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## Record-setting fuels flight keeps gas flowing

By Master Sgt. Mitch Gettle

376 AEW Public Affairs

The 376th Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron Petroleum, Oils and Lubricants Flight performs a vital function in delivering fuel to the warfighters in Afghanistan.



Photo by Master Sgt. Mitch Gettle

The men and women of POL, commonly known as the fuels flight, are responsible for receiving fuel from the contractors and delivering the fuel to the aircraft for use in completing the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing's mission of delivering fuel, people and cargo to Afghanistan.

The current AEF 3/4 rotation fuels flight recently set a few Manas Air Base records.

"We set the monthly receipt record in October when we received 7,256,000 gallons of fuel," said Senior Master Sgt. Mike Meacham, 376 ELRS POL Flight day shift superintendent. "We also set the single day issue record (delivering fuel to aircraft) with 356,000 gallons in one day on October 1st, the most ever issued in one day."

Everyday, the jet fuel flows from the civilian contractor's trucks to the fuel storage yard. Then, from the fuels storage yard, it is pumped into the R-11 fuel trucks and driven to the awaiting aircraft.

"We have 14,250,000 gallon fuel bladders for storage and we rotate the flow between them, as fuel is pumped into one the fuel is flowing out of another," said Sergeant Meacham,

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Senior Airman Phillip Johnson, 376 ELRS POL Flight, attaches a fuel hose to an R-11 fuel truck after unloading his fuel load into a KC-135 Stratotanker Nov 25. Airman Johnson is deployed from the 92 LRS at Fairchild AFB, Wash.

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deployed from the 60 LRS at Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

“Fuel comes through our intake pump and then we add three additives to the fuel, and it flows into the bag — then it is ready to go to the trucks on the delivery end out to the aircraft,” said Staff Sgt. Eric Filler, 376 ELRS fuel distribution driver, deployed from the 28 LRS at Ellsworth AFB, S.D.

The additives help in aircraft performance and reduce the static electricity from friction caused by the fuel traveling through the piping system, said Senior Master Sgt. John Pietrusinski 376 ELRS night shift superintendent deployed from the 126th Air Refueling Wing, Illinois ANG.

In addition to the records, the fuels flight has also begun a new receiving process that will lighten the load on the security forces. A new offloading site for receiving the fuel from the contracted fuel trucks opened this week. This improvement means these trucks do not have to come on base or the flightline to get to the fuel yard as in the past.

“We receive 9,000 fuel trucks a year and with security forces having to search each one of the trucks it can take 10 -15 minutes each truck,” Sergeant Meacham said. That time saved equates to approximately 2,250 man hours in searching vehicles or the equivalent of 93 consecutive days.

Sergeant Meacham said he is proud of the accomplishments made during this rotation and the hard work each person contributes to the mission.

“Here at Manas we have 37 people assigned to the POL flight, and we move about the same amount of fuel as we do at Travis, but here we do it with about one third the amount of people as compared to at home,” he said. “That speaks highly of the effort these Airmen put forth everyday.”

With the onset of winter, the fuels flight not only is responsible to keep the fuel moving to the AOR, but keeping Manas AB functioning on a daily basis.

“Diesel fuel right now is our biggest challenge,” said Ser-



Photo by Master Sgt. Mitch Gentile

*Senior Airman Grady Tunnell, 376 ELRS POL Flight, adjusts the throttle on the pump at fill station #1 in the fuel storage yard. The pump is used to push fuel into the R-11 fuel trucks at 450 GPM and it can take up to 30 minutes to fill the 5800 gallon R-11. Airman Tunnell is deployed from the 60 LRS at Travis AFB, Calif.*

geant Meacham, “We have three people working 12 hours a day non-stop to deliver all the fuel on the (Temporary Cantonment Area) side of the installation. We’re issuing 7,000 gallons a day of diesel fuel all over the base, and those Airmen are probably the hardest working people in the flight right now.”

Delivering fuel may not be the most glamorous duty, but just like every other specialty in the Air Force, it is one piece that — if not successfully carried out — could negatively impact the mission effectiveness of the wing.

The fuels flight does their job well and they take pride in accomplishing the mission. One Airman even gave his own take on how they impact the mission.

“We’re defending freedom one gallon at a time,” said Senior Airman Phillip Johnson deployed from the 92 LRS at Fairchild AFB, Wash.