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377th Medical Group pays tribute to registered nurses and medical technicians

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Pet Policy

After complaints about pets in housing, adhering to pet policies receives a push

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Contractor's Showcase

50 high-tech businesses put products on display and a free lunch on top of it all

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Farewell 551st SOS

551st Special Operations Squadron deactivates while Pave Lows continue exodus

By Staff Sgt. Markus Maier

377th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

An era came to an end when Team Kirtland said farewell to the 551st Special Operations Squadron during the deactivation ceremony during the 58th Special Operations Wing here April 27.

The squadron, which trained MH-53 Pave Low aircrews since 1989, stood down due to the Air Force's decision to retire the MH-53.

"For those of us who have flown the 53 it's a sad day," said Lt. Col. Todd Lancaster, the squadron's former commander. "But for special operations, this represents what we have always done, which is a continuum of the special ops warrior spirit. The guys who have flown the 53s will keep on the same tradition, which started during World War II and will carry far into the future."

Most squadron members will continue to serve at the 58th SOW, according to Colonel Lancaster.

"Many of our flight engineers are going to the CV-22 Osprey. Our aerial gunners are going to fly on the HH-60 Pave Hawk. Most of our pilots are retiring and some are moving on to higher leadership positions," he said.

During the ceremony, the colonel took the opportunity to thank his fellow squadron members.

"I'd like to thank the entire 58th SOW," Colonel Lancaster said. "We've always worked as a great team together, whether it's here training or off doing special operations around the world. We depend on each other. It's been a pleasure and honor serving with this great team."

The MH-53 Pave Low will still have a presence here at Kirtland. One is scheduled to be placed in the air park on the west side of the base in the near future.



Photo by Dennis Carlson

Lt. Col. Brett Hauenstein commands the 551st Special Operations Squadron formation during the squadron deactivation ceremony April 27.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Markus M. Maier

Lt. Col. Todd Lancaster, former 551st Special Operations Squadron commander, salutes after relinquishing command to Col. Leonard Smales, 58th Operations Group commander.

Kirtland crowns Idol

Air Force spouse takes \$700 prize

By Sheila Rupp

Nucleus Journalist

Team Kirtland rivaled "the other Idol" April 27 at the 2007 Kirtland Idol finals held at the Mountain View Club.

The house was packed with more than 200 attendees cheering on their favorite Idol-hopeful. Nine contestants selected by audience votes from three preliminary rounds gathered to give it their all and vie for the Kirtland Idol 2007 title – and \$700 cash.

Col. John Hill, 377th Air Base Wing inspector general; Chief Master Sgt. Vic Rountree, acting 377th ABW command chief; and Hilary Real of the Greater Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce served as judges for the evening's festivities.

Robert Gates started the evening off with Harry Chapin's "Cat's in the Cradle," which was the song that earned him a spot in the finals. He seemed much more relaxed this time around, though the tempo of the song was a little too slow to get the crowd revved up. Again, Gates' voice was strong and held the folk tune well. Chief Rountree said the performance had a lot of passion, while Colonel Hill said it reminded him of a cheap karaoke bar.

Chandre Osborne changed things up a bit for the finals, performing Jewel's "Foolish Games," a departure from her performance of the southern rock ballad "Black Velvet." The song may not have been completely suited to Ms. Osborne's voice as it didn't allow

See Idol