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66th Rescue Squadron RQS inactivates at Nellis AFB

The 66th Rescue Squadron inactivated during a ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023 for the second time in the unit's history.

The 66th RQS falls under the 355th Wing at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., but is located at Nellis.

The inactivation opens up additional space for a larger fighter presence at Nellis AFB as it transitions to the Fifth Generation Center of Excellence.

The 66th RQS was one of six Air Force active-duty HH-60 combat rescue units. Their primary mission was to provide rapidly deployable, expeditionary and agile combat search and rescue in response to contingency operations worldwide.

The squadron also conducted peacetime search and rescue in support of the National Search and Rescue Plan and the Air Warfare Center and directly supported the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter logistical and maintenance support requirements for the U.S. Air Force Weapons School and Air Combat Command-directed operational test missions.

"Our ability to integrate directly with the combat Air Force here at Nellis and have direct access to one of the greatest flying training areas in the country have both been amazing," said Lt. Col. Terry Kostellic, 66th RQS commander. "Thousands have been removed from danger on some of the worst days of their lives because of the actions of rescue Airmen that have walked these hallways. To me as an air rescue man, there is no greater impact."

The 66th RQS first took to the air as the 66th Air Rescue Squadron on Nov. 14, 1952, at Royal Air Force Station Manston, England, flying C-119 "Flying Boxcar" transports, H-19 "Chickasaw" helicopters and SA-16 "Albatross" seaplanes. The 66th ARS was inactivated on Jan. 18, 1958.

On March 1, 1991, the unit was reactivated as the now as the 66th RQS, operating the HH-60G. Over the next three decades, the 66th RQS deployed in support of Operations Northern Watch, Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Nellis Rescue Team conducted the first



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Lt. Col. Terry Kostellic, 66th Rescue Squadron commander, listens to Col. Jose Cabrera, 563rd Rescue Group commander, give an opening speech during the 66th RQS inactivation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023. The 66th RQS mission was to provide rapidly deployable, expeditionary and agile combat search and rescue in response to contingency operations worldwide.

combat recovery of a downed fighter crew by a conventional CSAR unit since the Vietnam War. Two Silver Stars, five Bronze Stars and 25 Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded to the 66th RQS aircrew for their heroic actions during operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"Rescue is a no-fail mission and the Airmen of the 66th have lived up to that requirement," said Chief Master Sgt. Michael Eberhart, 66th RQS senior

enlisted leader. "Their ability to adapt to any given situation is rooted in their heritage and there is no boundary on the impact they have made with the lives they have returned to their families over the years."

The HH-60G Pave Hawks assigned to the unit are expected to be divested by the end of the fiscal year. The intent is to capitalize on existing expertise and repurpose some of the active-duty Airmen and civilian personnel to support

the HH-60W Jolly Green IIs at Nellis AFB, while the remaining active-duty personnel will move on to new missions at other locations.

"As long as the Air Force sends Airmen into harm's way, there will always be a need for combat rescue," Kostellic said. "Regardless of what the mission calls for, rescue will find a way to make it happen and get those in need to safety."

—See **PHOTO FEATURE**, on Pages 6-7

It's easier to just say, 'I don't drink'

by Senior Airman Nash Truitt
Whiteman AFB, Mo.

"You have to lie."
"If I told the truth, I could not work."

Whether or not you have said any of the above phrases yourself, everyone in the military has probably heard someone say something similar about their yearly physical/mental health assessment.

Service members are presented with many opportunities to identify drinking problems. In my experience though, a lot of us are not honest. I wish I had been honest and gotten the help I needed before my problem became bad enough to affect my career.

I would go home every night and drink until I passed out. I knew it was an issue, but I was hiding how bad it was. I thought that if I asked for help, it would affect my job and how people viewed me.

I felt like I was stuck in a situation where I couldn't get a grasp on my problem, but I also couldn't speak to anyone about it.

I was wrong.
Eventually, my drinking problem reached a point where the decision to get help was taken out of my hands entirely.

In the military, we work in a culture where drinking can be common, which makes instances of binge drinking more probable.

Over time, I learned that alcohol use disorders are a lot more common than some people may realize.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health an estimated 28 million people ages 18 and above in the United States suffer from an alcohol use disorder. Less than 10 percent of those individuals will ever receive help.

The military is no different in that we have people who suffer from alcohol use disorders. Depending upon which study is reviewed, there is substantial evidence to support that we have a larger percentage of people who suffer from alcohol

The military has programs in place that are designed to specifically help us with identifying problems such as alcohol use disorders before they become more severe.

use disorders than the general public.

The military has programs in place that are designed to specifically help us with identifying problems such as alcohol use disorders before they become more severe. Even if the problems are severe though, those programs are still there to help any of us that need them.

Like myself, I am sure many other people wish they had spoken up about their problem, and some people are debating whether they should.

Maybe if I had spoken up, I wouldn't have lost a promotion, my rank, or my job, but more importantly, I would've been a better version of myself again sooner.

Even if it does not feel like it is a problem now, you may start to notice the reasons you or your friends give to drink, like "celebrating," "relieving stress," or "something to do," are happening more often.

My advice is to reflect on what is going on. Maybe it would be best to seek help, and there is nothing wrong with that.

More people struggle with alcohol use disorders than what a lot of people realize because it's easy to write the problem off compared to other substance abuse issues.

It's important to remember that in the military we work in an organization that does care about our well-being. Otherwise, programs that help us get better wouldn't be available. If you already have some concerning patterns or have noticed them starting to form, there are people who can help, and they are only a phone call or visit away.

Being honest with yourself or someone else, especially when it means you

will have to accept help from others can be hard. It being uncomfortable or hard though, should never be the reason that keeps you from being the best possible version of yourself.

For substance abuse support and resources, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 24/7 National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or visit <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>.



IS IT WORTH YOUR CAREER?

Air Force photograph by Staff Sgt. Jonathan Snyder



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The deadline for submissions to Desert Lightning News is no later than Monday, 4:30 p.m., the week of desired publication date.

For all submissions, a name and phone number of a person to contact must be included in the event questions arise.

All material is edited for accuracy, brevity, clarity and conformity to the AP Style Guide, to include military ranks and proper writing etiquette.

Corrections: Desert Lightning News staff members strive for accuracy each week. If you notice an error in fact, contact the Desert Lightning News staff at 334-718-3509, or e-mail editor@aerotechnews.com, and we will consider publishing a correction when appropriate.

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Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Haley Stevens

An MQ-9 Reaper sits on the flight line at Creech Air Force Base, Nev. The Remotely Piloted Aircraft enterprise is made of Airmen across all career fields to deliver justice to our nation's enemies 24/7/365.

432nd performs first iteration of ACE exercise with MQ-9 Reaper

by Airman 1st Class Victoria Nuzzi

Creech AFB, Nev.

A four-day Agile Combat Employment (ACE) exercise took place at the 432nd Wing/432nd Air Expeditionary Wing from April 11-14, 2023.

ACE is an operational concept intended to ensure Airmen are ready for contingencies and able to operate from locations with varying levels of capacity and support, ensuring Airmen and aircrew are postured to provide lethal combat power across the spectrum of military operations.

"A hypothetical real-world would be lifting off from Misawa, landing in Guam to set up, bringing over a small group of people, turning the aircraft, and launching it to the next mission. That way, it would be closer to the objective that it needs to get to," said Master Sgt. Cedric Wilson, the Section Chief for Weapons at Reaper AMU and Production Super for day shift ACE

operations. "It confuses the enemy as far as where we're at exactly and where we are launching from."

The exercise named Agile Talon, was the first in a series of MQ-9 Reaper ACE exercises that will take place on future dates. The exercise tested basic launching, recovering, and refueling capabilities while operating at a location with minimal footprint and equipment. The exercise also incorporated the use of a Portable Aircraft Control Station, a device used by maintainers to set up the aircraft and establish a satellite communications link before transferring control to the aircrew. The exercise aimed to test to see if, in a real-world situation, they could reduce the amount of Airmen needed and the need for a Ground Control Station for the MQ-9 Reaper.

The MQ-9 took off from Creech and stayed in the local area. It was piloted by Airmen from the 489th Attack Squadron stationed at Creech AFB and the 20th Attack Squadron, a geographically separated unit of

the 432nd Wing located at Whiteman AFB, Mo. The squadrons acted as both Launch and Recovery Element and the Mission Control Element, which were previously separate crews.

The 432nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron stationed at Creech AFB, Nev., successfully performed a PACS Satellite Launch and Recovery with the 489th ATKS and the 20th ATKS.

"Overall, we would say that the Agile Talon exercise was successful for the maintenance team," said Capt. Taylor Huang, director of operations for the 432nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "We met our objectives in validating and verifying our ACE manning and equipment footprint."

He said by being part of this exercise, his team was able to highlight and correct technical data deficiencies, solidify foundation PACS launch and recovery procedures, and instill best practices while operating in a hot climate environment.

AMMOS gets new commander during assumption of command at Nellis



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Elizabeth Tan

Lt. Col. Christopher Clark gives a speech after assuming the position as commander at the Advanced Maintenance and Munitions Operations School assumption of command ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 8, 2023. Prior to his current position, Lt. Col. Clark was stationed at the Headquarters Air Force Material Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, as the Deputy Director of Staff.



Air Force photograph by Airman 1st Class Elizabeth Tan

Brig. Gen. Richard Goodman, left, passes the guidon to Lt. Col. Christopher Clark during the Advanced Maintenance and Munitions Operations School assumption of command ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 8, 2023. The symbolic flag indicates all the authority of the incoming commander, who then assumes command.

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Deputy Director of DARPA takes familiarization flight at Nellis



Air Force photographs by Senior Airman Wyatt Stabler

Rob McHenry, the Deputy Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), left, and Lt. Col. Dustin Sanders, deputy commander of the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron, meet after a familiarization flight at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 24, 2023. DARPA works closely with service branches to create new strategic opportunities and novel tactical options in support of the national defense.



Maj. Megan Hainline, left, and Rob McHenry, the Deputy Director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), remove their helmets after a flight at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., May 24, 2023. DARPA works closely with service branches to create new strategic opportunities and novel tactical options in support of the national defense.

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66th Rescue Squadron RQS



inactivates at Nellis AFB

Air Force photograph

An HH-60G Pave Hawk from the 66th Rescue Squadron from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., sits on the airfield of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. The Nellis HH-60G Pave Hawks were part of a Personnel Recovery Task Force to provide combat search and rescue capabilities during Afghanistan evacuation operations.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Airmen case the 66th Rescue Squadron guidon during an inactivation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023. It is military custom to furl and case the guidon of an organization when its mission has been completed.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Airmen from the 563rd Rescue Group gather for the 66th Rescue Squadron inactivation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023. The inactivation opens up additional space for a larger fighter presence at Nellis as it transitions to the Fifth Generation Center of Excellence.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Col. Jose Cabrera, left, 563rd Rescue Group commander, and Lt. Col. Terry Kostellic, 66th Rescue Squadron commander, pass the 66th RQS guidon during an inactivation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023. The ceremony marked the second inactivation in the unit's history, with the first being in 1958.



Air Force photograph by Senior Airman Megan Estrada

Lt. Col. Terry Kostellic, 66th Rescue Squadron commander, furls the 66th RQS guidon during an inactivation ceremony at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 1, 2023. Since its reactivation in 1991, the 66th RQS deployed in support of Operations Desert Storm, Northern Watch, Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

Nellis makes wish come true



Air Force photographs by Senior Airman Zachary Rufus

Joseph D., a child with the Make-A-Wish foundation, left, and U.S. Air Force Maj. Aaron Hieronymus, 17th Weapons Squadron weapon systems officer, are at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., to tour the F-15E on June 2, 2023. A wish is as important as any treatment or medicine, a wish is a prescription for hope. The Make-A-Wish Foundation is a nonprofit that fulfills the wishes of children with a critical illness between the ages of 2 ½ and 18.



Maj. Aaron Hieronymus, 17th Weapons Squadron weapon systems officer, left, and Joseph D., a child with the Make-A-Wish foundation, tour an F-15E Strike Eagle at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 2, 2023.



Maj. Aaron Hieronymus, 17th Weapons Squadron weapon systems officer, tells Joseph D. and his family about the F-15E Strike Eagle's capabilities at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 2, 2023.



Joseph D. and his family pose for a group picture after receiving a tour of the F-15E Strike Eagle with the help of Nellis Airmen and the Make-A-Wish foundation at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., June 2, 2023. For more information on the Make-A-Wish Foundation, visit <https://wish.org>.

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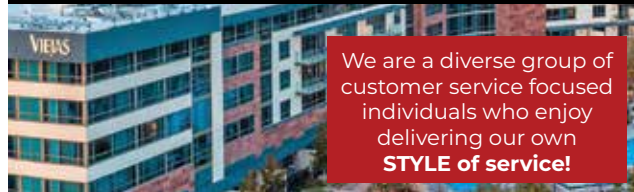
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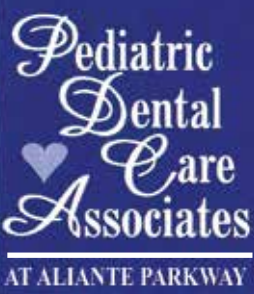
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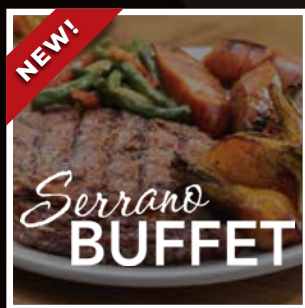
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