WBAMC WELCOMES NEW LEADERS

By Marcy Sanchez
WBAMC Public Affairs

William Beaumont Army Medical Center held a change of command and change of responsibility ceremony on 1st Lt. Paul A. Noel Parade Field here July 18.


“(Smyrski and George) have been extraordinary leaders. It’s my honor to thank both of you for your tremendous contributions to this command and to Army Medicine,” Tempel said.

“WBAMC has absolutely responded to the challenges of a rapidly changing environment by creating key relationships that were essential to maintain the trust of those we serve and those we serve with.”

The outgoing command team oversaw multiple achievements at WBAMC during their tenure, including trailblazing the deployment of the latest robotic surgical system in the Department of Defense, DOD’s first Certified Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence, various initiatives and improvements for mothers delivering at WBAMC and multiple surgical firsts in vascular, ENT and oral-maxillofacial surgery. Most recently, acquisition of the Army Safety and Occupational Health Star made WBAMC the first and only medical center in the continental United States to achieve the award.

“(Smyrski and George) developed a ready-medical force at WBAMC and a medically-ready force at Fort Bliss,” Tempel said. “The entire staff at WBAMC has elevated the level of care at WBAMC to an unprecedented one.”

Prior to the official ceremony, Tempel awarded Smyrski and George each with the Legion of Merit award for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of services. The award is the United States’ sixth highest award.

“It has been an unbelievable privilege to serve you these past two years. Together we served the entire staff at WBAMC.”

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See LEADERS Page 2A

Fort Bliss opens new air traffic control tower

By Mike Bradley
Fort Bliss Public Affairs

There’s a new building on post, and it is already one of the most intense and important structures a military installation can have – the air traffic control tower.

The Fort Bliss community celebrated the grand opening of the new Biggs Army Airfield Air Traffic Control Tower July 14 during a ribbon-cutting ceremony here.

The tower, standing 116 feet tall, was eight years in the making, cost $15 million and is a state-of-the-art project, servicing one of the longest runways in the Department of Defense at 13,556 feet.

“We’d like to thank the Corps of Engineers, also DPW and the contractor, SGS, for their incredible construction of this beautiful tower,” said Ron Edwards, manager, Biggs Army Airfield. “You couldn’t ask for a better tower. It’s going to serve the aviation community here at Fort Bliss in making things safer.”

Edwards said while the period of time from the inception of “we need a new tower” to the completion phase took eight years, the actual construction phase took a year and a half.

“The tower is placed almost in the middle of the runway,” said Kevin Alexander, facility chief, Air Space Information Center. “For the air traffic controller it gives better visibility of the runway and the aircraft. It’s a huge safety advantage over the old tower at the end of runway.”

Alexander said Biggs Army Airfield averages about 100,000 aircraft movements a year – a number that includes everything either flying through airspace over the airfield and landing and departing on the airfield. VIPs, such as members of Congress, as well as commercial charters charted through Air Mobility Command, have landed here, including the space shuttle and Air Force One.

“Aircraft transitioning east and west across the country tend to want to land here to gas up on their way,” Alexander said.

“On the DOD side, we are like a gas station.”

While contractors were building the new tower, air traffic control services on the airfield never stopped.

See TOWER Page 2A
By William King
2nd Theater Signal Brigade

NOGO SELO TRAINING AREA, Bulgaria – Users in Europe are familiar with the Army Enterprise Service Desk – Europe. It’s a common service, otherwise known as 159, for helping to resolve computer and network issues.

For exercise Saber Guardian 17, Soldiers from the U.S., Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, including Soldiers assigned to the 86th Expeditionary Signal Battalion from Fort Bliss, are working together at the International Help Desk here to assist users in the exercise with similar computer and network issues.

The exercise was a U.S. Army Europe-led, multinational exercise that took place from July 11 through 20. Approximately 25,000 service members from 30 allied and partner nations participated to highlight their interoperability capabilities, specifically the ability to mass forces in any given time anywhere in Europe.

Spc. Chris Gibson, an information technology systems technician assigned to the 86th ESB, 11th Signal Brigade, said the help desk is assisting users with connecting to the network, account creation, troubleshooting and touch labor, including running cables and connecting computers, printers and phones.

Gibson said the help desk Soldiers have all benefited from learning from each other, and said they have even taught him some things.

“They’re very knowledgeable in their field. If I don’t know a step to fix something or if they know a better way, then they show me another way how to fix it,” he said.

Gibson said he has benefited from working with Soldiers from other countries and backgrounds.

“It’s a great experience to be able to work with our international partners. I’m learning Bulgarian, Hungarian, while doing my job and advancing in my career,” Gibson said.

Capt. Jason Chambers, the G-6 communications and information management officer assigned to the 4th Infantry Division, said the help desk interoperability has been phenomenal.

“We’ve been able to employ the (Army Coalition Mission Environment) network built by (U.S. Army Europe) and facilitate it to all our users,” Chambers said. “One of the biggest challenges we had in the beginning was to try and incorporate the allies as far as administrative rights, but we were able to get that completed.”

Chambers said the biggest benefit has been the ability for Soldiers from the different nations to cross-train and learn from each other.

Pvt. George Vasilev, assigned to the Bulgarian Army Joint Forces Command, said he learned a lot from observing how the other countries work.

“I’ve gained a lot of experience helping with building the network (and) account creation (video teleconference) issues. It’s a very good experience to learn how people in other armies work, so we can take our lessons back,” Vasilev said.

The International Help Desk resolved more than 75 trouble tickets.

The 2nd Theater Signal Brigade conducts Department of Defense Information Network operations to enable mission command in support of U.S. Army, Joint and multinational operations throughout the U.S., European Command and U.S. Africa Command areas of operation.

By William King
2nd Theater Signal Brigade

Spc. Kevin Mendez, assigned to the 4th Infantry Division G-6 Communications and Information Management section, and Soldiers from Romania and Bulgaria, work at the International Help Desk during exercise Saber Guardian 17, July 13, at Nove Sels Training Area, Bulgaria.

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ITD holds first joint Ranger Assessment Course

By Abigail Meyer
Fort Bliss Bugle Editor

Ranger School is one of the most difficult schools in the military. It’s not for the weak or ill-prepared. To assure the most qualified candidates attend the school, many installations hold courses that Soldiers must pass before getting a chance at Ranger School in Fort Benning, Georgia.

“Go to Ranger School and earn the Ranger tab that establishes that you are able to be a combat leader,” said Sgt. 1st Class Reag Wood, noncommissioned officer in charge, Ranger Operations, 1st Armored Division Iron Training Detachment. “You’re able to

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By Master Sgt. Shelia L. Cooper
1st AD RSSB Public Affairs

SOUTHEAST AFGHANISTAN – The 1st Armored Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade’s command team conducted a battlefield circulation here July 19.

Col. Michael Lalor, commander, 1st AD RSSB, and Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Howard, command sergeant major, 1st AD RSSB, traveled to locations throughout the southeastern part of the country to speak with Soldiers who support the brigade and its mission.

“Battlefield circulations help to remind Soldiers that their leadership cares about them,” said 1st Lt. Ian Keysuhr, transportation officer, 77th Movement Control Team, 746th Combat Support Sustainment Battalion, 1st AD RSSB. “When you have Soldiers spread out across an entire country or theater it can be easy to feel forgotten. It also allows the commander to see operations firsthand so he or she can make effective change.”

During the visit, Lalor and Howard wanted to know more about their day-to-day operations and missions.

“Often times when you have a specific mission you focus just on the task at hand and this can cause tunnel vision in regards to your impact on the overall mission or operation,” Keysuhr said. “Battlefield circulations allow the commander to not only put things into big picture perspective for us, but also informs us on what additional assets we have in the area of operation to assist us.”

With Soldiers under the 1st AD RSSB spread across the Combined Joint Operations Area- Afghanistan, Lalor and Howard visited multiple forward operating bases.

“Battlefield circulation allows the leaders to get a visualization of their Soldier’s operations and ability to execute the requirements at hand,” said 1st Lt. Elaine Rosa, transportation officer, 746th CSSB. “It allows the FOB personnel to understand the commander’s intent for commodities and to align their sustainment efforts with larger Task Force needs.”

Rosa also said the discussion about the FOB’s development and challenges with the brigade command team allowed her to understand that some of the challenges at her location are task force wide and not isolated to her location.

With Soldiers at the forefront of the mission, these men and women serve and support the 1st AD RSSB and its evolving and challenging mission.

“Having eyes on Soldiers in the field is really the only way to get the whole picture for a commander,” Keysuhr said. “He or she (the commander) can get reports on operations but that doesn’t show him or her what the living and working conditions are really like. It also lets a commander put a face to the names of his or her Soldiers.”

The mission of each forward logistic element is different, so with a shared understanding the mission will help establish a more effective operation.

“Battlefield circulation allows the command team to understand and experience the FLE’s work,” Rosa said. “It also allows for a better understanding of the limitations and assets that each FLE is working with and the command team is able to provide specific feedback based on each FOB’s capabilities. The visit was helpful and allowed the FLE personnel to provide information to the command team, as well as discuss concerns and the support needed for ongoing operations.”

With Soldiers being the number one priority, the commanders and command sergeants major wanted to ensure the Soldiers had everything they need to ensure they can safely complete each mission at hand.

“I felt our visit from the brigade command team was extremely beneficial from a morale and an operational standpoint,” Keysuhr said. “While we have a great team here on the ground, there’s no substitute for being on the ground.”

The visit was helpful and allowed the FLE personnel to provide information to the command team, as well as discuss concerns and the support needed for ongoing operations.

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1st AD RSSB travels to Kabul

By Master Sgt. Sheila L. Cooper
1st AD RSSB Public Affairs

KABUL, Afghanistan — The 1st Armored Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade’s command team conducted a battlefield circulation here July 12.

Col. Michael Lalor, commander, 1st AD RSSB, and Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Howard, command sergeant major, 1st AD RSSB, along with Lt. Col. Tiffany Buethe, commander, 746th Combat Support Battalion, traveled to locations throughout the city to speak with Soldiers who support the brigade and its mission.

“Battlefield circulation is a tool which monitors the pulse of the organization,” Buethe said. “It gives leadership a clear picture of the operational area. This opportunity allows leaders to ask questions, confirm the understanding of their intent and to mitigate risk. It is better to observe an operation in person, in most cases, as technology does not always capture the day-to-day details of an operation. Battlefield circulation is a tool for leadership and it must be a well-planned and disciplined event.”

During the visit, the command team met with Capt. Haroun Muhammad, the Kabul forward operations base officer in charge of the 746th CSB.

“Battlefield circulation gives leaders firsthand experience of their Soldiers command climate, effectiveness of current operations, and allows them to develop potential courses of action through the lessons learned,” Muhammad said. “Battlefield circulation helps leaders anticipate, plan, and resource commodity requirements throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area-Afghanistan. Most leaders who perform BFCs have strategic level operational awareness that can be imparted on forward operations element teams, enabling these teams to be proactive on commodity management specific to their area of operations. With Soldiers and civilians constantly at the forefront of the mission, these men and women serve and support the RSSB and its evolving and challenging mission.”

“In order to stay engaged in the unit, it is critical to develop a rapport with Soldiers,” Buethe said. “It is important to be hands-on leader and share in the success and development of the Soldiers. This allows Soldiers to build confidence in their mission and leadership and provides the opportunity to work with Soldiers to refine the operation as required.”

Being able to see the mission set allows the brigade command team to understand the operational area.

“The key takeaway is that each forward logistics base, and their supported units, are a priority to the RSSB commander,” Buethe said. “We have a renewed understanding of the commander’s priorities, such as force protection, contract effectiveness and fluidity of support.”

Three missions of each forward logistics element is different, so a shared understanding will help establish a more successful mission.

“Each FLE is very different, and there are no two alike,” Buethe said. “They all have a significant impact on the RSSB’s ability to accomplish the mission and each FLE has challenges and constraints in moving their operation forward. The dialogue between the brigade and FLE teams were a positive opportunity to move operations forward and establish how the brigade and FLE can better support the CJOA-A. Each team today demonstrated their commitment to sustaining the fight across Afghanistan.”

Buethe said the trip demonstrated the significant impact each FLE team has across the CJOA-A to support the brigades sustainment mission.

“The various dynamics at each FLE highlight the innovation and initiative our teams contribute to the everyday fight,” Buethe said. “It is amazing to see the accomplishments that such a small, three-Soldier team can contribute to the RSSB mission. Each team has integrated into their supported organization and provided top quality sustainment to the force.”

With Soldiers being the number-one priority, the commanders and command sergeants major wanted to ensure the Soldiers had everything they need to safely complete each mission at hand.

“Each Soldier has a significant impact on the mission. What happens in their foothole is important to the overall success of the mission,” Muhammad said. “A leader must stay involved and focus on the morale and welfare of the Soldiers.”

Col. Michael Lalor, commander, 1st Armored Division Resolute Support Sustainment Brigade, and Command Sgt. Maj. Sean Howard, command sergeant major, 1st AD RSSB, conduct a battlefield circulation in Kabul, Afghanistan, July 12. During the circulation, the command team visited the Soldiers assigned to the 746th Combat Support Battalion and the 136th CSB.
By Wendy Brown
Fort Bliss Bugle Managing Editor


During the ceremony, Dominguez and Burnley passed the noncommissioned officer sword, which signifies the passing of the history, traditions and accomplishments of the unit from the outgoing command sergeant major to the incoming.

Brig. Gen. Christopher L. Spillman, commander, 32nd AAMDC, facilitated the passing of the sword, and afterward thanked Dominguez and welcomed Burnley.

"I've seen (Dominguez's) impact firsthand," Spillman said. "His thoughtful, mature and seasoned judgment has been absolutely invaluable to me. Without a doubt, this command would not be where it is today without Command Sgt. Maj. Dominguez's leadership."

Dominguez will spend the next year pursuing a master's degree in adult education through Pennsylvania State University at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy here, and after he graduates he will teach at the academy for three years, Spillman said.

Spillman congratulated Burnley on taking on the responsibilities of being the command's sergeant major.

"Professionally, I am eager to work with you as we continue to build and sustain readiness and provide our Army with highly trained units and Soldiers ..." -- Brig. Gen. Christopher L. Spillman

Dominguez thanked Spillman and several other Soldiers who helped him as command sergeant major, and said he looks forward to going to school and undertaking his new "GRF" mission at home.

"Nope, not the Global Response Force I spoke about earlier, but the GRF home duties," Dominguez said. "G: Take out the garbage. R: Relax watching the mandatory lifetime evening news. And F: Go outside and feed the horses and the dog and the cat. Got it."

Dominguez also introduced an exercise that could become a tradition at future ceremonies – the passing of the 32nd AAMDC command sergeant major BlackBerry.

"It is never official until I transfer the BlackBerry to his hand, so as I walk over I'm going to put this right in your hand. I hope it doesn't ring during your speech," Dominguez told Burnley from the podium.

After the transfer of the device, Burnley thanked Spillman for expressing confidence in him and allowing him the opportunity to serve the command's Soldiers and families.

"It is always a privilege to lead, and I know that," Burnley said. "My family and I have a wealth of experiences and we look forward to what lies ahead."