



## Airmen advise Afghans on Russian-made helicopters

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18th Wing Public Affairs

3/4/2009 - **KADENA AIR BASE, Japan (AFNS)**  
-- Kadena Air Base Airmen are contributing to the readiness of the Afghan national army air corps by serving as advisers to Afghan airmen who maintain the Russian-made MI-17 transport helicopter at Kandahar Air Base, Afghanistan.

Tech. Sgt. Daniel Flanagan, a helicopter crew chief, and Tech. Sgt. Brian Roberts, a hydraulics specialist, are mentoring Afghan airmen at the Afghan air corps southern wing at Kandahar AB.

Both Airmen are deployed from the 718th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Kadena AB.

"The MI-17 is being used to cut down the number of convoys by doing cargo runs. We also do troop transfers," said Sergeant Flanagan, describing the lifesaving missions the helicopters are conducting. By airlifting troops and equipment, they are reducing the exposure of coalition forces to one of the number one killers in Afghanistan: improvised explosive devices.

At Kandahar AB, Sergeant Flanagan is providing maintenance and inspection guidance to Afghan maintainers who in some cases have worked on the MI-17 for more than 20 years.

"Have you ever tried to give advice to somebody that has been doing something the same way for 20 years?" Sergeant Flanagan said. "It's not easy, but it really has been fun."

Sergeant Flanagan has shared improved risk management practices with them and taught them new methods for tracking flight hours and scheduling inspections. Sergeant Roberts has advised Afghan airmen on the MI-17's hydraulics system.

Sergeant Roberts, who usually works on E-3 Sentry aircraft at Kadena AB and is on his first deployment to Afghanistan, said their mission is important because they are "helping them (the Afghan air corps) to do their everyday jobs safer and better."

In preparation for the deployment, both Airmen attended a month-long familiarization course at Kremenchug Air College in Ukraine to learn about the MI-17.

"It was a great school," Sergeant Flanagan said. "We had two weeks of classroom lecture-type training and two weeks of OJT-type training."

"During our (on-the-job training) portion, Ukraine had record flooding," he said. "We actually got to help prepare the aircraft for a real world flood rescue operation saving 18 lives."

This is Sergeant Flanagan's second deployment to Afghanistan since he reported to Kadena AB in September 2006. On his first deployment, he maintained HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters that performed more than 100 medical evacuation missions and saved more than 120 lives.

With the unique opportunity to advise the Afghan air corps, Sergeant Flanagan said he and his fellow maintainers are making a tangible difference in the war-torn nation.

"It seems like we are really helping this country," he said. "Not only the maturing of the air corps but also helping in the community."

Lt. Col. Kurt Kolch, the 718th AMXS commander, said Sergeants Flanagan and Roberts exemplify the commitment of his maintainers to mission accomplishment regardless of the mission and where it takes them.

"When we were tasked to send Airmen to train the Afghan air corps, they were quick to volunteer," said Colonel Kolch, "and I couldn't be prouder of their service there."



Tech. Sgt. Dennis Flanagan advises Afghan air corps maintainers on the Russian-made MI-17 transport helicopter March 2 at Kandahar Air Base, Afghanistan. Sergeant Flanagan is assigned to the 718th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron from Kadena Air Base, Japan. (Courtesy photo)

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