



'Ammo' Airmen arm Bagram's war fighters

By Maj. David Kurle
455th AEW public affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Bombs, bullets and explosives are hazardous to friend and foe alike but are handled with care by the men and women who work in the 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron's Munitions Flight.

Known as "ammo" troops, the Airmen of the munitions flight handle all of the bombs, ammunition, defensive ordnance, explosives and bullets used by the Air Force in support of Operation Enduring Freedom here.

"Without ammo, the A-10 would be just a flying observation platform," said Senior Master Sgt. Brad Wilson, assistant flight superintendent. "You wouldn't have secu-

rity forces out there with loaded weapons, they'd be using sticks and stones."

The munitions flight takes charge of all ordnance until it leaves Bagram, either on an aircraft or in the magazine of a firearm, according to Sergeant Wilson, an Air Force reservist deployed from the 442nd Fighter Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo.

The flight receives ordnance from supply points, inspects it; stores it; combines different components to build it, for bombs and missiles; then delivers it where it needs to go, whether to the flight line or for individual issue, in the case of small arms.

"If you don't inspect it, it could be damaged in such a way that it won't work as expected," Sergeant Wilson said. "We don't want to put something out there that will hurt someone or something that won't function."

In addition to the 442nd, members of Spangdahlem Air Base's 52nd Fighter Wing, Germany, and the Kansas Air National Guard's 184th Air Refueling Wing also work in the munitions flight.

"I think our crew has been pretty well integrated," said Staff Sgt. Josh Brewster, a munitions specialist from the 52nd FW. "And, from what I've seen on the flight line, they've meshed pretty well out there too."

"Watching the integration of active duty and reserve, then accomplishing the mission is the best part about being deployed," said Staff Sgt. James McCall, also a munitions specialist, and a reservist from the 442nd.

"I think they've been doing a bang-up job," Sergeant Wilson said. "Our Airmen have been doing everything they've been asked and tasked."

However, working in ammo is not all bombs and bullets. The Ammo troops must also maintain auxiliary equipment, such as trailers used to transport ordnance.

"I don't know too many guys in munitions who like doing trailer maintenance," Sergeant Wilson said. "But it's one of those jobs that has to be done."

All the ammo troops in the 455th need to be proficient and proficiency comes from training and actually performing their wartime tasks repeatedly at their home units, with some differences.

"It pretty much feels like working back home, except that we're not building BDU-33s," said Master Sgt. Leroy Williams, referring to training munitions dropped by the A-10s of the 442nd FW when they're not deployed. "It's interesting knowing that your end result here in Afghanistan is helping out our troops on the ground."

"I know why they're dropping bombs here," said Master Sgt. Robert Jackson, a reserve munitions specialist, also from the 442nd. "It's to save our guys' lives. So the least we can do is give them ordnance that works."

"A big part of our pride comes from knowing that we're getting those bombs and bullets out there to help our Army brethren," Sergeant Wilson said. "When ammo works, it's because we did our job."



U.S. Air Force photo by Maj. David Kurle

Master Sgt. Robert Jackson inspects a 30 mm round for an A-10 Thunderbolt II in the munitions storage area here. Sergeant Jackson is a member of the Air Force Reserve deployed to Bagram as a munitions specialist. He and other munitions Airmen receive, inspect, store, assemble and deliver ordnance used on aircraft and in small arms.