

## Trip and the Shaw Team's Operations Update

Greetings from Shaw! It has been a whirlwind of a year and every squadron in the 20<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing has been busy.

The Shooters returned from Kuwait in May 2019 after taking the fight to ISIS in Syria and Iraq, eradicating their stronghold in the area. Flying from Al Jaber Air Base, the 55<sup>th</sup> racked up more than 1,000 enemy KIA. Over the summer the squadron stayed just as busy, flying Noble Eagle missions over several weeks and weekends to defend the POTUS. In November 2019, the Shooters deployed to Tyndall AFB for Exercise CHECKERED FLAG, a large-scale exercise focused on air-to-air integration, as well as Air-to-Ground WSEP, ensuring the Shooters' skills remain sharp for any contingency. Currently, the Shooters are flying in a COVID-19 contested environment and showed support for the local community and healthcare workers through a Sumter flyby. Roll 'em!



**Shooter flagship tail 550 “rails clean” at the deployed location**

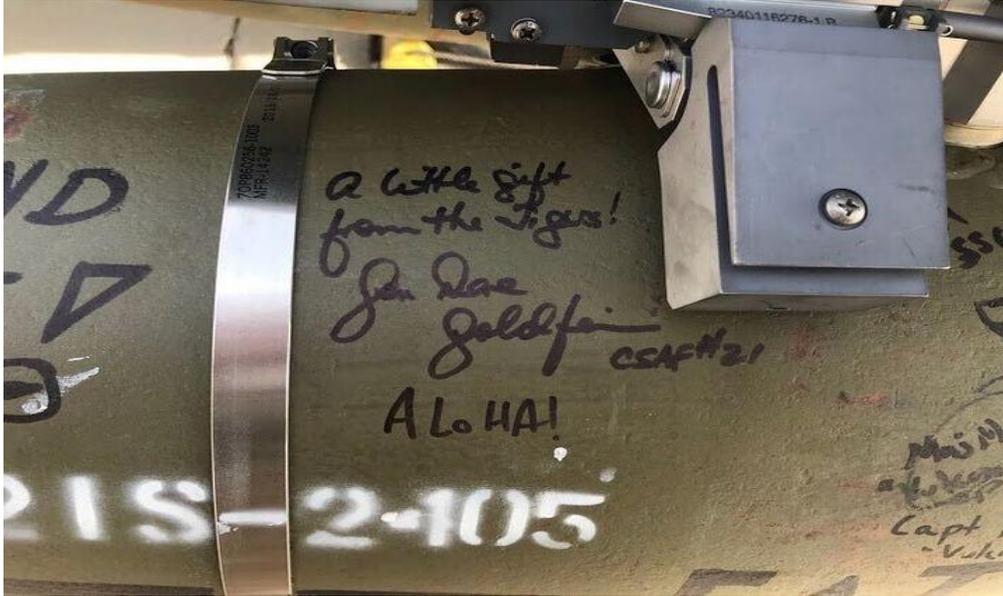
The Tigers left in October to continue our fight against terrorism in Afghanistan, beginning a dynamic and unpredictable seven months. From Oct-Dec, the Tigers tallied over 300 separate employments, removing over 100 terrorists from the equation. They also were poised in over-watch during a high-profile prisoner exchange, repatriating one American and one Australian to friendly control. The 79<sup>th</sup> then shifted operations to Al Dhafra and Al Udeid Air Bases to counter the Iranian threat in the Arabian Gulf last January, eventually settling at Al Dhafra under the threat of Iranian ballistic missiles. They continued to fly into Afghanistan, added missions to Iraq, and flew Defensive Counter-air in the Strait of Hormuz over the next 5 months. The Tigers

flew every ATO-assigned mission, never missing a task thanks to the great work of our Tiger maintainers, and despite challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Tigers getting ready to prowl**

On 11 Dec 2019, the 79<sup>th</sup> fought to defend the lives of personnel on Bagram. In the early morning hours, a 2000-pound vehicle-borne IED created a breach in the perimeter wall, while 11 insurgents heavily armed with suicide vests, rocket-propelled grenades, small arms, and heavy machine guns took control 3 buildings on the base. Amidst the ongoing firefight, wearing helmets and body armor, Tiger pilots and maintainers launched jets directly in the hellfire while rockets continued to impact near the flight line. The 79th helped coordinate the base response from the air, dropping 10 precision-guided weapons within Danger Close, killing all remaining 9 terrorists inside the base. All For Freedom!



**Actual GBU-54 Dropped in “Danger Close” signed by CSAF before!**

Not to be left out, the Gamblers begin spin-up this summer for deployment to an undisclosed location. They will participate in Exercise JADED THUNDER, a Close Air Support exercise in Salina, Kansas that has become the premier Special Operations-focused joint CAS exercise in the DoD. This exercise is integral to the Gamblers’ spin-up plan, which will cover a variety of mission sets in order to ensure the squadron is ready for any mission--from SEAD to CAS to DCA. Double Down!



## **Gamblers ready to provide the “winning hand” at Red Flag**

Finally, B-course production has not slowed, providing Shaw with around 20 new wingmen. Pilot transition to the F-35 also continues, with roughly 4-5 Shaw pilots per year making the switch, providing invaluable Weasel expertise to the JSF community.

We're all looking forward to the next reunion at Luke in '21. First In, Last Out!

-Trip and the Shaw Wild Weasels