

# 455<sup>th</sup> EXPEDITIONARY AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQUADRON



## MISSION

## LINEAGE

455<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

## STATIONS

Bagram, Afghanistan

## ASSIGNMENTS

455<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Maintenance Group

## COMMANDERS

LTC James D. Upchurch, Jun 2012

LTC Greg Lowe

## HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## EMBLEM

On a disc Azure, overall flames arcing to chief Or, issuant from base to dexter the head and neck of a cobra Sable, detailed Brunn, marked, eyed and langued Gules, armed of the second,

grasping in its mouth a bomb, nose to dexter Argent (Silver Gray), fins of the third, all within a narrow border Black. Attached below the disc, a Red scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "455TH EXP AIRCRAFT MAINT SQ" in Black letters. Attached above the disc, a Red scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "READY TO STRIKE" in Black letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The cobra represents the lethality of aerospace power which the work of the maintainers supports. The bomb held firmly between the cobra's jaws alludes to the unit's firm grasp on the actions required to sustain American and Coalition fighting forces. The flames represent the baptism-by-fire for expeditionary maintainers who accustom themselves to perpetuating turnover, rapidly acclimating to a high operations tempo.

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

The US Air Force will no longer operate the C-130H in Afghanistan. The new C-130J model replaced the veteran cargo workhorse on Jan. 9, states a Jan. 13 release. The first C-130J actually arrived at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, moments after the last C-130H took off from the base for its final time. "The C-130H model here at Bagram has been truly outstanding. They are the oldest C-130 fleet here in the [area of responsibility], flying the highest utilization rate, yet they continually boast the highest mission capability rate in the AOR," said Col. Ben Spencer, commander of the 455th Expeditionary Maintenance Group. In fact, the H-model had a 94 percent reliability rate flying out of Bagram, states the release. However, the newer aircraft is expected to be even more efficient with a whole new digital cockpit, additional airlift capacity, and more efficient engines and propellers, noted Lt. Col. Greg Lowe, commander of the 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "We hope that the J-models will pick up the mantle and do as well as our H-model brethren did," Spencer said. 2014

All around the dimly-lit tent are enduring symbols of a constant presence. A name scrawled across a wooden wall, a lengthy list of deployment dates written underneath, updated year after year. A library stacked with books and games to pass the time. A built-in couch labeled "Snooze Town." All the things people do to make a place feel like home are apparent in this place where its inhabitants often spend half their time each year. The 41st Electronic Combat Squadron and the 755th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, based out of Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, have been continuously deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and now the Resolute Support Mission, since 2002. They've called Bagram Airfield their deployed home since 2004.

They are the longest continuously deployed Air Force unit in Afghanistan. The unit operates the EC-130H Compass Call, a modified version of the C-130H Hercules airframe. It serves as an airborne weapons system capable of disrupting enemy command and control communications and limiting adversary coordination essential for enemy force management. This capability is known colloquially as "jamming" and ensures that when a U.S. or coalition unit goes on a

mission, the enemy is unable to communicate with one another. The effect is an indispensable asset to ground forces and has led to 2,193 terrorists removed from the battlefield since 2014. “The special forces guys will come by after a mission we supported and say thanks,” said Tech. Sgt. Michael Meredith, a 455th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron expeditor.

Many of their maintainers have been with the unit since the beginning. The members of the 455th EAMXS’s EC-130 Compass Call aircraft maintenance unit currently deployed to Bagram Airfield have 146 deployments among them. “I’ve been on 13 deployments, nine of them here (at Bagram) and all of them have been with this unit,” Meredith said. These numbers are not unusual, and individuals throughout the unit often have deployments in the double digits, with months out of each year spent away from home. “His kid just started walking and he shows us videos all the time – but he doesn’t get to see it,” said Senior Airman Richard Marshall, an Aircraft Electrical and Environmental Systems journeyman with the 455th EAMXS, about a fellow squadron member.

For those with families back home, they say the key is to make the most of the time they have. Tech. Sgt. Tony Rivera, a 455th EAMXS crew chief, has two sons and said he spends the time he has with his boys participating in their lives and making every moment count. Despite the strain of an undeniably high operations tempo, the mood in the unit remains positive. When they’re not working out on the flightline, they play sports or video games together and work out in their “prison gym” in front of a vividly painted “Muscle Beach” sign. “We just call it high-fiving. You don’t skip a beat,” said Meredith about the constant change-over.

“I’ve been deployed 13 times in my career and the last two since I’ve been with this unit have been the best by far,” said Rivera, who just arrived at Bagram for his third deployment in the two years since joining the EC-130 AMU. “This is without a doubt the tightest group of folks I’ve ever worked with.” To date, 41st ECS crews have flown over 39,000 hours during 6,800 combat sorties in these operations. The unit has broken the monthly flying records for three consecutive months since October 2016– something that has never been done before.

The unit’s mission capable rate, the maintenance term for the number of functioning aircraft, hit a 27-month record high in November 2016– 96.5%. This has led to the 455th EAMXS winning the 2016 Air Combat Command Maintenance Effectiveness Award.2017

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Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 14 Aug 2012

Updated:

#### Sources

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