

157th LOGISTICS READINESS SQUADRON

LINEAGE

STATIONS

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ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

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Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

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OPERATIONS

2008 At Ali Air Base (formerly named Tallil), located just southwest of An Nasiriyah, Iraq, the deployed men and women of the 407th Air Expeditionary Group commonly refer to the station as “the base the war forgot.” After the last permanent aircraft stationed at Ali were reassigned to Tikrit in February 2005, there were rumors that the base would shut down entirely. However, thanks to the hard work and dedication of a handful of airmen from the New Hampshire Air National Guard, Ali will be a major player in the future of Iraq and its people. For six months beginning in August of 2007, five members of the 157th Logistics Readiness Squadron

deployed to Ali, including Master Sgt. Thomas Vasile, Tech Sgt. John Rodgers, Staff Sgt. Mike Toth, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Day and Senior Airman Valerie Johnson and began playing a critical role in the revitalization of the base. They, along with eight other personnel from Air National Guard units in Florida, Texas and Montana, made up the 407th Vehicle Operations Flight, which was instrumental in turning the Ali Air Base around and making it a relevant and critical asset to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The first task facing the airmen was assisting the Navy in a joint force, bed-down operation, which brought the first permanent aircraft back to Ali; a squadron of P-3 Orion surveillance airplanes. The operators moved more than 25 tons of cargo and nearly 300 Navy personnel safely and efficiently, enabling the Navy to begin their mission five days earlier than anticipated. “We were surprised to see the Navy when we arrived in the desert, but in working with them we really could see the ‘total force’ concept at work,” Johnson said. Later in their tour, the vehicle operators were tasked with aiding in the setup of another new mission at Ali, the deployment of the 69th Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron and their unmanned MQ-1 Predator aircraft. The Predator is a multi-purpose aircraft responsible for armed reconnaissance and plays a key role in the detection and neutralization of improvised explosive devices and the insurgents responsible for placing them. The Guardsmen were responsible for delivering each of the \$40 million aircraft by tractor trailer, along with all of the equipment and supplies to set up the squadron’s base of operations. The speed, efficiency and safe manner in which the mission was accomplished enabled the Predator mission to come online a full week ahead of schedule, keeping the roads safer for convoys passing through the region. With the increase in aircraft and flying missions at Ali, a new radar system needed to be set up to enhance flight safety and air traffic control capabilities. Once again, the call went to the vehicle operations flight who delivered more than \$5.5 million in equipment to aid in the construction of the new facility. Despite the flight’s accomplishments, the operators will tell you that their most important role was the transportation it provided to medevac patients throughout their tour. At any hour of the day or night, they would answer the call to safely and quickly transport patients from the Army combat surgical hospital to aircraft bringing them to better care. Keeping the patients comfortable and safe was the most important mission for the operators. But they never underestimated the power of trying to make the wounded smile before heading home. After six months, the deployed airmen returned home safely on Feb. 19, having driven 22,000 miles accident free and having transported 5,000 tons of cargo and more than 2,500 passengers. Although impressive, these statistics hide the true story of how 13 Guardsmen impacted the future of Ali Air Base, Iraq, her people and the War on Terror. (Above): Five New Hampshire Air National Guardsmen including Master Sgt. Thomas Vasile, Tech Sgt. John Rodgers, Staff Sgt. Mike Toth, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Day and Senior Airman Valerie Johnson, spent six months at Ali with eight other personnel from Air National Guard units from Florida, Texas and Montana as part of the 407th Vehicle Operations Flight.

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.