

General Shares Tuskegee Heritage With Balad Airmen

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8/9/2007 - BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq (AFPN) -- Airmen serving with the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing here got a chance to meet with a man who shared some heritage with them July 31.

On his sixth visit to Balad Air Base in recent years, Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Scott, the son of a Tuskegee Airman, arrived with a number of purposes.

As the commander of the Joint Contracting Command Iraq/Afghanistan, the general traveled from his office in Baghdad to visit with two of his largest customers -- the 332nd AEW with the largest single-runway airfield after Heathrow International Airport in England, and the 13th Sustainment Command Expeditionary that is in charge of all the dining facilities, Army housing, mission support and force protection for Logistics Supply Area Anaconda, which is collocated with Balad AB.

He also attended the 332nd AEW monthly awards and enlisted promotion ceremony as a guest speaker, sharing his family history with approximately 500 Airmen.

The Tuskegee Airmen formed in 1941 when the Army Air Force began a program to train black Americans as military pilots at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Many went on to become members of the 332nd Fighter Group during World War II. Today, 332nd AEW Airmen are fighting the war on terrorism in the most forward-deployed Air Force wing in Iraq.

The general is the son of Paul Scott, a B-25 flying officer and navigator for the 477th Bomb Group. It is one of the lesser-known units and was the last major unit formed during the Tuskegee Experiment. His father was still in training when the war ended, so he spent his years in the Army Air Corps training and flying anti-submarine patrols off the coast of the United States.

"My father used to tell us stories at bedtime when we were little," the general said. "He often talked about his flying days. Once, he got a visit from then-Col. Benjamin O. Davis (also a Tuskegee Airman), while on duty. Colonel Davis was inspecting the barracks. The colonel then proceeded to get furious because my father had failed to provide heat in the enlisted barracks. He told him 'never forget your maintainers.'"

The general then spoke of meeting now-retired General Davis years later when he stopped by a base exchange where General Davis was signing copies of his autobiographical book.

"When it was my turn to speak to him, I told him who my father was and that his stories of those days made me want to join the Air Force and to become an officer," General Scott said. "He asked me to hang out while he finished up, and we would talk some more. I did, and I was amazed by the fact that though I had heard many stories about him, he never took credit for his deeds. For him, it was all about the team. All of the people involved shared experiences, and all of them earned the right to be called Tuskegee Airmen."

The general said he sees the same pride in the Airmen who serve today. While visiting various locations here, he said he noticed pride in Balad AB's Airmen -- pride in the way they wore their uniforms, pride to be



Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Scott looks over the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing's Fallen Airman Memorial along with Army Col. Anthony Helm and Staff Sgt. Mike Shellhaas July 31 at Balad Air Base, Iraq. General Scott is the commander of the Joint Contracting Command Iraq/Afghanistan. Colonel Helm is assigned to the JCC-I/A staff member and Sergeant Shellhaas is assigned to the 332nd AEW Protocol Airman. General Scott is the son of a Tuskegee Airman and took the opportunity to speak about his heritage with Balad AB Airmen. (U.S. Air Force photo/Tech. Sgt. Alan Port)

Airmen and pride in what they had accomplished while serving here.

"I love hearing about my Tuskegee Airmen when they bring a bad day to someone who deserves it," he said. "(Then) when I visited the doctors and nurses at the new Air Force Theater Hospital, I thought, 'Those are my Tuskegee Airmen.'"

The general closed the ceremony with a parting thought.

"Just like the Tuskegee Airmen of World War II, all of you have served in our Air Force fight," he said. "All of you have earned the right to be called 'Tuskegee Airmen.'"