

Deployment Journal.

I was notified in February of the acceptance of my AEF (Air Expeditionary Force) it originally was proposed for 30 days then changed to 60 days with the stipulation that AFRC had to accept the entire 120 AEF rotation. There was another Airman that had volunteered to take the back of the AEF. It turns out that in March his commander disapproves the deployment for him. Well the math is easy I was informed that I would be there for a total of 120 days. My destination Al Udeid Air Base located in the Emirate of Qatar. I shall be doing a mission unique for folks in my career field 3V071 graphic arts technician. I will be working with Intel as a WSV (weapons system video) Specialist. I've never done this before so have a lot to learn plus I'm informed that I need a TS (Top Secret) clearance. Oh and I don't have the equipment to do the job! My functional manager (CMS Greg Koenig pulls strings and has a kit sent up from New Orleans some cables are missing but the rest is in tact we get this, around the middle of March. Scott Booker a contractor at our base goes way out of his way to help me set it up. As everything else I have done in my career I attack all of this.

The March UTA's (Uniformed training Assemblies) of which there were two 4-5 & 18-19 March I started the lengthy out processing from the 440th Communications flight were I am the multimedia NCOIC/Superintendent part of the 440th Airlift Wing which is my home unit. Also in March I do a TDY to Luke AFB, AZ to take an intelligence class to get me accustomed to working with this part of my new assignment.

In between this and late April a number of problems come up such as wrong size DCU's (desert camouflage uniform) ordered unable to log on to various web sites to take required classes, and a number of other bureaucratic items. These things tend to make life miserable and incredibly stressful for me. I finally have to call my Commanding Officer to light a fire under our 1st Sgt. who has done nothing much to help me out. My wife is doing just okay with this and I'm sure she wants to kill me but as most things she is forgiving and tries to support me as much as possible. My 2nd son gets out of line at the same time and we try to deal with this as well.

The man that I am to replace contacts me via e-mail and this helps quite a bit he tells me what to expect and has been very helpful. I know what to bring what hours I have (12hours 7 days at least on call with a cell phone) the work load is light but a presence has to be kept between myself and another Airman 24/7 if someone needs a day off the other has to cover for that time frame. The heat is pretty unbearable as well it is April and already 105 with humidity. I will be there at the hottest time of year.

21 April 06 I find out via e-mail that my date of departure 15 May the day after mother's day is changed to 12 May which on top of everything else is pretty much in line.

26 April 06 my cousin Mary asks me to come to her house for lunch to wish me farewell. It turns out to be a very nice surprise luncheon with my cousins. We even talked to my Aunt June in Arizona. My Cousin Mary's husband Tom made a very touching gesture loaning me his crucifix which he had received and carried in Vietnam and has carried it

all his life since. I'm scared to death I will loose it but know what a gesture like this means. I don't feel that I need it and feel pretty safe going to Qatar but again who knows the way things go now a days. Tom also talks about how he read that 702 Vietnam Veterans have served in this war and that I am a very small minority. It was pretty moving for me and I don't like the attention but it is over now.

11 May 06 we went out as a family to the cheese factory for a dinner to celebrate Jan's birthday which is the 16th being that I wasn't going to be there we had a little party early. It was nice.

12 May 06 Friday morning I've checked and rechecked as I do for any trip and feel I have everything I need for the deployment. I had to bring some chemical warfare gear but not all thank goodness. I had all this stuff that made no sense a sleeping bag for the desert I don't think so, a rain poncho, okay at least I was smart enough to leave this junk at home. I had e-mailed my counterpart and he sort of set me straight SSgt John Cavello he really helped me out. Jan was nice enough to get up early with me as I put on my desert uniform for the trip to finalize my out processing as well as get me to the commercial plane leaving from Milwaukee. Got to me to the base where I had my Intel briefing found out some interesting stuff like the country is loaded with terrorist but their just happy being there as well as 12% of the population is Iranian. Finished up with MPF (Military personal flight) a few good byes to friends at the base then off to the Airport still with a ton of stuff.

Interesting plane ride met this younger executive who lived in Atlanta nice guy, we chatted the whole trip. We both had iPods and he actually gave me his to give in turn to some needy Airman of lower rank. It was quite a generous gift. I turned it over to the 1st Sgt when I got to Al Udeid and hope it wound up in good hands.

After a short layover in Atlanta I got to Charleston where they put me in some screwy temp lodging not quite up to AF standards but good enough. Had a few drinks with a bunch of Aerial Port NG (National Guard)from Tenn. Good time but ate some pizza which did not sit well the rest of the night. The rest of the night wasn't long show time of like 3AM yuk...naturally we stood around until about 0830 to get on the crowded flight.

13-14 MAY a pretty long flight but pleasant we had an hour or two layover in Frankfurt to change crews and then refuel. After another 5 or 6 hours we found ourselves at Al Udeid AB Qatar. I never even heard of this place until they told me I was going here. Got off the plane and was volunteered to download baggage, you got to be kidding me I'm a Master Sgt and they have me humping bags. Well I wasn't going to raise a stink. Another full time MSgt had us all chug a full bottle of water in the 95-100 heat. I was a sweaty MSgt by the time I got to process in to personal. There were so many instructions made your head spin.

Finally was met by my new CO Major Brian Kravitz seemed like a good guy pumped up for the mission an Intelligence office and in charge of our flight. I with another MSgt who is the 3C or computer fixit NCOIC are the highest ranking NCOs.

With the help of Major Kravitz I drag my bags to my room and he gives me a nice tour of the base while on the way he stops by supply to check on getting desert Sun glasses for a couple of his troops. I naturally say I don't have these neat things either. He orders these expensive puppies for me as well (and they are nice).

I drop my gear by my new room. I am told being an MSgt I get my own. Well this turns out wrong but hey we are in a war zone suck it up. I take a short nap I decide after talking to the Major that I wish to work a bit that night.

I meet whom I am replacing SSgt Kathy Parker a very religious lady and not together at all. She has missed two briefings and they are ready to kill her after working with her a couple of days I find that she is absolutely worthless and wonder how she ever got her rank or who was her supervisor that let her go on such a high profile assignment. I actually tell her to stay at home her last working night as she is so worthless and is no use even in instructing me. SSgt Edwards who I work with is just the opposite great trooper.

Well hey we're still on the first night are we not. It so happens that it has been painfully slow this last 4 months hardly any bombs dropped which means no work for us WSV guys (weapons system video). So happens it all happens Sunday evening while I am there for the first time. I insist on digitizing the video myself and tell the pilots I'll bring them good luck the next night some strafing and you can make out the bodies. Most of the week is slow as I learn my way around. Thursday I get two more bombings lost part of the master we set up. Wasn't anyone's fault but at least I taught myself enough to fix the damage and get the video done in the allotted time. There is a lot of pressure in this job all the Intel must be done to include the video uploaded on a server within 2 hours of the plane landing. I still don't know what happened.

24 May 06 finally getting settled in have made some standards for the WSV and have even an electronic form for the INTEL folks to easily fill out and they can even e-mail it to us and we cut and paste the information for the slide portion of the files. Been slow just have sightings that they do for INTEL no strikes for a while. I have an idea and the commander mentioned things may pick up. I work on the OPPS side of the base and this is a bit of a chore to get here but the one thing I noticed is that there are bunkers all by the Coalition compound where we sleep but hardly any here where the heart of the operation is. I mentioned this to my commander and it gave him thought as well. We are 80 miles from Iran and they would definitely make this their prime target seems silly to me. In the mean time since I keep this up the 336th FS left (the Rocketeers is their name) and are replaced by the 335th FS(Chiefs) who brought this huge mascot a cigar store Indian the Rockets stole it and hid it. Thought it was bad manners for the Chiefs to bring their mascot in while they were still here. All this done in a manner which was fun but you could tell that they are all very competitive by nature. The Chiefs were going pretty nuts about the missing "Chief". This new squadron is much more intense than the last. Lots of young pilots in both squadrons they don't even feel any danger but these bad guys do try to shoot at you. I cover every briefing on my shift. Earlier in the week I worked extra hours to let SSgt Edwards have some time off. My day isn't so bad I usually wake up eat, get my laundry (free laundry service 72 hour turn around. I then go to the pool (yes a pool) and do laps for around a half hour then goes to work. Then if not busy at night go to

the Oppstown gym and work out again. Go home go to bed. Today was even better nothing in the afternoon so I went to the nice movie in Coalition Compound and now am back at work waiting for a mission that is now half an hour late. Lots for them to do if going to Iraq they have to refuel several times depending. This all has to be choreographed to meet the refuelers at a specific spot.

25-26 May Last night was one of those nights nothing much to do but wait for a 2015 mission to return. It turns out they either missed the tanker or from what I was told the tanker just didn't show up. The flight had to refuel in Kuwait so they did not get in until after 2300 which canceled my workout. I still slept like a baby. I always wake up in the middle of the night or early morning with a full bladder this in part because, after all I'm 56 years old but also the enormous amount of water we all drink to hydrate again, don't know what I would do if I worked on the flight line probably be drinking even more. Pool was down this morning again when I went over there so will have to swim tomorrow. I took some video this morning and must make myself take more images and video to capture this for myself and Texas tech. The demographics on Vietnam vets serving over here are very small. I'm a dinosaur I guess. I may e-mail Dr Verrone to see if he has any stats. Does not look like many missions going to be productive today 26 May 06 I have one debrief at 1315, then nothing until 0015 which SSgt shall cover. I will probably eat and work out on this side of the base and then go home. There is a movie tonight at 2000 "Pink Panther" which I'll try to see and perhaps the pool before hand. I have a computer in my room but it is not getting my e-mail yet. I'm also working supply issues for my young 2nd Lt George Taylor, trying to help in any way I can as they are so much busier than myself.

26-30 May Not too much happening until the 28th when Jan is kind enough to e-mail me that my 3rd platoon mate (Vietnam) and long time friend Mike Ackerfeld passed away either the night before or that morning. I'm in shock to say the least the week before I deployed he had an heart attack but it seemed everything was going well and he was going to heal up. Mike would have been 56 in July. I find a way to call his wife Denise and the next day send her a card, with as nice a letter that I can write. I ask Jan to send 100 bucks to the scholarship fund in his memory. I also ask in the letter that they think about donating his papers to Texas Tech for a collection under his name. Jan comes through big time on this and is her normal helpful above and beyond self. Getting to interact with the Chiefs 335th FS. I was able to have dinner with our little Intel group SSgt Phillich and SrA Goodfellow last night and Lt Col Todd Boyd the 335th CO sat down with us. He is a no non sense officer and has a wonderful reputation with the enlisted folks in the Squadron. I guess this is unusual as most Sq CO's only pay attention to their pilots. We had a very nice conversation; I could tell he was feeling me out. I mentioned how I thought it was pretty dangerous for his young pilots to be doing these strafing runs on a crazy enemy who like nothing more than to get our kids in a trap to shoot them down. Funny thing is he agreed with me and said he was thinking the same thing last evening. All in all I am very impressed by this Officer. He works long hours and is around all the time. We had a pretty long conversation. The way the chain of command works is that I work directly for EOSS (Expeditionary Operations Support

Squadron CO until 2 June Lieutenant Colonel Steven D. Garland after 2 June Lt Col William M Tart) Wing Intel flight

Under Major Brian Kravitz chief of Intel. Major Kravitz also seems to be a fine officer taking care of a lot of small details he comes into the office once a day and chats with me. He is very busy as most of Intel seems to be I'm the least busy of all. Although I work Wing Intel the small group of Intel personal that I work with here at the 335th Sq is owned by the 335th and answer to them as well as to Wing Intel. 2nd Lt George Taylor works Midnight to noon SSgt Franchesca Phillich works noon-Mid (same as me) SrA Cameron Sutter works 6AM-6PM and SrA Mike Goodfellow works 6PM-6AM, SSgt Michael Edwards is my co-worker in WSV and works Mid-Noon. Everyone is nice to work with and I have no complaints. SSgt Phillich is a very interesting lady and already has my respect a mother of a 3 yr old this 34 yr old Intel SSG livens things up, always a smile and in a good mood she is NCOIC of 335th FS INTEL. She is from Puerto Rico and when she came into the AF knew absolutely no English in the last 10+ years she not only learned English but got her BS degree. They want her to go to officer's school. She is a little robust and tells me her and her husband have a bet who can have the best abs when she deploys from this deployment...but says there's a point where she'll stop as her husband wants his woman to "have some meat on her". She also is a compulsive cleaner and goes home and cleans her room every night and even from what she said cleaned the hallway of "dust bunnies", total stitch. Her I and the other INTEL troops will have lunch and dinner together it is about the only social life I have so far. In the meantime I get e-mails from Jan all the time and we certainly miss each other. Although not busy you get to see a lot of things here. I realize what a rotten enemy we have in these terrorist. They tape everything they can not so much to document their terror but to get paid from whatever source is backing them. There is also the instances that the ladies in western Iraq have been rapped by Syrians in the Moslem world these ladies are now worthless. What do they do? They turn into suicide bombers against us! Sure would make sense to seek revenge on the Syrians but in their mind kill the infidels instead. There is no logic here.

31 May 2 June I guess around 31 May our crew got credit for helping to take down a wanted bad guy. Makes it all worth while Kudos were sent around. Also that afternoon our Sq CO Lt Col Garland took his last flight here in an F15E Strike Eagle. Lt Col Boyd had me shoot some photos on the flight line one with BG Kresge the wing commander I got some great shots and made a copy for Lt Col Garland. June 2nd we had the change of command ceremony at 0900 most where in attendance from our 379th Expeditionary Operational Support Squadron EOSS which is whom I am attached to. This last couple of days with down time I have been designing a challenge coin for the 335th FS AEF cycle. June 2 I woke up and went to the latrine, more like I staggered. I must have been very dehydrated and never knew what hit me. It took a few hours to shake it off. I also suppose it may have been something with blood sugar so I drank Orange juice as well. Feel much better now it happened around 0500 and it is now 1200. I shall try and be more careful. Seems I am always the lucky one the strikes happen when I am on duty. I still have a great relationship with everyone and they all seem to know me even if I may not know them type of thing. The pilots seem to really enjoy BS'ing with me. Although this is

rough on me family wise and heat etc, I'm very satisfied I made the right choice in coming here.

Also today 2 June we had a large number of Air Force JTAC troops visit us here at OPPS on their way to Iraq perhaps 20 or so. All ranks from a Lt Col to A1C. The JTAC stands for Joint Tactical Air Controller these or our guys on the ground that guide or jets and make many of our missions. They are attached to Army Divisions and wear their unit patches even their combat patch and the symbolic nature of that patch is not lost on them at all and they wear them proudly. Great young folks in many cases doing a hazardous job. I chatted with some of them and showed them what my part in all of this was. Just another of the interesting things going on here all the time.

3 June I did not have to come into work until late afternoon so went for a swim and then a movie. Not too bad of a day. I'm at work now waiting for a late flight that seems to be always late this time of day, after that I can go home. Scary when you start calling this little 10X10 room home. Two days this will be without me doing any WSV (weapons system video), need some work, especially strikes. I will have my beers tonight it is the big party night time to use my new ration card for the month. I wish the flight were back now so I could go work out and get on my way but it is late as usual. Tomorrow Sunday will be a full day. Some of my favorite pilots going out on the next mission I always tell them to be careful and safe. I don't think they have a clue how dangerous their work is, think they are bullet proof.

Also found out that even the pilots are sharing rooms and all in the Rank of Major and below in the flying squadrons will have to. There are other fighters and assets coming now probably with the Iranian situation coming to rattle the sword. I being with EOSS have my own room they keep the squadrons separate for some reason. I will just shut my yap and leave it at that.

4 June 06 It was up to 118 earlier today. Pretty toasty out. I have been in the loop of things at my base in Milwaukee. One of the troops that works under me TSgt Lindquist who has some issues. This time he tried to demand that he get per diem because he has another home farther away then the one he claims as his residence near the base. After bothering several people and not getting the answer that he wanted he went over their heads and to the Group commander Col Betty Bowen. Then later while out there during the week asked for a day off saying his work was done also asking the Col. He is getting a reprimand letter. He also lied to the Col about not being busy. I

Slow in the shop now but not worth going outside it is so hot. I shall wait until after dinner and work out. Next debrief is not until 2215 and it is 1530 now. Gives me time to keep up with the journal.

5 June almost could have had the whole day off only had a mission coming in late nothing much going on. Boy it would be great to see a movie, but the movie went to see a movie it was bad left half way through and just came to work and did work on challenge coins and logos for our units. Meet a funny guy with my sense of humor at the pool in the morning. He looks at me and says "Boy if it were only 10 degrees warmer it would be

perfect". I get a kick out of this and he goes on to tell me that he was here last year. He goes on to say that it gets lots worse then this. I say "couldn't you just lie and say this is as bad as it gets?" He goes on to say "I wouldn't want to ruin the fun for you". For some sick reason I get a big kick out of this, I laugh pretty much all the way to my room.

6 June 06 Today would have been my father's birthday. Much of the same except now the weather has changed the humidity now is in play so I'm told for the rest of summer and into fall. It is incredibly hot now. I have another pretty easy day taking care of e-mails and such. Everyone thinks I'm stressed out. I'm only stressed out as there is no activity lately! I want to help kill terrorist that is why I'm here. I go and spend a lot of time at the pool still come in hours early to work on projects. I would have gone to the movie show but it is closed for some reason. I go into work way early again work on designs makes the day go by very quickly. SSgt Edwards tells me we have adobe illustrator on our computer now I go to town. I cover my shift and part of Edwards as it will help him out. SSgt Phillich is not in today I miss having dinner with her she is a very fun positive person. It is after 0130 and I go to the bus stop, now after midnight they only run every half hour. I see a guy in shorts t-shirt, the normal off duty wear. He is about my age and pretty outgoing, we strike up a conversation (sometimes I am starving for communication). Feeling each other out as old guessers do it comes up that I say that I go back a long ways. Now only among competitive men do things like this come up. He goes "I probably been around longer then you". Now the gauntlet has been thrown! I said okay I started in 1968! He goes on to say I started in 1967....damn he got me! He goes are you a reservist and I reply affirmative. He explains that he was in the Army and active all these years. He is a WO5 and was in Vietnam as a helicopter pilot. I tell him well you won't believe this but I was in the Army 1st and go into my shirt and pull out my ID holder which also has my Combat Patch! He looks at it a big grin comes on his face and he says "The Americal, that was my unit as well". It's a small war. He goes on to say that he wears his Americal patch on his greens but does not wear his on his BDU's/DCU's (Battle dress uniform/Desert Camouflage Uniform) as it goes about the American flag and nothing should do that. (I have to agree on this one.* Now the talk really starts up. A young LT with an SUV pulls up and offers us a ride; we look at each other and say should we take it or continue our conversation and wait for the bus. We get in the SUV another young airman gets in the front with the LT. We continue jabbering away introduce ourselves I mention the ADVA we talk about Nam casualties in our units and on and on, with little regard for the driver and other passenger. We get to my departure point and part ways telling each other were to find the other. The Lt looks at us and says "Sirs it has been an honor to give you both a ride". Guess it pays to stay and cover another guy's shift some time. I Will try and go to WO5 Leech's shop today and talk some more. The demographics are that there are only a few hundred Vietnam vets that have served in the Middle East this last war.

* I have been told it is no longer a "Combat Patch" but called a hostile fire patch which means you could be anywhere in the AO. Things change.

7 June hot as hell I find I may get a chance to go to Doha (capital of Qatar) the 8th with my 1st Sgt. It would be great to get away and see I have to see if time will allow.

8 June 06 Doha Very interesting trip big city all we stopped at were a couple of malls and lunch. The drive was really for a drivers training class. It was an eye opener in many ways. They have way too much \$ here. Gas cost .30 a gallon. The citizens for the most part don't work and the TCN (third county nationals) do all the work. I looked at all these folks in the mall men with these white formal white sheets and women covered from head to toe in black of all things. One mall rivaled the great American mall it had an ice scattering ring in the middle and a room with artificial snow for down hill skiing. It reminds me of Roman times with them all fat and stuff and the barbarians just waiting to kick their ass. This is why they let the infidels in this country and pay for most of the building of this gigantic base. They are building like crazy as they will host the Asian games in September something like an Olympics. We also are not allowed to travel there on Fridays as it is their holy day unless it is an emergency. Place is full of spies and such that is why we can even get in trouble if they find paperwork in our laundry. It's just a very strange place. I will send some photos later tonight.

8 June cont. You have no idea how close it was that the WSV video of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi wasn't mine. We missed it by a hair someone just beat my boys. Glad they got him but it was so damn close...shoot. Still a great day for all of us fighting this war. There was some disappointment as it was so close we had guys in the area they just were not the first on the scene. A good chance I would have done the video that is on every TV in the world today. Below short blurb from yahoo web story. Most-wanted Iraq terrorist al-Zarqawi dead

AP - 1 hour, 54 minutes ago

BAGHDAD, Iraq - Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, whose bloody campaign of beheadings and suicide bombings made him the most-wanted terrorist in Iraq, was killed when U.S. warplanes dropped 500-pound bombs on his isolated safe house, officials said Thursday. His death was a long-sought victory in the war in Iraq.

15 June 06 It has been some time since I have been able to add something not that there hasn't been stuff it is just I keep busy with lots of little things from the time I come in to the time I leave. I started the "swimming club" my goal is to log 2,000 lengths of the pool I should do this easily. I swim laps every morning for the last month at least a half hour maybe more non stop. It has been slow yet WSV wise but the camera stuff is taking off starting to do photo support uploaded an image this Monday to JCCC. Starting to teach Edwards. I think I scare him with my aggressive nature. He'll live through it. Had a IED (improvised explosive device) sighting last night stayed very late and got it done an uploaded to higher channels. It may have saved a life. This what I came here for to help where I can.

17 June today is mine and Jan's 34th anniversary it seems like time has just shot by. She sent me a very nice e-mail today. Last night we had a ice breaker Bar-b-Q. It was a nice little get together and a good idea. It was a pretty small room and crowded but guess that is the point. Lt Col Tart our CO for the 379th EOSS talked to me for quite a while. He is pretty much on the same page I am for hating terrorist and getting the job done. He will be here for a year. Besides that nothing much knew except a couple of days ago Capt

Bobby Guidry took some amazing video through his weapons pod of the moon and their F15E Strike Eagles flying into it great stuff and I'm trying to get it declassified for public view. We'll see it is a tough project doing anything like this but I'm the NCOIC of this stuff and if let loose it would be bad for everyone without clearance. Also this morning met a contractor that has been here some time he used to be reserve out of O'Hare and lives near us in Elgin Illinois great to have a conversation with someone. I really don't get to talk to too many folks.

26 June Yikes it is a little harder to keep up this journal then I thought also hard to remember everything that has happened in almost 10 days. I spoke too soon before around 5 days ago received a room mate a SrA E-4 named Karmon (that's right with a K). Very nice out going young fellow, I feel for him being stuck with a MSgt, he has no rights and can't really do much. I try to be as fair as I can. There are dry eraser boards outside our room. I was impressed by the message the first day "MSgt DeGroot sorry you're stuck with me SrA Karmon ???? The reason that I have a room mate is the base is getting very crowded and space is at a premium. As I said before there are even officers doubled up so suck it up as we say, there is a war going on. Unfortunately for Karmon they adjusted his shift to suit me. He is working midnight until noon. Karmon came in with a F16 squadron the 23rd FS from Stuttgart Germany. They are filling the gap of a Aircraft carrier that went home.

I was able to write up SSgt Edwards for NCO of the month, he clinched the INTEL flight and is nominated for Squadron and I hope he wins that and goes to group then Wing. I know I was nominated myself but don't know any of the results. I'm still working like mad. There have been some problems at the gym due to some of these younger guys play a CD player there so loud I can't even hear my own iPod. I have kept asking them but every night it is the same thing. Finally wrote in there suggestion book that there was a problem. If that does not work next I e-mail the service commander and have them just pull the damn thing out. Being a MSgt has its rewards. A couple of days ago my friend from the Americal had me by his plane we took photos his job is to fly VIP's around the AOR usually 4 stars and above. The plane is luxurious and they have an SSgt stewardess. It is quite the job and I can see why Jim likes it. I'm very surprised it is the Army flying this jet with two CWO5's at the controls.

All in all very slow lately for me on my shift only a couple of clips in the last two weeks. I did manage to get something in my eye or it is an infected. Went to the Doc he gave me some drops told me to come back if it did not go away and we would do antibiotics. That is about the most exciting thing lately. I call home once or twice a week and e-mail Jan at least once a day. I can tell she is busy and sometimes. Been watching a lot of movies when I can not really much else to do work out eat watch movies go to work. I'm still working on permissions to photograph in sensitive areas but the Major who is our DO watches comics on his computer and lets my paperwork sit. I finally went a bit over his head, we shall see if it works.

I have been asking one of the weapons officers Lt Benjamin Aldus to take flags up for me for gifts. I have 9 as of tonight and they will be very special gifts with certificates for my

sons first then a couple of friends at work, my boss who is a 9-11 survivor and has been so supportive of me. I have redesigned the certificate and will have them signed by the pilots and weapons officer these will be the best of gifts.

4 July 06 Now I am doing lots of photography for both squadrons have my letter for flight line photography the pilots and everyone seem to really enjoy my work. I'm also uploading the JCCC joint Combat Camera Center at the pentagon. There have been a few things that have happened since I last wrote in my journal. I saw one of the nicest gestures by some of our British allies a few days ago. A young airman was on the bus with a lot of luggage. They not only insisted on helping him off with it but helped carry it to his room. It was pretty chivalrous to see.

On the other hand I was taking a shower and the stall I was in would not turn off all the way. I got the number for maintenance and knowing how precious water is here decided to call. The Airman told me fine but he needed the building number. I explained that I did not know it and it is a ways away. I explained where this building was so there could be no confusion. He insisted on the building again. I finally got fed up and told him in no uncertain terms I was not going to walk over there and to look at map for god's sake. He finally shut up, what an idiot.

Still swimming each morning and working out at night, lost about 10 pounds so far and must have put on some muscle from the weights.

Today also trying to call my buddy John Crowley for his birthday can't get through but will keep trying.

Also one day taking video on the end of the flight line is quite an experience. The sound of our F15's is incredible, if you don't have ear plugs you'll lose your hearing for sure. One pilot Capt Flood "dusted" us he pulled up right where we were, it was like a tornado. If I would have had my good camera gear it would have been ruined. Lucky I brought replaceable items. Also doing well with the flags have 12 so far with another few to go. I keep thinking of people that are close or have done me some great favors. My boys were naturally the first on the list and I hope they appreciate them. Next was my best buddy Steve.

All else is going well, they asked for our info today for the return trip. I'm trying to get my replacements info as well so I can get him/her all the info they need. We also are beyond 1/3rd done. The 20th of July it will be the half way point and that will seem like a mile stone. Still hot as hell, but after 2 months I'm slightly better. If I leave for work in the afternoon still sweaty when I get to work. Only takes a few minutes out there to feel it.

5 July 06 we have to take buses around here as this is such a big place. If you are just making it to the bus and don't run, they leave you, plane and simple. Not a pleasant prospect in 120-130 degree heat to wait for the next one. My bus was early, I went running over all these stones they lay down to keep the sandstorms to a minimum and low and behold Mr. knee is sprained at best, worse part is it pisses me off (still does not make the ouch go away). I feel like the wounded water buffalo with the lions licking there chops, hope to mend soon. This was last night the 4th that I went to the Emergency room of our little hospital. Doc was very nice said my knee did not sound too good but

that was probably already the case. He gave me a prescription for Motrin, seems this kind of stuff never helps. The bus thing happened in the afternoon, I went when off of work. This morning slightly better but still hobbling like a 90 year old. I'll go back in a few days if it gets worse. My CO Maj Kravitz, was pretty upset I did not let him know right away. To tell the truth I never thought of it. He has to write a report. It could be worse I guess. This limits my gym workouts.

6 July 06 Today is President Bush's birthday. I also saw a sign this morning on someone's dry erase board that the person in the front room was snoring so loudly that it was unreal and something about hey it is quite time here 24/7. Well that was my room and probably me. The meds I was on must have made me go into a comma; I figure tough shit, what he wants me to do shoot myself. The board was erased shortly after I saw it. I volunteered to take Edwards first debrief on his shift. He sent me an e-mail that he needs a day off (I would have to work 24 hours straight). I replied that I need a day off too. I think we will have to make an attitude adjustment here. We both are not over taxed and I do all the photo and such. He very rarely works 12 hours. Perhaps I'll just put us on 12's for the rest of the AEF that should shut him up and stop the whining.

9 July 06 the sandstorms are about as bad as I have ever seen them today. So far our planes are grounded and hopefully it will let up. I went swimming in the AM as I normally do and got in a solid 45 minute swim then was relaxing and they decided to close the pool. Even with 8-9 foot solid walls around the wind was whipping up. I have also had some problems with the young SSgt E-5 that works with/for me. He wants a day off. That would mean a 24 hour shift for me. I will admit our work is not that hard we have very flexible hours and come and go as we please. I usually even take time to work out across the street virtually every night as does my SSgt. He has been performing less and less and been pretty unresponsive to a couple of request. This on top of missing commander's call. I had put him in for NCO of the month. He did not get it which was lucky as he would not have been present to receive it which would have been very embarrassing to me. Here is the e-mail I send him today when he couldn't take the hint from my first e-mail. Painful lesson for him but this is how I feel and that is why I'm an MSgt and he isn't.

10 July 06 well it seems SSgt Edwards did not take my e-mail too well. We'll have to talk. This is solid day 2 of the sandstorms. They supposedly will be here for the next couple of days as well. It really is a pain. I tried to wear my contacts now my right eye is sore again, plus the banged up knee and of course always the hip. I'm a mess out here. Very boring long night at work. Our planes are 4 hours late tonight coming in and this may be the 1st time I went all day without a work out of some sorts. The pool is closed because of the storms. I hope this gets resolved with Edwards. I don't think he understands that if he wants something like this he should at the very least do what I ask him to do. I'm not being impressed lately. Does not mean he is a bad kid just does not seem to want to do anything extra.

15 July 06 Well there usually is something going on but nothing much that I can think of lately. It has been very slow in my particular job of WSV. I have been taking a lot of photos and that is the good part. Folks seem to really appreciate their images being taken

and displayed. I have taken hundreds to date and have almost 20 uploaded to JCCC. My friend MSgt Bill Kimble from the 4th Combat Camera Squadron at March AFB, CA is attempting to send me a kit with lenses and a good body. Great as the quality of my shooting will go way up. SSgt Edwards is still hardly communicating with me, his lose. He just does not seem motivated to do anything outside of our job description. To each there own. Can't help but think that I would be going home now if it was the original 60 day tour, I can at least start counting down now. Still hot had 3 days of very heavy sandstorms. My eye seems infected again my knee is still a mess plus my hip hurts, so much for feeling young. Can't even bend to pick anything up. Nothing much I do except take multron all the time. Tonight is beer night something to look forward too. I gave Lt Aldus a coin last night he is flying tonight and perhaps this will bring him some luck and he'll bomb someone for us. Everyone is buzzing about the little war going on in Israel right now as well. This could get exciting very quickly. Does not take a brain surgeon to realize the Iranians and Syrians are behind a lot of this.

18 July 06 the pool is still down because of the sandstorms. I have permission to upload our WSV to JCCC Lt Col Boyd was very helpful. He went all the way to ACC (Air Combat Command) as well as to our Wing Commander Col (BG select) Shugg to get permissions. I have probably 30-40 bombings and strafing which I shall caption and upload. This is a piece of history that will be saved. Still working out like a madman sometimes twice a day. I still have only lost about 10 pounds but feel pretty strong despite my bad body parts... Had some more e-mail traffic today and the Camera equipment is coming for sure. I also did WSV for the 23rd FS which are F16's today. I'm also helping out with the awards and decs officer Lt Hamilton we are working on a Meritorious Unit Citation which would be nice. I have been trying to guide the young officer. Still keeping an eye on the rest of the Middle East situation. It also seems I am doing much better with the heat. SSgt Edwards still seems very unmotivated and I'm disappointed in him but what can you do.

20 July 06 a big night last night although I did not do the WSV we had a special mission in Afghanistan and did a drop. They are not as fussy about dropping there more unpopulated land. Everyone was pretty excited. I tried to send to JCCC but no luck with the SIPR ftp site they gave me.

23 July 06 Still working software and other problems for uploading WSV files to JCCC. Like everything else we'll over come these obstacles. SSgt Edwards is helping me on this and seems to be coming around. I'll have to be a little easier on him. He is a young NCO 23yrs old and needs some work but feel he will try his best on this. Got some wonderful images of B1B bomber load crew working and will be uploading them today took them the 21st and have them all captioned and ready just waiting for PA. Lots going on lately at this base as usual. The heat and humidity have come with a vengeance now truly gets unbelievably nasty. I tend to try and stay indoors as much as I can. I love to shoot photos but try to wait until 1700 or so, and it is still brutal even for a few minutes one is soaked. My pool (notice I say my pool) is up and running so I am back in the routine. Have finally lost some weight but it did not help when my friend Mike Snow sent me a care package yesterday. I made a pig out of myself.

28 July 06 It has been some time since I have written here. Things that remember are yesterday when I went for my morning film found a thermometer and at 0930 it was already 118 so gives you an idea of how hot it gets. Lt Aldus who has been a pal and very kind in taking all my flags on his flights got to finally drop a bomb two evenings ago. He was beaming. It has been very slow in that department and I was very happy for him. A couple of missions ago I gave him one of the Americal Coins for good luck, maybe that was what did the trick, we're not sure. I gave him my combat patch tonight as well as wiped the coin on my stripes for more luck. We'll see if that works. He dropped it on a mortar position. The enemy is pretty smart they will bury a tube so only part of it is showing. Place a mortar round in ice and place on top of the tube. The ice melts round goes down the tube fires and no one is around. I'm trying to get on the first Rotator flight out of here that I can. I will have 120 days 10 Sept. If I can get out of here by the 15th I may be able to make the 1st Bears game. My orders say the 19th. I will see what I can do. Went to the doc about my knee today and he said I may have a torn muniscaple taking x-rays showed a lot of arthritis. Probably have to get it worked on. Also another 3V from Minnesota is coming here in another capacity. I'm still setting him up to shoot for us. I do keep busy that is for sure.

4 August 06 It almost seems longer since I was able to write in this journal. I have been very busy lately if not with WSV I have been with photos and other projects for the 2 squadrons I work for. The big news is the camera came in with some lenses. Big time stuff a D1X Nixon. I had to find instructions and finally Pat and Bob (photographers from my home base in Milwaukee) came through. This equipment is a little intimidating even to me. I got it Wednesday and it is now Friday and I feel pretty good about it. Already have some images for JCCC. I'm sure I will improve. Wednesday early morning some of the folks from my EOSS Sq volunteered to clean the rotator (the plane that fairies us here and back). It started about 0100 and lasted until about 0230, naturally I took photos but had to use my point and shoot which has a flash. The Sq gets \$500 for their fund. It was a lot of work think there were about 17 of us.

It is no secret that the military is changing sexual harassment is the big thing now. They even have it on all the military channels something like "turn the bugger in". I'm not saying that it does not happen nor should people do it. It just seems it programs people to act strange and enable other folks to bring charges for things that may not matter. Case in point Sgt Pillich who I enjoy very much as a person is telling me that some time ago some young Lt was rubbing her back and she turned him in. (He also told a dirty joke to a gal she knew and they both turned him in). I'm not saying this Lt was right but no doubt paid a price for his career. I just told Sgt Pillich "why didn't you just tell him "stop rubbing my back?" She just sort of looked at me blankly. My point is have we all lost our minds lately?

Got another haircut today, these guys do a great job message and all for like \$4 then I tip them another \$2 worth it. I probably could have gotten away with not getting one but just felt like it.

I also approached our Administrative guy SSgt Holmes about trying to get me out of here the 14th or 15th of Sept. If that can happen I can make the Bears game with son Joe. Jan has been in WI with her family this week so I miss hearing from her but glad she has gotten a break. I know the last couple of months have been very tough.

Also the war goes on in Lebanon and it seems like this place could go up in smoke. Security has been added but that is to be expected.

9 August 06 been very busy lately besides some WSV have been trying to caption all of my images and consolidate. I took over 130 today on the Group commander's last flight in his F16. They came out pretty good. I have to tell one story while I can. The latrines here are called Cadillac's because the old ones were so bad when they built these they said they compared like a Cadillac to an old car. I sweated so bad today taking those images my uniform was drenched. Believe it or not the couple of days before were worse; I just wasn't on the flight line. Hard to keep this up I have been so busy.

16 August 06 Like I left off before I have been pretty busy. I can't tell you exactly what but busy. The photography is probably the main reason. Captioning images etc takes a long time. Then there are items such as getting the WSV to JCCC which is a work in process. I did get to Doha the 12th I believe. It was very nice to get away the 1st Sgt MSgt Tom Rayl was kind enough to drive me and take me to the place where I could get the presents I wanted for the family especially Jan. I treated him to lunch and what I really enjoyed was the trip we took to the harbor to take photos. They have these Arabian boats there they call them Dhows. They make for wonderful photos. I have a couple I may even have framed when done. The one problem was that it was so hot all you could do was go out of the car for a few moments take a photo and get back in. Dripping wet just from that little time. The photos were still worth it, probably the best I took since I have been here. I'm still maintaining my weight around 170 so that is pretty good. My buddy Mike Casey sent me some licorice again which I ate the entire pound in 20 minutes (no will power now a days). He sent be a big bag of pistachios as well, my other favorite food group. I had to go have my three beers and much them down, so good. Having trouble with my replacement there is none so I can't plan what to do. I'm hoping to get out of here the 15th so I can see the Bears play the 17th we'll just have to see. The hot weather is still that hot. There are times lately I feel just brain dead. Between the sun and the repetition here your mind just goes into a fog. I would be a zombie if I had to spend a year here. Just the same it is much better then Iraq, from what I hear. I still work out twice a day an except for my old man parts that are falling off I'm doing well. I will know if Jan ever reads this because now I will make a confession, I have made my bed everyday since I have been here. I can't stand to have my little room out of sorts. I need the stability I guess. I think she would be mad if she knew I made my bed every day. I have now started to gather all my photos on cd's and shall continue too. I always try to thin of the collection at Texas Tech and add anything I can. It is nice as many of the things are electronic now a days. Today also we had a U2 come on the base. Yes they still use them amazing, that plane is almost as old as me. By the pool yesterday myself and my friend a civilian contractor Tim Halverson where taking. I always sit in the same place every day which is near one of the entrances. Tim looks at me all serious and says "you're sitting here all the time to catch the breeze". I looked at him and said "Tim your nuts to think there is even a breeze in this entire country". The place is like an oven and it is 130 degrees and any wind feels like a blow dryer. He has been here too long to be sure. The nice thing now is at least I am getting somewhat short and am looking forward to home and my two weeks off. Although I don't feel I'm over taxed here. Working 7 days

a week with no time off, or even if I had time off, I feel a bit burned out. I keep finding ways to motivate myself and get done all that I want to get done. Oh also 11 August Major General Dutch Holland was on the base. He is way up there on the food chain. I took photos of him on the flight line and asked to have one with him. Double Dutch, the general was very accommodating and we had our photo taken. My vein is bulging out of my head it is so hot. Probably 150 degrees on the flight line. He had been introduced to me the day before and is pretty out going. Lots of new folks coming in now all the time. This makes you feel even better as they can take our place. I had vowed to write today and now had a chance.

17 August 06 There still is no word on my replacement, this could be good and it could be bad. If one is coming I can go early if one is then they best get going as it is getting late in the game. They have put a few of us in for a decoration but the policy here is very stringent for some reason. Only 10% of a unit may be given one and in actuality they don't even give a fraction of that and those are usually downgraded to an Air Force Achievement medal at that. I feel more sorry for these poor kids that bust their butt on the flight line they really deserve something. Hope to get out and take some photos of the U2 today it will be taking off tonight. I feel that today I am finally catching up on all my work and will have some of my stuff organized. Did weigh in today and I'm at 170 pounds which is pretty good for me, still feel chunky but guess I will have to just suck it up being 56 years old sucks. I still have another month left perhaps I can loose a little more, but will be happy to hold the weight here for a while. The food as I mentioned before is good but repetitive. I usually have two hard boiled eggs in the morning with a bagel plus coffee and an orange juice. Seems to be just right. I go back to my hooch for the juice as it helps me remember to take my medicine and vitamins. Then every other day I get my laundry together and exchange that. Otherwise it is right to the Cadalac for my shower and shave. Next off to the pool. I swim at least a mile of laps every single day and then sun for a bit. Around 11-1130 I get back change then weight in go to the library or even the BX. Then lunch either at the mess hall or a snack in my room. Either I go to work or watch a movie either in my room or the show. Then regardless off to work. That is my day, day after day after day.

Oh last but least I put in my retirement request today 17 June 2007 I picked as the retirement date with 9 June 2007 for the ceremony. It will be hard to leave after all this time. My CO Capt Jones e-mailed me this from his AEF in Iraq. It was nice he thought so highly of me. Here is also my reply.

No sir everything is fine. I'm having a memorable time on my way out. It is just going to be the timing with the base closing. I've done it all and have had a great career. I have had great support (including yourself) and my little multimedia world will be gone. Just time. You're the best thanks,

V/R

John "Dutch" DeGroot, MSgt, USAFR

379 EOSS

DSN 318-437-5973

Cell [REDACTED]

AFIM: [REDACTED]

From: Jones, Scott W. CAPT [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2006 4:43 PM
To: DeGroot John H MSgt 379 EOSS/WSV
Subject: RE: Retirement

You okay Dutch ...do we need to talk? Don't get me wrong I support your decision.

SCOTT W. JONES, CAPT, USAFR

Reconstruction Programs

Operations Officer

GRD/PCO, Baghdad, Iraq

VOIP [REDACTED]

Iraqna [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2006 4:49 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Retirement

Chris/Kelly,

I put in my request for retirement just now. Date of retirement 17 June and ceremony Saturday June 9th. I will have to put in a few man days May 1 to June probably around 3 or 4 tops. I will hate to hang it up but all good things come to an end. Chris, I have you down as POC if that is okay.

V/R

John "Dutch" DeGroot, MSgt, USAFR

DSN 3 [REDACTED]

Cell [REDACTED]

AFIM: [REDACTED]

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18 August 06 I was happy to take so many great images of the U2 that was here yesterday. Stayed very late to start to process the images. I was very thrilled to be able to photograph such a historic plane. To say I was pumped up is an understatement. I got a phone this morning from SrA Tim Bazar a good trooper who works for PA here and has been very helpful. He said the images were not to be cleared for public release. I wasn't terribly disappointed as at least I can still send them to JCCC. Problem is they can go nowhere from there. I can get up very early to work today to keep pounding away at what I can. I get very little WSV lately but still have to be here. The self appointed jobs are what bury me. I can't believe how busy I am just with the photos alone. When I have spare time I'm trying to achieve all of the paperwork and files I have as it is getting near to coming home. I fill up 10 hour days without any problem and some days are longer. It just seems funny with all these hours I put in that I don't get caught up.

Speaking of going home. There is still no replacement for me that they know. From what I have been told they are still going to send me home. I shall make sure that I at least train Intel in how to do my WSV function if it comes down to that. Intel for this AEF is leaving 12 Sept. There is an outside chance I may even get to be on that one. Wishful thinking for now.

23 August 2006 Well yesterday I finally got my Rotator assignment unless something changes I will be on the 15 September rotator. That means I will just make the Bears game. Seems minor but it gave me something to hope for and a minor victory. I was elated when I found out last evening and even had a couple of beers with my favorite young fliers Lt Aldus and Capt Johnson. Somebody is watching out for me. Not a lot of WSV action of late. I even have laid back on taking photos. There are group photos that folks want now and I have been tasked to take one at 0630 in the morning which really sucks but what can I do. It is sort of my fault for bringing this all up. The young SSgt Nason from Minnesota ARS should be here tomorrow. I will try to make him feel at home. Besides that sort of a laid back day today. There was an exception this morning in the chow hall when I confronted what seemed to be a Pilot (he was in civilian dress) talking too much about OPSEC. I told him I was trying to be discreet but he was so loud and talking about operations like a mad man. I reminded him that he shouldn't be talking like that. He thanked me but I'm sure wasn't happy. He should know better anyway. It is not my style to do something like this but this guy was loose cannon with all these other officers chirping in.

27 August 2006 as always I have no idea where the time goes in between my scribbles here. It gets harder to remember all the little things that are going on around here and sometimes my brain seems to be going to mush lately. I know I have been here long enough. 25 Aug had a massive air strike in Iraq on a weapons storehouse factory. The secondary explosions were incredible they used GBU-38's this time. The GBU-38 is a co-ordnance type munitions using GPS and no clouds or such will interfere like the GBU 12 which is guided from the cockpit. Who ever was near this target is no more it was early in the morning and there where 4 munitions dropped. Again you have to see it to believe it. Anyone wanting to go to war against us has to be utterly mad.

Yesterday the 26th I got some pretty bad news in that my rotator was moved back to the 17th meaning I shall miss the game and not be home until the 19th. Jan reminded me that it I will still be home to enjoy the family and she is right, but this gave me a lot to look forward to. Everyone who knows me is disappointed for me as they knew how excited I was. Went out for my 3 beers Saturday and had a piece of pizza at the place they serve the beer. It was left over from an earlier evening promotion party for Col (select) Boyd the 335th CO maybe it was the pizza that got me a little ill, I shudder to think it was the beer. I just didn't feel good all night. BTW Lt Col Boyd getting selected for Col was Thursday 24 August, they had me rush in to take some photos which are part of all this archive I'm doing. My buddy from the pool the civilian contractor is home on leave crazy Tim. I miss our conversations at the pool. He and SSgt Francheska Pillich are really the only ones I talk too much and perhaps MSgt Dave Thuis.

Today had a group lunch with Lt. Gen.

John A. Bradley he is he Commander of the Air Force Reserve Command, it was pretty nice. He asked for questions and I asked "why should the Reserve get 3 sets of uniforms and the active duty four when we are deployed?" I also stated that this did not concern me as much because my job was mostly inside but the poor kids on the flight line who sweat through all their gear. He actually thought it was a good question and would look into it. I also as did the 20 or so of us receive a challenge coin from the 3 Star Gen, it is real nice and I shall add it to my coin collection which is getting pretty big. He asked me what I was going to do with Milwaukee closing and I said I was going to retire. He said I should give it some thought. The coin is still real nice....

Also Francheska Pillich has been having a lot of marital problems so I try to listen to her. It is a roller coaster ride and I don't mind her using me as a sounding board. Her husband keeps after her about one small thing she did years ago which in my mind was pretty minor. I told her that she just should tell him "we're done forever bringing that up and that's it. (I think this is from Jan's book) it seems to have worked, at least she felt better. It sure is difficult to be married now a days without compounding being in the military and on top of that on the other side of the world.

5 Sept 2006 I know it has been ages since I was able to write in this journal. I have been non stop busy it seems all the time. I rarely have any time to myself and have endless projects and demands from my units. A lot has happened and I will try to remember.

Francheska's problems are still there big time and it will be hard time for her when she goes home. She asked her husband to leave. I act as her sounding board and really don't mind listening at all. She is one of the few folks I really have conversations with. Her and my buddy "Crazy Tim" who is the civilian contract worker that hangs with me at the pool. He is on leave now and I miss talking to him. I hope he comes back in time for me to at least take a photo of him.

In other news I took the best photos that I have ever taken lately of the F15's taking off. They are just real good and it is my present to the 335th, The lighting timing and everything was perfect. Bob Sommer gave me some great tips that helped via e-mail.

Then there was the visit by Michele Desrochers Sept 2nd (Jeff's 21st birthday), it was so good to see someone that I'm close to after being here so long. The visit was short but great. She was pretty tired out from the travel but made every effort to visit. We even had

a beer before she left. I wish her luck on her assignment in Iraq I know how dangerous it can be.

I also got my new date for leaving here today 15 Sept report time 1130 baggage check in 14 Sept at 2330. The plane will take off local 1430 which means I should get home the 16th and perhaps make the bears game 17 Sept with Joe. I pushed for this and got some help. Because of all my above and beyond here this rotation folks have helped out.

We also had an F16 Strike the 2nd they hit a moving truck the video was pretty awesome the truck got hit, kept going into a river and then sunk. I'm sure all aboard were killed. I have no pity for these terrorist and could care less. I see the intel and what they do.

I'm still working out but seem to have gained a couple of pounds lately, don't know why. My hip hurts like hell as well as my busted up knee, only 10 days to go.

My roommate Kamron moved out yesterday and I'll have a new one tonight. This is when the rotations happen and it is a madhouse. The AF works on AEF rotations every 4 months and there is a mass turnover. Credit to the AF they don't loose an inch in operations with all of this, there is something to be said for that. Also fresh bodies, I'd be lying if I didn't admit that I'm a little burned out after 4 months of this life.

The weather seems to have improved a little since I last had a chance to write, not pleasant by any means but no sandstorms and the temperature seems a few degrees less perhaps 115. The humidity is pretty bad yet though. I may go and have a beer to celebrate my 10 days to go tonight. Tomorrow we have out last commander's call and they will be giving out awards. I know I was put in for SNCO of the AEF cycle as well as for a decoration. It would be nice but I'm not counting on it at all. I know I have done a good job here and believe it or not that is reward in itself. Oh I failed to mention the young SSgt Nason coming from the Minn Air Reserve unit turned out to be a real bust. I was going to set him up for some great life experiences and asked him to see me when he got here. Long story short he didn't and now is doing things such as cleaning buildings and such. He would have really shined here with a camera and I was going to train him.

10 Sept 06 A lot has been happening since I last wrote. Finally got together with young SSgt Nason chewed him out a bit but there is not much that can be done now. He apologized and what can you say. I would have really had this young trooper doing some incredible stuff out here which would have made all parties happy. I want to write right now though on something that is happening at this moment. Our flight came back for a debrief around 1200 local which I was here to do. They were following a truck with armed militants on it and finally got the clear to eliminate target. (One has to be careful of course in situations such as this. While tracking the target the Pod (targeting pod) got masked as the truck was turning. (Masked is when the wing may cover it as the plane is turning loosing sight. By the time they re-acquired the truck it turned out that it was a different vehicle (a SUV compared to pick up). Another reason these guys are so good is they didn't just let drop but ascertained it was another like vehicle and aborted the mission. Lt Col Watt who was the pilot is pretty upset to say the least loosing the target. IMHO the good news is they were good enough not to take out the wrong target. I feel

badly as well as hard as these guys work. They have been here since noon and it is 1400 and I'm still waiting to digitize anything. You can only imagine how upset folks are to let some terrorist escape, they have no idea what a lucky day they have had. A little later on I find out that some of our choppers got them and took them out so maybe it wasn't a lucky day. Let me get the tear out of my eye.

Have a new roommate MSgt Good who is originally from Scotland a nice guy Intel troop and very focused. I'm sure he will do a great job. Today I also gave Col (select) Boyd and Major Kravitz coins. Maj K almost had a tear in his eye. I'm starting to wind down and get all my files together. CMS Hornback gave me a bunch of camera gear in need of repair. I sent it home and hope to get it fixed up for Jan and me to do photos together when I get back. They also had the unit awards (commander's call). I got beat out for SNCO of the AEF and that's the breaks. Folks could not believe I didn't get it (maybe because I'm a reservist) but that is show business. I'm not upset as I'm just happy to be going home and know that I have done a lot. We have a good bye meeting for the Intel folks Monday 11th before most of the Intel goes home, and Lt Col Boyd also told me to be at the 335ths Commanders call Monday (11th) that they want to say by to me as well in a formal way. I'm not lacking for recognition to be sure.

New folks are pouring in like crazy, it is really something to see. They think it is hot now they should have been here a couple of weeks ago. It is still hot but one can feel the difference. I think I'm going to freeze when I get home and Jan likes it on the cool side compared to me.

4 May 2014 Well I've finally gotten back to edit this many years later I'll try to fill in the last couple of days from what I recall. As I said from the EOSS I received nothing as far as an award. The 335th on the other hand had a nice surprise for me. They sent home for a lithograph one of their fighters everyone signed it and it was matted and framed. It is still hanging in my office and one of my most treasured artifacts. They also gave me a bears jersey and hat. Really a first class unit and folks. I did make it on time for the long flight home. We landed in Baltimore and a dear friend Leanne Kolman met me there at some ungodly hour 3 or 4 in the morning. I then proceeded home to Chicago after going through hoops to get my ticket changed from arriving in Milwaukee. Jan picked me up at the airport and it was great to be home. I reported to my unit the next Monday after attending the Bears game with my son Joe.