Det 825’s Viper Comes Home

In a ceremony held on 17 Sep 2009, Det 825 cadets and cadre dedicated our newly refurbished F-16 to the men and women of the 924th. Many former 924th personnel were able to join us for the special event.

After 33 years of service and sacrifice, the 924th furled its banner for the last time in 1996 and donated the 1/7-scale F-16 model to the detachment. The F-16 stood prominently on the west side of Russell A. Steindam Hall until 2009, when construction changes on UT’s campus forced us to relocate the model. With the requirement to move the airplane, Longhorn Airmen enlisted the support of Command Chief Armando Blanco and Mr Rick Trent and his team of experts at Randolph AFB to completely refurbish the Viper. Their hard work and dedication paid off. The F-16, with a 924th patch on the intake and “UT” emblazoned on the tail, is better than ever. It’s now “on patrol,” high above the ground in the atrium of our building, in constant tribute to the men and women of the 924th.

~ Col Chris “mori” Bowman

Dedicated 17 September 2009
Commemorating the service and special patriotism, valor, and sacrifice of the men and women of the 924th.

From 1962 to 1996, from Ellington AFB to Bergstrom AFB, from Flying Boxcars to Fighting Falcons, the American Airmen of the 924th protected our Nation.

Longhorn Airmen do well to follow the 924th example “till Gabriel blows his horn.”

F-16 donated to detachment 825 by members of the 924th Fighter Wing, Bergstrom AFB, TX in 1996. In 2009, F-16 graciously repaired and repainted by personnel from the 12th Training Flying Wing, Randolph AFB, TX.
From July 17 through July 30 2009, I was fortunate enough to participate in the AFROTC CCIP trip to Morocco. For two weeks, I along with 15 other Air Force Cadets toured Morocco and learned as much as we could about the culture, history and society of the region. We were accompanied by two officers, both cadre at different detachments.

We first flew to New York, where we all met, introduced ourselves, and boarded a Royal Air Morc flight to Casablanca. We were met at the airport by our tour guide, a native Moroccan woman name Nadia, and our tour bus driver, Brahim. They accompanied us for the next two weeks and lead us all around the country. The first day, we toured Casablanca, which is Morocco’s largest city with 5 million inhabitants, and also home to half the businesses and industry in the entire country. Despite the romantic idea of Casablanca, in reality it is just a large urban sprawl and port city. That night we had dinner with a man from the American Embassy, who gave us a briefing about security in Morocco.

The following day we drove to the capital city of Rabat. This is where the King of Morocco has his royal palace. Morocco is a true kingdom, and the present king, Mohammed VI, has absolute authority over the entire country. He is a very generous and progressive monarch, and has done much to improve healthcare, education, and women’s rights. Rabat is a beautiful, clean coastal city, although by Moroccan standards a bit small and quiet. The countryside in this area was like I imagine Tuscany to look, semi-arid but fertile, with rolling hills, wheat fields and olive orchards.

Late on the second day we arrived in Fes, the cultural and academic center of Morocco, about four hours inland from the capital and set at the foothills of the Middle Atlas mountain range. Fes is home to the world’s oldest university, established in the 9th century and still in use today. The city of Fes has two distinct districts. The Medina is an ancient walled city, with narrow winding streets and two story mud brick houses. The passageways are too narrow for motor vehicles, so within the city walls, only foot and donkey traffic exist. It truly feels like going back in time, straight out of the tales of Aladdin or Lawrence of Arabia.

The other part of the city is the Ville Nouveau, a modern cityscape, built during the French colonial times, complete with broad boulevards and cafés. Morocco was a French colony from 1904 until 1955, and the French influence has remained. Breakfast is often a croissant and café-au-lait, and all signs and menus are printed in both French and Arabic. The vast majority of the population speaks fluent French and Arabic, and most people also speak some English, Spanish, or local Berber tongue.

We spent the majority of our stay in a modest hotel in the Ville Nouveau, and would take day trips out to other cities around Fes, holy sites, and Roman ruins. While in Fes we attended a foreign language school, where we learned introductory Arabic—enough to get by for the time we were there. All of our language teachers were native Moroccans, and this was a great opportunity to ask questions about the Moroccan culture, and discuss any misconceptions they had about American culture. We also spent two mornings in Fes doing community service at a handicapped children’s school. It being summer, the school was not in session, but we built playground equipment, did “landscaping” and painted the school. We also had lectures about Islam, and had Moroccan cooking and music classes.

One weekend we took a trip nine hours by bus, over the Atlas Mountains into the Sahara Desert. For the most part it is very rocky place, with towering bluffs and wide open patches of nothing but gravel and shrubs, not unlike the American southwest. Then all of a sudden there is a sea of sand, with dunes rising 500 feet tall and stretching from horizon to horizon. We rode camels out in to the dunes one night, and stayed in Berber tents. Another night we stayed in a desert town on the banks of a river oasis. The valley floor was only for agriculture, with the buildings perched on the hillsides that were unsuitable for growing crops.

We returned to Fes for a few more days before flying out to Casablanca, and then back to New York. We spent the night in New York City, visiting Times Square and walking around the Big Apple. After such an amazing trip, it was exciting to return home and see such a juxtaposition of settings, but still bear witness to the similarities between our peoples and cultures. Morocco is a beautiful and fascinating country, and I would recommend anyone with a taste for travel or cultural learning consider this program.

~Chandler Thorpe
THE LONGHORN AIRMAN

TEAM McCONNELL!!!

The chance to spend three weeks at any Air Force installation with 26 ROTC cadets from all over the country is exciting. This past summer Cadets Betros and I were granted the opportunity to travel to McConnell AFB in Wichita, KS for Professional Development Training (PDT). McConnell is home to the 22d Air Refueling Wing, which flies the KC-135. The base has one primary mission, conducting air refueling for any aircraft, anywhere in the world.

While there, Betros and I were able to shadow the majority of the supporting squadrons such as Maintenance (MX and AMXS), Civil Engineering, Logistics Readiness, Security Forces, and Force Support. Though we are ROTC cadets training to become officers in the Air Force, we participated in the daily duties of enlisted personnel while at McConnell AFB. To name a few of our trip highlights, we inspected KC-135s before takeoff with Maintenance, put up a barbed wire fence along the SF shooting range with Civil Engineering, controlled the extension cockpit of a de-icer truck with Logistics, simulated training tactics with an M-4, M16, and a shotgun with Security Forces, and performed community service with Force Support. We definitely learned the foundation of mission success is with our enlisted members.

After all the excitement within the squadrons at McConnell, we didn’t think it could get any better, but the base exceeded our expectations by planning a refueling mission with F-15s over New Mexico. The experience of lying in “the boom operator’s office” while two F-15s came to refuel was an unforgettable experience. I am also positive we will never forget the six hour plane ride in the belly of a KC-135 on jump seats.

Our time at McConnell AFB will be a learning experience we’ll always remember. The opportunity to interact with Air Force people should never be turned down, for there is much to learn from our Airmen on the job. Our visit showed us the Air Force could never survive without teamwork from each squadron and support from the community.

~Andrea Collins

Flying high. Cadet Andrea Collins snapped a bird’s eye view of an F-15E Strike Eagle about to make contact with a KC-135 tanker.
Last fall I still needed a language credit to graduate and I didn’t want to take Spanish, so I decided to take something new…Farsi. I soon found that I liked the language and enjoyed learning it.

Because I was studying Farsi, I was given the opportunity to study abroad with the ROTC Language and Culture Project. The program sent a group of cadets from the three different ROTC branches to Tajikistan during the summer. Since I had studied one year of Farsi, I was to stay in Tajikistan for six weeks to further my studies. Another group of cadets who had not previously studied Farsi stayed in Tajikistan for three weeks to get a taste for the language.

All of us were matched with a host family to live with during our stay and I could not have asked for a better match. I lived with a family of six who welcomed me graciously into their home. I played many card games with my “brother and sister,” and did many things with my family.

Everyday I had class for four hours at American Councils. After class we would explore the city. One day we ventured over to the First Afghanistan Economic Development Expo in Tajikistan. It gave us another chance to use our Farsi. We had five weeks of class while in Tajikistan. At the end of the five weeks, we had finals; we will receive a transcript to give to UT for course credit.

We discovered a dance studio that offered Arabic dancing. We attended the classes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday that we could. The class was alot of fun, and gave us a chance to mingle with locals and practice the language.

On Saturdays the group would go on outings. We went out to Varzob twice, once to hang out by the river and once to go for a hike in the mountains. A few of the Sundays, my family took me out to the mountains for a picnic and to swim in a waterfall. One weekend we did a group trip to Iskander Kul, the lake named after Alexander the Great. We stayed over night in a small village, where we were the recipients of Tajik hospitality. The next day on our way to the lake we stopped to see a waterfall. Once we got to the lake, we went to see another waterfall. Both waterfalls were big and beautiful, but the second was just amazing. Before heading back to the city, we went for a swim in the lake. The water was freezing cold, but it was refreshing. The mountains are beautiful and the views are awesome.

On the last Saturday, our “mom” took the other two girls and me to Korvon, the biggest bazaar. The bazaar was huge and very crowded. It was two weeks before school started, so everyone was doing back to school shopping. My last day in Tajikistan, I went with my family to the land they owned for a “BBQ.” That night I said goodbye to my family for what I hope is only one year. I enjoyed my stay in Tajikistan and I can’t wait to go back. I am hoping that I can go again next year with the program. The experience was great and one of a lifetime.

~ Victoria Villa

Congratulations to the graduates of Summer 2009 Field Training!

Maxwell I-Romeo Le, Jonathan Snyder, Kevin Stout (DG), Benjamin Temple (DG), Travis Vanover (SP), Severin Witte; Maxwell III-Chris Mesnard (SP), Elinore Ray (SP), Sung Yi; Maxwell IV-Andy Stalford; Maxwell V-Lianne Blackburn, James Forkner, Grant Georgia, Eric Hitzfeld (DG), Philip Porter, and Adam Zillweger.

Welcome TSgt Lisa Hall! TSgt Hall and her son, Terrance, joined us in April from Laughlin AFB TX.

Welcome Capt Scott Stout! Capt Stout, wife Jami, and two sons joined us in June from Osan AB ROK

Tower Trivia
What was the original purpose of the UT Tower?
The “Taj” on Randolph AFB holds 500,000 gallons of what substance?

Answers next time!