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Interview by Dr. Charles Gross, Air National Guard [ANG] Historian, with BG Harold Feucht, Commander, 121<sup>st</sup> Air Refueling Wing (ARW), Ohio ANG, at Rickenbacker ANG Base, Ohio.

Subject: Highlights and challenges of the 121st ARW's operational support activities since the terrorist attacks on the US on 9/11/01 including operations Northern Watch, Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom.

DR. GROSS: Could you identify yourself and your assignment here and when you became commander, and we can talk about post-9/11.

BG FEUCHT: Okay. My name is Harry Feucht. I go by "A.J.," and I'm the Wing Commander of the 121st Air Refueling Wing.

DR. GROSS: Okay, when did you take over here, sir?

BG FEUCHT: I started here in October of 2000.

DR. GROSS: Okay, okay. What I'd like you to do, and this is in kind of a general sort of way, could you talk about some of the highlights and challenges of the 121<sup>st</sup>'s activities since 9/11. We can go by maybe Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), [Operation] Enduring Freedom (OEF), OIF [i.e., Operation Iraqi Freedom] and anything else that you can think of in terms of

operational support that's interesting. We can start with Noble Eagle and what that was like that day and what the challenges were subsequent to that, of operating a refueling wing in a radically changed environment here.

BG FEUCHT: Sure, sure. We were one of the units, at least in Noble Eagle, that was tasked early on. The majority of our missions were flown over DC. We did a few to New York, we did a few to Chicago.

The very first morning we flew a mission over Chicago and we refueled two F-16s out of Toledo. They were, I knew one of, or I knew both of the guys who were flying the F-16s and they were on a local -- it was supposed to be an instrument check for one of the guys and they didn't even have live ammo. They had ball ammo on the airplanes but it was important that they put CAPs [i.e., combat air patrols] up.

So we refueled with them the very first morning.

Our participation -- I don't have the facts and figures. You can get that.

DR. GROSS: Yes, we can get that.

BG FEUCHT: Sure, but at one time, flying the missions out of here for DC., we were -- we almost had -- in a 24 hour period,, we only went about three one hour periods I would say where we didn't have an airplane airborne.

So that's how heavily tasked we were here. Part of the reason we got into it so heavy on it was because we did not want to sit alert here.

DR. GROSS: Why is that, sir?

BG FEUCHT: Well, "sitting alert," you come in and you sit for a four to five hour period and, at the end of the four to five hour period, if you're not used, obviously, then you just go home.

We wanted to do pre-planned missions where people knew we were going to be here at a certain time whether it was midnight for a takeoff, whether it was three in the morning for a takeoff. We actually knew we were going to go fly as versus sitting and waiting, "Is the phone going to ring?"

DR. GROSS: Okay, yes.

BG FEUCHT: We just thought for our people it was better to do pre-plans instead of sitting alert. We did sit some alert but, when it was our choice of "Okay, here's some missions available. What do you want to do?" We usually picked the pre-plans. We knew we were going to fly. We knew it was pretty high priority irrespective within reason of what the weather was -- we were probably going to go fly. We could get off.

So that's the reason we went for that.

The other thing, it was more -- along with that, it was

more predictable for our people.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: And if you "sat alert" you didn't know for sure where you were going.

DR. GROSS: Or how long you were going to be there.

BG FEUCHT: You might go to Hershey, Pennsylvania, and refuel the AWACS. You might go to DC and do a two hour CAP there. Because of -- then it was also a little bit more convenient with fuel loads. We knew where we were going, what we were doing. We weren't jerking maintenance up and down on fuel loads because our mission changed or something like that or come back and dumping a lot of gas because we were scrambled and then they didn't need us.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: So we just figured that the pre-plans with maintenance and ops and everything else, it was a lot easier that way.

Along with, of course, all training flights were pretty much canceled. We weren't refueling C-17s. We weren't refueling F-16s out of Springfield on a regular schedule basis like we do now. It was Title 10, Noble Eagle or pretty much nothing because we were tied up.

DR. GROSS: Okay, how long did that last?

BG FEUCHT: That probably went for six-nine months.

DR. GROSS: Okay?

BG FEUCHT: At the same time, when 9/11 happened, along with flying Noble Eagle, we also at the 121st picked up the mission in Incirlik, Turkey.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: And part of that rationale was, we were the lead unit, we were going to go into Turkey, we were going to buy that for a year.

DR. GROSS: This is Northern Watch?

BG FEUCHT: Well, yes. It was Northern Watch, right.

DR. GROSS: Right, okay, right.

BG FEUCHT: And along with March [Air Reserve Base, California]--

DR. GROSS: Okay?

BG FEUCHT: -- [the California Air] Guard unit, we were going to go in there together. We were pretty much [inaudible]. We were identified as the lead unit but what we ended up doing was every 90 days, and we did this for three quarters. We didn't go for a year. We would switch leadership roles with March so they would

have an opportunity to be the deployed commander and run the majority of the operation and then we would switch back.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: So we were carrying that on in Turkey at the same time we were flying Noble Eagle.

DR. GROSS: How big was that requirement in terms of people and airplanes?

BG FEUCHT: Well, the number of airplanes, if I remember right, was probably six to eight.

DR. GROSS: Six to eight?

BG FEUCHT: You can get that out of ops easier than you can out of me.

DR. GROSS: Sure.

BG FEUCHT: We were stretched -- pretty much. That was also at that time when we first started, the first deployment, and we went over right before Thanksgiving, there were few people who were mobilized for that and the problem was, the volunteering, being mobilized, we hadn't worked all that out with the Air Force and with the Department of Defense.

DR. GROSS: I understand you had an option on Noble Eagle on how you could do that?

BG FEUCHT: Yes, yes.

And we had some people were mobilized and some people volunteered. And we worked that through at least on the crew -- well, on the maintenance and on the ops side, we worked that through the maintenance group commander and the ops group commander to work with squadrons and their people to see, "Okay, here's what the requirement is and in the whole organization here, individually, what's your preference?"

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: "Here's the AFSCs we need. Here's how many crews we need. Here's how many crew chiefs we think we're going to need to pull all this off. Who wants to deploy? Who wants to stay here? Who wants to do it through volunteerism? Who wants to do it through mobilization? And we pretty much took that we didn't mobilize the whole organization and we haven't done that even with Iraqi Freedom. We pretty much did it all with volunteers on what kind of status they wanted to be in.

DR. GROSS: So they could choose, then, basically?

BG FEUCHT: Absolutely. Yes. That's the way we worked it here. Some units didn't do that. But, and I think it worked out well. We obviously had some people who were furloughed from the airlines looking for gainful employment, if you will, and that's okay. We had a mission, we had a requirement and they stepped forward

with that and said, "Well, hey, mobilize me." That's fine.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: But anyway, we did the Northern Watch mission. We did that for nine months. We were supposed to do it for a year. We planned to do it for a year. And we ended up rotating people in and out every 45 days is what the end analysis was. That's how we pulled that off.

DR. GROSS: Some would be mobilized, some would be volunteers?

BG FEUCHT: Right, yes, right.

DR. GROSS: Because there was a certain point where the Air Force said "Everybody going overseas ought to be mobilized now because we don't know how much is going to go on, how long we're going to need them."

BG FEUCHT: Yes, right.

DR. GROSS: So you were able to work around that to some extent?

BG FEUCHT: Right. And even when we went to Northern Watch, even though it was after 9/11, within -- we missed the boat on a few people who were mobilized by about three days because we had the approval from the Department of Defense, through the Air Force, that we

did not have to mobilize people. We could do that on a volunteer status.

DR. GROSS: Okay, okay. But they were doing these longer tours. Where were they at this point, doing the longer tours or were they just doing 15 day tours?

BG FEUCHT: No, no. 45.

DR. GROSS: All doing 45? Okay.

BG FEUCHT: Now, I will say that, I think at one time in there, once we kind of had things rolling and we were, we had everything set up over there and that was working and maybe after about the first three months or so, I think the Air Force came down with -- or the Guard Bureau, came down with a 15 or 30 day rotation we could do in and out. And we ended up staying, if I remember right, with 45.

DR. GROSS: Okay, okay.

BG FEUCHT: And that was because we were using our own airplanes to take our people in and out and trying to cover the mission over there and we had enough people that volunteered saying "Hey, I'll go for 45."

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: So the longer time period you have people in theater, it's because of the transportation involved and everything, it was just easier for us to do that.

So that was kind of our own thing. I think March was a little bit different. I think March cut down the time frame with their people but then the complexion of their organization was probably a little bit different, or the culture of their organization was a little bit different.

DR. GROSS: Okay, okay, okay.

BG FEUCHT: So we were allowed to do that, though.

DR. GROSS: It worked out pretty well for you?

BG FEUCHT: Oh, yes, it worked out very well. It worked out very well.

DR. GROSS: Yes, okay, okay.

Were there any other aspects of Noble Eagle, just looking back in a sort of a macro view -- of course it's still going on.

BG FEUCHT: Right, well, yes. It's still going on. I mean, we evolved into, as far as Iraqi Freedom, when the Fairchild [AFB, Washington] active duty unit and I don't remember what the wing number is.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: They were mobilized and sent overseas and we ended up for a three [or] four month time frame at

least, yes. Probably three to four months until Fairchild got back, we deployed crews every week, I think it was three crews in two airplanes, to Fairchild to cover their alert commitment.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: So we were almost like back-filling back here and that was Noble Eagle. That was Northwest United States, filling in for anything on the West Coast.

DR. GROSS: Even with the 141<sup>st</sup> [ARW, Washington ANG] out there? Well, that's interesting.

BG FEUCHT: Yes. The 141st, I think the 141st was some of their people and airplanes were mobilized and deployed.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: So we went out there because, see, they're a single squadron and we're a double squadron so we had more people. We were also doing an "East Coast -- West Coast" swap with C-5 and [C-]141 crews. So we had people deployed in theater at two locations, some with our airplanes for Iraqi Freedom.

DR. GROSS: um hum.

BG Feucht: We were doing an East Cost -- West Coast swap which they called something "Express" -- I can't

remember exactly what the term was. Like on an even or odd day, I can't remember which one it was, we'd send a crew out of here and a tanker to Westover [ARB, Massachusetts]. They landed at Westover and picked up C-5 or 141 crews, the majority of them were C-5, I think, and take them to Travis. RON [i.e., remain over night] at Travis. The next day they would do the dead head back here or they would take crews back to Westover and then come back here. And we did that for about three to three and a half months during Iraqi Freedom. Like every other day we were doing that.

So we were doing the alert at Fairchild, we were doing the "Express" the East Coast -- West Coast "Express" and then we had people deployed and we were a double squadron so we had more people and more airplanes.

DR. GROSS: How much did you have deployed for Iraqi Freedom at its height?

BG FEUCHT: In theater? Well, you mean with all of those?

DR. GROSS: Yes, well, I guess just in theater, I'm sorry.

BG FEUCHT: In theater I think we had five or six airplanes and nine crews in one base. And we had five crews in another base. We didn't take any airplanes.

When the whole Turkey thing went down, we were supposed to go to Turkey. We were one of the wings that, a year

ago this time, we were planning on going to a base in Turkey and taking the whole wing and we were going to have some other airplanes and some other crews from another Guard unit go to round us out. And then when the Turkish Parliament voted against that, then the bases that the U.S. already had in theater they wanted some more of our airplanes and some more of our crews and then on the one base they just needed more crews to fly the airplanes 24 hours a day.

DR. GROSS: So there you are. Yes.

BG FEUCHT: So we ended up being ops and maintenance with a few other squadrons or individuals that were mobilized for Iraqi Freedom. But it all came back off of that.

DR. GROSS: If I read the stuff correctly I understand you were deployed as a wing commander in OEF for an AEF thing?

BG FEUCHT: No.

DR. GROSS: Okay, I got that --

BG FEUCHT: That was early on. That was one of the plans. There were about four wings in the Guard, two of them, Pittsburgh was one that went as a wing. They ended up going to [RAF] Mildenhall and then they forward deployed into Sigonella [phonetic]. That may be classified, I don't know. Probably isn't now.

DR. GROSS: I don't think so.

BG FEUCHT: Scott, Hal Keisler [phonetic] is the Commander out at Scott [AFB, Illinois of the 126<sup>th</sup> ARW, Illinois ANG]. They went to, I don't know if they went to Marone [Air Base, Spain]? They either went to Marone or maybe Lajes [Field, Azores], and they were working the [air] bridge. They were working the bridge. We were supposed to be -- Pittsburgh early on was supposed to go into Turkey. We were supposed to go in to Turkey and then all that went away and no, I never deployed as the Wing Commander.

DR. GROSS: Okay, okay, I got the wrong scoop off of something there.

BG FEUCHT: Skip Scott -- not "Skip" -- Tim Scott, who was the Wing Commander in the Alaska Guard unit, happened to be at a forward base just filling in for 90 days as the Wing Commander, kind of when the whole thing started boiling up and he had gotten in theater I think in August 2002 and he was there for 90 days while, about the unit, his 90 day time, it looked like things were going to happen, you know right after the first of the year. So he stayed in theater for six to seven months being the deployed Wing Commander at an Expeditionary Air Refueling wing. And he was at one of the bases that we went to.

DR. GROSS: Might be an interesting guy to talk to.

BG FEUCHT: Pretty cool. He's the new Assistant AG for

Air in Alaska. Good guy, good guy.

DR. GROSS: Okay, okay. Anything else on Iraqi Freedom, as far as it impacted here?

BG FEUCHT: It was very quick when our crews were mobilized out of here because they were reacting to the Turks, the Turkish Parliament not letting us in so we ended up deploying crews out of here not knowing exactly where we were going because from January 2003 until when we actually deployed in March, we notionally moved to about four different places and that created some problems for us because we were actually, when we got the word, mobilizing people, putting people through a mobility line and getting them out here within 48 hours.

DR. GROSS: Wow.

BG FEUCHT: That created some problems for us as far as in country briefing, what in country rules were and things like that, because there is some research that has to be done on what the status of forces, how people are briefed on what's going on in that country and that causes some problems because it happened so fast. But notification, and the notification we were told "Your warning order is on the line. You should have it by now" on a telephone conversation out of AMC and, in fact, we didn't have it yet. So we were -- the timing caused us some problems getting people out here. We made every takeoff time we were supposed to make.

DR. GROSS: Yes, okay, yes, yes.

BG FEUCHT: But the in depth probably quality of the briefing of our people going out of here wasn't as good as it probably should have been.

DR. GROSS: Well, obviously they knew where they were going at this point?

BG FEUCHT: They knew where they were going but, as far as the briefings that people receive when you're going with a host nation rules and regulations and what's going to happen when you get there and things like that, as far as the research we have to do here to brief the people who were going, wasn't as good as it should have been.

DR. GROSS: Okay, yes, yes? Did you know -- did they know there was going to be a war?

BG FEUCHT: Oh, yes, yes. They knew there was going to be a war. But there were some things besides just what's going on - [inaudible] okay, you're going to this location and you're going to war. There are some other things that, through a mobility line, through legal and -- that people should know about before they get there and, because we didn't know early on to do the research, they didn't have everything that they might have.

DR. GROSS: Were the tactics or the deployment of them any different over there than in previous scenarios or previous operations?

BG FEUCHT: Yes, I think one of the things, just the employment over there. When our crews got over there, actually in one of the locations were actually flying their first mission, which is called "over the shoulder" -- even when we go into Northern Watch, we go fly our first mission and we have somebody that had been there for a month flying missions sitting in front of your airplane. You've got plenty of room for people.

DR. GROSS: It's not like an F-16, okay?

BG FEUCHT: They lead you aloft. Okay? They kind of watch what you're doing, what you maybe need to be calling so and so here and checking in and changing your IFF here and doing whatever those procedures are -- there's somebody there to remind you. You've got a checklist that tells you how to do all that and what the timing is. But it is just somebody kind of watching and telling you how things are done.

DR. GROSS: Yes, I know.

BG FEUCHT: We had some of those missions done, I think, the very night that the war started, as an "over the shoulder." So then, because of the tempo that was going on, our crews would go fly, come back, land, debrief, immediately go into crew rest, and eight hours or ten hours later, whatever they were using, they were back up again whether they could sleep or not, brief them to go fly, come back to debrief, to go back into crew rest again so they could fly the next mission. Those weren't

on a 24 hour basis. So one day you'd be sleeping at night. The next 18 hours later you'd be trying to sleep in the daytime.

DR. GROSS: Good lord.

BG FEUCHT: And so those cycles for about the first 30 to 45 days where, I mean, basically they weren't bored.

DR. GROSS: No, no, yes.

BG FEUCHT: But I mean, it was fly, come back, whatever the legal rest period was, they went into the legal rest period and they turned around and went and flew again. So that's how hard the tankers -- and the fighters were probably the same way.

DR. GROSS: Yes, yes.

BG FEUCHT: But that is not the norm for Northern Watch -- Southern Watch, you know.

DR. GROSS: Did they fly them in places where they normally wouldn't fly them in terms of you know possible exposure to enemy fire?

BG FEUCHT: Yes. Yes.

DR. GROSS: Because I seem to recall reading something about that. They were forward.

BG FEUCHT: Right. Yes, they actually flew over Iraq.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: And the reason for that was, when the A-10s and any of the F-16s that were, any of the -- any of the -- I want to say "tactical" combat aircraft that were flying missions took -- to come outside -- let's say you were flying over Baghdad?

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: To come outside of Baghdad, if you're flying an A-10, or if you're sitting up there in some kind of CAP, to go hit the tanker again and have to go down over another country to hit that tanker, to go back into Iraq just takes too long.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: And so once they felt the threat was down enough, then they moved the tankers in country and they were getting fired at, or there was firing going on.

DR. GROSS: Missile stuff?

BG FEUCHT: Yes.

DR. GROSS: Did they have any countermeasures or any tactics?

BG FEUCHT: The only -- the tankers don't have countermeasures.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: So we'd -- they'd move CAPs, they would fly high when it would come time to refuel. They'd fly low so the fighters could get on easier. They moved the CAPs around some.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: [LT] GEN Mosley, who was the CFAC [i.e., Combined Forces Air Commander], flew on a tanker --

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: -- to prove that, "You know, folks, we can do this. I did it." You know, "These are the things that we have to do when the war is going on. We can't afford to have you, you know, 200-300 miles out of the totally -- In the environment we are in, you can get a missile shot at you about any place. But there's an operational requirement that you have to come forward with your tankers so we can project combat power in an area.

DR. GROSS: But this was quite different, isn't it, than probably anything that's ever gone on before in terms of a war to have them actually where they could get fired at.

BG FEUCHT: On a regular basis.

DR. GROSS: On a regular basis? Yes, yes, yes.

BG FEUCHT: And they were, I mean, there were instances where you know somebody has been hit and they need fuel or whatever and there were instances where people received medals flying tankers who basically flew right over Baghdad, north of Baghdad up to Mosul and picked up, I think it was a fighter that had been hit or whatever, that didn't have enough fuel to get back and they went right over the whole combat area to pick this fighter up and bring him out and give him enough fuel.

But, on an ongoing basis, to fly over an area where you're having missiles and/or triple AAAs [i.e., anti-aircraft artillery] shot at you, was not the norm. I'll put it that way.

DR. GROSS: Yes, yes. Probably to us there was quite a few Air Medals in your last newsletter, in fact.

BG FEUCHT: Yes.

DR. GROSS: Our friends from Johnstown, [Ohio], their son was in a P-3 and they flew them over and they actually got pretty close calls with three or four missiles.

BG FEUCHT: Right. Right.

DR. GROSS: Did any of your guys have close calls like that?

BG FEUCHT: Not that I know of.

DR. GROSS: Okay, that's good.

BG FEUCHT: "Close call" is a relative term.

DR. GROSS: Yes. [Laughter.]

BG FEUCHT: So, I mean, when you don't have an RWR --

DR. GROSS: "RWR?" I'm sorry?

BG FEUCHT: "Rear warning receiver" which a fighter has.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: And you're not tracking -- I mean, you can see -- I mean, I wasn't there.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: I wasn't flying a night mission watching triple AAA come off the ground and watching the tracers. I mean I've have flown F-16s and have done the same thing and been shot at, but being shot at and missed at and shot at and hit are two different things.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: So I don't know. You'd have to talk to some of the crews that were there.

DR. GROSS: Okay. Yes well, has your unit been involved

in Enduring Freedom over in Afghanistan at all?

BG FEUCHT: We have been there. We did not fly anything out of Turkey. There was a dual mission going on in Turkey when we were there for Northern Watch and that's when Enduring Freedom first started.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: And Alabama was in there for that.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: We went with -- we went back in August of 2003.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: We were supposed to go back into Turkey and again the Turkish Parliament wouldn't let us in, so we went to Marone. And we were flying -- we were doing fighter drags in and out of Iraq, which was --

DR. GROSS: Okay, from Marone?

BG FEUCHT: Yes.

DR. GROSS: Jeez. Okay.

BG FEUCHT: We'd go up over Central Med, pick up A-10s and/or go to the Eastern Med and pick them up and bring them out.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: We did some of that. We were also doing, we were also refueling some C-5s coming in and out of Kuwait over the middle of the Med, and then I want to say, around the 18th -- 20th of August, it was in the Air Force link. It was in some Air Force publications. We were the first unit -- we moved from Marone into Incirlik. We were the first Air Force, U.S., airplanes back into Incirlik during -- flying Enduring Freedom since the war started.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: And there was a picture of one of our airplanes touching down supposedly. And there was some interviews. You will talk to Greg Dibert --

DR. GROSS: I believe that's one of them I have.

BG FEUCHT: -- who was the DETCO for that whole operation. He was at Marone and then he moved into Turkey.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: Once we moved into Turkey, that's when we started flying a lot of the C-5, C-17 missions going in and out of Afghanistan. Plus, we were also doing some fighter drags. So it was not only Enduring Freedom. Some of that was probably sustained Iraqi Freedom also.

DR. GROSS: Okay, I know everything kind of gets mushed together.

BG FEUCHT: Right. So for a while, when we were doing Northern Watch, we had Northern Watch tankers in Turkey and we flew Northern Watch and we had Guard tankers in there that were doing Enduring Freedom and they were doing all the C-17, C-5 missions going in and out of Afghanistan and we were totally separate. We didn't -- "Oh, you guys are short an airplane today? We'll give you one of ours." And we were all Guard guys. Those were totally separate missions taken care of by two different units, buying their schedule doing their thing.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: If we were short a tanker for Northern Watch, we could go over to Alabama and say "Hey, how you guys doing?" "Well, we got a light schedule day up here." "Well, we need one of your airplanes."

DR. GROSS: Why were they that segregated?

BG FEUCHT: That's just the way the Air Force -- we were on call for the Air Force. We were there for the Air Force. We were volunteers for two separate operations. They were two separate operations.

DR. GROSS: Yeah. Okay.

BG FEUCHT: We borrowed equipment, things like that, but we didn't borrow -- we would use ground equipment just because the airplanes started needing something.

DR. GROSS: Okay, right, right.

BG FEUCHT: But we did not take -- they were owned by two different entities.

DR. GROSS: Yes, okay, okay.

BG FEUCHT: And so that was just the way life was.

DR. GROSS: Yes, okay.

BG FEUCHT: And usually we kept the airplanes in where it wasn't that big a deal. As a matter of fact, I don't think it ever was a big deal if somebody had to cancel a mission because they didn't have an airplane.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: That's just the way the combatant commander divides up his assets and you don't get in somebody else's rice bowl I guess [inaudible].

What else? That was pretty much Enduring Freedom.

DR. GROSS: Okay. Any other -- big operations? I don't know, the Balkans? Whatever you'd been involved with since 9/11? We've talked about Enduring Freedom, Noble Eagle, Northern Watch, Iraqi Freedom.

BG FEUCHT: Iraqi Freedom for us was kind of interesting.

DR. GROSS: Okay?

BG FEUCHT: One of the things early on, GEN Handy told us all, the AMC commander, told all the AMC units of the [inaudible] Guard and Reserve. He said "The first thing we will do as we build up, if we're going to have a conflict or whenever it's going to be, or an operation with Iraq, is we will push the active duty to the breaking point for ops tempo. Next thing we will do, we will ask you for volunteers to help us with the ops tempo. When you're at the breaking point on volunteerism, that you can't do any more for us, then we'll mobilize. We'll mobilize the Guard and Reserve, as many as we need to take care of what we think the ops tempo contingency is."

And he did that.

DR. GROSS: Oh, really? Okay.

BG FEUCHT: Yes. Now here, we had -- the rule was, "We're going overseas for Iraqi Freedom. You will be mobilized." People were mobilized to go overseas, Title 10.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: But, they volunteered for that.

DR. GROSS: Yes, okay.

BG FEUCHT: They volunteered knowing, going overseas, probably going to war. This is when we're going to go because we had a tasking -- "Okay, out there in the unit, how many people want to volunteer to go do this?" And as I said, there were quite a few people in the outside in the maintenance side of the house, that had been affected in their civilian jobs that said, "I'm furloughed from Delta or whatever. I'll go. I'll do whatever it takes"

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Okay, I mean --

DR. GROSS: Was there a distinction, though, between the air crews and the folks in support people on the ground in terms of their availability because of that?

BG FEUCHT: No, not really. There were -- you mean, as far as like maintenance people?

DR. GROSS: Maintenance people?

BG FEUCHT: No. Because we also had maintenance people, college kids who volunteered, full time people out here, Guardsmen out here who had -- I mean, we had a Guardsman who worked for, he's a maintenance guy for ComAir in Cincinnati, and when 9/11 happened and all the airlines started furloughing people, they furloughed maintenance

people too. So he was like, hey "I'll either volunteer with the unit, I'll volunteer to be mobilized overseas, I'll do whatever it takes, because" -- I mean, I'm not saying they weren't patriotic, but they also said, "Hey, I need a job."

DR. GROSS: Right.

BG FEUCHT: "I'll go do -- that's what I do." A lot of people -- but they had to be mobilized Title 10 to go overseas.

DR. GROSS: Okay, that was my understanding. After a certain point we just couldn't do this. "Well, 15 days volunteering, you know?"

BG FEUCHT: No. They were on for the duration. They were mobilized .

Now, when they came back, based on what our tasking here with what the East-West Express, and with still backfilling at Fairchild for just a little bit, those people either stayed on based on our tasking here, or the demob process, relatively speaking, was very good coming out of Iraqi Freedom as versus what it was right after 9/11.

DR. GROSS: What were the big differences?

BG FEUCHT: Well, the difference was the work in the paperwork through AMC or through the Air Force or the Department of Defense to get people released.

DR. GROSS: That's pretty hard after the first --

BG FEUCHT: The first part? Sure. Sure, because if you remember back in Desert Storm, I was told people were mobilized for two years and to come off of anything short of two years took a Secretary of Defense approval and signature.

DR. GROSS: Jeez, I didn't realize that.

BG FEUCHT: So that minutiae or whatever -- you might want to cross check that -- but that's what I was told. People were mobilized for two years and to do anything -- or maybe it was a year.

DR. GROSS: This was after Desert Storm?

BG FEUCHT: Yes. Or during Desert Storm.

DR. GROSS: During Desert Storm, yes?

BG FEUCHT: It would take a long period of time to get them to demobilized and they're sitting here, the mission's over here and everything else and they're sitting here painting rocks or doing whatever --

DR. GROSS: Yes, well, that's great for morale.

BG FEUCHT: -- because of the minutiae for getting them off, because of all the paperwork and everything else it took. Now, we've come a long way.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: I mean, we're getting people on and off of orders based on what the need is and we're going to work eventually, I don't know if that'll work at the Wing Commander level -- well that's down the road some place but we think that's where it needs to be.

DR. GROSS: You're talking about how long did it take to get people off orders this time or the latest times around.

BG FEUCHT: You're going to talk to a lot of people here on the base. I would say there was lead time involved. You need to get it in why you needed off. You could probably get it done within 30 days or so. But that was a notification that 30 days from now we need to get them off.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: It wasn't calling and say "Hey, guess what, we want the guy off today."

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Because that ain't going to happen. Okay? But if we planned it out because people had accumulated leave, they have reconstitution time, they had -- they come back, they stay on orders but they don't come to work -- depending on how long they were on orders, how

long they were overseas -- they got four or five days like grace period at home where they stay with their family and --

DR. GROSS: So this did not become a big issue or a big problem with families and members, stuff like that?

BG FEUCHT: What do you mean?

DE, GROSS: The coming home, demob, waiting around, painting rocks, nothing to do? Or did it?

BG FEUCHT: We were pretty good with this. I would say, relatively speaking, we've come a long way. There are some instances, depending on what -- different commands worked differently, ACC, AMC, mobilizing, demobilizing, who they have to get approval for and all the rest of that, you could go over, you could talk to our 220 at the EIS Squadron over at Zanesville and they could probably because they work with a different command than we do, how they get people demobilized and through the paperwork and everything to make that happen, maybe totally different because it's different command and they work them differently.

DR. GROSS: Yes, yes.

BG FEUCHT: But I will say AMC, relatively speaking, was pretty easy to work with. They're getting better.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: They got better and better.

DR. GROSS: How about the Air Guard CAT and the AEF Center?

BG FEUCHT: Air Guard CAT, they're all good. They're all good. They're doing the best they can with a short number of people and you're --

DR. GROSS: People are there on short tours?

BG FEUCHT: Right.

DR. GROSS: And stuff like that?

BG FEUCHT: That works pretty well, I think. I mean, relatively speaking.

DR. GROSS: There were some problems last time around. I talked to people and they said, "God no."

BG FEUCHT: You know, a lot of that depends on who the owning agency is, when people start getting mobilized or activated.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Some organizations are easier to work with than others.

DR. GROSS: How about the AEF Center down at Langley, [AFB, Virginia]? Did you guys work with them?

BG FEUCHT: No, we don't really work with -- that I see, we don't work with them that much.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: We work with AMC and we work with the ANG CAT. They're -- that whole operation, work and everything with them, is just better and better all the time.

DR. GROSS: Yes, un-hum. Another general question. Employer support issues, trends since 9/11? How has that impacted here?

BG FEUCHT: It's been real good, I think. We have a really a super -- You talk to Kathy Lowrey and some other people, a LTC here who was the executive officer, but she -- and I am going to talk just a little bit about family.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm. Well, good, good.

BG FEUCHT: We have a full time family readiness person involved, Carolyn Neibert [phonetic]. I don't know if you're going to talk to her.

DR. GROSS: I don't believe so this time, but you know maybe some other time.

BG FEUCHT: If you get a chance, you can talk to her. She's a civilian that's in that contracted position.

She does just a great job. We have a lot of people going in and out of here cycling people in and out, 45 days for Iraqi Freedom and all that kind of stuff, whether it's stateside being mobilized or being activated, if you will. She does a great job and she has, as I said, a group of volunteers that work with her that are just super people.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm. Great.

BG FEUCHT: The employer side? We, I think, we probably have a small number of employers who are hurt when people are mobilized. It is the, I guess it's like 90 percent of your problems or 90 percent of your concerns are what you work on are with 10 percent of the people. And for the majority, I think, on the employer side, we're in pretty good shape. A lot of that's communication -- is a communication for why it's important, what's going on, what are these people really doing when they go? And quite frankly, we have Guardsmen who volunteer, okay, because they enjoy going and doing and being a part of it and not necessarily -- because we will go and say "Okay, who can volunteer? We're going to do three 45-day tours. Or we're going to do 90-day tours. Who can volunteer?" We do this all the time. Guardsmen have been doing this for the last 10 years.

DR. GROSS: Yes, yes.

BG FEUCHT: It isn't, you know, weekend and it ain't 15 days any more. It's like, "Hey, we have work to do. Who can volunteer? Who can go on this deployment? Who

can do whatever? We're always asking that.

But our employers I think overall are very, very positive towards supporting their guardsmen. The ones that aren't are the ones that have small companies that just can't afford for two or three people to be mobilized for 90 days and be gone.

DR. GROSS: For a year or something like that?

BG FEUCHT: Right, but then, and see, I'm talking from Air Guard perspective. I'm not talking about the Army Guard Major or Captain I just read about in the newspaper, I just read about him the other day, he's from Ohio, and he's an Army Guard. He just lost his business.

DR. GROSS: Jeez.

BG FEUCHT: He and his wife had a business and his wife -- he was mobilized and I don't know, I can't remember if he was sent to Iraq or wherever. But he was going to be gone for over a year and they just lost their business. They went bankrupt.

DR. GROSS: Jeez.

BG FEUCHT: I think this may have been in the Sunday paper. I remember reading it. But we have, in the Air Guard, been gone that long. The Army Guard's getting hurt right now big time.

DR. GROSS: Because of the length of deployment?

BG FEUCHT: Because the length of deployment is going to be in country for a year. That lead in time -- It's boots on the ground over there is when it starts and it's boots off the ground is when it's over as far as their "year." But the lead time and the demob time and everything else, that leave that they use and all the rest of that at the end is not even figured into that.

DR. GROSS: Yes, yes. It's a lot more for them. I mean, we just pick up and go in the Air Guard.

BG FEUCHT: Well, we pick up and go and, Doctor, we go, we get our job done.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: I mean, from the time our people are mobilized for Iraqi Freedom until they were home was, at the most, three and a half months. And it was over. I mean, the big push -- and they got, they were bored at the end over there. And, but they held them in theater and that's a different story. But I mean, we went, we fought the war and we came home.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: And within a month to a maximum, 45 days after, we got everybody home which was all happening at about June. We were back to flying the same flying schedule we're flying today.

DR. GROSS: Yes. Get your training done and all that kind of thing.

BG FEUCHT: Yes, we're going refueling C-17s, we're refueling F-16s out of Springfield. I mean, we're back to the status quo, at least here in the Air Guard.

Now, 130s in the Guard are a different story.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: This is their big time.

DR. GROSS: Well, over there. Sure, sure.

BG FEUCHT: The active duty has come out over there and now it's the Guard's time in the C-130s. So the, what do I want to say? The heavy duty, "how does it affect your unit for mobilization?" For us right now, except for people that are doing ECS, combat support, and they're always going in and out in one-zies and two-zies and teams of five or whatever some place, for like right now, the [C-]130 is big time ops tempo and ours isn't.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm. Well, okay. Well, how's all this the last few years, then, since 9/11 affected things like recruiting and retention here? You hear all this moaning and groaning from Washington and other places. "Oh, god, the Guard and Reserve, they're hurting. We're going to lose people." Blah, blah, blah, blah.

BG FEUCHT: I think here, as I said -- here, for what we do, I think we're fine -- because of our business and how we do it, and you know, from the time we sent people to Iraqi Freedom until they got home -- it was almost March, April, May, June -- it was four months max.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Probably three on the average for our people.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Now, when's the next one? How long is that going to be? We don't know.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: But the ones, I think, well the ones relatively speaking that are hurting right now are going to be the Army [Guard] people. It's going to be the Army that I see as versus us.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: Now, this is a [KC-]135 unit here at the 121st Air Refueling Wing. C-130s at Mansfield, C-130s, a different Guard unit or Reserve unit or whatever, depending on how they're in and out of the flow and how long it takes people to go and come back, is probably a different story.

DR. GROSS: What about your cops?

BG FEUCHT: Cops are pretty good. They're a tough group. As long as they get -- support from their families, I think, within reason, and they get support downtown like -- we were having trouble with cops getting, because a lot of our cops here are cops on the outside.

DR. GROSS: Okay.

BG FEUCHT: And so, from the smaller communities, and even from the City of Columbus, we have a lot of cops -- we finally got some buy-in from them that they would go along with some salary matching and things like that and extending at least the option for their health benefits. We talk a lot about Tri-Care for Guardsmen.

DR. GROSS: Right.

BG FEUCHT: But a lot of Guardsmen who work downtown want to have the option of continuing their health care that they had when they worked downtown.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: Because, if you change [to] Tri-Care, yes, you leave, you're gone, now your wife and your three kids have to go find a different physician because they don't come under Tri-Care.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: And it's just hassle kind of stuff that they don't want.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: And downtown Columbus, State of Ohio, those state and municipal organizations have pretty much come on line with "We will match -- salaries and we will allow you to continue to use your health provider or whatever that you had before."

DR. GROSS: Okay. Are most of your cops back?

BG FEUCHT: Oh, yes.

DR. GROSS: So you haven't seen any big exodus or big change?

BG FEUCHT: No. There's some. I mean, you know, if it -- it's something we have to watch overall in the Air Guard and the Reserve because some places are stretched hard.

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: Some organizations are stretched hard. And I'm not saying we're not.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: I just, relative to like what the Army Guard's going through right now?

DR. GROSS: And the Army Reserve? You read a lot about them, too.

BG FEUCHT: It's been light action for what they're doing.

DR. GROSS: Yes, well, I see some of these sort of policy solutions that they're talking about in Washington is based upon all these horror stories and stuff and I say, "Well, they may be true somewhere else but I don't see it yet with the Air Guard."

BG FEUCHT: Well, it's -- I don't think it's as bad as what I hear but that's just my interpretation.

DR. GROSS: Yeah, sure.

BG FEUCHT: I think, I mean, we still have people walking in the door. We still have people re-enlisting.

DR. GROSS: yeah. [End of side A.]

DR. GROSS: We have to look at the old Gross schedule.

BG FEUCHT: Is it running?

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Okay, I'll just kind of wrap it up. I think, what you're looking at, at least in this organization, is if you can, and this is what we're

trying to do in Ohio is what the Air Guard is trying to do, if you can give people some predictability, within reason, and for where you're going to go and what you're going to do in the future, if you can get people in, do the job, whether it's Iraqi Freedom, whatever -- get it in, do the job -- when it's over, when the majority of it is over and the active duty or the Department of Defense can start releasing people and demobilizing people, then they need to do it instead of hanging them on.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: The main thing I think for the Guard is, we need to have an understanding with the "gaining command" if you will. We will respond. We will have volunteers. You tell us what the time frame is and we will tell you that we can meet that or we can't meet that. We don't need to bring people here for 30 days before they ever -- disrupt their lives for 30 days and they're sitting here not doing anything, before they go someplace, and then they get there and they sit for another 15 days before anything starts --

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: -- within reason. You do the job and you don't sit there for another 15 days twiddling your thumbs --

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: -- because everything's winding down but everybody's afraid to let you go home because they're afraid something's --

DR. GROSS: Something bad is going to happen there, yes.

BG FEUCHT: And if we can get that mind set, you know, we can work through the active duty Air Force or whoever those, the "gaining command" is and we say "We will respond with what you need on time to meet your expectation. And then you need to let us go."

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: "Let us get back to our lives and get back."

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: And we're getting better at that than we've ever been before.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: And that will work.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Our people are, as you know, are as patriotic as anybody else in the world, and I really do think, and I saw this when I was at Toledo. For years and years and years -- I've been in the Guard for 35 years. We'd go to Alpena, Michigan, once every summer.

DR. GROSS: Yes.

BG FEUCHT: Every five years they'd let us go to Europe and take our airplanes and we'd fly out of Skulthorpe [phonetic], England, and do something for two weeks. That's all we ever did.

DR. GROSS: All right.

BG FEUCHT: Now, we're doing it with AEF every 15 months on the fighter side and we're doing it every day here. We're a total part of it and the people involved in it that I saw at Toledo when we went there for Northern Watch and Southern Watch, the people thought that was important stuff.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: And they were like, and I had any number of people come up, and I've been in the Guard a long time so when they say, "This is the right kind of stuff, this is what we ought to be doing all along."

DR. GROSS: Mm-hmm.

BG FEUCHT: Instead of going to Alpena for two weeks and once every five years [inaudible].

DR. GROSS: Exactly. So it's been very positive?

\BG FEUCHT: Absolutely.

DR. GROSS: Yeah.

BG FEUCHT: And that is what the majority of people want to do.

DR. GROSS: Yes, yes, and you can manage it properly if they let you do that, you'd be all right?

BG FEUCHT: Absolutely.

DR. GROSS: You would be alright. It strikes me as a lot of the rhetoric in planning is based on different information or different problems that other people have, you know?

BG FEUCHT: That's right.

DR. GROSS: Well, let me just close this and thank you very much, sir, I appreciate it. It's been very helpful.

[Whereupon, the interview was concluded.]

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