

# OUTSTANDING AIRMEN OF THE YEAR



## **SSGT. JOSEPH R. ATON**

Tactical Air Control Party  
11th Air Support Operations Squadron (Air Combat Command)  
Fort Hood, Tex.

Home of Record: Roseville, Calif.

Directed aircraft delivery of 27,000 pounds of weapons to support 60 troops-in-contact actions and killed 42 enemy forces, during 180-day deployment to a remote forward operating base in Afghanistan. ... Determined origin of enemy fires, exposing his position, to enable precise close air support (CAS) strikes. ... Controlled simultaneously B-1 and MQ-1 aircraft while tracking eight individuals emplacing improvised explosive devices (IEDs), resulting in all insurgents being neutralized. ... Prepared a response team and controlled an AC-130 gunship during a successful rescue of an isolated soldier. ... Led recovery team digging out a soldier trapped in building collapse, saving five lives and ensuring evacuation of wounded. ... Created 10 hours of CAS courseware, helping instruct dozens of Army joint fires officers.

## **SSGT. ZULLY M. BIRKBECK (FORMERLY RENON)**

Financial Management Journeyman  
56th Comptroller Sq. (Air Education and Training Command)  
Luke AFB, Ariz.

Home of Record: Lazaro Cardenas, Mexico

Instrumental to the \$134 million operations and maintenance budget program execution at Luke Air Force Base. ... Selected as Air Force Financial Management Airman of the Year for 2009. ... Oversaw \$26 million in funding and helped provide contingency operations financial guidance during deployment to Central Command theater of operations. ... Certified 117 documents—error free—worth about \$19 million. ... Trained other airmen on new way to handle unsettled orders, cutting the list by 95 percent in three months and prompting CENTCOM-wide adoption of her strategy. ... Worked on teaming with vendors outside the wire, speeding delivery of supplies from two months to just one week.



## **TSGT. ANTHONY G. GRAHAM**

Flight Line Production Expeditor  
18th Aircraft Maintenance Unit (Pacific Air Forces)  
Eielson AFB, Alaska

Home of Record: Tellico Plains, Tenn.

Led maintenance on USAF's oldest active duty F-16s, overseeing 4,056 scheduled maintenance actions and 230 repairs. ... Guided 38 maintainers who generated 2,892 sorties and 5,026 flight hours to complete wing's annual flying hour program. ... Supervised 55 airmen and 15 aircraft for a Red Flag exercise that produced 247 sorties and verified combat skills of more than 20 pilots. ... Created cannibalization procedures and targeted 56 tasks and 12 high-fail areas which increased on-time aircraft maintenance to 93 percent. ... Readied his organization for a 10-aircraft, multisite deployment with 100 passengers and 41 short tons of cargo that met all maintenance metrics over the course of 245 sorties.





*The Air Force Outstanding Airman program annually recognizes 12 enlisted members for superior leadership, job performance, community involvement, and personal achievements.*

*The program was initiated at the Air Force Association's 10th annual National Convention, held in New Orleans in 1956. The selection board comprises the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and the command chief master sergeants from each USAF major command. The selections are reviewed by the Air Force Chief of Staff.*

*The 12 selectees are awarded the Outstanding Airman of the Year Ribbon with the bronze service star device and wear the Outstanding Airman badge for one year.*



**SSGT. ROBERT GUTIERREZ JR.**

Combat Control Craftsman  
21st Special Tactics Sq. (Air Force Special Operations Command)  
Pope AFB, N.C.

Home of Record: Chula Vista, Calif.

Directed and controlled more than 40 CAS strikes and strafing runs while under intense enemy fire against a well-trained insurgent force estimated to be 200 strong. ... Controlled air strikes and medical evacuations that eventually led to the successful extraction of all team members and casualties. ... Served 90 days in western Afghanistan before being wounded in the chest during a battle with Taliban forces. ... Continued in action, killing his attacker and directing CAS strikes within 30 meters of his location. ... Curtailed convalescent leave to serve as a joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) instructor.

**SMSGT. STEVEN HIGGINS**

Wing Inspections, Readiness, and Exercises Superintendent  
48th Fighter Wing (US Air Forces in Europe)  
RAF Lakenheath, England

Home of Record: San Francisco

Deployed to Iraq for six months as a counter radio-controlled IED electronic warfare instructor, serving as the electronic warfare senior enlisted leader with an Army unit. ... Led 52 field site electronic warfare technicians. ... Commanded 10 outside-the-wire missions. ... Helped ensure more than a hundred soldiers were mission ready again in less than 24 hours after a convoy attack. ... Found and cleared 110 RCIEDs. ... Executed more than 300 system precombat checks, identifying and replacing 50 faulty systems that protected 200 vehicles and 700 people. ... Oversaw more than 300 maintenance actions and 131 threat updates.



**TSGT. STEPHEN R. HUNTER JR.**

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Craftsman  
944th Civil Engineer Sq. (Air Force Reserve Command)  
Luke AFB, Ariz.

Home of Record: St. Petersburg, Fla.

Completed 107 combat missions, destroying 29 IEDs and clearing 3,000 kilometers of critical supply routes while on a short-notice mobilization—his second six-month deployment to Iraq. ... Volunteered to help manpower-strapped active duty counterpart squadron, training seven regular Air Force counterparts and certifying explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technicians on vital range tasks and critical war skills. ... Swept 70,000-plus acres of Goldwater Range, disposing of more than 4,000 items of unexploded ordnance and recycling 548 tons of scrap metal. ... Considered a top tactical range operations EOD instructor. ... Developed an inventory system that achieved 100 percent accountability and doubled user productivity.



**MSGT. JAMES P. MOGREN**

Security Forces Craftsman  
72nd Security Forces Sq. (Air Force Materiel Command)  
Tinker AFB, Okla.  
Home of Record: Wheatridge, Colo.

Provided command and control after explosive device detonation on deployment to a provincial reconstruction team in Afghanistan. ... Maintained security and aided the injured, resulting in award of Bronze Star Medal. ... Led security operations for 95 convoys that enabled quality assessments on 27 projects valued at \$3.2 million. ... Planned and executed numerous joint missions with coalition forces, including working with French forces to secure volatile valleys in the area. ... Conducted 60 critical meetings with Afghan government officials, building trust and teamwork that impacted daily lives of some 350,000 people. ... Supervised 13 humanitarian assistance actions that delivered 20,000 tons of aid to 3,600 Afghan families. ... Detailed security specifications for construction projects, working to NATO standards.



**SRA. CHERYL A. MOORE**

Multisource Analyst  
8th Intelligence Sq. (Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Agency)  
JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii  
Home of Record: Portland, Ore.

Earned one of only two instructor rated officer certifications given so far in USAF for the multisource analyst position. ... Analyzed Predator video, enabling compound Hellfire strikes on enemy forces in CENTCOM theater of operations. ... Warned combat units of imminent threats and protected forces against snipers, IEDs, and ambushes. ... Worked outside her specialty and excelled in combat with minimal training or supervision. ... Led intelligence fusion for 120 remotely piloted aircraft missions with 1,300 hours on target, giving critical situational awareness for 240 combat operations. ... Instructed nine analysts on innovative exploitation techniques, increasing ISR reporting in-theater by 23 percent.



**SRA. RYAN D. PFEIFER**

Security Forces Journeyman  
791st Missile Security Forces Sq. (Air Force Global Strike Command)  
Minot AFB, N.D.  
Home of Record: Aurora, Colo.

Executed three emergency deviations to convoy routes, enabling forward units to meet convoy commander's intent and uphold nuclear weapons security. ... Improved convoy briefing creation and distribution process, saving two hours on each convoy and more than 200 man-hours annually. ... Served as a heavy weapons team leader for 120 convoys, up 50 percent from the previous year's total and all conducted without incident. ... Led security teams for 49 nuclear system movements. ... Performed 72 hours as a security escort team leader for increased mission operations, allowing three missile sequence code changes to be accomplished without delay. ... Selected to aid group conducting nuclear systems route vulnerability study, helping verify and mitigate 300 routes.



**A1C SAMUEL A. SIEWERT**

Fire Protection Journeyman  
437th Civil Engineer Sq. (Air Mobility Command)  
JB Charleston, S.C.

Home of Record: Oconomowoc, Wis.

Extracted a cardiac arrest patient from a civilian aircraft, enabling first responders to revive the patient and save his life. ... Recognized immediately that a routine medical call was in fact a suicide attempt, providing correct care for patient survival. ... Applied advanced life-saving techniques to twice revive a patient who had been ejected from a car. ... Recalled to duty to help battle a raging fire in military housing, following up by helping the victim with relocation. ... Rescued an individual pinned by two cars, stabilizing a broken leg and treating internal injuries—patient recovered. ... Controlled a C-17 aircraft fire to the point of origin, securing a pathway for 13 individuals on board and helping save a multimillion dollar aircraft.



**MSGT. SARAH A. SPARKS**

Supply Manager  
Hq. Logistics, Installation, and Support Division (Air Force Space Command)  
Peterson AFB, Colo.

Home of Record: Taos, N.M.

Served one-year deployment as a logistics advisor for the Afghan National Security Forces, advising the Afghan two-star logistics and materiel readiness director and synchronizing efforts across the Ministry of Defense. ... Led 225 convoys and ensured safety of 1,400 passengers along 1,600 miles with no mishaps. ... Managed Afghan National Army (ANA) depot capability for 134,000 soldiers, 11,000 weapons, a \$350 million vehicle fleet, and \$65 million worth of radio equipment. ... Spearheaded a total review of national Afghan logistics policies and procedures, slashing expected rewrite time from 18 months to four months. ... Facilitated \$13.7 million supply warehouse upgrade at ANA national depot. ... Led Air Force Global Logistics Supply Center review for AFSPC, identifying and resolving nine critical and six major logistics concerns.



**SSGT. KENNETH I. WALKER III**

Tactical Air Control Party Journeyman  
116th ASOS (Air National Guard)  
Camp Murray, Wash.

Home of Record: El Paso, Tex.

Supported four JTACs at five forward operating bases, working with the Army's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, on his fifth deployment to CENTCOM theater of operations. ... Led CAS missions for nine named operations. ... Spent more than 135 hours on combat patrols. ... Directed 18 precision strikes, employing more than 48,000 pounds of ordnance. ... Controlled more than 1,600 rounds of ordnance during 88 troops-in-contact situations, inflicting 33 enemy kills. ... Directed strikes and returned small-arms fire, saving numerous US and coalition lives, after dismounting a vehicle struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. ... Led CAS missions during a 40-hour firefight, destroying an enemy bunker and saving some 200 coalition forces. ... Provided armed CAS overwatch for a critical medical outreach mission, ensuring safety of more than 100 local nationals and helping build indigenous support. ... Spearheaded CAS support for an eight-hour search mission, neutralizing the enemy threat and providing safe passage for some 100 US and Afghan forces.

