

RED TAIL FLYER

332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, Balad Air Base, Iraq



**Forecasting in a
combat zone**

Page 10

**Balad remembers
fallen Airman**

Page 5

**Balad Airman earns
national ATC award**

Page 6

Forecasting in a combat zone

Combat weather flight ensures safe traveling

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Alice Moore
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

When Staff Sgt. James Brown steps out for the first time during his day here, he scans the sky. He already knows what type of day he'll have at work before he steps into his office because weather is his business.

The combat weather forecasters assigned to the 332nd Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron monitor local weather conditions 24/7 to ensure safe flight conditions for the aircraft flying in and out of Balad Air Base.

"Weather support here is provided by a team of forward-deployed and rear-echelon weather support agencies," said Master Sgt. Michael Dannelly, combat weather flight noncommissioned officer in charge, deployed from Hill Air Force Base, Utah. "The 332nd EOSS combat weather team, or weather flight, is the lead weather unit here. We collect local observations, provide flight weather briefings and disseminate weather watches, warnings and advisories."

The combat weather team accomplishes its



Staff Sgt. James Brown, 332nd Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron combat weather forecaster, looks at a map for guidance Monday.

missions using several electronic tools including visual satellite loops and infrared enhancements that detect incoming dust storms and clouds, and radar displays that detect inclement weather such as thunderstorms. The flight also uses a tool called a meteogram, a computer-based program that allows the forecasters to view a forecasted slice of the atmosphere.

However, their resources don't end with electronics, according to Sergeant Brown, also deployed from Hill AFB.

"We also rely on our observation point to collect basic information such as hourly winds, visibility, temperature, and cloud heights," he said. "We use (distance) markers to help measure distances."

The distances are used to inform pilots of the visual range of the runway as they approach for landing.

The flight has four forecasters on each shift readily available to provide continuous weather updates to a wide variety of Army, Air Force and Department of Defense civilians here. The flight provides approximately 100 flight weather briefs a day, Sergeant Dannelly said.

He also said one of the toughest challenges of being in a deployed environment comes with bad weather.

"It's not as challenging on nice weather

days, but when everybody and their brother starts calling during bad weather, it gets pretty hectic," he said. "Our biggest challenge is definitely the dust and the sand. It's very difficult to predict the intensity and dispersal of the dust storms here."

Although the shop has its challenges, being deployed also comes with its rewards.

"You can definitely see that we have a huge mission impact here. It's good because you're able to see it (bad weather) play out and know you had a hand in keeping people safe," Sergeant Brown said.

"For me being here has been a positive experience because I've gotten to meet and work with different people within my career field," said Staff Sgt. Jason Noel, deployed from Offutt AFB. "I'm definitely about deploying because it gives me a chance to obtain different experiences I wouldn't get otherwise."

Sergeant Dannelly said at the end of the work day, the flight credits its success here to teamwork, which he says is phenomenal.

"Each one of us is unique and we each bring our own ingredient to the team. The different personalities just make it a fun place to work and when you get an aircraft on the ground before a dust storm hits it's a pretty satisfying feeling."



Staff Sgt. Jason Noel, 332nd Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron combat weather forecaster, provides the most up-to-date weather conditions for aircrew Monday.