

1 HOUR PHOTO

Deployed Airmen keep imagery on the move

Story and Photos by
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Joint Combat Camera Management
Team

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A picture may be worth a thousand words, but if no one sees the image, those words are lost. A team of highly specialized Airmen, including three reservists from the 4th Combat Camera Squadron, March ARB, Calif., ensure those “words” get to the people who need to hear them.

All photographs and video taken within the Iraqi Area of Operations are processed through the Joint Combat Camera Management Team here.

Located
inside the

Green Zone of central Baghdad, the team’s main objective is to collect and move all military imagery electronically back to the United States. The team members are innovators, in a sense, because nothing like this has been tried before.

The system is comprised of a central hub, located in Baghdad, and up to 12 individual satellite transmission units scattered strategically throughout Iraq. The field units send their imagery to the hub, which is then forwarded to the Pentagon. The imagery is made available for use by the Department of Defense and other government agencies. Once the imagery is reviewed and cleared for public release, it is also made available to news agencies and press services.

“In the past it has always been the job of the individual combat camera person to send his or her imagery off to the Pentagon,” said Tech. Sgt. Glenn Clark, a video technician with the JCCMT from the 4th CTCS. “Now the field units can send all their video and photos to the hub using a high speed satellite connection, where we can collect it and send it off to the Pentagon all at once.”

The strategic location of the JCCMT

and its large imagery archive make it a high demand resource for local commanders engaged in the Coalition Provisional Authority’s Information Operations campaign. The collected imagery is also often used in coalition news conferences to show the military’s perspective to the local and international press.

“In times past, those who needed access to combat camera imagery had to request it through the Pentagon. Now there is a process in place to get it into the hands of the local customers, within minutes instead of days,” said Capt. David Ross, officer-in-charge of the JCCMT. “As soon as we get hot imagery, our team immediately gets it where it needs to go.”

While the word joint in their name means they receive and process imagery from all branches of the U.S. military, the current staff in Baghdad is made up solely of Air Force members.

“This has been a good experience for me to work with other branches of the service,” said Sergeant Clark. “Having to call a Marine or Army team in the field to coordinate a transmission or work out a technical issue gave me real insight into how the other guys

do business.”

The team includes four active duty members and three reservists. In addition, the seven Airmen are deployed from three different bases. The team members attribute this diversity to the success of their mission.

“It’s always the people who make or break a mission,” said Staff Sgt. Tracy Duplantis, the JCCMT maintenance technician from the 1st Combat Camera Squadron at Charleston AFB, S.C.. “Three members of the team are reservists. They are just as skilled and professional as their active duty counterparts, and we have all come together to get the job done.”

The mission of the JCCMT is as difficult as it is unique. It has evolved from a concept of being able to move imagery on demand, to something people rely on everyday to tell the military’s story from inside Iraq.

For team members, the hours are long and the demands are high. Despite the dangers of working in a combat environment, the Airmen stay focused on the importance of their mission and understand they play a role as guardians of America’s military history.

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Tech. Sgts Glenn Clark and Roy Santana from the 4th Combat Camera Squadron, March ARB, Calif., check out the satellite dish for the Joint Combat Camera Imagery Transmission System. These combat camera specialists were sent to Baghdad to manage all military imagery documentation in the Iraq AOR.