

OUTSTANDING AIRMEN OF THE YEAR



SSGT. ANGELO C. BANKS

Pass & Registration Clerk, 81st Security Forces Squadron
81st Training Wing (Air Education and Training Command)
Keesler AFB, Miss.
Home of Record: Salina, Kan.

During deployment to Transit Center at Manas in Kyrgyzstan, Banks led a quick response fire team providing security for 90 sorties delivering vital cargo for Operation Enduring Freedom and trained Kyrgyz military members how to search vehicles for improvised explosive devices. Also supporting OEF, he led 19 flyaway security missions to 39 austere forward operating bases and spearheaded a vulnerability assessment footprint for air mobility protection. His home station efforts included streamlining base access registration for 25,000 technical school airmen; strengthening base defenses; and championing an Air Force Smart Operations for 21st Century initiative that led to an AETC “best practice” for an electronic entry authorization list system.

MSGT. ALAN M. BRADEN

Career Assistance Advisor, 88th Force Support Sq.
88th Air Base Wing (Air Force Materiel Command)
Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio
Home of Record: Monroe, Mich.

Braden designed a Career Assistance Advisor Community of Practice program that provided training to 82 Career Assistance Advisors and became the Air Force’s benchmark. He led 83 courses, visited 82 organizations, met with 432 airmen, and developed new professional development programs. He also drafted the CAA and First Term Airmen Center inspection program, which has been adopted by the functional manager for use across AFMC. He served as acting First Sergeant for eight months and squadron superintendent for 14 weeks. He created a deployed airman outreach program that attracted 101,000 website hits. He also supported Total Force efforts, addressing an Air National Guard leadership conference and planning an Air Force Reserve Command professional development seminar.



SSGT. CORY T. BRANHAM

Customer Support Supervisor, 366th Logistics Readiness Sq.
366th Fighter Wing (Air Combat Command)
Mountain Home AFB, Idaho
Home of Record: Shelby, Ohio

Air Combat Command designated Branham’s reports program as a “best practice” after he coordinated with 25 units to manage 158 performance reports with on-time completion. He also took control of the expendable asset program, recovering 2,500 assets and returning more than \$4 million to the Defense Department. During a 30-day absence of the NCOIC, Branham led the customer support section team and trained new staff members, providing a seamless transition for wing and group leadership. His organization of four Expeditionary Combat Support System courses and training of 55 wing points of contact laid the groundwork for Air Force-wide system implementation. He was cited as a superior performer during the first combined Unit Compliance Inspection/Logistics Compliance Assessment Program.





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.



SRA. BRYENNA L. BROOKS

Aerospace Medical Services Technician, 2nd Medical Operations Sq.
2nd Bomb Wing (Air Force Global Strike Command)
Barksdale AFB, La.

Home of Record: Appleton, Wis.

Deployed for 205 days for Operation Enduring Freedom, Brooks provided direct medical support to the 101st Sustainment Brigade Troop Medical Clinic at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, and 13 forward operating bases. She also served as the sole convoy medic on 25 missions, providing 24-hour care to more than 1,000 troops. She was wounded during an RPG attack but kept treating other personnel. She earned a Combat Medic Badge and received an Army Commendation Medal. She also taught combat lifesaver classes for more than 1,000 soldiers, dedicated more than 80 hours toward expansion of the Troop Medical Clinic, was a key asset in the mass casualty plan rewrite, and assisted at the blood bank at the Afghan National Army hospital.

TSGT. BRANDON C. BRUNER

Vehicle Operator/Dispatcher, 1st Special Ops Logistics Readiness Sq.
1st Special Ops Wing (Air Force Special Operations Command)
Hurlburt Field, Fla.

Home of Record: Panama City, Fla.

While logging 13,000 miles in the Iraq Joint Operations Area, Bruner led one convoy of 23 troops through a small-arms attack with no injuries. He received an Army Combat Infantry patch and a Bronze Star Medal. In all, he led 11 combat missions, trained 32 joint team members, certified six convoy positions, and qualified 312 airmen with the M-4 rifle, ensuring his 1,200-person battalion was combat ready. In Kuwait, he directed first-responder action following a three-car collision, assisting four casualties and receiving local leader praise. He also provided armed security for six recovery operations, ensuring minimal exposure of team members in insurgent hotbed areas. At home base, he filled a senior master sergeant position for four months, managing an "excellent" inspection rating with a short workforce.



SRA. MATTHEW J. BUTLER

Weather Forecaster, 15th Operational Weather Sq.
1st Weather Group (Air Force Weather Agency)
Scott AFB, Ill.

Home of Record: Colorado Springs, Colo.

Deployed for Operation New Dawn, he executed 400 forecasts to enable 5,500 flight hours and 40 combat convoys. He identified low-risk routes for 53 missions, enabling 30,000 tons of cargo to be airlifted to battlefield outposts. Executing 63 close air support briefings, he identified opportunities to ensure supplies were delivered to troops pinned down by enemy fire. When entrusted with a high-visibility resource protection role, he beat the forecasting accuracy standard by 22 percent. His timely forecasts of damaging hail, a blizzard, and mission-limiting winds to units of USAF, the Air National Guard, and Army enabled cost-saving preventive measures for high-value aircraft and weapons and life-saving measures for helicopter medical evacuation flights.



SMSGT. LAURA A. CALLAWAY

Physical Medicine/Emergency Dept. Supt., 60th Medical Operations Sq.
60th Air Mobility Wing (Air Mobility Command)
Travis AFB, Calif.
Home of Record: Ormond Beach, Fla.

Callaway led the Air Force's largest physical medicine and emergency departments and forged a clinical practicum, identified as a career field benchmark, with the University of California, Davis. She secured a multiyear contract to ensure on-site care for veterans, reducing diverted care by 30 percent and saving \$500,000. She was the architect for a team program for an \$8 million rehabilitation center. Her efforts during Operation Pacific Passage were instrumental in the safe evacuation of 2,600 people. She was the ramrod for USAF's largest civilian physical therapy training exchange program, chartering agreements with five universities, saving the Air Force \$600,000. She also established a splint/amputee/inpatient care in-service program, increasing staff productivity by 30 percent.



SMSGT. EMILIO HERNANDEZ

Operations Flight Supt., 100th Civil Engineer Sq.
100th Air Refueling Wing (US Air Forces in Europe)
RAF Mildenhall, UK
Home of Record: Hialeah, Fla.

Hernandez led 52 people in 53 civil engineering projects at 163 forward operating bases in Afghanistan. He led the largest buildup of tactical operations centers in the Southwest Regional Command area, boosting command and control for the 2nd Marine Force. He orchestrated repairs for nine USMC aircraft hangars to support a vital ISR platform for Southwest Asia operations. He led an outside-the-wall mission to coordinate emergency repairs to Kandahar government buildings, including rewiring an electrical grid to sustain police station operations. He also oversaw the regional command's top civil project, upgrading the electrical grid for a dam to preserve water and power flow for 450,000 Afghans.



SRA. NICHOLAS A. HURT

Response Force Leader, 721st Security Forces Sq.
21st Space Wing (Air Force Space Command)
Cheyenne Mountain AFS, Colo.
Home of Record: Chino Valley, Ariz.

As part of a quick reaction team at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, Hurt disrupted an insurgent supply point by discovering a weapons cache and destroying 200 pounds of explosives. He also responded to 14 indirect fire attacks, clearing mission-critical zones without taking casualties or losing assets. He was the designated radio telephone operator for 38 outside-the-wire missions, gathering key intelligence and strengthening the coalition bond with host nationals. He was also the only airman first class to lead three 13-personnel squads for outside the wire presence/reconnaissance patrols. He responded to a severe head trauma injury, applying combat lifesaver skills to stabilize the victim, and provided emergency medical help to an ill Afghan child.



MSGT. SANDRA L. PLENTZAS

Chapel Operations Supt.
944th Fighter Wing (Air Force Reserve Command)
Luke AFB, Ariz.
Home of Record: Glendale, Ariz.

Plentzas leveraged the Headquarters Chaplain Total Force Initiative to integrate Active Duty and Air Reserve Component chaplain training and scheduling, maximizing Luke's ministry efforts for more than 2,000 airmen. By employing a spiritual needs assessment, she identified an increase in financial/relationship issues and developed a comprehensive airman fitness ministry plan in response. Volunteering to deploy, she was NCOIC of the largest chaplain team in the Southwest Asia area of responsibility, covering four sites in three countries and ministering to more than 18,000 troops. She also oversaw two ministry facility renovation projects, managed 54 religious programs per week, and was handpicked to fill a critical helping agency void in Saudi Arabia.



TSGT. MATTHEW G. STARK

EOD Quality Assurance Section Chief, 354th Civil Engineer Sq.
354th Fighter Wing (Pacific Air Forces)
Eielson AFB, Alaska
Home of Record: Amherst, N.Y.



Filling a senior NCO position for 80 days during combat operations, Stark led the most decorated explosive ordnance disposal flight in Iraq. He oversaw 27 operations with zero casualties during Operation New Dawn. He revamped the Ali Base weapons safety program, earning a command safety excellence award. He directed the Ali Base response to five rocket attacks. He directed responses to several vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, coordinating joint service actions and neutralizing the threats. He also directed the response to destroy unexploded ordnance found on a Predator remotely piloted aircraft ramp, securing the Predator. Handpicked for a US President security team at the United Nations, he organized and conducted IED sweeps to ensure the security of 193 world leaders.

SMSGT. LUKE W. THOMPSON

Combat Controller, 125th Special Tactics Sq.
Air National Guard
Portland Arpt., Ore.
Home of Record: Battle Ground, Wash.

Thompson led an expeditionary special tactics squadron in Afghanistan, preparing 85 battlefield airmen to support two Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces. He enabled 55 operators to conduct more than 1,200 combat missions, including capturing 241 high-value targets, and provided 50 combat controllers to conduct village stability operations behind enemy lines. His management also enabled joint terminal attack controllers to deliver 142 lethal air strikes to the enemy. He was the driving force in construction of a multimillion dollar special tactics operations center to enhance combat capability in theater. He was also the architect for the ANG special tactics growth plan and engineered the first ANG special tactics mobilization, providing 27 battlefield airmen to US Central Command.

