

202nd WEATHER FLIGHT

MISSION

The 202nd Weather Flight provides meteorological and atmospheric forecasting and observing to both United States Army and United States Air Force agencies.

LINEAGE

202nd Weather Flight

STATIONS

Otis ANGB, MA

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

On 29 July 1967, HQ Air Weather Service recognized the 202nd and assigned us to Logan ANG

Base, Logan International Airport in East Boston, Massachusetts. At the time of organization, the 202nd had 1 Officer and 3 enlisted assigned to it.

In February 1968, the 26th Aviation Brigade moved from Logan to the Massachusetts National Guard Flight Facility in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and the 202nd moved with them. The unit remained at Fitchburg until 12 November 1973.

In November 1973, The Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ordered the 202nd to Otis Air Force Base in Falmouth, Massachusetts, where they are currently stationed.

the 202nd has been activated only once for state service, but showed itself to be an outstanding organization by supporting the Commonwealth in relief and recovery operations after a blizzard shut the state down in February 1978. Members of the unit received the Humanitarian Service Medal.

On 1 September 1993, the 26th Infantry Division (Yankee Division) was reorganized as an Infantry Brigade. At that time, the 202nd Weather Flight began to support the 42nd Infantry Division (Rainbow Division) of the New York National Guard.

Since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, members of the 202nd Weather Flight have supported Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

In January 2005, members of the 202nd Weather Flight deployed to Iraq in support of the U.S. Army 1st Infantry Division (Big Red One), the 42nd Infantry Division, and the XVIII Airborne Corps as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

2005. By Master Sgt. Ken Wheeler. Predicting the weather can be a challenging task at best, but throw in some of the world's most extreme temperatures and a blast of wind kicking up an errant three-day sandstorm and you get an inkling of what nine members of the 202nd Weather Flight had to contend with when they deployed to Iraq earlier this year. Broken up into two groups, the nine men and women were attached to elements of the 42nd Infantry Division.

The weather troops provided data for briefings for Maj. Gen. Joseph Taluto, commander of the 42nd Infantry Division and Task Force Liberty, and his staff for both ground and air operations. The first group, consisting of Lt. Col. John Hanavan II, Senior Master Sgt. Susan Smith, Master Sgt. Shawn Peno, Staff Sgt. Paul Morey and Staff Sergeant Jennifer Fischer, was assigned to Headquarters Company at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Danger in Tikrit, Iraq. They were in Iraq from mid-January to mid-July. The second group consisted of Capt. 202nd weathers stint in Iraq Senior Master Sgt. Susan Smith sitting on her 200 pounds of gear as she awaits transportation home.

SSgt Fischer performs a preventative maintenance check and cervice inspection on a humvee at FOB Danger, Tikrit, Iraq. John Cullen, Master Sgt. Robert Chapman, Staff Sgt. Kevin Phipps and Senior Airman Christa Osgood. They were assigned to the division's aviation brigade at FOB

Speicher, also in Tikrit. They overlapped the first group a bit, arriving in mid-May and leaving in late September.

The 202nd personnel worked with the 28th Operational Weather Squadron from Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., gathering data from a variety of sources and locations. The weather briefings also included weather histories of high and low temperatures, rainfall, etc., Sergeant Smith said. The historical data, such as snow melt that could affect flooding of the Tigris River, was used by such units as combat engineers. If engineers wanted to build a bridge, they would look at the historical data to decide how high to plan the structure, Sergeant Morey said. In dry mountainous areas, sudden rainfall could cause flooding that would wash out roads, said Sergeant Fischer.

In some instances, canal walls collapsed, causing rollovers. But the biggest impact to operations came from dust and sandstorms, Sergeant Smith said. "Using satellite images and weather models, we could see storms coming." The storms often caused mission cancellations, but not for everyone. Part of Airman Osgood's job was to forecast weather for medical evacuation pilots who flew out of FOB Speicher.

"They were pretty tough, sometimes actually flying despite less than optimum weather conditions," making sure the wounded quickly got the care they needed. On occasion, the weathermen were flown by Blackhawk helicopter to set up remote weather stations. On a mission to Forward Operating Base McKenzie in East Samarra, about 60 miles away, some of the Airmen set up a tactical meteorological observation system consisting of a variety of equipment, including a temperature gauge, rain gauge, lightning detector, anemometer and ceilometer, which measured the height of clouds.

The rugged package, set up in remote locations, transmits data that Army troops download on laptop computers. Despite being housed in one of Saddam Hussein's former palace compounds, the men and women of the 202nd came under attack several times from indirect small arms fire, mortars, rockets and suicide bombers. Because of that, the Airmen were required to carry weapons and wear body armor and their Kevlar helmets. "We weren't required to leave the base," Airman Osgood said. "We were better utilized where we were," chimed in Sergeant Fischer.

The nine kept track of the variable Iraqi weather 24 hours a day to provide the general and his staff with a weather effects matrix that showed how the weather elements affected different types of operations, such as how the limited visibility of a sandstorm affected flying. That was especially valuable to missions involving unmanned aerial vehicles, which are very sensitive to weather. "They are very light and sensitive to winds," said Sergeant Smith. "They also are surveillance aircraft, so they are very sensitive to cloud cover."

At FOB Speicher, one of Airman Osgood's tasks was to monitor surface weather conditions and put the data into an online tactical forecasting system. Those observations were then viewed in Iraq and the U.S. for hourly updates of the current weather. Her forecasts supported missions by HU-60, AH-64 and OH-58D. Sergeant Fischer said the weather in Iraq ranged from snow flurries in January, along with hail and thunderstorms in the winter, "but spring was beautiful." By June, the temperatures had risen to 120 degrees, the clouds disappeared "and every five days a sandstorm would roll in and last for three days.

There was continuous dust in the air." The nine men and women were grateful for the support they received from back home, and specifically pointed to the DaSilva family of Cape

Cod. Mom Michelle and her children Dylan, J.D., Jamie and Torri sought donations from area businesses and put together care packages consisting of t-shirts, comfort foods, books and many other items. "The hardest part of being in Iraq was being so far from home," said Airman Osgood. The base's morale, welfare and recreation section tried to make up for some of that distance by providing some first-rate communications and recreational facilities. Airman Osgood said she once made a hour-long call home to her husband. "It was expensive but worth it."

Sergeant Fischer said the gymnasium was state of the art with free weights and a wide variety of exercise equipment. " And it always had staff to help." The compound also had a small base exchange, Subway sandwich shop, laundry and Green Beans coffee shop. The MWR section included the gym, a theater, library, game room and internet café. "We were in a place that was so rich in history that we attended Easter services in a church that dated back to the 5th century," said Sergeant Smith.

Saddam had created a lush oasis in the desert palace compound, Sergeant Fischer said, using irrigation. "We also were extremely well-treated by the Army," she said. They were a very good host." "We were impressed that everyone we worked with did whatever it took to get the job done every single day," Sergeant Smith said. "It didn't matter your rank or specialty - didn't matter if you were a senior airman, a private or a general. It was a privilege to work with such a dedicated group."

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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