

Prime BEEF 50th Anniversary

This year we celebrate 50 years of Prime BEEF units and their support of expeditionary operations. Many of us in uniform today joined, or chose to stay in the Air Force, expressly to provide operational platforms and bases in deployed environments when our nation calls ... essentially to continue the legacy of those first Prime BEEF units. As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Prime BEEF, I'd like to take a moment to look back at the roots of its birth, and invite you to read Dr. Ronald Hartzer's article on page 4.

After the creation of the Air Force in 1947, contingency engineering responsibility was given to the Army. The Army forces designated for Air Force support were undermanned, poorly equipped and untrained when the Korean War broke out in 1950, and the Air Force realized something had to change for future conflicts.

In 1957, the Air Force was directed to develop a capability for emergency repair of bomb-damaged air bases using existing personnel, and began experimenting with a mobile team concept to respond to deployment requirements. On Oct. 1, 1964, 17 years after the creation of the Air Force, the Prime BEEF program was born from this effort.

The war in Vietnam served as a watershed moment for Prime BEEF, with the first deployments to Vietnam taking place in August 1965. Those initial Prime BEEF teams set a standard of excellence and paved the way for the RED HORSE squadrons that were activated in October 1965.

Between 1964 and 1975, 318 mobile Prime BEEF teams comprising 9,402 military personnel were deployed worldwide, and set patterns for future Prime BEEF employment. In the late 1960s, Prime BEEF began contingency skills training, setting the pattern for today's Silver Flag sites. Over the years, deployments in support of the Cold War, Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, the Balkans and post-9/11 operations in Southwest Asia have repeatedly validated the Prime BEEF concept. You can read about the innovative work they are doing today on pages 8-15.

I also want to recognize and thank our civilian Airmen who enable the Air Force's unique structure of military members being dual-tasked to support both home station and deployed operations. When I am asked how the Air Force can be so effective down range, my response is always the same. At home we are trained every day to operate an air base or installation by outstanding civilian teammates, from master craftsmen or master planners. I am sure all of you share my pride in the civilian contributions to Prime BEEF members.

I want to be clear that when I say "Airmen," I am referring to our Total Force: active duty, Guard and Reserve. Reserve and Guard Airmen engineers are absolutely vital to the success of our Prime BEEF mission. The expertise and capabilities they bring to the fight are without equal and have shined bright over the past 13 years since 9/11.

As we celebrate the last 50 years, there are nearly 1,400 Prime BEEF engineers deployed in harm's way, continuing the legacy. I am confident they will provide effective combat platforms to ensure continued mission success today and into the next 50 years.

Engineers lead the way!



Timothy S. Green
Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Civil Engineers