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That’s because the Air Force core values — integrity, service and excellence — aren’t optional in an organization of this caliber. They’re essential.

That commitment to excellence is apparent each year when enlisted leaders gather for the difficult task of selecting who will be named the unit’s Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

State Command Chief Master Sgt. Mark Grant described the 2003 selection process as gruelling, adding that each airman was scrutinized for leadership traits, significant self-improvement, and base and community involvement.

“The successes of the 123rd Airlift Wing are due to an extraordinary team effort,” Chief Grant said. “However, in the midst of this team, there are those who distinguished themselves as leaders and outstanding performers.

“Of this elite group of airmen, there were 25 individuals nominated for the Outstanding Airman, NCO and Senior NCO of the Year for the Kentucky Air National Guard.”

While all of the candidates were exceptional, Grant said, three were deemed a cut above the rest — Senior Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, Staff Sgt. Joe Youdell and Senior Airman Mason Hoyt.

Hoyt, who recently was promoted to the rank of staff sergeant, is a combat controller in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron here. Sergeant Hoyt’s job requires him to deploy into remote locations, where he establishes and controls aircraft landing and drop zones, sets up communications links, and provides command and control of aircraft.

“He also uses demolitions to clear obstacles and can provide surveying capabilities and weather observations.

The correct application of these skills saves lives, said Master Sgt. Mark Rines, a fellow combat controller and Sergeant Hoyt’s supervisor here.

Last year while deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom, Sergeant Hoyt saved the lives of 500 Kurdish fighters and his own team while deployed in Iraq.

Hoyt, Youdell and Rosa named wing’s 2003 Outstanding Airmen of the Year

By Tech. Sgt. Amy Mundell
Cargo Courier Editor

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Wing is comprised of proud citizens, dedicated to the profession of arms

Colonel Michael Harden 123rd Airlift Wing Commander

That is why we never lack for people who volunteer and answer the bell when we are called to support contingency operations abroad or emergency operations in Kentucky. We are, and always want to be, an organization that responds not because of coercion or arm-twisting or fear of the boss, but because of a sense of obligation and duty to community, state and nation.

We must continue to capitalize on this concept of citizenship and the pride that results when people realize the obligations inherent in the concept, and then fulfill that obligation.

Our place in the modern history of our country has such a small percentage of our population served in the military. Nevertheless, before the time in this great state and nation, we feel an obligation to serve. Because we are fortunate to be a part of this great state and nation, we feel an obligation to serve.

The AF Medical Service strongly advises airmen to contact physician before taking Ephedra following FDA alert

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By G.W. Pomeroy Air Force Surgeon General PAO

WASHINGTON — Following an FDA alert, Air Force Medical Service officials are strongly advising airmen to contact their physicians or health-care providers before taking dietary supplements containing ma huang, or ephedra alkaloids.

“FDA will publish a final rule as soon as possible that will formalize its conclusions that dietary supplements containing ephedra alkaloids present unreasonable risks to those who take them for any reason,” said Tommy G. Thompson, health and human services secretary.

“Our intentions, and it tells consumers that it’s possible that will formalize its conclusions that dietary supplements containing ephedra alkaloids present unreasonable risks to those who take them for any reason,” said Tommy G. Thompson, health and human services secretary.

“If the public has any questions about the unreasonable risk of consuming Ephedra, including its pharmacology, studies of ephedra’s safety and effectiveness, adverse event reports, and rely on independent experts,” Dr. McClellan said.

In September 2002, the Air Force surgeon general issued a revised policy covering dietary supplements containing ephedra that discouraged the use of such supplements and highlighted associated risk factors.

In November 2002, the Air Force surgeon general issued a notice to airmen on the potential risks associated with dietary supplements containing ephedra, following the death of a young airman.

These medical notices are released by the AFMS clinical quality management division to disseminate lessons learned from medical incident investigations and other pertinent events.
KyANG NEWS

123rd Communications Flight

Leadership

Lt. Col. Mary McCallie has commanded the unit since 1996.

Mission

To provide continuous communications support to the 123rd Airlift Wing, including all telecommunications, computer, multimedia, information management and information assurance functions.

Personnel

The flight has approximately 50 members, about 15 of whom are full time. The remainder are traditional, part-time reservists.

Global engagement

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the flight’s tasks have grown substantially due to the wing’s two activations. Immediately after the attacks, the flight provided 24-hour messaging and switchboard service to support the mobilization of Kentucky airmen.

The flight currently provides deployed personnel with e-mail and switchboard service to support the mobilization of Kentucky airmen.

The flight currently provides deployed personnel with e-mail service and support for morale calls to family members, allowing deployed personnel to talk to loved ones on a regular basis.

The flight also has provided many deployed personnel to talk to family members, allowing deployed personnel with e-mail and switchboard service to support the mobilization of Kentucky airmen.

Wing’s top airmen honored tonight

Continued from Page 5

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In fact, Sergeant Rosa was the only military member to serve on the detail, Major Shoop said.

In addition, Sergeant Rosa attempted to save the life of a Department of State sniper who had a heart attack while on duty.

Sergeant Rosa diligently attempted cardio-pulmonary resuscitation for more than 45 minutes before the man was declared dead. For these efforts and more, Major Shoop described Sergeant Rosa as a truly exceptional member of the military and a role model for others.

“Jon obviously does a specialized job in a very elite environment and has made a major impact on a personal level, not just in the Global War on Terror, and not just in the campaign in Northern Iraq, but also by being chosen to guard president (Hamid) Karzai’s life,” Shoop said.

“Professionally, Jon has made a huge impact.”

And now, he added, Sergeant Rosa is a combat-experienced senior NCO with 20 years military service.

Sergeant Rosa currently is pursuing a master’s degree in aeronautical science from Embry Riddle University. He also donates time by working to protect veterans’ rights and is active in the Air Force Association.

“He’s a stellar performer in a unit of stellar performers,” Major Shoop said.

“I’m extremely honored that special tactics personnel won for all three (Airmen of the Year) categories, because so many people did so many good things.”

A banquet to honor Hoyt, Youdell and Rosa will be held tonight at the Parcourt Springs Convention Center in Shepherdsville, Ky. The event gets underway at 6 p.m. and will feature Chief Master Sgt. Vickie Muddlin, command chief master sergeant of the Air Force Materiel Command.

Happy Homecoming

Staff Sgt. Ryan Russell, a crew chief in the 123rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, is greeted here Jan. 17 by his wife, Amanda, and son, Drew, following a 45-day deployment to an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

Sergeant Russell is among more than 400 Kentucky airmen who deployed last year in support of the Global War on Terror. The deployment was Sergeant Russell’s third in less than a year.

Tired of failed relationships?

February is the time for valentines, flowers, special cards and gifts that express your love to that someone special. It’s also one of the biggest days for chocolate sales, except maybe Halloween.

Some of us mistakenly think that the right gift to the right person will produce the right relationship for a lifetime.

Yet, again and again, relationships fail.

Why?

The answer can be illustrated by two models for building relationships.

One can be called the Hollywood method. It has four easy steps: (1) Find the right person; (2) Fall in love; (3) Fix your hopes and dreams on that person; (4) If failure occurs, repeat steps 1, 2 and 3.

The typical Hollywood marriage lasts about as long as the milk in your refrigerator. Love grows over a long period. Infatuation dies away when you stay away. Third, instead of fixing your hopes and dreams on that person, fix your hopes and dreams on God’s purpose for the relationship.

God’s desire for your relationship is everything you’ve always wanted: personal growth, intimacy, passion, fidelity and security.

If you have a failed relationship, take time to become the right person, walk in love and fix your hopes on God. This is part of the abundant life God intended for you to enjoy.

— Lt. Col. Tom Curry

Wing Chaplain

Chaplain’s Column

Citizens

Continued from Previous Page

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Wing Chaplain
Farquhars support civil engineering mission in Baghdad

By Capt. Carrie Clear
447th Air Expeditionary Group
Public Affairs Officer

BAGHDAD, IRAQ — It’s been said that a family which prays together, stays together. But what about the family that deploys together? One family here might be able to answer that question.

Chief Master Sgt. Glenn Farquhar and his daughter, Airman First Class Desiree Farquhar, both belong to the 447th Expeditionary Civil Engineering Squadron. Both deployed in November in support of ongoing operations at Baghdad International Airport.

Chief Farquhar, who has served nearly 34 years in the military, is a member of the readiness office. Airman Farquhar, who works in the supply section, has less than four years’ military service under her belt.

The Farquhars are an Air Guard family from Kentucky’s 123rd Airlift Wing.

Farquhar’s wife, Senior Master Sgt. Rose Farquhar, recently retired from the Kentucky Air Guard. They also have another daughter who served in the same unit, as well as twin boys, age 13.

“I told them there’s no pressure to join,” the chief said. “There’s been a Farquhar in the Kentucky Air Guard for 50 years.”

Not only is this the first time the father-and-daughter team have deployed together, this is the first time Airman Farquhar has even been TDY.

“I like having dad here, except when the sirens go off and I have to worry where he is,” she said. She did admit, however, that her mother likes the fact that her father is there with her.

In addition, Airman Farquhar said that having her dad with her takes away some of the homesickness she might feel if he weren’t around.

Chief Farquhar, who has participated in numerous deployments throughout his career, agrees.

“It’s a little bit of home being together,” he said. “I worry less about her because I’m here.”

Tech Sgt. Amy Mundell contributed information to this article.
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Tech Sgt. Amy Mundell contributed information to this article.

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BAGHDAD, IRAQ — Members of the Kentucky Air Guard’s 123rd Civil Engineers Squadron cheer their home state rivals as they watch the University of Kentucky-University of Louisville basketball game here Dec. 27 on the Armed Forces Network.

The unit currently is deployed here in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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A little bit of Bluegrass in BAGHDAD

Photo courtesy of the 123rd Civil Engineers Squadron/KyANG

Chief Master Glenn Farquhar and his daughter, Airman First Class Desiree Farquhar, perform during a holiday candle-light service at Camp Sather in Baghdad, Iraq.

The Farquhars, both from the Kentucky Air National Guard’s 123rd Civil Engineers Squadron, deployed in November in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terror. More than 50 members of the squadron remain deployed at Camp Sather.

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Continued from Front Page

knowledge for his grade,” Sergeant DeShane said.

In one incident, while Sergeant Hoyt was near Mosul, Iraq, he and his team encountered heavy artillery fire but managed to maneuver behind enemy lines. Sergeant Hoyt then coordinated coalition aircraft to the target and destroyed the enemy’s effectiveness, saving the lives of about 500 Kurdish fighters and his own team, Sergeant DeShane said.

In addition to Sergeant Hoyt’s military duties, he is a full-time student at the University of Louisville’s Speed School of Engineering.

Despite such a busy schedule, Sergeant Hoyt remains dedicated to the unit and his team, Sergeant DeShane said.

“On school days during the week after class, he always stops by the unit to check on training schedules and see how he can help out.” Sergeant DeShane said.

Sergeant Hoyt joined the unit after leaving the active-duty Air Force in 2002. He is a member of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1170 and works to recruit new special tactics personnel.

Staff Sgt. Joe Youdell, the second Outstanding Airman of the Year, is a pararescueman in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron.

Sergeant Youdell’s primary mission is to provide civil and combat rescue services in all environments, including mountain terrain, the open ocean and swift water.

He participates in search and recovery missions, provides emergency medical care and may even act as an aircrew gunner and/or scanner aboard aircraft.

The former active-duty combat controller cross-trained into pararescue after joining the Kentucky Air National Guard in 1999.

His supervisor, Master Sgt. Ryan Schultz, said Sergeant Youdell’s contributions to the mission have been exceptional.

Sergeant Youdell deployed into Northern Iraq last year in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, moving behind enemy lines and into Bashur. While there, he provided medical support for the largest tactical airborne jumps since World War II. With more than 1,000 soldiers participating, he immediately treated and evacuated three critically injured parachutists.

Moreover, Sergeant Youdell also assisted in the establishment and continued operations of a critical airfield in Northern Iraq.

He set up airfield lighting equipment necessary for takeoffs and landings and marshalled aircraft to critical off-loading points, directly contributing to the airfield’s success, Sergeant Schultz said.

As a result, more than 100,000 metric tons of equipment and more than 10,000 troops were able to enter the combat zone and establish the northern front in Iraq.

Back home, Sergeant Youdell cares deeply about his community, Sergeant Schultz said. He regularly volunteers at Louisville’s Habitat for Humanity, a charity that builds homes for disadvantaged families, and volunteers at a church-sponsored soup kitchen.

“Joe is an outstanding performer who sets high standards and goals for himself, Sergeant Schultz said. “He strives to excel in all that he does, whether it has to do with his job or his personal life.”

The third KyANG member to be honored with an award is Senior Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron’s combat control superintendent.

Sergeant Rosa is responsible for leading, equipping and managing combat control assets, supervising forward-deployed airfields and guiding nations onto enemy targets.

Maj. Jeremy Shoop, commander of the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron and Sergeant Rosa’s supervisor, praised the sergeant for the huge impact he’s made in the war on terror.

While deployed last year, Sergeant Rosa spent about two months in Iraq, arriving just days before fighting began.

He was assigned to an Army Special Forces A-Team, where he was responsible for bringing in firepower from Air Force fighters, bombers and gunships. During the assignment, Sergeant Rosa was in direct contact with the Iraqi military, and his unit took mortar fire.

After the demand for combat controllers began to ease up in Iraq, Sergeant Rosa deployed to Afghanistan to protect the life of the country’s president, Hamid Karzai.

There, Sergeant Rosa assisted the president’s security detail with counter-ter-
**KyANG unit profile**

**123rd Communications Flight**

**Leadership**

Lt. Col. Mary McCallie has commanded the unit since 1996.

**Mission**

To provide continuous communications support to the 123rd Airlift Wing, including all telecommunication, computing, multimedia, information management and information assurance functions.

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The flight has approximately 50 members, about 15 of whom are full time. The remainder are traditional, part-time reservists.

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Since Sept. 11, 2001, the flight’s tasks have grown substantially due to the wing’s two activations. Immediately after the attacks, the flight provided 24-hour messaging and switchboard service to support the mobilization of Kentucky airmen.

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**Wing’s top airmen honored tonight**

**Continued from Page 5**

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“Professionally, Jon has made a huge impact.”

And now, he added, Sergeant Rosa is a combat-experienced senior NCO with 20 years’ military service.

Sergeant Rosa currently is pursuing a master’s degree in aeronautical science from Embry Riddle University. He also donates time by working to protect veterans’ rights and is active in the Air Force Association.

“He’s a stellar performer in a unit of stellar performers,” Major Shoop said.

“I’m extremely honored that special tactics personnel won for all three (Airmen of the Year) categories, because so many people did so many good things.”

A banquet to honor Hoyt, Youdell and Rosa will be held tonight at the Parade Springs Convention Center in Shepherdsville, Ky. The event gets underway at 6 p.m.

For more information, contact the 123rd Airlift Wing staff at 671-0559.

**Above & beyond**

February is the time for valentines, flowers, special cards and gifts that express our love to that someone special.

It’s also one of the biggest days for chocolate sales, except maybe Halloween.

Some of us mistakenly think that the right gift to the right person will produce the right relationship for a lifetime.

Yet, again and again, relationships fail.

Why?

The answer can be illustrated by two models for building relationships.

One can be called the Hollywood method. It has four easy steps: (1) Find the right person; (2) Fall in love; (3) Fix your hopes and dreams on that person; (4) If failure occurs, repeat steps 1, 2 and 3.

The typical Hollywood marriage lasts about as long as the milk in your refrigerator.

A better approach to lasting relationships is published in an insightful book by Chip Ingram titled “Love, Sex, and Lasting Relationships.”

Pastor Ingram presents God’s model for lasting relationships.

After all, God created men, women and the institution of marriage.

The model says, instead of finding the right person, become the right person.

You will be attracted to healthy relationships instead of manipulators.

Second, instead of falling in love, walk in love.

Be imitators of God, who loves us with unconditional and faithful love.

Love grows over a long period. Infatuation dies away when you stay away.

Third, instead of fixing your hopes and dreams on that person, fix your hopes and dreams on God’s purpose for the relationship.

God’s desire for your relationship is everything you’ve always wanted: personal growth, intimacy, passion, fidelity and security.

If you have a failed relationship, take time to become the right person, walk in love and fix your hopes on God.

This is part of the abundant life God intended for you to enjoy.

— Lt. Col. Tom Curry

**Chaplain’s Column**

Happy Homecoming

Staff Sgt. Ryan Russell, a crew chief in the 123rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, is greeted here Jan. 17 by his wife, Amanda, and son, Drew, following a 46-day deployment to an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

Sergeant Russell is among more than 400 Kentucky airmen who deployed last year in support of the Global War on Terror. The deployment was Sergeant Russell’s third in less than a year.

**Tired of failed relationships?**

Continued from Previous Page

ly strive to learn more and become the best orders clerks, wrench-benders or services people in the Air Force.

We all must remember that we are a part of the strongest military in the world. We represent, and are a product of, all of those proud airmen who came before us, and we must never do anything that will bring dishonor on this unit and those who served before us.

The profession of arms, like citizenship, has some unique obligations that take dedication and commitment to fulfill.

Just as we are citizens all the time, we are members of the profession of arms all the time. They both require dedication, pride and commitment.

Next month we will talk about the final piece of our vision — and when we’re through maybe we will all have an understanding of what we really want to be.

Thanks Loads!

— Lt. Col. Tom Curry

**Citizens**

Wing Chaplain

Michael Curry
Wing is comprised of proud citizens, dedicated to the profession of arms

Col. Michael Harden
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

That is why we never lack for people to volunteer and answer the bell when we are called to support contingency operations abroad or emergency operations in Kentucky. We are, and always want to be, an organization that responds not because of coercion or arm-twisting or fear of the boss, but because of a sense of obligation and duty to community, state and nation. We must continue to capitalize on this concept of citizenship and the pride that results when people realize the obligations inherent in the concept, and then fulfill that obligation.

Nestled before in the modern history of our country has such a small percentage of our population served in the military. This is true for the wing, as well as City Hall, the Statehouse and Congress. Because of this we can only survive and flourish if our pride in citizenship is so visible that it creates a very positive impression and has a lasting effect upon our neighbors, as well as our leaders. Our pride and enthusiasm must be contagious if we are to recruit our neighbors and win in the support of our elected officials. Along with pride in citizenship, our folks must be dedicated to the profession of arms. We must realize that the military is not merely a job, it is a way of life.

All members of this organization must look at themselves not as part-time airmen, NCOs or officers, but as full-time airmen, NCOs and officers with part-time availability. We are members of the military all the time; we are on duty only some of the time. As members of the military we have certain obligations, such as adhering to regulatory requirements and living up to the tenets of duty, honor and country and the core values of integrity, service before self, excellence in all we do, empathy and a spirit of initiative. NCOs and officers must think of themselves as leaders and live up to the responsibility of leadership. Airmen must consider what it means to be part of this great state and nation, we feel an obligation to serve.

This is the time to discuss this concept of citizenship and has a lasting effect upon our neighbors, as well as our leaders. Our pride and enthusiasm must be contagious if we are to recruit our neighbors and win in the support of our elected officials. Along with pride in citizenship, our folks must be dedicated to the profession of arms.

Wing Commander... Col. Michael Harden Wing Public Affairs Officer... Capt. Dale Greer Editor...Tech. Sgt. Amy Mundell Staff Writer...Staff Sgt. Mark Flener

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An electronic version of the Cargo Courier is available at the Kentucky Air Guard’s Web site — www.kyiou.inf.aff.mil

COMMANDER’S CALL

AF Medical Service strongly advises airmen to contact physician before taking Ephedra following FDA alert

By G.W. Pomeroy
Air Force Surgeon General PAO

WASHINGTON — Following an FDA alert, AF Medical Service airmen are strongly advised to contact their physicians or health-care providers before taking dietary supplements containing ephedra alkaloids.

The emergency proclamation was issued an embroidered Air Force logo is to be embroidered on the upper left chest. The dot in the center of the symbol is centered vertically between the shoulder seam and where the underarm side seam joins the armband sleeve, and centered horizontally between the zipper and the sleeve armband seam. Rank on the jacket continues to be worn on either the collar or the sleeve.

This funded Air Force newspaper is an authorized publisher of the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Air Force.

The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the public affairs officer of the 123rd Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, Louisville International Airport, Louisville, Ky. 40213-2678.

Our office is located in room 2118 of the Wing Headquarters Building. Deadline for the next issue is Feb. 23.

See CITIZENS, Next Page

WASHINGTON — Air Force Uniform Board members have introduced an embroidered Air Force logo as an optional-wear item on the lightweight blue jacket.

Anyone not issued an embroidered jacket can have the logo applied to his or her jacket by a local embroidery shop — as long as certain guidelines are followed, she said.

The Air Force logo is to be embroidered in a polyester white meridian thread with a stiff tear-off backing, according to specifications provided by Libby Glade, Air Force clothing office chief. The total stitch count of the logo and lettering will be between 4,200 and 5,000 stitches.

The symbol is to fit within a two-inch square. There is a one-inch square space between the symbol’s lowest point and the “U.S. AIR FORCE” type. The “U.S. AIR FORCE” type is to be one-fourth of an inch high, 3.5 inches long, in all capital Arial feet, 24 point.

The symbol is to be embroidered on the upper left chest. The dot in the center of the symbol is centered vertically between the shoulder seam and where the underarm side seam joins the armband sleeve, and centered horizontally between the zipper and the sleeve armband seam. Rank on the jacket continues to be worn on either the collar or the sleeve.

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“FDAs publication of a final rule as soon as possible that will formalize its conclusions that dietary supplements containing ephedra alkaloids present unreasonable risks to those who take them for any reason,” said Thomas G. Thompson, health and human services secretary.

“The action” (puts) companies on notice of our intentions, and it tells consumers that the time to stop using ephedra products is now,” Mr. Thompson said.

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“The action” (puts) companies on notice of our intentions, and it tells consumers that the time to stop using ephedra products is now,” Mr. Thompson said.

“We are taking action today to notify Americans about the unreasonable risks of ephedra as currently marketed in dietary supplements,” said Dr. Mark B. McClellan, FDA commissioner. “Our action is based on diligent and thorough work by the agency as required by the challenging legal standard in the dietary supplement law.”

“We worked hard to obtain and review all the available evidence about the risks and benefits of ephedra, including its pharmacology, studies of ephedras safety and effectiveness, adverse event reports, and reviews by independent experts,” Dr. McClellan said.

In September 2002, the Air Force surgeon general issued a revised policy covering dietary supplements containing ephedra that strongly discouraged the use of such supplements and highlighted associated risk factors.

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Romans selected as first sergeant of the year

By Staff Sgt. Mark Flener
Cargo Courier Staff Writer

Master Sgt. Gregg Romans of the 123rd Logistics Readiness Squadron has been named the Kentucky Air National Guard’s 2003 First Sergeant of the Year.

As a first sergeant, Sergeant Romans is responsible for serving as a liaison between the enlisted troops and the commander, ensuring that their concerns are voiced.

Sergeant Romans, who was activated last year for Operation Iraqi Freedom, said he was surprised to discover he won.

“I’m elated and humbled at the same time,” Sergeant Romans said. “There are so many really good first sergeants on this base. I was surprised, to say the least.”

During his activation, Sergeant Romans served for six months as the lead first sergeant supporting deployed units at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. He was responsible for about 350 maintenance, operations and support personnel.

Sergeant Romans attributes his success during the mission to watching over and providing support to the airmen.

“We made sure troops had as little distraction as possible and people were taken care of,” Sergeant Romans said.

Lt. Col. Johnny Jones, commander of the 123rd Logistics Readiness Squadron, said Sergeant Romans was highly deserving of the award.

“I’m very delighted he’s been selected,” Colonel Jones said. “I have received nothing but compliments from people who deployed with him in regards to his service as first sergeant.”

Sergeant Romans is a 16-year member of the Air Guard. Prior to that, he served three years on Air Force active duty.

Hoyt, Youdell and Rosa named wing’s 2003 Outstanding Airmen of the Year

By Tech. Sgt. Amy Mundell
Cargo Courier Editor

Being a member of one of the most highly decorated Air National Guard units in the country is no easy task. In fact, it’s quite a challenge, wing leaders say.

That’s because the Air Force core values — integrity, service and excellence — aren’t optional in an organization of this caliber. They’re essential.

That commitment to excellence is apparent each year when enlisted leaders gather for the difficult task of selecting who will be named the unit’s Outstanding Airmen of the Year.

State Command Chief Master Sgt. Mark Grant described the 2003 selection process as gruelling, adding that each airman was scrutinized for leadership traits, significant self-improvement, and base and community involvement.

“The successes of the 123rd Airlift Wing are due to an extraordinary team effort,” Chief Grant said. “However, in the midst of this team, there are those who distinguished themselves as leaders and outstanding performers.

‘Of this elite group of airmen, there were 25 individuals nominated for the Outstanding Airman, NCO and Senior NCO of the Year for the Kentucky Air National Guard.”

While all of the candidates were exceptional, Grant said, three were deemed a cut above the rest — Senior Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, Staff Sgt. Joe Youdell and Senior Airman Mason Hoyt.

Hoyt, who recently was promoted to the rank of staff sergeant, is a combat controller in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron here. Sergeant Hoyt’s job requires him to deploy into remote locations, where he establishes and controls aircraft landing and drop zones, sets up communications links, and provides command and control of aircraft.

He also uses demolitions to clear obstacles and can provide surveying capabilities and weather observations.

The correct application of these skills saves lives, said Senior Master Sgt. Tom DeSchane, a fellow combat controller and Sergeant Hoyt’s supervisor here.

Last year while deployed for Operation Iraqi Freedom, Sergeant Hoyt “showed outstanding professionalism and