



THE NORTHERN LIGHT

Monthly Newsletter
And Spotlight

Proudly serving the People of Misawa Air Base, Japan

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Four-Legged Wingmen: Misawa's Own Military Working Dog

Since World War II, before the Air Force was a separate service, the Army Air Corps historically implemented Military Working Dogs (MWDs) to aid service members throughout the years. The 35th Security Forces Squadron here at Misawa Air Base showcases this tradition by implementing their four-legged counterparts when accomplishing the Air Force defense mission.

"Our military working dogs not only provide all types of detection capabilities, they also create a psychological deterrence for people who might want to cause harm to our personnel on base," said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. James Chiriboga-Flor, the 35th Security Forces Squadron kennel master.

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A New Start

SECDAF LLOYED J. AUSTIN III

Lloyd Austin, a retired four-star Army general, has been confirmed by the Senate, making him the first Black, Secretary of Defense in U.S. history. The Senate approved President Biden's nomination for Pentagon chief in a near-unanimous 93-2 vote Friday. "It's an honor and a privilege to serve as our country's 28th Secretary of Defense, and I'm especially proud to be the first African American to hold the position," Austin said. "Let's get to work," he added.

Austin's nomination was approved despite concerns raised on both sides of the aisle that he hadn't been out of uniform for the legally mandated seven-year period.

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Around the Wing



RECORD BREAKING SNOWFALL

Joint and allied personnel at Misawa Air Base executed mission-essential training and defense operations while simultaneously receiving a record breaking 72.4 inches of snowfall during the month of December in 2020.



ANNUAL LOAD COMPETITION 2021

Last week our 13th and 14th Aircraft Maintenance Unit load crews raced against the clock to gauge which team could most accurately and efficiently load inert munitions onto an F-16 Fighting Falcon.



WILD WEASEL UNIVERSITY WARRIOR

Did you know that Wild Weasel University has an award tier system for taking classes? Last week, A1C Doyle earned the highest level, the Warrior award, for completing all requirements and taking 30 classes!



MORE

Check out the Misawa Air Base Facebook for more information!

Legal Blotter

The following personnel at Misawa AB were punished under the Uniform Code of Military Justice in DECEMBER 2020 (UCMJ):

Nonjudicial Punishments (Article 15):

A Master Sergeant from the 35th Healthcare Operations Squadron received an Article 15 for sexually harassing and having unprofessional relationships with airmen within the member's squadron. The member received a reduction to Technical Sergeant, forfeitures of \$2,086.00 pay for 2 months with half suspended and a reprimand.

A Staff Sergeant from the 35th Healthcare Operations Squadron received an Article 15 for being derelict in the performance of her duties by having an unprofessional relationship with a direct subordinate. The member received a reduction to Senior Airman, suspended forfeiture of \$1,373.00 pay and a reprimand.

A Senior Airman from the 35th Security Forces was derelict in the performance of his duties by failing to maintain direct control of his weapon. The member received a reduction to Airman First Class, 10 days extra duty and a reprimand.

An Airman from the 35th Healthcare Operations Squadron received an Article 15 for drinking alcohol while underage and wrongfully obstructing justice. The member received a suspended reduction to Airman Basic, forfeiture of \$340.00 pay per month for 2 months, 20 days extra duty and a reprimand.

The following personnel at Misawa AB were administratively separated:

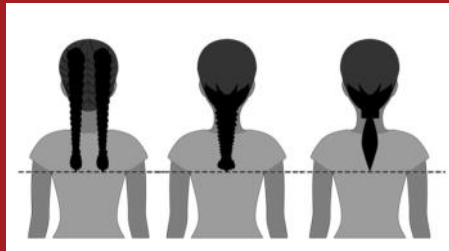
Discharges:

An Airman Basic from the 35th Security Forces Squadron was involuntarily separated for Drug Abuse and received a General service characterization.

An Airman Basic from the 35th Security Forces Squadron was involuntarily separated for Drug Abuse, Misconduct: Pattern of Misconduct, and Failure in Alcohol Abuse Treatment and received an Under Other Than Honorable Conditions service characterization.

POLICY UPDATES

New Standards in Air Force Instruction 36-2903



As an outcome of the 101st Air Force uniform board, Air Force women will be able to wear their hair in up to two braids or a single ponytail with bulk not exceeding the width of the head and length not extending below a horizontal line running between the top of each sleeve inseam at the under arm through the shoulder blades. In addition, women's bangs may now touch their eyebrows, but not cover their eyes.

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Protection

The MWDs selection process begins and the dogs receive their initial training by the 341st Training Squadron, at Lackland Air Base in San Antonio, Texas.

Once they pass a series of base requirements at Lackland, they will be sent off to their first duty station,” Chiriboga-Flor said. “Between myself as the kennel master, and the trainer, we will conduct different training sessions with the dogs to see if we can identify their deficiencies, then improve upon it.”

The MWD and handler undergo training overseen by the MWD trainer to ensure they are both proficient and maintain the standard they are required to meet.

“We’re always training on a daily basis, whether it’s obedience, bite work, or detecting odors for explosive and narcotics detection,” said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jesse Lawson, a 35th Security Forces Squadron MWD handler. “We train for the worst case scenarios to ensure we’re ready when the time comes.”

Lawson added that having a MWD in the Security Forces Squadron, especially on patrol, potentially calms the scene of the situation down.

“There are certain tasks that industry professionals believe are better suited for K9s,” Lawson said. “Based on their physical capabilities, alongside other accompanying factors that go into detection, it can be very beneficial and ultimately save more lives.”

Chiriboga-Flor added that although maintaining a sense of preparation and readiness with training is important, MWDs also need breaks from working.

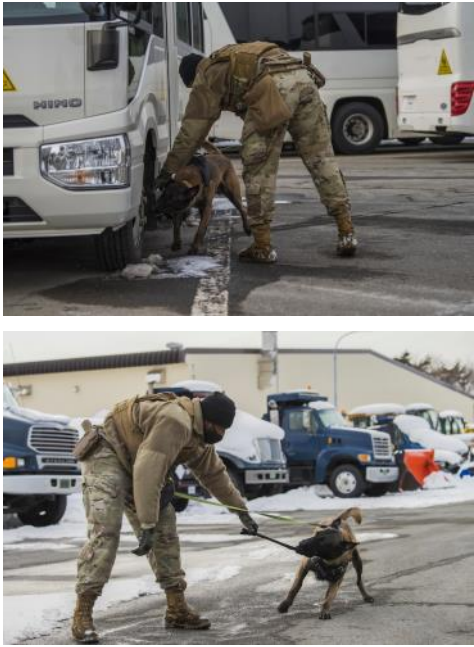
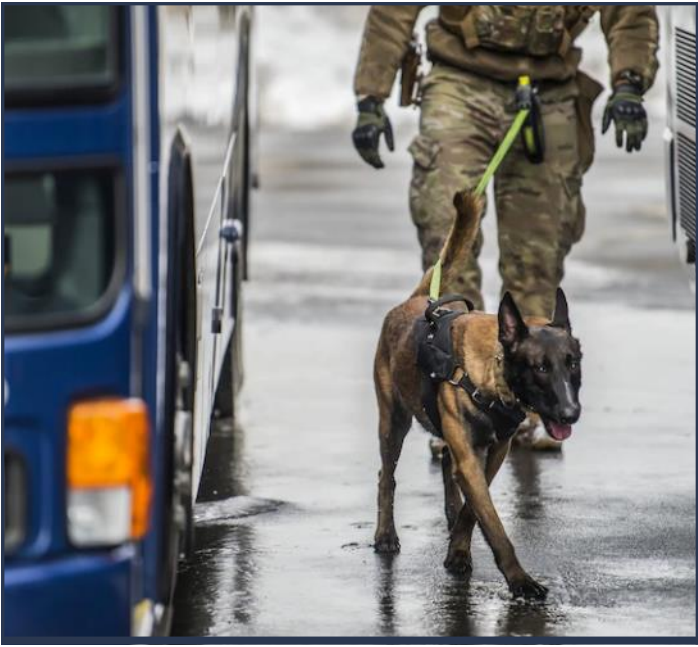
“Play is one of the biggest things that we use as a reward so every day they’re getting that love and attention, just like any other dog,” Chiriboga-Flor said. “If anything it is more important for those dogs to have, it is that, so they can build on the rapport between the dog and the handler.”

Lawson added when a MWD is assigned to an installation, unless deployed, they will stay at the same installation for the rest of their career. This means when the MWD handler receives a Permanent Change of Station, they will have to pass the leash off to the next handler.

“It gets rough, when you build that bond and all of a sudden you have to drop it and let it go,” Lawson said. “It’s and emotional situation, but we understand that there’s still a job to accomplish at the end of the day and you don’t want to jeopardize the next handlers bond with the MWD.”

Chiriboga-Flor added that a MWD can retire out of the Air Force; the last MWD handler will receive first choice at adopting the partner they’ve worked so closely with throughout their career. If the handlers are not able to adopt the dogs, that’s when adoption is open to the base populace and sometimes the public.

“Our hope is always for them to be able to get that retirement life at the end of their service,” Chiriboga-Flor said. “I believe the dogs deserve it more than anybody to lay on that couch and live that nice life after they’ve served their tour.”



Beginning

The National Security Act of 1947 created the rule to ensure civilian control over the military is maintained, but it also permits a waiver if lawmakers in both the House and the Senate approve.

Those votes also passed in bipartisan fashion, clearing the way for Austin's confirmation.

"The safety and security of our democracy demands competent civilian control of our armed forces. The subordination of military power to the civil," Austin, 67, said during his confirmation hearing Tuesday before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

He also attempted to allay fears of some committee members who raised concerns of setting dangerous precedent by allowing two waivers for defense secretaries in four years. He promised to surround himself with "experienced, capable civilian leaders" and to hire a chief of staff who "will not be a military person."

Austin becomes just the third Pentagon chief to serve after receiving a waiver. He joins George Marshall, a retired general of the Army nominated in 1950 by President Harry Truman, and retired Marine Gen. Jim Mattis, former President Donald Trump's first defense secretary in 2017.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell explained that he was voting in favor of Austin because presidents should be allowed the latitude to fill their administration with "qualified, mainstream people."

He also lamented that Congress once again had to pass a waiver in order for Austin to serve in the post.

"The law that we keep waiving actually exists for a good reason," McConnell said.

"Civilian control of the military is a fundamental principle of our republic. We emphatically do not want high-ranking military service to become a tacit prerequisite for civilian leadership over at the Department of Defense," he added.

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer chose to focus instead on the history that was made on the Senate floor.

"Mr. Austin will be the first African American ever to helm the Defense Department in its history," Schumer said. "A powerful symbol of the diversity and history of America's armed forces."

The only two no votes for Austin's confirmation came from Sens. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., and Mike Lee, R-Utah.

Austin served more than 40 years in the Army, and headed U.S. Central Command, the Pentagon's key post leading military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. He served as commander of the theater from 2013 to 2016, making him the first Black general to hold that post.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska, who introduced Austin at his confirmation hearing earlier this week, congratulated him on his accomplishment, adding that Austin was "a great American."

The senator said he and Austin served together in the Middle East in 2005 and 2006. He spoke of their "uneven power relationship" with Sullivan being a major in the Marine Corps., while Austin at the time was a two-star Army general.

"I was just one of hundreds of field-grade infantry officers, recalled to active duty, deployed in the region during a challenging time for our nation," Sullivan said Tuesday. "But when I asked for his time, Mr. Austin gave it. When I had a problem, he listened. And when I asked for help on an important mission, he provided it."

With much of Austin's expertise focused on nations in which the U.S. is at war, some lawmakers raised questions about his readiness to tackle other global threats, in particular from China and Iran.

"I think China is ... our most significant challenge going forward," Austin said Tuesday, while referring to Iran as a "destabilizing force" in the Middle East.

Another challenge facing the new defense secretary are concerns of extremism within the ranks of the military. Those fears have been heightened since the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol that was set into motion at the urging of Trump.

An NPR investigation found that nearly 20% of the people charged in the Capitol complex breach as of Thursday have served or are currently serving in the military.

Concerns about extremist elements within the ranks of the military are not new, of course.

During his confirmation hearing, Austin called it a "critical" issue and said that better screening is needed for military recruits. He also shared an anecdote with lawmakers about when he was working with the 82nd Airborne Division in North Carolina years ago.

"We woke up one day and discovered that we had extremist elements in our ranks and they did bad things," Austin said without providing details. "The signs for that activity were there all along. We just didn't know what to look for or what to pay attention to, but we learned from that," he said.

Austin graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1975 with a commission in the Infantry, according to his biography from the American Academy of Diplomacy.