



27th Fighter Wing Public Affairs staff report

Nearly 300 Cannon Airmen returned home Thursday to hugs, handshakes and thank-yous after completing a four-month deployment to Balad Air Base, Iraq, that occurred during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year holidays.

Anxious family members and friends filled Hangar 133 to greet their returning Airmen who arrived to Cannon by charter jet. The F-16 aircraft returned later in the day and another aircraft with about 35 more Airmen will return soon.

"It's been nerve-racking," said Joanne Lodder of the deployment of her husband Staff

Sgt. Jason Lodder, 27th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, adding that e-mail communication helped make it easier.

"It's time for me to be a dad," said Staff Sgt. Jason DeRocher, as he held his two-month old daughter, Jessica for the first time.

The deployment will be the last Air Expeditionary Force deployment for the 524th Fighter Squadron, but not the last for the 27th Fighter Wing.

This group of Airmen represents the largest deployment Cannon has had in the past year. On average, Cannon has had about 650 Airmen deployed throughout the world in support of various missions and operations.



PHOTO BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS RANDI FLAUGH



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Left: Senior Airman Joshua Crook, 27th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, dabs a tear off the face of his wife, Anais. Airman Crook is an aircraft electrical specialist who works with the 524th Aircraft Maintenance Unit. This will be the last AEF deployment for the 524th Fighter Squadron due to Air Force Special Operation Command taking command of Cannon in October.

Left: Staff St. Sean Mulcahy, 27th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, embraces his daughter, Sabrina after returning home from a deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This deployment has been gone since September and missed the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year holidays with their families. Below: Family members, co-workers and friends packed into Hangar 133 Thursday for the opportunity to catch a glimpse of their loved ones exiting the chartered aircraft that brought them home from a deployment to Iraq. Airmen were greeted by area television and newspaper media, as well as music from a local radio morning broadcast.



PHOTO BY GREG ALLEN

Left: Staff Sgt. Jason DeRocha, 27th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, spends time with his wife Sarah and his two-month old daughter Jessica shortly after his return to Cannon from Balad Air Base, Iraq, Thursday. Sergeant DeRocha was one of nearly 300 Cannon Airmen who returned from a four-month deployment to Iraq as members of the Air Expeditionary Force 3/4 rotation.

Right: Staff Sgt. Nicholas Asbury, 27th Equipment Maintenance Squadron, was welcomed at the flightline by his family and son upon arrival Thursday morning. Airmen from many career fields left as part of the AEF 3/4 rotation.



PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. SCOTT MACKAY



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