

Desert Lightning News

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INSIDE

Flagship KC-10 flown to 'Boneyard'

STORIES

- Bronze Pistol Shot, 2
- Childcare fee reduction, 3
- HH-60s move to Kadena, 4
- Spark Tank finalists, 5

FEATURE



Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III
DM HOSTS TORNEO DEL SOL

See Pages 6 and 7



U.S. Air Force photos by Master Sgt. Traci Keller

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Andrew Baer, 9th Air Refueling Squadron commander and KC-10 Extender pilot, communicates to fellow aircrew members prior to starting engines on the aircraft Jan. 11, 2024, at Travis Air Force Base, California. The crew flew the aircraft to the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG), known as "The Boneyard," at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. The aircraft, with tail number 79-1946, was designated as the 9th ARS's flagship because of its history with the squadron.

Story by Master Sgt.
Traci Keller

60th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. — As the U.S. Air Force continues to downsize its fleet of KC-10 Extender aircraft, the 60th Air Mobility Wing —the last active-duty wing to operate the aircraft — said farewell to one particularly special tail.

An aircrew with the 9th Air Refueling Squadron flew the flagship tanker, with tail number 79-1946, January 11 from Travis AFB to Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, home of the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG), often referred to as "The Boneyard." It is where the Air Force and other federal agencies maintain open-air storage and preservation of their aircraft.

The jet making this journey was considered unique for the 9th ARS, according to U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Andrew Baer, 9th ARS commander and KC-10 pilot.

"What's so awesome is this airplane has a long history," said Baer. "It was in (Operations) Urgent Fury, Enduring Freedom, Allies Refuge, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn, Inherent Resolve... you name it, this jet has seen it."

The term "flagship" dates back centuries ago and traditionally referred to the ship

See KC-10, Page 10



U.S. Airmen from the 9th Air Refueling Squadron inspect a KC-10 Extender at Travis Air Force Base, California, Jan. 11, 2024, prior to flying it to the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG), known as "The Boneyard," at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Zachary Ruff, 9th Air Refueling Squadron KC-10 Extender boom operator, looks out the window of the KC-10 prior to opening its door Jan. 11, 2024, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

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U.S. Airmen compete for Bronze Pistol Shot

By Airman 1st Class
**ROBERT ALLEN COOKE
III**

355th Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Airmen participated in the Beretta M9 Excellence in Competition, or EIC, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, on Jan. 26, 2024.

The Excellence in Competition consisted of three individually scored relays that were held at 10:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m. respectively.

Before the competition commenced, each relay's competitors participated in a safety briefing that included information on weapons' safety and range safety. The safety briefing, hosted by combat arms instructors from the 355th Security Forces Squadron, provided a rundown of the course, including what the time limits were, how the targets were scored, and how certificates would be distributed.

"We're just here to make sure that the firing line runs safely," said TSgt. Christopher Uremovich, 355th Security Forces Squadron section chief of combat arms and coordinator for the Excellence in Competition. "We make sure that we're not having any safety violations and everybody's paying attention to the course of fire and doing everything that they are supposed to do."

During each relay of the competition, the instructors ensured that the participants' Beretta M9 muzzles were level pointed down range to prevent unwarranted fire. However, the competitors did not receive coaching from combat arms during the EIC. The competitors knew how to clear out



U.S. Air Force photos by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III

U.S. Airmen prepare to shoot during the Excellence in Competition at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 26, 2024. Seven competition winners were selected from the 73 total participants to receive a certificate and a "Bronze Pistol Shot" badge.

and reload their weapons prior to the competition.

"When anyone is out here on our firing line, we have to make sure that our muzzle is always level and pointed down range, because we never know when that firearm could go off," said Staff Sgt. Vanessa Garcia, 355th Security Forces Squadron combat arms instructor and a line official for the Excellence in Competition. "If that muzzle is level and pointed down range, we know that it's not going to be hurting anybody."

Additional setup for the competition required coordination with the 355th Munitions Squadron on Davis-Monthan.

"We have to coordinate with



U.S. Airmen participate in a safety briefing for the Excellence in Competition at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 26, 2024. The safety briefing provided a rundown of the course, including time limits, scoring, and how certificates would be distributed.

MUNS to grab ammo, the weapons, and ensure that all weapons are operational," said Staff Sgt. Joshua Horne, 355th Security

Forces Squadron non-commissioned officer in charge of combat arms and tower operator for the Excellence in Competition. "We have to do maintenance on guns and the targets as well."

As tower operator of the EIC, Horne was responsible for safety on the line, Horne told the shooters when to fire and when to cease fire during each relay. Horne worked along other coordinators and instructors of the 355th SFS, such as Uremovich, to set up the event and establish safety procedures for the competitors.

"I am coordinating everything today," Uremovich said. "We have twenty-eight shooters each relay, which means per our instructor student ratios on the line, we must have at least four instructors on the line and one in the tower. Right now, we have a total of six instructors."

Prior to each relay, the instruc-

tors preloaded M9 magazines, stapled the targets, and created rosters. During the relays, the instructors ensured that the line ran safely, that safety violations were avoided, and that everyone paid attention to the course of fire.

"There's a lot of preparation that does not get seen by the average eye," said Senior Airman Adam Weigum, 355th Security Forces Squadron combat arms instructor and a coordinator for the Excellence in Competition. "We really do work as hard as we can, not only for our shooters to have a safe, enjoyable time out here on the range, but also to prepare them for what they may encounter later on down the road in their Air Force career."

At the end of the EIC, seven winners were selected to receive a certificate and a "Bronze Pistol Shot" badge to wear on their uniforms.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sergeant Vanessa Garcia, 355th Security Forces Squadron combat arms instructor, points to a target during the Excellence in Competition at Davis-Monthan Air Force base, Arizona, Jan. 26, 2024. As a combat arms instructor and a line official for the EIC, Garcia ensured safety procedures were followed and graded targets.



U.S. Airmen participate in the Excellence in Competition at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 26, 2024. The Airmen shot long-range targets over a series of rounds to receive points in the competition.

DOD reduces childcare fees for military families

By Joseph Clark

DOD News

The Defense Department is focused on making quality childcare options affordable for military families as officials continue to prioritize initiatives to take care of those who serve.

In January 2024, the department implemented its new fee schedule for on base childcare designed to reduce fees for lower income military families while maintaining high quality care at DOD child development centers around the world.

Chad Sheldon, DOD's associate director for child and youth programs policy, said the driver behind this year's fee change was "to make the childcare fees more equitable and more affordable, specifically for those families with the greatest economic need."

"We wanted to be able to reduce the percentage of income that they're paying for childcare and balance that across our fee schedule," he said.

The reduction in the basic weekly rate for on base childcare is applied across several tiers under the new structure, as determined by military families' total family income:

- Those with a total family income of \$45,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$54, down from \$82 under the previous fee schedule.
- Those with a total family income of \$65,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of



Photo By Space Force Airman 1st Class Justin Todd

Lenese Rogers reads a story to a group of children at a child development center on Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado, Nov. 9, 2023. The DOD reduced the cost of on base childcare in January 2024.



U.S. Air Force photo by Craig Z. Rodarte

A child development center staff member cares for children at Buckley Space Force Base, Colorado., Feb. 2, 2023.

\$74, down from \$121 under the previous fee schedule.

- Those with a total family income of \$90,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$104, down from \$143 under the previous fee schedule.
- Those with a total family income of \$115,000 will pay a basic weekly rate of \$138, down from \$154 under the previous fee schedule.

Sheldon said childcare can be a major expense for new families who are typically still in the early stages of their careers and not at the peak of their earning potential.

"By making these adjustments to our fees, our intent is that they're going to have more money in their pocket to cover additional expenses – food, diapers, all those things that come along with being a parent as well," he said.

President Joe Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden have made reducing childcare costs for military families a key focus of

the Biden-Harris administration.

The new fee structure follows Biden's executive order in April directing the DOD to improve childcare affordability on military installations.

The DOD operates one of the largest employer-sponsored childcare programs in the U.S., serving more than 160,000 children every year, according to 2022 figures.

"Our service members matter," Sheldon said. "Their families matter. And certainly, we have a vested interest in children and youth. Our mission is a really important one and one that we take seriously."

He said childcare providers and child development center staff throughout DOD, take their mission to serve the children of military families to heart.

"I hope that service members know that their well-being and their family's well-being is something that is critically important to us," he said.



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HH-60Ws move to Kadena, Japan

By Airman 1st Class
Jonathan R. Sifuentes

18th Wing Public Affairs

Force Base, Arizona, arrived at their new duty station, Kadena Air Base, Japan, January 26, 2024.

The HH-60W is the successor to the HH-60G "Pave Hawk" and built on the established framework of the UH-60M "Black Hawk" production model.

KADENA AIR BASE, Japan
— The HH-60W Jolly Green IIs from the 55th Rescue Generation Squadron, Davis-Monthan Air



U.S. Air Force Airmen with the 33rd Helicopter Maintenance Unit and 718th Aircraft Maintenance Unit rig a towing bar to an HH-60W Jolly Green II at Kadena Air Base, Japan, Jan. 26, 2024.



U.S. Air Force photos by Airman 1st Class Jonathan R. Sifuentes

Service members with the 33rd Helicopter Maintenance Unit and 718th Aircraft Maintenance Unit offload two HH-60W Jolly Green IIs at Kadena Air Base, Japan, Jan. 26, 2024. The HH-60W is designed from the ground up with integrated mission systems and features new multi-function displays to provide pilots with critical flight information.

Alternatively known as the "Whiskey" model, the HH-60W is designed from the ground up with integrated mission systems that improve situational awareness for aircrews conducting the combat search and rescue missions in contested environments.

"The new avionics systems and

multifunctional displays provide the pilots with critical flight data," said U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Anthony Canlas, 718th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron HH-60 dedicated crew chief. "These new models will improve our continued search and rescue missions throughout the Pacific."

The HH-60W is intended for a variety of mission critical operations to include recovering isolated personnel from hostile or denied territory, day or night, in adverse weather, and in a variety of threat environments from ter-

See MOVE, Page 10

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DAF announces Spark Tank 2024 finalists

Deputy Under
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

Management

WASHINGTON (AFNS) — The Department of the Air Force announced the six Spark Tank 2024 finalists Dec. 14, following the announcement of the 15 semifinalists Dec. 5.

The Spark Tank team presented the top 15 ideas identified through pairwise voting and subject matter expert evaluations from this year's pool of submissions. DAF senior leaders convened to review and discuss the merits of each idea, reaching consensus to identify Spark Tank 2024's six finalists.

Out of 138 submissions from across the U.S. Space Force and U.S. Air Force, the following were selected for the semi-finals round:

Air Traffic Control Situational Awareness Mobile Network — a man portable combination system that provides a RADAR-like capability in austere environments

CLEAR skies, safe eyes: Protecting aircrews from laser strikes — technology to triangulate locations of ground-based laser attacks directed at aircrews

COMMERCIAL CHECK - Pioneering the Path to Eradicate Acquisition Delays — harnessing automated intelligence and machine learning to securely expedite acquisitions

Enterprise Digital Credentialing Service — a user-centric integration of credentials from both DAF and external systems to provide a holistic view of Airmen's knowledge, skills, and abilities

Increasing USAF Air Dominance Lethality and Survivability through M&S — an application for advanced framework for simulation, integration and modeling for rapid tactics evaluation tool



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Sergio A. Gamboa

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Justin Bauer, 355th Fighter Wing stamps a date on a wheel at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, May 20, 2020. Winner of the 2021 Spark Tank contest, Bauer designed a prototype tool for C-130 Hercules wheels, allowing the shop to work on the wheel inhouse instead of delivering them to Hill Air Force Base, Utah. This saved Davis-Monthan and the Air Force \$624,000 annually.

Project Spectrum Shield — a network of connected devices that detect and locate intrusion by unauthorized devices collecting against air bases and sensitive operating locations

Revolutionize the PCS Process—Bring Transportation of HHG from 1975 to 2023 — an application that fully automates household goods shipping management

Secure Agile Communications System — a self-contained fly-away kit that establishes secure communication channels for forward operating bases

Unmanned Flight Interface — a unified dashboard that

provides a reliable, seamless integration of all software tools utilized by unmanned vehicle pilots

The following were selected as the finalists from the top 15:
Autonomous Vehicles for Flightline Resupply* — automated delivery vehicles to provide supplies to maintenance crews working on aircraft on the flightline

CyberAssess — like TurboTax for your Authority to Operate* — an application that simplifies the steps and automates the paperwork required to introduce new technology into the Air Force information architecture

F-16 Collapsible Cockpit ACE Ladder* — a collapsible ladder that can be carried inside the cockpit, thus removing the need to preposition bulky legacy ladders

Flyways Defender for Airspace Awareness and Defense* — an artificial intelligence-enabled to provide air defense situational awareness and aid decision making

Load Plan+* — an interactive load plan application that allows medevac crews to label patients, select equipment needed for the mission, and optimize placement within the aircraft

Project Lavoy (formerly Project Lifesaver)* — advanced technology for contingency blood transfusions

The six finalist teams traveled to Arlington, Virginia, in January 2024 to refine their pitches and stage presence in preparation for their presentation to the secretary of the Air Force, chief of Space Operations, chief of staff of the Air Force, chief master sergeant of the Space Force, and chief master sergeant of the Air Force next year at a yet-to-be-announced location.

Spark Tank is DAF's flagship competition in which innovators from across the department pitch their ideas to a panel of top leadership and industry experts in pursuit of sponsorship to realize their idea.

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D-M hosts Torneo

By Airman 1st Class
ROBERT ALLEN COOKE III

355th Wing Public Affairs

Davis-Monthan Air Force Base hosted a regional level volleyball tournament in the Benko Fitness Center for west coast Airmen on Jan. 13-14, 2024.

Seven west coast U.S. Air Force volleyball teams traveled to Davis-Monthan on permissive TDY to compete in the two-day tournament.

“The difference between this tournament and previous tournaments is that this is actually a regional tournament, which is eventually going to lead to a finals,” said Ian Ventura, director of the volleyball tournament at Davis-Monthan.

The teams competed for a chance to qualify for the national tournament that will be held at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Each team played a minimum of three games to determine their regional ranking.

“Whoever wins this regional will be the west coast champion, and those champions get to play in the national tournament,” said Senior Airman Ricky Moore, 612th Air Operations Center imagery analyst and vice president of the Desert Lightning Volleyball Club. “Along with the national championship, every team is invited to the invitational, which is another tournament happening in San Antonio. Whoever wins the invitational gets a free spot in next year’s championship.”

As vice president of the volleyball club, Moore had the opportunity to design the awards and accessories for the tournament. Specifically, Moore designed stickers, patches, flyers, team shirts, trophies, and medals for the competition. Moore also worked with his teammates to create name for the tournament.

“Everyone kept bringing up the sun, and so then I was just like, ‘Okay, what if it’s ‘Tournament of the Sun,’ but in Spanish? ‘Torneo Del Sol,’” Moore said. “We went ahead and named it that.”

In the aptly named Torneo Del Sol tournament, each participating base had the opportunity to send three divisions into the competition, including: a men’s division, a women’s division, and a co-ed division. The men’s and women’s divisions played simultaneously on the first day, and the co-ed divisions played on the second day prior the awards ceremony.

“For each division, we took the stats that they had to rank them right,” said TSgt. Merida Diaz, 755th Operational Support Squadron cryptologic skills program manager. “They wrapped up their points over this last year. We had to take their rankings and then make a bracket that guarantees them three games.”

Diaz said that the base league coordinator, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Steven Landgren, made the bracketing system that allowed a three-game minimum for each team. Diaz organized a two-day schedule based on that bracket system.

Diaz was the setter and outside hitter for the women’s team. With sixteen years of volleyball experience, Diaz took on roles such as the event coordinator, the team’s interim coach, and the organizer of the women’s division.

“I’ve been with the women’s team from the beginning,” Diaz said. “Getting here to this point, it’s taken a lot of extra time, a lot of coordination, a lot of communication, and it’s really opened my eyes at least to how complex not only hosting a tournament is, but also keeping a team together.”

Diaz said that any Airmen interested in joining the Davis-Monthan volleyball team, called the Mustangs, can reach out to the head coach. McKenzie Rath accepted her position as the head coach after responding to a base wide email.

“I’m specifically coaching the men right now,” Rath said. “I have two captains coaching and playing with the women’s team. I’m technically the head coach because I run all the practices, but I think that with the men’s team, we have a really solid group of guys.”

At the conclusion of the tournament, Travis Air Force Base, California, won the competition for the women’s and co-ed divisions, while Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, won the competition for the men’s division. The women’s division of the Davis-Monthan Desert Lightning Team, formally known as the Mustangs, came in 2nd place overall. They started preparations to attend the next volleyball invitational tournament that will be held in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in February.

“We’ve seen a lot of improvement in the chemistry between each of the players,” said Rath. “I think that once we kind of get into a rhythm, we’re really good.”



U.S. Airmen on the Travis Air Force Base volleyball team pose for a team photo. The team secured a win for the women’s and co-ed divisions.



U.S. Airmen on the Travis Air Force Base volleyball team pose for a team photo. The team secured a win for the women’s and co-ed divisions of the regional tournament.

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III

U.S. Airmen play in a volleyball tournament at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 13, 2024.



U.S. Air Force

Torneo del Sol



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III
Team photo at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 14, 2024. The Travis Air Force women's division of the regional tournament.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Ross
The Davis-Monthan women's volleyball team competes against the Travis Air Force Base team during the Torneo Del Sol west coast regional volleyball tournament at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan 13., 2023. DM took second place for the women's division of the tournament.



Cloe Lewis celebrates scoring a point during the Torneo Del Sol west coast regional volleyball tournament at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 13, 2024. Lewis played on the Davis-Monthan women's and co-ed team during the tournament.

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Ross



U.S. Airmen on the women's division of the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base volleyball team receive an award at the Torneo del Sol, Jan. 14, 2024. Davis-Monthan organized and hosted the regional volleyball tournament for U.S. Air Force teams on the west coast.

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III



U.S. Airmen on the women's division of the Creech Air Force Base volleyball team receive an award at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 14, 2024. The awards ceremony was held after the second day of the tournament at the Benko Fitness Center.

U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Robert Allen Cooke III

WAPS testing going digital in February 2024

SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) — Beginning with the CY24 E6 promotion cycle in February, the Weighted Airman Promotion System test will be administered electronically, supporting a long-awaited modernization need in the Air Force's personnel development efforts.

The eWAPS platform is a collaborative effort between the Air Force, the Personnel Data Research Institute and PearsonVUE. Airmen participating in the 2024 technical sergeant and staff sergeant promotion cycles will be the first to use this system.

"This initiative, along with others such as the myFSS applications, is just one of many human resources transformation efforts," said Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller, deputy chief of staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services. "Transforming HR Information Technology is one of my five priorities and underpins the entire HR enterprise."

Promotion-eligible Airmen can anticipate receiving invitational emails, prompting them to visit the PearsonVUE website to establish an account by creating a username and password.

Test Control Officers or unit WAPS monitors will contact each eligible Airman to



Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller

Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller is the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, the Pentagon, Arlington, Virginia.

come into the base education and testing center to sign for their assigned official test date. During this time, they will review testing instructions and individual respon-

sibilities, which include the requirement to have their username and password with them on test day.

Airmen will also receive instructions on how to create their PearsonVUE account if they did not receive the PearsonVUE email or did not create an account due to reasons such as not updating their email in vMPP or a deployment.

Airmen are required to arrive in uniform, punctually, and with their Common Access Card. Additionally, it is now imperative for them to remember their username and password.

Lack of preparation, to include not having or knowing their username and password, can result in being marked as a no-show for testing. Airmen can retrieve their username using their first and last name and their email account and will also be able to reset their password by responding to security questions they established during the account creation process. Airmen who cannot reset their password and access their PearsonVUE account will be marked as a no-show for testing.

"This is a transformative step that enhances the careers of our Airmen," said

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne Bass. "By aligning with industry standards, e-testing ensures a secure and innovative platform for a fair and equitable opportunity in promotion and career advancement. It also streamlines the process by allowing



test responses to be submitted directly to the Air Force Personnel Center, eliminating the need for traditional mailing of answer sheets. This advancement not only instills total confidence in our Airmen but also provides unhindered access, empowering them to reach goals with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

This is a much-needed change... and there are more to come!"

Airmen who are not co-located near a base testing center, such as Airmen assigned to a geographically separated unit, could test at one of many PearsonVUE centers, affording greater flexibility.

If eligible Airmen do not receive an e-mail or they can't find it, they can go directly to the PearsonVUE website and create an account. Accounts can only be created through the PearsonVUE website after Jan. 30, 2024, at <https://home.pearsonvue.com/waps>.

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MOVE (from Page 4)

rorist to chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear threats.

Its capabilities also include humanitarian missions, civil search and rescue, disaster relief, medical evacuation, and non-combatant evacuations.

With water rescues being an ever-present reality for Okinawa, these new aircraft will allow Kadena Airmen to be better equipped to save not just American lives, but also Okinawan lives.

“These models are the new standard for combat search and rescue operations for PACAF and nationwide,” said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Brian Donnelly, 718th AMXS, 33rd Helicopter Maintenance Unit production superintendent. “All HH-60G models will be replaced on Kadena.”

The name “Jolly Green II” designated to the HH-60W was coined in a ceremony in February of 2020. It honors Jolly Green crews of previous generations who set the precedent for the AF combat rescue crews who operate today.



U.S. Air Force photos by Airman 1st Class Jonathan R. Sifuentes

U.S. Air Force Airmen with the 33rd Helicopter Maintenance Unit and 718th Aircraft Maintenance Unit offload an HH-60W Jolly Green II at Kadena Air Base, Japan, Jan. 26, 2024. The HH-60W is designed for mission critical operations to include personnel recovery, humanitarian missions, civil search and rescue, disaster relief, medical evacuation, and non-combatant evacuations.



An HH-60W Jolly Green II assigned to the 33rd Rescue Squadron arrives at Kadena Air Base, Japan, Jan. 26, 2024.



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Julio Mejia Larez, 718th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron HH-60 avionics apprentice, assists in the offloading of an HH-60W Jolly Green II at Kadena Air Base, Japan, Jan. 26, 2024.

KC-10 (from Page 1)

that carried the commander of a naval fleet, deeming it most important.

According to Baer, their own research indicates the jet was the seventh KC-10 delivered to the Air Force from McDonnell-Douglas, a once major Department of Defense contractor, in 1982. The Extender was assigned to the 22nd Air Refueling Wing at then active-duty March AFB, California, where two air refueling squadrons operated it. Following a base realignment and closure implementation, Air Mobility Command began the relocation of 17 of those tankers to Travis in the fall of 1994 and 79-1946 was delivered the following year.

“This tail is unique because of the nose art it wore back in the 1980s and 1990s,” said Baer. “When this airplane was delivered, it was what we call a ‘blue

and white.’ It had a blue and white paint scheme when it flew for Strategic Air Command, and through a lot of work—a lot of research—we have found photos of this aircraft from all those years ago wearing its nose art and its nose art was the 9th Air Refueling Squadron’s patch.”

Since that time, it has been flown by the 6th and 9th ARS as well as the 349th AMW’s reserve air refueling squadrons, the 70th and 79th ARS, making Travis the Air Force’s western hub for air refueling operations.

As the mission commander taking the aircraft to Davis-Monthan AFB, U.S. Air Force Capt. Clark Albers, 9th ARS KC-10 Extender pilot, said he was especially humbled.

“It was an incredible honor to be able to mission command a KC-10 retirement, especially the original flagship of the 9th

Air Refueling Squadron,” said Albers. “I was looking through my logbook and I’ve flown (tail number) 1946 nine different times now, including my initial aircraft commander check ride and five times while deployed.”

“I could not have asked for a better aircraft and community other than KC-10 to start my operational career in the Air Force,” said Albers. “It really is a sobering moment knowing these aircraft, after more than 40 tremendous years of service, will more than likely never see the skies again after landing at Davis-Monthan.”

The 60th AMW will continue to send its remaining KC-10s to “The Boneyard” through the rest of the fiscal year. After that, both 6th and 9th ARS will exclusively fly the KC-46A Pegasus to support Air Mobility Command’s aerial refueling operations worldwide.



U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Ryan Sickle, 9th Air Refueling Squadron KC-10 Extender boom operator, signs his name on the nose gear doors of a KC-10 with the tail number 79-1946 Jan. 11, 2024, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. The aircraft was designated as the 9th ARS’s flagship because of its history with the squadron. The aircrew delivered the KC-10 to the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG).



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Van Stewart, 9th Air Refueling Squadron KC-10 Extender flight engineer, checks aircraft maintenance forms prior to flight Jan. 11, 2024, at Travis Air Force Base, California.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Andrew Baer, 9th Air Refueling Squadron commander and KC-10 Extender pilot, leaves a note for the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG) while flying Jan. 11, 2024



U.S. Air Force Capt. Clark Albers, 9th Air Refueling Squadron KC-10 Extender pilot, conducts a pre-mission brief to the aircrew Jan. 11, 2024, at Travis Air Force Base, California.



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