

# The Patriot



THE PHOENIX AIR NATIONAL GUARD PATRIOTS

PHOENIX • ARIZONA

Spring 2010

Once in a lifetime

## Reflections on a trip to USNA

By Jerry Lebo

Life can become so routine. Its experiences within pass quickly and are forgotten. *Not this one.*

It's 0530 hours, October 6, 2009, and we bleary-eyed civilians are turning over luggage to some bright-eyed and highly-efficient young men and women of the 161st Air Refueling Wing at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport. A little coffee and some snacks would help jump-start those of us unaccustomed to this early-morning regimen and, once again—the 161st delivers.

We're about to embark on a journey that most people can only dream about, one that we'll all remember and talk about for the rest of our lives. The 161st is taking us to the United States Naval Academy and Andrews Air Force Base as part of an effort to expose Arizona educators to the educational opportunities offered by the United States Military Academies. When we step off our KC-135R at Sky Harbor three fast-paced days later, we'll do so with a wealth of valuable memories and impressions to share with other educators, parents, friends and family. Among them:

The pre-flight briefing included a great deal of interesting information about the history and mission of the Arizona Air Na-



Photo by Col Pam Jackson

**An imposing building on the USNA campus is the 100-plus-year-old Naval Academy Chapel. The chapel houses the sarcophagus and final resting place of Revolutionary War hero John Paul Jones.**

tional Guard. Few of us were aware the scope of the mission extends not only to the conduct and support of military operations here and abroad, but also to such humanitarian efforts as assistance with emergencies for families of those ANG members serving abroad. The technical briefing for the flight itself was

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## Life is crazy, yes, but just imagine it being deployed

**Scott Essex**  
President, PANG Patriots

The wild swings we've experienced with the winter weather have been as unpredictable as the rest of the world around us. One day it's 75° and sunny and the next 50° and a downpour. The economy, job, school, kids, bills, appliances, roof repair (for the 50 and downpour days) ... everything seems to be in flux. And, you know, it's not so much that things are changing, but how fast they are changing. It's easy to lose sight of the target with so many important issues and minor distractions demand-

ing our time and attention, all with a deadline of yesterday. It's even harder to remember there are those who while serving us, desperately need our help.

Imagine, if you will, that all the demands that a husband and wife struggled to meet together before, continue, but one of them is now deployed. I wouldn't want to be in that position.

Thank you for being members of the PANG Patriots and providing the financial assistance and family support for our service men and women in the 161<sup>st</sup>.

And, if you have some time to help with any of our events, please call. With your help, we can make a difference!



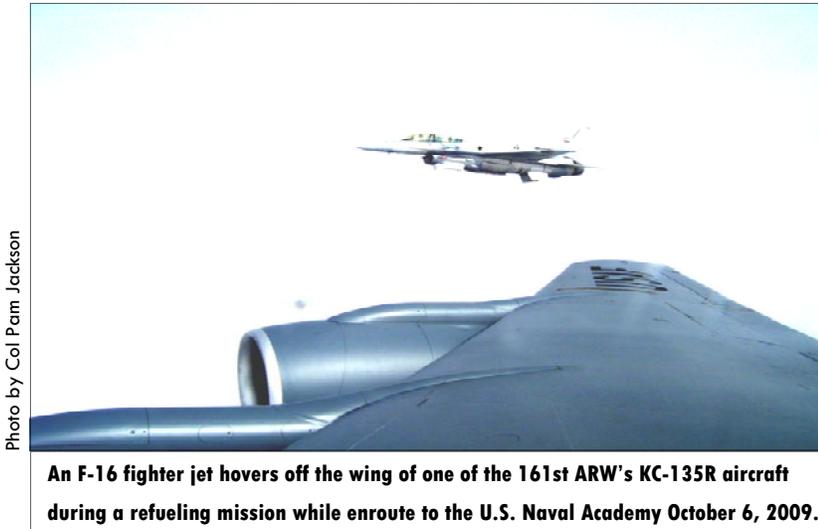
Photo by MSGT Charles Wade

**Scott Essex congratulates SrA Therese Chadwick on her selection as Airman of the Year for 2009, at the March 14 Hometown Heroes Salute held at the El Zaribah Shriners' Auditorium in Phoenix. Looking on are 161st commander Col Steve Balsler and CCMSGT Jim Nedved.**

## US Naval Academy provides an educational trip

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**An F-16 fighter jet hovers off the wing of one of the 161st ARW's KC-135R aircraft during a refueling mission while enroute to the U.S. Naval Academy October 6, 2009.**

delivered clearly and forcefully, with enough good humor thrown in to relax those in the group leery of flying on that ominous grey monster that would carry us to the east coast and back.

And speaking of which—it's one thing to experience the takeoff and climb thrust on a commercial 737 while facing forward. It's quite another to experience it while sitting sideways in troop seats. We looked like a double line of palm trees bending before a hurricane, hanging onto the seat frames to keep from spilling aft on each other.

Probably the thing that made this more of a once-in-a-lifetime experience than any other was the mid-air refueling of F-16s. One can fly across country anytime, and even visit military academies, but the chance doesn't come along every day to witness an F-16 being refueled in flight, from within the tanker carrying the fuel. That monstrous thrust came back occasionally during the refueling, and we found out that it was part of a maneuver called break-away, practiced routinely as emergency preparation.

Our tour of the academy was conducted in small groups with highly-knowledgeable guides leading us through the main features, answering questions with patience, and injecting

interesting, often humorous details into their revelations about the place. The Academy is rich with history, tradition, and educational excellence. The remains of Admiral John Paul Jones, father of the United States Navy, disinterred from an unmarked grave in France, lie here in an ornate crypt beneath the chapel. The chapel itself, modeled to form a cross, stands out in craftsmanship and artistic impression. The chapel's existence led to the designation of the academy as a national historic landmark in 1961. The scale of the primary dormitory here is almost beyond comprehension – all 4400 members of the brigade reside in the 1.4 million square foot structure!

We were privileged to have lunch with midshipmen from Arizona, giving us an opportunity to hear about their academy experiences and their hopes and aspirations. Lunch presented another of those sheer-scale scenarios – all 4400 members of the brigade eat lunch in the same mess hall at the same time.

The educational highlight of the trip came during an opportunity to attend class with our Arizona guides. Class work is rigorous and demanding. There were messages here about what we do, and don't do, in our elementary and secondary educational systems to prepare students for this level of academic challenge,

and we need to do our best to get those messages across to our colleagues.

The day at the academy ended with a dinner in small table groups with midshipmen nearing graduation, presenting an opportunity to explore their reflections on what led them to the USNA, their experiences there through the years, and their future plans. In addition, we were reminded that the arts are not forgotten here by a delightful *cappella* performance of favorite songs by a group of midshipmen.

We were able to tour some of Andrews Air Force Base on the last day of the trip. This is the base charged with protecting our nation's capitol, and there is no doubt that the men and women here are serious about doing so. A row of combat ready F-16s stands ready to scramble at any time – two of them were scrambled just as we arrived at the base. A slide show and commentary by the wing executive officer gave us insights into the capabilities of the F-16 and the pilots who fly the aircraft.

As we headed back to Arizona, there was plenty of time to reflect on what we had seen and done. We were impressed from beginning to end by the absolute professionalism and competence of the members of the 161st, and of everyone we met at the United States Naval Academy and Andrews Air Force Base. These folks believe in their work, they believe in their country, and they exemplify every quality that makes America great. We are indeed fortunate to have them standing watch over us. To support them, we need to work with our fellow educators to help them understand the opportunities presented to our students by the military academies, and by the military service in general.

From all of us who went on the tour, congratulations and a heartfelt thank you to the 161st Air Refueling Wing, and especially to Col Steve Balsler, commander, and Col Pam Jackson, vice commander. Job well done!

# December holiday party remembered as success

By Lt Col Shanna Woyak

President, 161st ARW Officers' Club

The 2009 161st Air Refueling Wing Holiday Party was held December 13, 2009 at the Wigwam Resort in Litchfield Park. More than 300 officers, enlisted, spouses and guests were in attendance. A large hospitality suite, dinner, dancing, photography, and live music ensured the event was a huge success.

The event is intended for all current members, retirees, and related organizations. Ticket prices for the event are kept as low as possible to encourage attendance and build esprit de corps.

The holiday party is organized by the president and vice president of the 161st's Officer's Clubs, helped out by sizeable groups of volunteers. I have been honored to serve as president the past two years, along with my vice president, Lt Col Kurt Woyak. For the coming two years, Maj Mark Anderson, and Maj Tiffany Strevor will serve as president and vice president.

It wouldn't be possible for many of our airmen to attend the holiday party if it were not for a substantial contribution



Photo by Lt Col Shanna Woyak

Jon Marple, Johnny Estrella, Lori Truillio and Brite Gonzales are enjoying holiday festivities at the 161st annual Holiday Party held last December 13.

from the PANG Patriots. We were able to have more than 40 airmen attend this event at no cost, thanks to the Patriot's generosity. We want to convey our sin-

cere gratitude for your donations and continued support of the 161st Air Refueling Wing and its members! Please join us next year!



Photo by MSgt Dan Sharayko

**The 107th Air Control Squadron would like to thank the PANG Patriots for the kind donation to help us celebrate our annual Family Day. The event, held November 7, 2009 at Luke Air Force Base, was a great success! The funds you generously gave supported entertainment for the kids (and adults) to bounce, slide and ... eat lots of sugar! We are grateful for your support and appreciate your generosity to our unit and to the Arizona National Guard!**



Photo by Col Pam Jackson

Bob Murrillo, president of Mi Ranchito Foods, admires a model KC-135 awarded to him by PANG Patriots president Scott Essex. Murrillo was recognized at the Patriots' Fall Dinner for his steadfast, consistent support of the troops. Mi Ranchito donated chips and salsa, and funds, to members of the 161st ARW who were deployed last year (see related photo on page 2, Fall 2009 issue of The Patriot.)

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# PANG Patriots excel at annual golf tourney



The 2010 PANG Patriots Golf Outing has been an exceptional success! The event teed off Sunday morning, March 21, at that Hidden Gem of the East Valley, The Links at Queen Creek. More that \$19,000 was raised at the event. Special mention goes out once again to the Tilted Kilt, and to all the volunteers on hand from the 161st ARW!