

Commander's Connection



Photo by Airman 1st Class Susan Penning

Col. Sam Angelella (left) meets with spouses graduating from a Heartlink orientation course Tuesday. The Heartlink program teaches civilian spouses, who are new to the Air Force, about military life.

*"Commander's Connection" is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to **commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil**.*

*Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in **The Shaw Spirit**.*

Q Recently, I went to the 5000-area Shoppette to rent a movie, but couldn't because only DVDs were available. I have a VCR. Why don't you carry VHS tapes?

A We apologize for your inconvenience. With the high cost of VHS-formatted movies and the fact they represent only a small portion of total movie rentals, we opted to offer VHS movies only in the children's category and a small percent in action/drama, etc. DVD-formatted movies make up 90 percent of AAFES movie rentals. The selection offered at the shoppette is similar to national movie rentals. Thank you for your question.

Air Force moves closer to front Airmen grow stronger, more prepared

By Lt. Col. David Stilwell
77th Fighter Squadron commander

Imagine it's March 1991, during Operation Desert Storm. Somewhere in southern Iraq, a soldier shivers in a trench, opens up a cold MRE and wonders when the big push to Baghdad is going to kick off. "This stinks," he says to himself.

Out in the Persian Gulf, a sailor rolls over in his rack, looks out the porthole at a battle far away on shore and muses, "I bet it stinks over there."

A Marine, in the same trench as the soldier, but covered from head to toe in crude oil Saddam used to slow up the advance, opens up his MRE, which tastes like petroleum, and thinks, "I wish this would stink some more."

An Air Force pilot who's safely returned to an air base after dodging surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery during a strike mission over Iraq, settles back into his quarters, grabs the remote and turns on the TV. He thinks, "This stinks. . .no cable."

Fast forward to December 2003, 12 years later. Many Shaw members from nearly every Air Force Specialty Code either have recently been or are currently in the "sandbox." While deployed, they're now living a life once reserved for soldiers, Marines, special operations forces and combat aviators -- in, amongst and above those who would seek to do them harm.

The transition that got us to this point has been gradual. It wasn't like the end of the Cold War when the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. Over the past 12 years, we have transformed from an Air Force that operated in relative safety, hundreds of miles from the front lines, to an Air Force that fights side-by-side, on the ground, with members of other branches of the military.

The first time I remember hearing of such a thing was when we stood up operations in Afghanistan, and the Air Force lived and worked with the Army during Operation Anaconda.

The technical nature of the Air Force once allowed us to "stand off" from the fray and put more emphasis on technical expertise rather than more traditional warrior attributes such as brute physical strength and endurance. This new year, however, we again align ourselves with other services in the realm of physical fitness. We've jettisoned the high-tech bike test and gone back to a more traditional, and less controversial, means of gauging one's readiness to fight.

It's going to take some time to get us all back into the sweat and grunt physical fitness test mindset, but you can see signs of it everywhere on base. Running is back in style. Unit cohesion is building as squadrons meet for physical training. Through it all, I believe we are growing stronger and are better prepared for future conflicts, as we learn to operate in any environment...even without cable TV.

What was your New Year's resolution?



"I've decided to quit smoking. So far, I haven't bought any."
-- **Senior Airman Nicholas Connell, 20th Comptroller Squadron**



"I'm trying to lose weight and get fit. I bought a treadmill for Christmas." --
Staff Sergeant Sheran Wheeler, 20th Communications Squadron



"I've begun financial planning so I can send my kids to college." --
Master Sergeant Robert Haithcock, 20th Mission Support Squadron

The Shaw Spirit

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