

Airpower with ingenuity



Photo by Senior Airman Kerry Solan-Johnson

Senior Airman Daniel Lindsay, a Guardsman deployed from Joe Foss Field, S.D., uses a drill press at the metals technology shop.

Metal techs spark airpower over Iraq

By Senior Airman Kerry Solan-Johnson
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

Dirty-fisted and in a shower of sparks, Senior Airman Chris Redman helps shape the face of airpower in Iraq.

Airman Redman, a metals technician assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron, proves his mettle here welding, heat-treating, fabricating and assembling metal components to support Balad Air Base, including the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

“The jet-based work is some of the most important work we have,” said Airman Redman, deployed from Cannon Air Force Base, N.M. “When a jet has to get

off the ground, it *has* to get off the ground.”

The five metal technicians assigned here are a small but vital component; it is the integrity of their work that enables maintainers to move their jets out of the chocks and into the skies over Iraq.

Their blackened knuckles and palms are the result of the hands-on production their craft requires, which Airman Redman calls a “wide range of work.”

The range includes the diverse airframes that fly through Balad, from C-17s to Predators. Metal technicians often rely on their own ingenuity to fabricate parts that might otherwise have to be ordered for aircraft, from bolts to

bulkhead fittings.

But the technicians aren’t limited to Air Force airframes in the joint environment of Balad AB and Logistics Support Area Anaconda.

“Right now, I’m welding brackets for (Army) helicopter blades,” said Senior Airman Daniel Lindsay, a Guardsman deployed from Joe Foss Field, S.D. “The different kinds of customers we have definitely keeps us busy.”

The job isn’t always Falcons and flying things; their welding, brazing and soldering talents are sought by many units at Balad.

“These Airmen accomplish various projects which help units meet mission needs,” said Tech. Sgt. Michael Bertrand, 332nd

EMXS metal technology night shift supervisor, who is deployed from the 114th Fighter Wing, S.D. “Many of these units need things they had at home station and don’t have here, and they come to us to fabricate these items.”

Metal technicians have fashioned work stations for radar approach and control and blast plates for explosive ordnance disposal technicians. These jobs were additional to the typical requirements coming in from aerospace ground equipment, armament, ammunition and maintenance units.

“It’s a lot of work,” Airman Redman said. “But when I’m in it, it’s just me and my spark, just me and my weld.”