

THE CARGO COURIER

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Ky. airman receives Silver Star from SECAF Miller first state Guardsman to get medal while serving in unit

By Capt. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

A Kentucky Air National Guardsman 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 Guardsman to receive the honor while assigned here, distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against al-Qaida and Taliban forces near Marzak, Patkia 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.



Chief Master Sgt. Terry Lutz/KyANG

Secretary of the Air Force Dr. James G. Roche pins the Silver Star on Tech. Sgt. Keary Miller during a ceremony held Nov. 1 in the Kentucky Air National Guard Base Annex. Miller, a pararescueman in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, received the medal for his bravery under fire during a rescue mission on a remote Afghan mountain in 2002.

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

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Rebuilding a country is complex, difficult and takes time

H

ard to believe, but the year is just about over — and what a year it has been.

Members of our great organization have been involved in every aspect of our wartime struggle to make our homeland safe by ridding the world of all those who seek to destroy our American way of life.

Your service has been honorable, and I know that at times it has been frustrating and caused many hardships for you and your families. For that and more, you have my thanks and admiration.

All of you in the Thoroughbred Express has done your job in a superb manner, whether you deployed to the desert, to Europe or stayed home and supported those who did deploy.

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 our quest to keep America safe and secure.

The longer we have people deployed to Iraq the more we will hear some folks say that we have no business being there, that it is all about oil and lining the pockets of rich corporate executives.

They will say that 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



Col. Michael Harden
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

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 jerked 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, stabilize the infrastructure and set up a government with democratic principles run by the Iraqis.

We then leave them to govern themselves and become valued members of the world community.

The problem is that some folks want instant results. We have already taken down the regime and are well on the way to neutralizing 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 3,000 folks who died in the attack on Sept. 11.

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KyANG dedicates memorial to retirees

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."

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.

Photos by Master Sgt. Charles Simpson

Civil engineers depart for Iraqi Freedom



Senior Airman Philip Speck/KyANG

More than 50 members of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Civil Engineers Squadron departed the base Nov. 11 for the Persian Gulf region. The troops, who deployed aboard 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.

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 once.

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-getting, but now we rejoice in gift-giving. So, what are your plans for the holidays? Avoid the holiday blues and invite someone over.

Put on some favorite music and get lost in the holiday sounds.

Clean out your closet and take something to Good Will.

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.

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.

—Lt. Col. Tom Curry
Wing Chaplain

Chaplain's Column

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.

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

The only way 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!

Michael R. Stand

Miller receives Silver Star for actions in OEF

Continued from Front Page

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 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.

"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.



Photos by Chief Master Sgt. Terry Lutz/KyANG

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.

Hail to the chief



Tech. Sgt. Dennis Flora/KyANG

Col. Howard Hunt, commander of the 123rd Maintenance Group, and Col. Michael Harden, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, promote Mark Hall to chief master sergeant during a ceremony here Nov. 2. Hall is the superintendent of the 123rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and has served in the unit nearly 32 years.

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.

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 Logistics Readiness Sq.
- Stephen Kirkpatrick,
123rd Maintenance Sq.
- Michael Moore,
123rd Maintenance Sq.
- James Sneed,
123rd Logistics Readiness Sq.
- Jonathan Stanley,
123rd Maintenance Sq.

STAFF SERGEANT (E-5)

- Amanda Blackburn,
123rd Airlift Wing

- George Burke Jr.,
123rd Logistics Readiness Sq.
- Derek Dye,
123rd Logistics Readiness Sq.
- Charles Harley,
123rd Maintenance Sq.
- Roscoe Hobgood,
123rd Medical Sq.
- Kevin Roy,
123rd Security Forces Sq.
- Anita Young,
123rd Security Forces Sq.

TECHNICAL SERGEANT (E-6)

- Dana Corbin,
123rd Medical Sq.
- Norma Kern,
123rd Mission Support Flt.
- Cary Mendelsohn,
123rd Special Tactics Sq.
- James Powell Jr.,
123rd Civil Engineers Sq.
- Carla Quarles,
123rd Airlift Wing

MASTER SERGEANT (E-7)

- Theodore Bothur,
123rd Mission Support Flt.
- Kevin Kaufman,
123rd Civil Engineers Sq.
- Eric Mills,
123rd Special Tactics Sq.

The following individuals have separated from the Kentucky Air Guard:

- Tech. Sgt. James Adams,
123rd Security Forces Sq.
- Senior Airman Elizabeth Byars,
123rd Aerial Port Sq.
- Staff Sgt. Robert Ellis,
123rd Special Tactics Sq.
- Tech. Sgt. Christopher Middleton,
123rd Security Forces Sq.
- Senior Airman Andree Mitchell,
123rd Communications Sq.
- Staff Sgt. Alexandra Roof,
123rd Aerial Port Sq.

Supplemental bill to improve quality of life

By K.L. Vantran
American 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 water. We want them to have decent facilities to sleep in.”

Zakheim, speaking here Nov. 17, said the servicemembers who deployed to Afghanistan started out in “pretty miserable conditions.”

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

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

“They’re going to be there. We don’t know for how long. We need to ensure that, given the very difficult environment they’re functioning in, they at least have the decent standards of living in terms of basics: water, electricity, heating and air conditioning.”

The bill provides \$64.7 billion for military operations in Iraq, in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Of this, about \$51 billion is for Operation Iraqi Freedom and \$10 billion for Operation Enduring Freedom.

The remaining funds will cover costs of

Operation Noble Eagle and support for allies in the war on terror.

Besides providing pay and benefits for servicemembers, the bill will pay for such things as spare parts and flying hours — things that keep day-to-day operations going.

It also assigns funds for force-protection measures.

This includes protective vests and ceramic inserts for the vests, as well as upgrades for Humvees and sensors that will allow detection of attacks, Zakheim said.

“It’s a whole array of programs that are geared (toward) protecting our forces,” he said.

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 basic objective is not just to transfer sovereignty to Iraq 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.”

Billions of dollars will be spent on elec-

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 — the most urgent infrastructure needs and, of course, security.”

If the average Iraqi sees that the new environment will create a better future for him or her, then he or she will buy into the larger ideas for a democratic future for Iraq, Zakheim said.

Another \$1.2 billion is for rebuilding Afghanistan. It will go toward the Afghan national army and police, as well as some infrastructure such as schools, roads and hospitals.

Afghanistan is a mountainous country and is “tough to get around,” Zakheim 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.

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

Zakheim acknowledged there are still some internal difficulties in southeastern Afghanistan, but added, “People may not realize that Afghanistan has its most stable government in 30 years.”

“For the average Afghan to have peace (and) not have their cities blown up by their own people is new.

“It’s novel, and we’ve done that for the Afghan people.”

Federal govt. grants leave to demobilized reservists

Air Force Print News

WASHINGTON — In a Nov. 14 memorandum, President George W. Bush directed executive departments and agencies to grant five days of uncharged, 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 Reserve,” the president wrote in the memorandum. “We are the guarantors of the rights of returning (servicemembers) under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, and I am personally committed to providing each of them with our

full support, recognition and assistance.”

Kay Coles 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 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.

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