

Desert Lightning News

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Serving Southern Arizona's military community, including Davis-Monthan Air Force Base

MARCH 2023

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FEATURE



Airman 1st Class Jhade Herrera

DIRT BOYZ AT WORK

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Preserving Air Force heritage

By Staff Sgt.
JACOB STEPHENS

355th Wing Public Affairs

The United States Air Force prides itself on its history, heritage, and tradition. It is the responsibility of today's Airmen to carry on the legacy of those who served before them.

The Airmen assigned to the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base Honor Guard do this through their support of memorials, ceremonies, and other official events.

"Our mission is to provide military honors to service members," said US Air Force Tech. Sgt. John Crona, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base Honor Guard program manager. "We present the colors, fold the flag, play taps and perform other functions at the different events we support."

As the second busiest honor guard team in Air Combat Command, they support over 1,200 events per year across an area of more than 49,000 square miles.

"I had always wanted to be a part of the honor guard as a way for me to give back," said U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Mercedes Rodriguez, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base honor guardsman. "My father was part of the honor guard and it makes me happy to be able to honor him and others who have served."

Honor guard Airmen are selected from different units across DM and support the program for six months at a time. Over the six-month period, they learn new skills, network with those outside their assigned career field and experience a new mission set.

"It has been amazing to see a different side of the Air Force outside of my typical job," Rodriguez said. "It reminds me why I wear the uniform and makes me proud to be part of the honor guard team."

Honor guardsmen can be recognized by their special uniform, which includes an



U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Jacob T. Stephens

Davis-Monthan Air Force Base honor guardsmen present a flag during a retirement ceremony at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 12, 2023.

honor guard emblem and no nametape. The special appearance is associated with their clean and professional presentations, which are a result of countless hours of training.

"We work hard to ensure that every family and event get the same quality of service," Crona said. "The Airmen go through a two-week initial training course to qualify as an honor guardsman and then continue to train throughout their time here to ensure they perfect their movements."

This training is extensive, continual, and targeted. Honor guardsmen are required to have intricate attention to detail, precise movements, and the ability to maintain military bearing in all situations to fulfill the requirements of their mission.

"We stand on the shoulders of giants," Crona said. "We recognize heroes from World War II, the Korean and Vietnam

wars, as well as current service members. To be able to recognize these heroes, pay respects and provide closure to the families is something like I have never experienced and is one of the most gratifying things I have ever done."

Air Force heritage and traditions have been built and solidified by Airmen since the Air Force's inception in 1947, and even before as part of the Army Air Corps. The honor guardsmen at DM are charged to carry on this legacy every time they don their uniform. Through their practice and dedication, they continue to precisely execute this rich, meaningful mission.



U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Jeremy Jones, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base honor guardsman, stands at parade rest during a retirement ceremony at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 18, 2023. Air Force honor guardsmen can be recognized by their special uniform, which includes an honor guard emblem and no nametape.



Honor guardsmen stand at parade rest during a retirement ceremony at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 18, 2023. As the second busiest honor guard team in Air Combat Command, they support over 1,200 events per year across an area of more than 49,000 square miles.

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355th MDG executes Ready Eagle

By Airman William Finn

355th Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force Airmen from the 355th Medical Group participated in exercise "Ready Eagle" Feb. 14-16 at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona.

During the event, the 355th MDG teams trained with the Air Force Medical Service to improve response capabilities during a mass casualty event. The teams spent three days in various classes and exercises, culminating with a mass casualty exercise on the final day.

"Ready Eagle is a training exercise that's designed to test our medics in a controlled environment when we have time on our side," said U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Matthew Centeno, 355th MDG medical readiness flight commander. "This ensures that in a real-world event, we are prepared."

For the first two days of the exercise, the MDG teams participated in open monologue classes to discuss and fully understand the necessary procedures that take place during a mass casualty event. On the last day, the mass casualty event simulated an aircraft crash and required teams from the MDG to respond at the site of the crash, receive the simulated casualties and effectively treat them.

"A lot of times we get the question of what we do on our training days, and

See 355th MDG, Page 3



U.S. Air Force photos by Airman William Finn

U.S. Air Force Airmen assigned to the 355th Medical Group perform treatment during a mass casualty training exercise at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Feb. 16, 2023. The Ready Eagle exercise evaluated response capabilities during a mass casualty event.





Warrior of the Month



Courtesy photo

355TH WING WARRIOR OF THE MONTH AWARD
355 WSA/CPTS
Member: Senior Airman Zhen Shen
Supervisor: Staff Sergeant Reardon

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Outside of Shen's finance job, he was hand-selected to fill the NCOIC role at the Wing Tax Center. He leads an eight-member team providing free tax services to all active and retired service members of the DLT. Additionally, Shen has passed the rigorous four-section CPA exam, earning his CPA certification. After completing his CPA, Shen began working towards his master's at Boston University. His dedication to education has inspired his peers and supervisors to further their education. Shen goes above and beyond his duty title every day, always bringing a positive attitude to the workplace.

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355th MDG _____ (from Page 2)

these are sort of the events that we train," said U.S. Air Force Col. Lea Ann Calderwood, 355th MDG commander. "Being an out-patient clinic, we typically see musculoskeletal complaints,

so taking the time to participate in exercises and training like this helps our medics get hands-on experience and work as a team to respond to the types of events that they don't see every day."

Airmen constantly train to keep

DM and the MDG ready for any situation at any time. DM is committed to the safety and wellbeing of the Air Force's most valuable resource, its Airmen and their families, by building their readiness, resilience, and relationships.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman William Finn



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355 MDG mental health initiative

By Senior Airman William Turnbull

355th Wing Public Affairs

In accordance with an Air Force-wide initiative, mental health professionals at the 355th Medical Group have started to focus on vectoring mental health patients who do not need direct therapy toward group therapy or shift care at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. This new approach of connecting

a member with the most appropriate resources is known as "Targeted Care Initiative for Mental Health." These group sessions will host five to 10 patients who will work with one to two mental health specialists. The purpose of this initiative is to improve access to care so that members do not have to face extended wait times for individualized care.

"Targeted care is a new way to approach mental health," said Katherine Lord, 355th MDG social

worker. "The goal is provide the most appropriate level of care to individuals who are referred to us and determine what the best avenue is for them whether it is us, the chapel, friends and family or an outside resource."

Another on-base resource available to Airmen is True North. This program embeds providers and social workers in specific units including: 48th Rescue Squadron, 563rd Rescue Group, 55th RQS, 79th RQS and Rescue Generation Squadron, 355th Wing, 355th Mission Support Group, 755th Operations Support Squadron, 355th Security Forces Squadron, 355th Equipment Maintenance Squadron and the 755th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.

"Right now, there are a couple of different ways you can get into mental health and be seen," said

LEFT: A paper with mental health references sits on display at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Feb. 13, 2023. The 355th Medical Group has begun a new way of filtering mental health care by vectoring people and providing group therapy.



Photos by Senior Airman William Turnbull

The 355th Medical Group mental health annex at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Feb. 13, 2023. The 355th Medical Group has begun a new way of filtering mental health care by vectoring people and providing group therapy. While this initiative is still being developed, it has already been implemented on nine other installations with improved access to care results.

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Jacob Stubbs, 355th MDG mental health technician. "Being referred by your primary care manager is the main way to get seen by specialty care providers, we also have walk-in hours where we can vector people to the appropriate level of care. For people that don't need specialty care we can refer them to the chapel or other resources such as a group session."

While this initiative is still being developed, it has already been implemented on nine other installations with improved access to care results.

For members at and around

Davis-Monthan, the mental health resources are the mental health clinic (520-228-4357), walk-in hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; the chapel (520-228-5411); primary care behavioral health appointment line (520-228-2778); and military family life counselors for active duty and family members (520-228-7749).

Off-base services include Military One Source (800-342-9647) and the Tucson Vet Center (520-882-0333). The national 24-hour crisis line hotline is (988) and the Arizona statewide crisis hotline is (1-844-534-4673).

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Tuskegee pilot to brigadier general

By Senior Airman
CASEY OVERTON

355th Wing Equal Opportunity Office

On Oct. 27, 1954, Benjamin O. Davis Jr. became the first African American to attain the rank of brigadier general in the United States Air Force. This was not the only barrier that Davis broke through his military career.

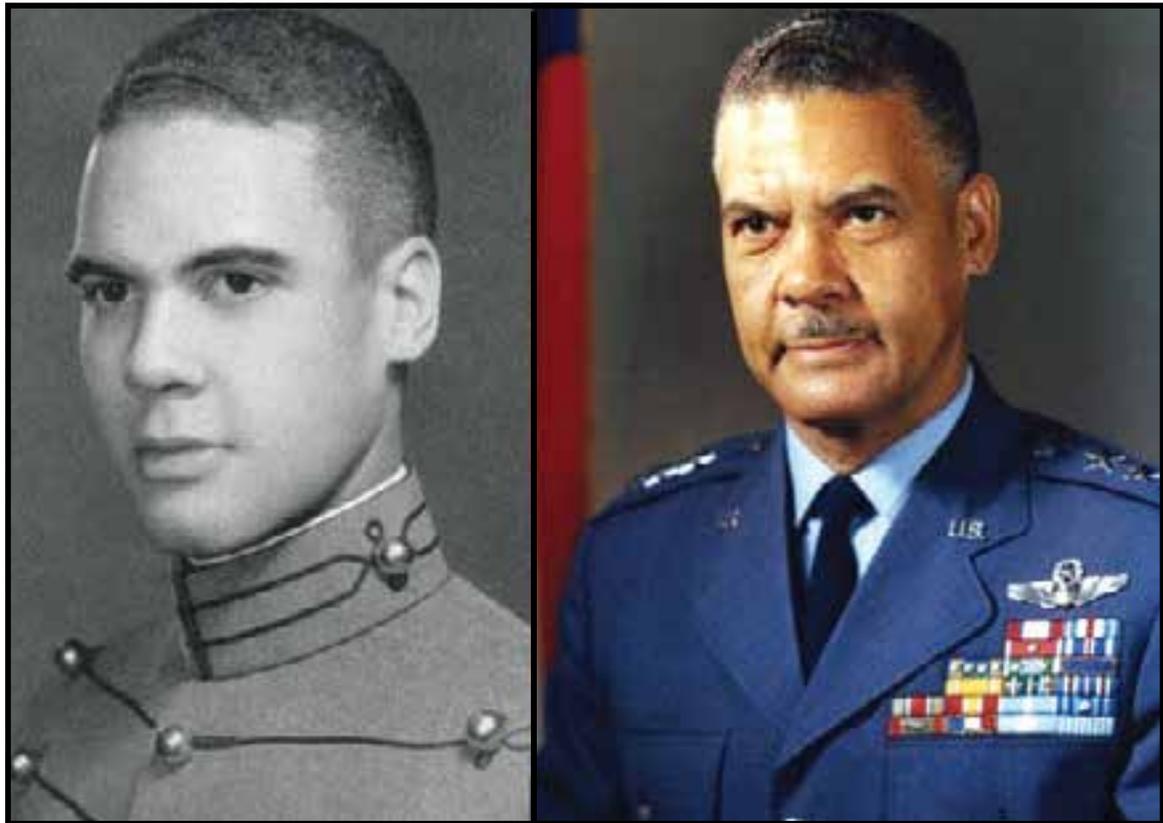
Davis entered the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1932, ultimately graduating in 1936. He was the first Black man to graduate from West Point since 1889, and just the fourth in the school's history. While attending the academy, he experienced fierce discrimination from his classmates who hoped that it would encourage him to leave. This treatment only strengthened his resolve to continue and graduate, proving that he belonged there.

In 1941, as a captain, Davis was selected to attend the first pilot training class held at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama. After his graduation

from the course, he became commander of the first African American fighter pilots to serve in the United States armed forces. Soon after, Davis and the 99th Pursuit Squadron, whom he commanded, were sent to North Africa in 1943. While there, Davis' squadron supported the Allied invasion of Sicily, proving that they were a formidable fighting force. They eventually became known as the "Tuskegee Airman," making history.

Over his 34-year career, Davis faced discrimination, racism, and unfair treatment based on the color of his skin. Despite all the adversity he faced, Davis inspired change within the United States and our military, paving the way for many more African Americans to follow in his footsteps.

For more information about Black History Month, contact the 355th Wing Equal Opportunity office at 520-228-5509, or visit: <https://www.deomi.org/human-relations/special-observances.cfm>



Courtesy photo

Benjamin O. Davis, at left as the fourth-ever Black graduate of West Point in 1936, and right, as the first African American U. S. Air Force brigadier general.





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355TH CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon
U.S. Air Force Airmen and members of the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron pour concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 12, 2023. All the planning required to pour took a month and was an opportunity for all Airmen to show their growth in their job skills.



U.S. Air Force Airmen and members of the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron pour concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, guard outside of their freshly renovated facility.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon
U.S. Air Force Airmen and members of the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron pour concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 12, 2023. The concrete was used to create a new outdoor drill area for the honor guard outside of their freshly renovated facility.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jhade Herrera
U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Nix, assigned to the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron, smooths concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 17, 2023. Nix took part in the project to create a drill pad for the DM honor guard team.

N DIRT BOYZ AT WORK



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon
ona, Jan. 12, 2023. The concrete was used to create a new outdoor drill area for honor



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon
U.S. Air Force Airmen and members of the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron pour concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 12, 2023. The concrete was poured outside the new honor guard facility to create a drill area for them to practice for ceremonies at.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jade Herrera
U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Samuel Babac, assigned to the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron, pushes concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 17, 2023. Babac took part in the project to create a drill pad for the DM honor guard team.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jade Herrera
Ralph Gunarson, 355th Civil Engineer Squadron heavy equipment specialist, pours concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 17, 2023. Gunarson took part in the project to create a drill pad for the DM honor guard team.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Paige Weldon
U.S. Air Force Airmen from the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron pour concrete at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, Jan. 12, 2023. This concrete created a walkway from the honor guard drill area to the Airman Leadership School patio.

Service members should avoid foods with poppy seeds

By **JIM GARAMONE**

DOD News

Service members may want to hold off ordering that “everything” bagel.

It’s not an urban legend: Eating poppy seeds can cause diners to test positive for codeine on a urinalysis, Defense Department officials said in a memo released Feb. 21, 2023.

“Recent data suggests certain poppy seeds varieties may have higher codeine contamination than previously reported,” said Gilbert R. Cisneros Jr., the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. “Consumption of poppy seed products could cause a codeine-positive urinalysis result and undermine the department’s ability to identify illicit drug use.”

This comes as something of a surprise for the department. At one point, some meals ready-to-eat contained lemon poppy seed cake, and dining facilities often served poppy seed salad dressing.

Officials became aware of the problem in 2022 and have worked to review the “limited scientific studies and also contracted with an independent laboratory to have the codeine and morphine contamination of multiple poppy seed brands analyzed,” officials said. “The analysis and

other recently published studies were the catalyst for the warning regarding poppy seeds.”

The poppy seed memo calls on the Army, Navy and Air Force to notify service members “to avoid consumption of all poppy seeds, including food products and baked goods containing poppy seeds. “Bagels, rolls, salads and salad dressing are the most common foods with poppy seeds, but there are many other foods where poppy seeds are used as spice. Many foods contain poppy seeds in the Balkans, the Middle East, and central and Eastern Europe.”

It’s possible that some service members have been disciplined or discharged for “innocent or unknown ingestion” of poppy seeds, an official said. “We are currently working that analysis and focusing on codeine-only positive tests from fiscal year 2019 to present,” the official continued. “This timeline is based on currently available information. The amount of poppy seeds consumed, concentration of codeine detected in urine, and time of consumption relative to the drug test are also important factors. As we gather more information, we will reassess and update, as appropriate.”

In his memo, Cisneros said service members should work with their local legal office for any related concerns with urinalysis results.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Vaughn Weber

People enjoy their meal at Fast Brrreak at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. Defense Department officials are now warning service members that eating poppy seeds could cause them to test positive for codeine on a urinalysis.

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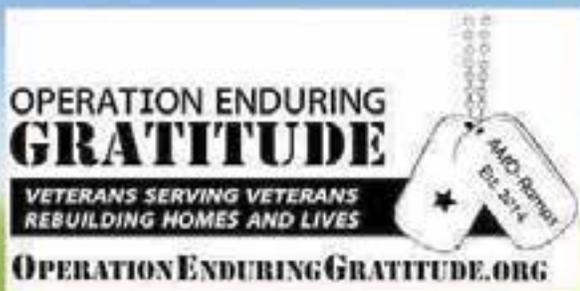
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