

# Packing It In

*Air Force Portal:  
one password,  
endless opportunities*

by Master Sgt. Chuck Roberts  
photo by Master Sgt. Lance Cheung

**M**ore than 442,000 people have entered the Air Force Portal.

Doing so required filling out yet another online registration form, providing a user name and coming up with one more password to contend with. But that's where similarities end.

In some cases, registering with the Air Force Portal allows users to consolidate 50 passwords into one. It offers the same convenience for average computer users who are sometimes

forced to scribble passwords on yellow sticky notes and squirrel them away in a binder or a remote corner of a desk drawer underneath a tangled heap of paper clips and rubber bands.

And once you're in, users can take care of personal and professional needs previously accessed through numerous separate Web sites, said Maj. David Gindhart, deputy chief of the systems integration division of the Air Force chief information office in the Pentagon.



Want to increase contributions toward your Thrift Savings Plan? Need to start an allotment to pay off that new car? Deployed and unable to contact the home office by e-mail or by phone to track down the status of those desperately needed spare parts? It's all there on the Portal.

The Portal concept has been around since 2001. The current version came online a year later, but it only became mandatory in April for civilian and military Air Force computer users. Signing up is mandatory, but people will be glad they did, Major Gindhart said.

### Breaking through the clutter

"It's an exciting time," he said of the capabilities available now and others in the works. "All Internet-based applications will be accessible through the Portal. Air Force Portal breaks through the clutter of the last five years," the major said of Air Force Web sites that are often cluttered, difficult to navigate and present duplication of effort.

So far, feedback from the field has been favorable, Major Gindhart said. "They like the vision, and they like the single sign-on." But computer savvy users, he said, are quick to demand "more and faster" capability. Not all computer uses that have become commonplace are accessible. LeaveWeb and myPay, for example, can be accessed, but users still must log into their accounts. In the case of myPay, it's more difficult to integrate a password into Portal because myPay is a Department of Defense site, the major explained.

While those capabilities are in the works, others such as instant messaging are in place and being put to good use. Examples cited by the Portal staff include Staff Sgt. Francisco Camacho who, while deployed from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., to Southwest Asia, was having difficulty contacting Air Combat Command for an update on hot mission capability stats. He was directed by e-mail to the instant messenger available on the Portal. With instant messenger, both parties are online at the same time and can respond instantly to each others' written messages.

"Air Force instant messenger allowed us to communicate without interrupting our phone call or disrupting our daily workloads," he said. "During downtimes, our request was queued and received the next time [Air Force instant messenger] was opened."

In addition to his job, he also used the Portal's instant messenger to stay in touch with his wife back at home. The biggest hurdle, he added, was making Airmen aware of the capability the Portal has to offer.

"Many deployed personnel had never used the Portal, and some had never even heard of it," he said.

And while at home or on the road, users can check their office Web mail or tap into any of the Portal's seven major categories: AF Home, My Org, My Base, My Workspace, Library, Career and Life. In addition, the main menu features the latest Air Force news, a search engine, a section for favorite Web sites, the Air Force White Pages for tracking workers and an A-Z section covering a gamut of information such as military acronyms and a dictionary of military terms. Users can customize the Portal to accommodate personal preferences for sites and display.

### Computer community

For those looking for a cross-flow of information, they can join a forum to share experiences and knowledge in a creative, free-flowing Web community. More than 150 communities are available to assist in driving strategy, solving problems quickly and sharing best practices while working together from remote locations.

But in one instance, the Portal is the only source of information. Airmen can now track their fitness efforts through the Air Force Fitness Manage-

ment System which is only available through the Portal.

"We're getting to the point where you won't need to go anywhere else," Major Gindhart said. He believes Air Force people share his vision of what the Portal can offer. "My challenge," he said, "is to deliver more and deliver it fast."

You can begin using the Portal by logging onto <https://www.my.af.mil> and clicking on the self-registration link. After logging on, Major Gindhart recommends clicking on "AF Home Tour" for an overall guide to the Portal. ☺

### Portal assistance

For more information about Air Force Portal, or assistance for those already registered, contact:

*Air Force Portal Customer Service  
Field Assistance Branch  
afportal.helpdesk@gunter.af.mil  
DSN 596-5771, ext. 117, then 9 for personal assistance  
Commercial (334) 416-5771, ext. 117, then 9 for personal assistance*

To migrate or integrate an application to the Air Force Portal, contact:

*Air Force Portal/Global Combat Support System  
Glen Townsend, Senior Project Manager, Air  
Force Portal Outreach  
glen.townsend@hanscom.af.mil  
DSN 478-7509  
Commercial (781) 377-7509*