



## MEDIA RELEASE

### 134TH AIR REFUELING WING MCGHEE TYSON AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

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## Tennessee Air Guard Band returns from Overseas

KNOXVILLE – Tennessee Guardsmen from the Air National Guard's Band of the Smokey Mountains returned Friday, August 28, from deployment to Southwest Asia.

Calling the group, "Sirocco," which means desert winds, 10 members of the 572<sup>nd</sup> Band of the Smokey Mountains entertained troops throughout Southwest Asia during a whirlwind tour from July 22 to August 28. The primary mission of the band was to perform for troops stationed in areas too dangerous to receive a USO tour.

During their deployment the Guardsmen performed over 30 concerts at a number of locations in Southwest Asia, including bases in Kabul, Afghanistan, Kyrgyz Republic, two Forward Operating Bases, and other bases ringing the Persian Gulf.

Audiences consisted of airmen, soldiers and marines. Even exhausted and battle weary warriors found themselves tapping their feet or even all-out dancing to the music of the Air Guardsmen from Tennessee.

It was a totally different audience in the Kyrgyz Republic and the band traded in flak vests and helmets for Polo shirts and khakis and headed off-base where they performed for children at orphanages, village community centers and a children's cancer center. While the youngsters there spoke only Russian or Kyrgyz and the songs were in English, the entertaining message resonated loud and clear.

The adage, "music transcends all language barriers" was proven again and again throughout their many performances of songs by artists ranging all the way from Bob Marley to Blues Traveler.

The part-time airmen, who are stationed at McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base in Knoxville, have a wide variety of civilian careers outside of the Air National Guard. They include a music student, music teacher, human resources advisor, postal worker, professional musician, IT technician and a mother of two. They left all that behind to serve not only their country but their fellow service members by bringing the sounds and music of home and offering a respite from the daily pressures of deployment in a foreign land.

Sirocco band members are: Senior Airman Johnathan LeFan, from Chattanooga; Staff Sgt. Daniel Stone, Memphis; Staff Sgt. Reginald Coleman, Knoxville; Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Matthew Adams, Jasper; Staff Sgt. Chad Bailey, Nashville; Staff Sgt. Michelle McGill, Chattanooga; Staff Sgt. Traci Lamb, Chattanooga; Tech. Sgt. Steve Burdick, Chattanooga; Tech. Sgt. Eric Odiorne, Blountville; and Senior Master Sgt. Hilary Walton from Asheville, N.C.

**CUTLINES: Staff Sgt. Michelle McGill, from Chattanooga, lead female vocalist with the band, sings to an enthralled young audience at the Children's Cancer Center in the Kyrgyz Republic Capital Bishkek. (Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Patrick J. McCracken)**

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