the same cloth as Keary Miller and his colleagues in the 123rd STS,” Roche said.

“And we will prevail,” Kentucky’s adjutant general, Army Maj. Gen. D. Allen Youngman, expressed his appreciation for what he called “the personal valor and professional excellence of a great warrior.”

Youngman also praised the other members of the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, which has been actively engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom and combat operations in Afghanistan.

“My courageousness and skill led to the successful delivery of 10 gravely wounded Americans to life-saving medical treatment and to the recovery of seven servicemen killed in action, the citation said.

“2003 The Cargo Courier
Dec. 6, 2003

Merry Christmas

A letter to President Bush

The Cargo Courier
Dec. 6, 2003

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The Cargo Courier Dec. 6, 2003

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BY CAPT. KIRK HILBRECHT

By Capt. Kirk Hilbrecht
KyANG State Headquarters PAO

The Kentucky Air National Guard dedicated five memorial plaques to the unit’s 725 retirees during a ceremony here Nov. 14.

The plaques, which list the names of every individual who retired from the unit between 1960 and 2002, were unveiled in front of a crowd of more than 400.

“This is a great way of publicly recognizing and thanking those who have sacrificed and served in the Kentucky Air National Guard,” said Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin, a board member of the 50th Static Group, which was created to honor individuals who represent the collective heritage of the Kentucky Air National Guard.

The memorial is, he said, a fitting tribute to the airmen who served the Commonwealth and their country 20 years or more, sacrificing time away from their families and civilian jobs.

Col. Michael Harden, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, agreed.

“This memorial is a visible and permanent way to recognize the airmen who made this a great organization over the years. Those airmen who went before us and selflessly served the Kentucky Air National Guard,” Harden told the crowd just prior to the unveiling.

“This day is a culmination of a process started over six years ago when Gen. (Verna) Fairchild and I decided that we needed a way to recognize the accomplishments of not only the unit as a whole but also its individual members who turn the wrenches, fly the jets, cook the meals, publish the orders, pay the bills and do all of the millions of other things necessary to make the unit great,” Harden said.

Four of the plaques were donated by the 50th Static Group, whose membership includes current Kentucky Guardsmen and retirees.

The other plaque was donated by the Louisville Monument Co., which created all five of the etched, black granite memorials.

Names of subsequent retirees will be added to the plaques each year.

TOP: Guests view the names of the 725 retirees listed on the plaques. Four of the five plaques were donated by the 50th Static Group, while the other plaque was donated by Louisville Monument Co.

RIGHT: The KyANG color guard presents the flag at the dedication ceremony here Nov. 14. More than 400 attended the ceremony, including retirees, current Guard members and guests.

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KyANG State Headquarters PAO

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The Cargo Courier Dec. 6, 2003

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Rebuilding a country is complex, difficult and takes time.

The longer we have people deployed to Iraq the more we will hear folks say that we have no plan. I think that is about all oil and lining the pockets of rich businesses. People get hurt and die — even good, some bad — but all of you need to realize that we don’t have a plan.

We can all think of things that went well, and of other things that didn’t go so well. We all have war stories to tell — some good, some bad — but all of you need to know that what you’ve done this past year is important, and will pay big dividends in the future. We want to do the same for our forces in Iraq,” he said.

“We want to create the environment of security that is so important for an everyday Iraqi to live in and function in,” Zakheim said. “Billions of dollars will be spent on electricity, water and health initiatives, as well as getting the oil industry “up to speed,” he said.

“And they are to recover economically,” he said, “they’ve got to have some kind of wherewithal to do it with. That is what we’re trying to do.”

The enemy’s use of improvised explosive devices has been a concern, Zakheim said. To help counter this, funds will be used for unmanned aerial vehicles that can track when the devices are being placed. The bill also includes about $19 billion for reconstruction projects in Iraq. The bureaucratic obstacle to providing the funds is not just to transfer money, but also to “put them on their own economic feet,” Zakheim said.

This includes funding various security forces — civil defense forces, facilities protection forces and the new Iraqi army.

“We want to build up the judicial system,” Zakheim said. “We want to build up the constitutional system. We want to build up a prison system.”

“We want to create the environment of security that is so important for an everyday Iraqi to live in and function in.”

“If they are to recover economically,” he said, “they’ve got to have some kind of wherewithal to do it with. That is what we’re trying to do.”

The enemy’s use of improvised explosive devices has been a concern, Zakheim said. To help counter this, funds will be used for unmanned aerial vehicles that can track when the devices are being placed. The bill also includes about $19 billion for reconstruction projects in Iraq. The bureaucratic obstacle to providing the funds is not just to transfer money, but also to “put them on their own economic feet,” Zakheim said.

This includes funding various security forces — civil defense forces, facilities protection forces and the new Iraqi army.

“We want to build up the judicial system,” Zakheim said. “We want to build up the constitutional system. We want to build up a prison system.”

“We want to create the environment of security that is so important for an everyday Iraqi to live in and function in.”

If the average Iraqi sees that the new environment of security is working, he said, “I am personally committed to providing each of them with our full support, recognition and assistance.”

Kay Coler James, director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, issued guidance to department and agency heads on implementing the president’s order. “Many of our employees have endured great disruption to their families and their normal lives as a result of their service in the war against terrorism,” James said.

Therefore, I join the president in urging that agencies do everything possible to ease their return to civilian life.”

The five work days of excused absence covers employees who were activated for military service in connection with operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.
‘One click, one call’ arrives for pay, personnel issues

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – A one-stop customer service phone number and Web page are up and running, linking several call centers and online resources Air Force people use when managing personnel and pay information.

A single phone number and a companion Web site now make it easier for Air Force active-duty and reserve-component military personnel, as well as U.S. appropriated-fund civilian employees, to find what they need quickly, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

Customers can find answers to questions by calling toll free (800) 616-3775 or visiting www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cst. Until now the burden had been on Air Force people to determine which agency handles a particular issue before contacting customer service by phone or via the Web. Customers will be able to access any of the following support services by using the new number and Web site:

— Air Force Contact Center for general military personnel inquiries, including discrimination and sexual harassment concerns and assistance in navigating the virtual military personnel flight application

— Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver for Air Force Reserve personnel, as well as U.S. appropriated-fund civilian employees, to find what they need quickly, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

“Several of the linked call centers reside at the personnel center, where leaders have been facilitating the consolidation of Air Force customer-service operations.”

“We are making sure that customer service is a lot more than a 1-800 number,” said Maj. Gen. Tom O’Riordan, personnel center commander. “Our focus is making sure we meet the needs of the field, and that we accelerate those changes which make life simpler for the commander and our airmen.”

Customers calling from international locations and hearing-impaired employees should continue to dial the number they currently use to access support for personnel or pay matters, officials said.

The new toll-free number should begin accommodating foreign area customers faster and more efficiently.

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— AFPC Benefits and Entitlements Service Team for civilian appropriated-fund benefits and entitlements.

This latest evolution in customer self-service is the product of cooperation between different agencies inside and outside of the Air Force, officials said.

“A substantial partnership between military and civilian personnel, Air Force financial services (military pay) and Defense Finance and Accounting Service — years in the making — is making one-stop customer service possible,” said James Short, the Air Force’s deputy assistant secretary for financial operations.

“It goes beyond just a phone number and a Web page,” said Roger Blanchard, assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel. “What our customer service transformation team is beginning to do is actually combine customer service efforts behind the scenes to serve customers faster and more efficiently.”

Ky. airman receives Silver Star from SECAF

By Capt. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

A Kentucky Air National Guardman received the Silver Star from the secretary of the Air Force here Nov. 1 in recognition of the airman’s heroic acts while deployed to Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Tech. Sgt. Keary Miller, a pararescueman in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, was lauded by Dr. James G. Roche for his bravery under fire during a mission on a remote Afghan mountain in 2002.

“When faced with the well-entrenched and committed enemy force, when faced with the reality that men around him were receiving mortal wounds, when confronted with the prospect that he, too, might suffer the unfortunate fate that others endured on that 10,000-foot mountain, he courageously stepped into the breach to risk his life to save his fellow warriors,” Roche told an audience of nearly 450 who gathered in the Base Annex.

“Because of the actions of this intrepid airman, Keary Miller, with his teammates on the mountain, 10 gravely wounded Americans came home — home to their units, home to their families and home to an ever-grateful nation.”

“She is no less blessed to have professionals of his character and courage.”

Miller, the first Kentucky National Guardsman to receive the honor while assigned here, distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against al-Qaeda and Taliban forces near Marzak, Paktia Province, Afghanistan, on March 4, 2002.

On that date, Miller was the Air Force combat search and rescue team leader assigned to a Quick Reaction Force tasked with recovering two American servicemen evading capture in austere terrain.

Just before landing, his MH-47E helicopter received rocket-propelled grenade and small-arms fire, disabling the aircraft and causing it to crash land.

Miller and the remainder of the assault force formed a hasty defense and immediately suffered four fatalities and five critical casualties, according to Miller’s award citation.

Despite intense enemy fire, Miller moved throughout the battlefield, crossing open danger areas on numerous occasions in order to assess and care for critically wounded servicemen.

As the battle drew on, Miller removed ammunition from the deceased and, in multiple acts of extraordinary courage, proceeded through some of the day’s heaviest rocket-propelled grenade, mortar and small-arms fire while distributing the ammunition....