

TORCH

Air Education and Training Command's

Winter 2015/16



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reducing risk to life, limb

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Cover photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarayuth Pinthong
Back cover photo by Master Sgt. John R. Nimmo Sr.

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Lt. Gen. Darryl L. Roberson
Commander

Col. Dean W. Lee
Director of Safety

Timothy P. Barela
Editor
timothy.barela@us.af.mil

Bob Van Elsberg
Contributing Writer/Editor
kvanelberg@roadrunner.com

Tech. Sgt. Sarayuth Pinthong
Photojournalist/Designer
sarayuth.pinthong@us.af.mil

Subscriptions and Contributions:

To request unit subscriptions or address changes, or to submit articles, photographs or artwork, e-mail information to torch.magazine@us.af.mil. Or you can write to: Editor, TORCH, HQ AETC/SEM, 1850 First Street West, JB SA-Randolph, TX 78150-4308. You also can fax to: (210) 652-6982 or DSN: 487-6982. For customer service, call (210) 652-5818 or DSN 487-5818. Include your name, full unit address, phone number, fax number and e-mail address on all submissions. Unit distribution is based on a ratio of one copy per seven persons assigned. For personal subscriptions, call toll free 1-866-512-1800 or write to New Orders, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954.

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FROM THE COMMANDER

By Lt. Gen. DARRYL L. ROBBERSON
AETC Commander



MAKE GOOD CHOICES

As AETC's commander, I consider your well-being my top priority. It's what keeps me awake at night. Each and every one of you is an important member of our First Command family. You are vital to the effective accomplishment of our mission to recruit, train and educate Airmen to deliver airpower for America.

Thankfully, in recent years we have been trending down in most categories of safety mishaps. That's the good news. The bad news is the vast majority of the preventable mishaps and fatalities that do occur involve human error.

Most of these mishaps can be traced back to poor decision making and a lapse of judgment. Sound risk management practices are dependent on discipline and making safety part of our everyday operations culture.

I expect every Airman to follow established rules, guidelines, and tech orders. They

are there for a reason — not only to keep our equipment running at optimum levels, but more importantly to keep all of us alive and well.

Additionally, we have to take that safety mindset home with us. The majority of injuries and deaths in AETC occur off duty. Vehicles are still our biggest killers, with alcohol, excessive speed, improper seat belt use and distractions, such as texting while driving, being leading contributing factors.

I challenge all Airmen, both military and civilian, to stay alert and be proactive when it comes to safety and mishap prevention. Safety doesn't have a rank. It depends on all levels to be successful. Anyone can intervene; anyone can call a "knock-it-off." When it comes down to it, my philosophy on safety is pretty simple: Make good choices and be proactive wingmen. We cannot afford to lose even one person to a preventable mishap. It takes all of us to forge the innovative Airmen who power our service. Airpower starts here, and it starts with YOU.

Darryl L. Roberson

JEERS

I hate to rain on the parade, but 2nd Lt. Stephen Hunter probably should have been punished for his binge drinking escapade, not awarded a commission ("Barking Up the Wrong Tree, Fall 2014 Torch, cover story). I thought after all the recent negative press and

discipline problems that the Air Force Academy had stiffened its standards. But I guess its bark is still worse than its bite.

Aaron Allen
Via e-mail

I wonder what would have happened to a lower-ranking enlisted guy if he had done the same thing as Lieutenant Hunter?

Things that make you go, "Hmmm....."

Todd Weatherford
New York

CHEERS

Dear 2nd Lt. Stephen Hunter: Thank you for being brave enough to share your painful story ("Barking Up the Wrong Tree, Fall 2014 Torch, page 8). As a teenager growing up in Alaska, I drank a lot and did dangerous things. What happened to you could have easily happened to me — many times.

When I became a police officer in my early 20s, I stopped drinking to be a more positive role model. I am a sergeant now

with more than 25 years of Alaska police experience, and I have seen many tragic examples of the cost of binge drinking.

I shared your link on my Facebook page where it will be seen by hundreds of friends. Your bravery in sharing your embarrassing story will save lives. Thank you for protecting and serving our country in your own humble way.

Michael Livingston
Sand Point, Alaska

Kudos to 2nd Lt. Stephen Hunter for sharing his story. No way that could have been easy! Sure he made a mistake, but he has selflessly chosen to set his ego aside and share his story so others know the dangers of

binge drinking. I'd say he learned his lesson. Hopefully, people will take stock of his story.

Retired Maj. Jonathon Myers
Via e-mail

Thank you for the story "Barking Up the Wrong Tree." My brother went on a binger when he was a teenager and nearly died from alcohol poisoning. This is an impor-

tant message that needs to get out to our young folks.

T.J. Foran
Via e-mail

I enjoyed the story "Barking Up the Wrong Tree." Haven't we all been there — or on the verge — at one time or another? Most of us don't have the guts to share our most humiliating moments with the world ...

I know I wouldn't. So my hat is off to you, Lieutenant Hunter. Best of luck on the rest of your career!

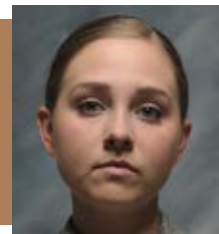
Julie Rubin
Via e-mail

TEAR-JERKER

Airman 1st Class Madison Sylvester's story, "Mommy Isn't Coming Home" (Fall 2014 Torch, page 5), really tugged at my heart and made me reach

for the Kleenex. It hit close to home for me. I also had an alcoholic parent ... not an easy life.

E. Pelaez
Via e-mail



BY SENIOR AIRMAN XAVIER NAVARRO

WHERE RUBBER MEETS ROAD

Tire blow-outs are no fun (reference "Nearly 'Retired,'" Fall 2014 issue, page 12). Some years back I had a tire blow on my truck, lost control and flipped it. Luckily, no one else hit me and I was wearing a seat belt; so I escaped with hardly a scratch (though I did have some soreness for about a week — especially

in my neck). Glad to hear 1st Lt. Laura Jones has recovered and is back to flying. Anyway, thank you for the story and the survival tips ... I learned mine the hard way.

Staff Sgt. H.L. Montoya
Via e-mail

FROM THE TOP

The winter holidays provide an opportunity to relax and celebrate with our families and friends. It's also an opportunity to re-establish a proper work-life balance by enjoying the seasonal festivities and activities.

We work diligently all year to reduce mishaps, and we should not ignore those efforts during the much-deserved break. Sadly, last year we lost five Airmen in off-duty mishaps between Nov. 22 and Jan. 2. Every Airman, uniformed and civilian, must take a few minutes to include sound risk management in his/her winter and holiday plans. The same risk management principles that keep us safe on duty are just as effective when traveling and enjoying recreational activities off duty.

Think through every plan and have a backup plan for contingencies. Pay close attention to weather conditions, remain vigilant and maintain proper awareness of your surroundings.

Use your training and common sense to do the right thing. If you see someone in need, help them. If you're the one struggling, make the right choice and seek help from a friend, a supervisor or a professional.

We are the best Air Force on the planet because of who we are, how we approach challenges, and what we do for our families and fellow Airmen. The Air Force and the nation need every Airman to be ready and available to respond when and where called.

Your family, friends and nation depend on you to make safety a priority in your winter and holiday plans. While enjoying the season, take care of yourself and take care of each other.

Deborah Lee James, Secretary of the Air Force
Gen. Mark A. Welsh II, Air Force Chief of Staff
Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Cody

WASSOM'S ROAD

Recently a Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., Airman and his family were honored for their sacrifice and courage. Many of you have heard the story of Master Sgt. Dan Wassom II of the 189th Airlift Wing (Air National Guard) and his actions during the tornado that struck Vilonia, Ark., last year ("Missing Dan," Summer 2014 issue of Torch, cover story).

Wassom displayed the highest duty to his family and paid the ultimate price to protect his 5-year-old daughter during the tornado. He has been posthumously awarded the Airman's Medal. The Airman's Medal is awarded for heroic action (non-combat) at voluntary risk of life. Additionally, the section of road in front of the Air National Guard campus on Little Rock had been renamed "MSgt. Dan Wassom Road."

The Director of the Air National Guard, Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke III, presented the Airman's Medal to Wassom's widow, Suzanne, at the ceremony in Hangar 207. (She was also given her husband's Meritorious Service Medal. Moreover, the governor of Arkansas presented her with the Arkansas Distinguished Service Medal, which also was awarded to Dan.)

Sergeant Wassom has truly shown us what it means to be a hero.

Col. Patrick J. Rhatigan
19th Airlift Wing commander
Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark.



Dan Sr. and Pam Wassom stand at "MSgt. Dan Wassom Road" at Little Rock AFB, Ark. The road was named in honor of their son, Master Sgt. Daniel R. Wassom II, or "Bud" as he was called by family and friends. Wassom, a loadmaster evaluator with the 189th Airlift Wing at Little Rock, died April 27, 2014, while trying to protect his daughter from a tornado that struck their home in Vilonia, Ark.

BY SENIOR AIRMAN IAN CABLE

LETTERS TO TORCH

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EXPANDING ON... GEN. HAP ARNOLD'S VISION

AIR FORCE ESTABLISHES NEW NAME FOR GROUND SAFETY

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — The Air Force re-branded its ground safety program, officially changing the name to occupational safety Oct. 1.

Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold, commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Forces, coined the name "ground safety" in 1943 when he directed a ground safety division stand-up to prevent jeep accidents. The name stuck and remained a part of the Air Force safety structure.

"This name change is significant," said Maj. Gen. Andrew M. Mueller, Air Force chief of safety, "because it properly reflects the broader requirements of our current safety program that has evolved considerably beyond the program that was launched 62 years ago."

According to senior safety leaders here, the change aligns ground safety with current Department of Defense and industry nomenclature, and better clarifies the duties and strengths of today's Air Force occupational safety professionals.

"Occupational safety instantly translates our duties and responsibilities to other federal agencies and industry," according to Bill Parsons, division chief.

Parsons, who championed the initiative, added, "The name 'ground safety' was an anachronism that ceased to effectively capture or support the evolved mission responsibilities of today's world-class service. The name change to occupational safety was



imperative for the clear branding of our Air Force safety discipline in the 21st Century."

Conflicting terminology between the Air Force ground safety function and that of other federal agencies began to appear when the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 was expanded to apply to all federal agencies, and subsequent Department of Defense instruction became OSH program guidance. As the service's federal and industry partners transitioned to the occupational safety designation, the ground safety moniker appeared less inclusive of the Air Force's roles and responsibilities since the days of Arnold's vision.

"While the new name isn't all-inclusive of duties aligned under occupational safety, such as sports and recreation, it's more succinct and points directly to our mission: Prevent mishaps and preserve combat capability," said Mike Ballard, division deputy director. "Occupational safety more clearly addresses the duties and strengths of our Air Force safety professionals supporting a force that maintains global readiness 24/7."

The division manages the Air Force on- and off-duty safety program that includes operational, occupational, sports and recreation, as well as traffic safety. It oversees integration of Air Force safety inspections, evaluations, assessments and policy, as well as risk management processes.

— Darlene Y. Cowser
Air Force Safety Center Public Affairs

IMPORTANT PRACTICES TO AIR FORCE HEALTHCARE

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. — The Air Force is moving to standardize healthcare of its Airmen, dependents and retiree population with a new program called the Human Performance Concept of Operations.

"The HP CONOPS is a big picture-style plan that will guide us for the next 10 or so years," explained Lt. Col. (Dr.) Shane Steiner, 81st Aerospace Medicine Squadron chief of training health. "It's a strategic document whose goal is to help people live to their maximum potential, rather than simply focusing on when they're already sick or hurt."

The three legs of the program — the Air Force Medical Home, Human Performance Operations Center and the Clinic Innovation Test and Evaluation System — all work together to provide more proactive, rather than reactive, medical care.

An Air Force-wide program that's meant to affect all TRICARE beneficiaries, HP CONOPS is focused on performance, evidence-



Maj. Clara Batiste, Capt. Michael Tiger and Maj. Jonathan Forbes prepare a patient for brain surgery.

based medicine and preventative care. While the HP CONOPS sets out to reenergize Air Force healthcare, the Base Operational Medical Cell sets out to support primary care teams as they care for specific groups.

"People will be enrolled in primary care teams based on what they do," Steiner said. "That means all the security forces guys will see one healthcare team, the finance guys will see a different team and so on. We are already doing this with aircrew (members).

"That specific healthcare team will know its patients, they'll know the challenges that population has to being healthy, and they'll be better at making them healthy."

"This standardized way of making sure people are healthy will ensure the error margins are slimmed and the care more effective."

— Airman 1st Class Duncan McElroy
81st Training Wing Public Affairs

AETC BATTLES NATIONAL 'EPIDEMIC'



One text or call can wreck it all. AETC's Distracted Driving Campaign runs through Jan. 15. Check out www.distraction.gov for video testimonials.

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas — What's worse than drinking and driving? According to statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, texting and driving. As a matter of fact, texting while driving is about six times more likely to cause an accident than driving intoxicated.

That's why Air Education and Training Command is running a Distracted Driving Campaign Nov. 15 through Jan. 15.

"Distracted driving — and texting and driving in particular — has become an epidemic," said Blane Taylor, AETC occupational safety manager. "I think people are shocked to hear texting and driving is more dangerous than drinking and driving. But most people don't drink every day. Many people do, however, text every day. The sheer volume of texters makes this one of the leading mishap factors for motorists."

Taylor said in addition to safety awareness, the campaign will focus on letting

people know the federal and state laws on distracted driving in the areas in which they live and work.

The president himself has directed federal employees to not text message while driving government vehicles. And handheld cell phone use while driving on Department of Defense installations is strictly forbidden. Despite those efforts, however, the Air Force has not been immune to the catastrophic effects of distracted driving.

Less than a year out of basic training, a 20-year-old Airman lost control of his vehicle while texting and driving. It flipped three times and ejected a passenger. The Airman survived, but his passenger died. He is still haunted by her death.

In another instance, a 19-year-old AETC Airman drove while trying to use the GPS on his cell phone, which sat on his lap. With his eyes off the road, he drifted into the lane of on-coming traffic, striking an ambulance head-on. Both vehicles flipped,

and the Airman and two of his passengers died in the tragic mishap.

Distracted driving causes more than 350,000 vehicle mishaps per year, and texting and driving tops the list of distractions, NHTSA statistics show.

According to studies, five seconds is the average time texting steals a person's attention from the road. If you are going 55 mph, that's like traveling the length of a football field blindfolded.

"Each one of us can do our part to reduce this epidemic by being informed of the state and federal laws in effect," Taylor said. "Make a pledge to not use your phone or text while driving. Driving is dangerous enough — even without distractions. Our goal is simple: We want people to stay focused while driving so they can reach their destinations safely."

Taylor encourages everyone to check out www.distraction.gov for more information.

— Tim Barela



‘HOLD MY BEER AND WATCH THIS’

DRUNKEN MAN SLICES FRIEND’S NOSE WITH SWORD

A party trick involving a sword, a sausage and plenty of beer went horribly wrong when a man ended up with his nose sliced in two.

A YouTube video that went viral with more than a million views captures the shocking footage. In one of those “Hold my beer and watch this” moments, the booze-empowered daredevils begin their “lesson” in how NOT to chop a sausage link in half. One man leans his head back gripping a sausage in his teeth, while another brandishes a sword and steadies it just above the man’s face. Fittingly, “red solo cups” can be seen strewn in the background. The sword bearer rears back clumsily and swings the blade, which, of course, misses its intended target.

Did someone shout, “Off with his nose”?

Cheers and laughter turn to screams and gasps as horrified onlookers realize the severity of the insane stunt’s failure.

The victim can be seen recoiling away, his nose barely

hanging on by the skin. He clutches his face in agony, as his sword-wielding friend looks on in shock. The still intact sausage fell to the floor.

A photo shows the gruesome gash and the victim’s bloodied face with the caption saying doctors were able to successfully sew him back together.

One YouTube viewer may have summed it up best when he wrote: “Well, if he didn’t know this was a bad idea at first, he NOSE now.”

— Compiled from YouTube and wire reports



WHERE RUBBER MEETS ROAD

TIRES SHOULD BE AT TOP OF VEHICLE WINTERIZATION LIST

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. (AFNS) — With winter upon us, it’s time to get our vehicles ready for the rough weather and conditions ahead.

Some people call this winterizing and tend to get crazy about anti-freeze, wiper fluid, water-grabbing gas additives and wiper blades. While some climates aren’t as severe during the winter, these are all good things to take care of no matter where you call home. But at the top of the list?

Tires.

I ran my own garage before I entered the Air Force, and I raced cars for years. In my prep for a degree in mechanical engineering, I took a couple extra courses in automotive applications. One of them spent an entire block on tires. It was fascinating, and I’ve been a student of tire technology ever since.

TREAD, CRACKS AND AGE

Most of us use all-season tires, so all we need to do is check the condition, age and pressure. The condition is the hard part ... tread depth, road damage and sidewall cracks are some of the easy things to miss. Damage can be hard to find, so spend some time looking closely.

Don’t tolerate sidewall cracks, sometimes called “dry rot.” These deterioration patterns suggest the rubber is nearing the end of its lifespan. Trying to stretch this can leave you stranded or much worse; so you should have a professional inspect them.

If your tires are more than 5 years old, it’s time to think about replacing them. Every tire has a “birthday” stamped on the side, and the Department of Transportation requires tire manufacturers to follow a standard marking scheme. Of course, the tire’s birthday is in code. The “magic decoder ring,” which displays a tire’s birthday, is available on the DOT Web site.

PRESSURE

The only tire pressure you need to know is the one printed on the vehicle data plate. Most of these are on the driver’s side door jam. It displays the manufacturer’s recommended tire pressure, as their judgment

of the best compromise between traction, handling, noise, wear, etc. They tune the suspension components around this number and have carefully determined how the tread contacts the road, called the contact patch, at that pressure. Any deviation makes you the test pilot.

TEMPERATURE

That temperature sensitivity (about one psi for every 10 degrees Fahrenheit) means you have to adjust the tire pressure as the seasons change, typically in fall and spring. Now that summer is behind us, many people are probably seeing some tire-pressure warning lights if their vehicle has a tire pressure monitoring system.

If you filled your tires when it was 95 degrees outside in July, when the temps dip into the 30s, you could be almost 10 psi low. It’s best to check first thing in the morning, and in the shade. That will give you a true “cold” reading.

There’s a temptation to “add a little

extra” air with thoughts of decreasing rolling resistance and increasing gas mileage. The extra air consumes your margin, and causes the contact patch to change shape. It mucks with the handling, wet traction and braking effectiveness. Additionally, it makes the center of the tires wear out faster than the edges.

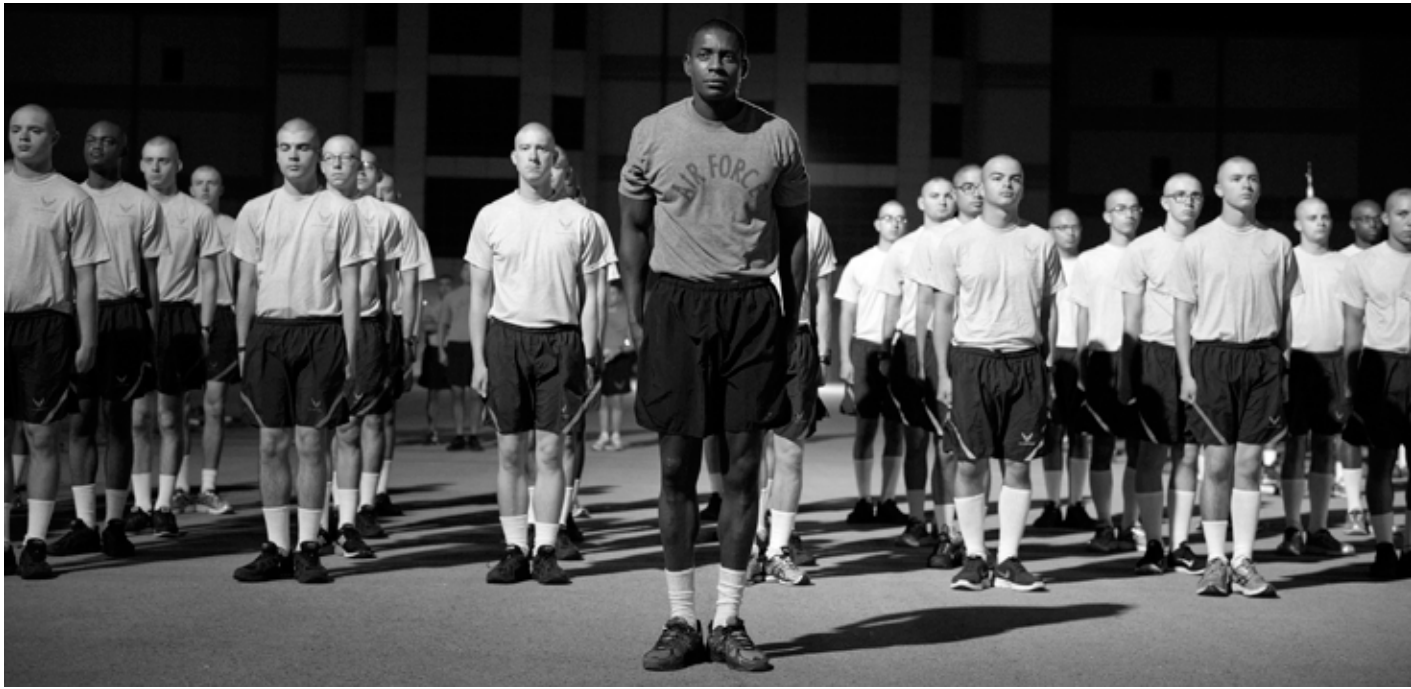
— Col. Michael Panarisi
Air Armament Center Safety Office





‘Show ‘em
what right
looks like’

By **TIM BARELA**
Photos by Master Sgt. **JEFFREY ALLEN**



Tech. Sgt. Chananyah Stuart, a military training instructor, stands at attention in front of his flight of new Airmen before beginning physical training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. The flight was in its eighth and final week of Air Force basic military training at the time the photo was taken.

Commander talks about successfully bringing airpower to fight while reducing risk to life, limb

He's responsible for the well-being of more than 60,000 command members and nearly 300,000 students each year — many of them teenagers who still feel bulletproof. And the cold reality is that at some points during his reign, he will lose Airmen under his command ... not to war, but to preventable mishaps.

That's enough to keep anyone up late at night.

Q: AETC is unique in that we get most Airmen in the infancy of their Air Force careers. How do you go about instilling solid risk management principles in them?

A: It's important when we take Airmen off the street that we start them off on the right foot and show 'em what right looks like. They are joining the Air Force, and this is a military organization that requires discipline and requires us to do things a certain way to be successful to bring airpower to the fight. We have to show them what the expectations are — what the standards are — from the very beginning. Then they have to understand that if they don't follow the standards what the implications or repercussions

But Lt. Gen. Darryl Roberson, who took over as the Air Education and Training Command commander in late July, doesn't shrink from that challenge. He believes the command can reduce mishaps and fatalities.

While there's no magical formula, he does believe there are some simple solutions. In November, he discussed some of those issues with Torch.



BY TECH. SGT. SARAVUTH PINHONG

“I think 99 percent of our Airmen are going to do the right thing, the right way, the first time.”

— Lt. Gen. Darryl Roberson

are. They need to know they will be held accountable. If we demonstrate and teach you the right way to do things, then I think 99 percent of our Airmen are going to do the right thing, the right way, the first time.

Q: What do you think is the best way to reach the high-risk group, ages 17-25, to prevent mishaps and instill risk management into their professional development and personal lifestyles?

A: We need to focus in on what they are doing. It's a combination of everyone working together — from peers and their wingmen all the way through their first-line supervisors and highest-level commanders. We have to constantly evaluate how our youngest Airmen are

learning, how they accept information and how to get the message across to them. And every generation is different. So it's actually fun in many ways to try to make sure we're staying in tune with how best to message our youngest Airmen. Safety is one of those things that needs to be constantly talked about. Even though some Airmen, especially the younger ones, don't necessarily want to hear the repetition, safety really is our effort to try to take care of them. And caring for our Airmen is one of our basic priorities.

Q: What safety violations or issues drive you crazy?

A: Tech order compliance concerns me. If after an accident we find out that folks were not following tech orders, that's a big deal to me. It shows that we have lost a little bit of our discipline; that we perhaps weren't paying attention and focused as critically as we needed to be. Our operations put lives on the line every day; so it's really important that we follow the tech orders and we do the operations the way we know how.

Another concern of mine is motorcycles. The thing that gets me about two-wheeled vehicles compared to four-wheeled is that in many of the cases in which someone was either killed or paralyzed for life, they were doing nothing wrong. They were wearing the proper equipment. They were obeying the traffic laws. They weren't doing anything unusual. And yet they got taken out. Because there is less protection, riding motorcycles, especially in a city or a congested environment, is very risky business.

And, last but not least, texting while driving gets my attention. Every time I get out on the road I see people swerving. Then I see them on their phones texting or talking. We need to get this under control as it has become one of our most dangerous activities.

Q: As a commander, what types of mishaps have you witnessed or reviewed that stick out in your mind?

A: The ones I remember the most and the ones that are the most tragic for me are the ones that could have been prevented if just one link in the mishap chain had been broken. It's the fact that nobody stepped up to break one of those links before the actual huge tragedy happened that makes it even worse. I lost an F-4 flight commander in training back in the early 1980s. It was a night mission out over the water; the weather was bad. We really didn't need to be out there. The training was not so important that we had to be out there doing it in those conditions.

We ended up losing two people in an F-4 crash over the Gulf of Mexico.

To get the mission done, they ended up compromising in a couple of areas they shouldn't have. And the supervisors knew about it but didn't stop it. Really unfortunate stuff. If we have

leadership that accepts less than doing it the right way then we're compromising and putting everyone involved at risk.

Q: What are your “keys to success” for commanders and first-line supervisors regarding the execution of a safety and mishap prevention program?

A: Keys to success are discipline, enforcing the standards, having a strong risk assessment program, holding people accountable and the ability for everybody to be able to call a knock-it-off. Even the youngest, lowest-ranking Airman should feel empowered to be able to say, “OK, stop. This is not right. We're going to hurt somebody or break something.” We are in the Air Force, and any military requires discipline to be successful. So we need to have the discipline to execute what we know works and to call a knock-it-off when things aren't going right.

Q: If you had the last word before an Airman departed for leave or had a chance to give some last tidbits of advice, what would you say?

A: Do the risk assessment. Think about what you're going to do and kind of mentally chair fly what you're going to do. How far of a drive do you have? Should you break it up into a couple of days travel? Do you know the route? What's the safest way to go? What's the weather look like? After you've done the assessment and selected a plan that reduces the risk, stick to your plan. Avoid last-minute changes. I speak from experience because I was in a hurry to get home for the holidays when I was young too.

Q: The Air Force is rapidly changing. With sequestration budget cuts and reduced man-

ning, do you believe we are putting ourselves at more risk for mishaps? If so, how can we mitigate this risk as we try to adapt to this “new reality” while continuing at a high ops tempo?

A: Well the reality is we are the smallest Air Force that we've ever been in our history. And nothing really has come off the plate. So operations continue the way they were when we had a lot more Airmen. We have had to adapt to that situation. Because of this change, it actually makes our safety program even more important. Safety is not only critical for saving lives, limbs and resources, it's mission imperative. Now more than ever, we can't afford to lose even a single Airman to a preventable mishap because the impact on the mission is devastating.

I know we're short on people. We're short on time. We're short on resources. But none of that should drive us to the point that we're compromising on these operations that need to be done. Doing it right the first time is critical.

Please don't ever feel so pressured to get something done for mission accomplishment that it's going to compromise someone's life. There is no training event that occurs in AETC that is more important than the lives of the people doing it. ✈



BY STAFF SGT. MARISSA GARNER

“Please don't ever feel so pressured to get something done for mission accomplishment that it's going to compromise someone's life.”

A close-up photograph of a person's hands, wearing black handcuffs, holding two glasses of beer. The glasses are filled with a golden beer topped with a thick white head of foam. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt. The background is blurred.

SECOND-DEGREE MURDER

Airman sentenced to 18 years
in drunken-driving death

By **CHRIS McCANN**

Photo by Tech. Sgt. **SARAYUTH PINTHONG**



Before being labeled a murderer, Lane Wyatt had a different title: Airman first class.

Everything before June 29, 2013, the day he killed a 20-year-old woman in a drunk driving accident, was different.

Wyatt was born into an Air Force family, moving around from Florida, to Okinawa, then to Oklahoma.

“My parents were strict,” said the former airman first class and client-systems technician stationed at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

His father, a retired Air Force major, started off as an enlisted Airman before commissioning. His parents inculcated values, but for a while, Wyatt admitted, he slipped.

“I knew I was going wild when I got out of high school,” Wyatt said. “I had to straighten up, and the military was the best option.”

He enlisted in the Air Force. His parents came to the ceremony when he graduated from basic military training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

“They were happy. They thought I was party-crazy, and I flipped the script on them,” he said.

From party animal to a promising Air Force career, Wyatt surprised his parents further when he told them of his plans to become a scuba instructor and to attend college, something he had balked at before.

For his first duty station, Wyatt was assigned to the 673rd Communications Squadron at Elmendorf, where he excelled in his job immediately.

He had really turned his life around. One senior NCO even said Wyatt appeared to be on the fast track to achieve his dream of being a chief master sergeant.

But those dreams came to a screeching halt the night Wyatt chose to drive drunk.

On that fateful day, Wyatt and a couple of his friends decided to hang out at the home of another friend who’d just returned from a deployment. They later decided to go out for the evening, so they dropped off their cars and called a taxi.

“We just had fun,” he said. “It was a guy’s night out. I left my car; I didn’t plan on driving. The plan was to go home and crash out.”

At some point later, the group decided to go dancing at a bar in the area where they ran into another friend.

As the evening was coming to a close, Wyatt and his compatriots called Joint Base Against

“It was like after an explosion in a movie, when there’s no sound, just the ringing. I had no idea what to do. ... There was blood on her face. ... People were yelling at me to stay where I was. I told my friend I was going to jail. I was terrified.”

Drunk Driving, an Elmendorf-based volunteer organization that offers free rides home to service members. Not wanting the fun to stop, they invited the newcomer and the young woman he was hanging out with to join them. They returned safely to the house, where they listened to music and goofed off.

Sometime after 4 a.m., the couple who had joined them late decided they wanted to head home, which was about a half-mile away, within easy walking distance.

“I decided I’d give them a ride,” Wyatt said. “I thought I was good to drive. I thought I was fine.”

His friends protested, but ultimately they all piled into his Chrysler 300 and were on their way, laughing and joking.

While on their journey, they stopped at a red light where Wyatt said someone pulled up beside them and revved their engine as if they wanted to race. He did it back, in jest, before they started through the intersection. Though he didn’t actually race, the other car fell behind.

“I remember coming up to a green light,” he said. “Then it turned yellow.”

He wasn’t sure whether to speed through the intersection or try to stop. According to prosecutors, Wyatt was doing 50 to 55 mph when he opted to go through the light.

“I didn’t see anyone; I just saw lights,” Wyatt said.

The next thing he remembered was waking up draped over the steering wheel, his nose bleeding. He got out of the car, as did his friends.

“I just stood there and looked, trying to take it in. ... I thought they hit us,” he said.

One of the other Airmen asked how he was doing.

“It was like after an explosion in a movie, when there’s no sound, just the ringing,” he said. “I had no idea what to do. The girl was in the back seat and there was blood on her face, so we tried to get her out and calm her down.

“I just remember standing there, not knowing what to do. ... People were yelling at me to stay where I was. I told my friend I was going to jail. I was terrified.”

Shortly after the accident the police showed up.

“I didn’t want my friends to get in trouble,” he said. “I said they didn’t know I had been drinking.”

The police took him to the Anchorage Correctional Center where they asked about the evening’s events. His blood alcohol concentration was 0.196.

When they were done, Wyatt asked for his phone and called his father.

“He told me to stay calm,” Wyatt recalled. “Neither of us realized how serious it was. I didn’t know anyone was seriously injured or anything.”

When the police officer returned, he placed Wyatt under arrest for one count of driving under the influence, three counts of assault in the third degree, four counts of assault in the first degree and manslaughter.

Former Airman 1st Class Lane Wyatt recounts the night of June 30, 2013, when he killed Citari Townes-Sweatt in a drunken-driving accident. Wyatt’s actions also injured seven other people, four severely.

He had killed 20-year-old Citari Townes-Sweatt, the driver of the other vehicle.

“I was shocked,” he said.

Wyatt later made a call to his supervisor, Staff Sgt. Corina Arangure.

“I was pretty hysterical,” he said. “I told her the charges, and I asked her to call my parents. And then I sat. They let me walk around, but I didn’t want to be seen. It was my first time in jail.

“I felt horrible. I spent the next few hours crying on the floor of the cell. A mental health provider came and asked me about it and all I could say was, ‘Someone died. ... Someone died.’ ”

Townes-Sweatt was killed almost instantly in the crash. Her four passengers sustained serious injuries, which led to the first-degree assault charges. Wyatt’s own three passengers had superficial injuries, adding up to the three counts of third-degree assault.

“She was the designated driver,” Wyatt said, tears spilling down his face. “And I feel like the trash of the earth. It’s one of those things that’s unforgivable. A lowlife does that, and that’s not me.”

Master Sgt. Paul Kodiak was the communication squadron’s acting first sergeant. He had known Wyatt as an Airman in another section, but didn’t really meet him until that day in jail.

“The reality of the situation really hit me when that second door closed behind me,” Kodiak said. “He couldn’t answer a lot of things because of the investigation, but he said, ‘I’m not that kind of guy, Sergeant Kodiak.’ ... I sat and talked with him until they kicked me out. It was only about 45 minutes — not long enough.”

Wyatt was freed on bail after about six months and was able to return to work. He had an ankle monitor and a third-party custodian — a guardian who, outside of work, could never leave his side.

Going back was a relief, Wyatt said, especially compared to the stress of incarceration. His parents came to visit him, and even at work people didn’t treat him any differently.

“The Airmen welcomed him back — not exactly with open arms — but they liked and respected him for the level of effort he put in (to his job),” Kodiak said. “They wanted him back.”

According to Arangure, Wyatt was a stellar Airman.

“He was excellent; he was definitely on track,” Arangure said. “He’d ask for ways to improve himself, look for projects to do himself. He’d give anybody the shirt off his back — and he always will. That’s part of who he is.

“He definitely feels all the remorse, the regret, the devastation,” Arangure added. “All the conversations he’s had with Ms. Townes-Sweatt’s family, there’s been nothing but forgiveness. But as much forgiveness as they’ve given him, and the love, he’s still full of absolute regret and remorse.”

Wyatt went online and looked up Citari Townes-Sweatt on Facebook. He ended up on her mother’s page, looking at posts she’d made and videos she’d linked.

“It was my own personal hell,” he said. “I haven’t talked to her. I don’t know what to say.”

After a while, his custodian couldn’t provide the around-the-clock presence the court required. Wyatt remanded himself

back into custody while his Air Force discharge paperwork was nearing completion.

“He started losing hope,” Kodiak said. “His demeanor started changing; I guess he felt the screws were tightening.

“Even as restricted as he was (with the custodian), on base or in his dorm room, he liked that a hell of a lot better than jail,” Kodiak said. “When the discharge was complete, the last thing he asked me was to get his story out. ‘If it saves one Airman, it will be worth it,’ he said.”

Eventually he was moved to the Goose Creek Correctional Center, where he resides for the present.

Even there, Wyatt said, he sees people who knew Townes-Sweatt.

“Every single day I run into people who were affected by it,” he said solemnly. “They were dating someone who knew her, or they were friends, or people she knew in high school. ... They say they forgive me, but it doesn’t feel right being around them. I try to avoid being around them. I don’t deserve to be around them.”

Wyatt said he heard the safety briefings and had seen the videos about the dangers of drinking and driving. He’d even been at an Airman’s Call where the guest speaker was an Airman who’d gotten a second chance after a DUI.

“I thought, ‘I’m never going to be that guy,’ ” he said.

“I never thought I would do it. And then I became ‘that guy.’ ”

Wyatt said he knew a DUI could be devastating to his future.

“But hurting someone ... not what you think about,” he said. “You don’t think you’re going to kill someone.”

“Ninety-nine years is the maximum they could give me,” he said before his sentencing. “But it’s not the years. That doesn’t matter as much as I killed a young woman. Seeing people so affected (by my actions), that’s what matters.

“I brought shame on the military; I brought shame on my parents. ... And those people (in Townes-Sweatt’s car), they’re still recovering from serious things they’ll have to live with for the rest of their lives.

“I’m just sorry.”

In a plea agreement, Wyatt pled guilty to one count of murder in the second degree, one charge of assault in the first degree and driving under the influence, condensing some of the assault charges in exchange for the upgrade from manslaughter to murder.

The judge sentenced the once promising young Airman to 18 years in prison.

“I hope to get out before I’m 35,” said Wyatt, 24.

With good behavior, a chance at parole may give him that opportunity. ... But it’s still a long way off.

“Until then, I take it one day at a time,” he said. “There will be difficulties finding a job. I’ll be a convicted felon, and I know how that looks on a resume. It will be hard to go back to normal.”

He has three brothers, one in the Air Force, and his family has stood by him.

“I thought I’d be disowned,” he said. “It makes it easier, hav-

ing people — it gives me hope for the future. I’m not going to be by myself.”

Kodiak, now a first sergeant with the 673rd Logistics Readiness Squadron, said the two years he has spent in contact with Wyatt have given him a new outlook on his role as an NCO.

“He’s motivated things that had kind of died out in me,” Kodiak said. “Being more alert, not taking things for granted, and especially to dig a little deeper, to not stop at the second layer; to know your Airmen — and their friends. You maybe can’t stop them from a bad decision, but you can mentor them, encourage them (and) inform them.”

Though he is facing 18 years of incarceration, Wyatt said he feels it’s a life sentence anyway.

“It’s not something that will go away, ever,” he said. “I don’t blame anyone but myself.”

McCann is a member of the public affairs staff at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska. (AFNS)



Jamaesha Sweatt (right) hugs Deborah Wyatt in an Anchorage, Alaska, courtroom. Wyatt’s son, Lane, was sentenced to nearly two decades in prison for the drunk-driving death of Sweatt’s sister, Citari Townes-Sweatt.

SOBERING FACTS

- The average person metabolizes alcohol at the rate of about one drink per hour. Only time will sober a person up. Drinking strong coffee, exercising or taking a cold shower will not help.

- Almost every 90 seconds, a person is injured in a drunk driving crash.

- Every day in America, another 27 people die as a result of drunk driving crashes.

- One in three people will be involved in an alcohol-related crash during their lifetime.

- You are twice as likely to be killed in a drunk driving related crash on the weekend and more than four times more likely to perish at night.

- In fatal crashes in 2011, the highest percentage of drunk drivers was for drivers ages 21 to 24 (32 percent), followed by ages 25 to 34 (30 percent) and 35 to 44 (24 percent).

- An average drunk driver has driven drunk 80 times before the first arrest.

- If all 17 million people who admitted to driving drunk had their own state, it would be the fifth largest in the United States.

— Information courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

“I killed a young woman. I brought shame on the military; I brought shame on my parents. ... I take it one day at a time. ... I’ll be a convicted felon.”



Airman had on 'blinders' before crash

By Senior Airman **ALEXIS SIEKERT**
Photo by Staff Sgt. **CHAD WARREN**

I'll admit it. I've taken my eyes off the road to change the radio station, check my hair in the mirror or rummage around my purse for lip balm. I've seen others texting while driving or gawking at fender benders.

Most of us have read the statistics and heard the slogan "Distracted Driving Is Deadly Driving." But in all honesty, I never thought it could happen to me.

I was wrong.

One of those very same everyday actions in the wrong moment changed my perspective.

I realize now that split-second of

inattention to the road is like driving blind-folded.

On the morning of Feb. 19, 2014, it all started with the simple act of locating my military ID card.

I'd left my house with plenty of time to get to work, and my mind focused on the drive. But as I got closer to the gate at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, I grabbed my wallet out of my pocket to retrieve my ID, which I needed to gain access to the base.

In the moment it took me to look down to ensure I had the right card, I veered off the road.

My tires screeched as I slammed on the breaks trying to correct my direction. Traveling at just more than 40 mph, I narrowly missed oncoming

traffic. I took out a deer-crossing sign and two road markers.

Then I hit a concrete barrier, and my car flipped ... twice!

I don't remember the first turn, but I knew I was upside down during the second when I could feel my weight being fully supported by my seat belt. I could hear the shattering of my windows and metal screeching on concrete. I finally came to a stop after my car fell into a ditch on the opposite side of the roadway.

Twenty seconds.

That's all the time that elapsed from that split-second I diverted my eyes from the road to the chaotic crash ending.

My BMW was totaled. The caved-

in roof served as a chilling reminder of how fortunate I'd been. The fact that I can even tell this story is a miracle that is not lost on me.

Somehow I walked away without a scratch, bump or bruise. I attribute most of this to German engineering, my seat belt and a lot of luck. But I'm very aware those three factors didn't cancel out my careless actions.

I could have killed myself or someone else.

Beyond the shattered glass, bent metal, and the sirens of the police and ambulatory services, I knew I had to change the way I measured risks. I never want something like this to happen to me or anyone else again.

I can't count on being this lucky a second time. ✈

Siekert is with 52nd Fighter Wing Public Affairs.



With her Beamer totaled after a crash caused by distracted driving, Senior Airman Alexis Siekert of Spangdahlem AB, Germany, says she was lucky to survive the wreckage. Distracted driving causes more than 420,000 injuries each year, according to disraction.gov, the U.S. Government's official Web site for distracted driving prevention.

Tips from a Survivor

1. Have your ID card or relevant papers out of your pocket and easily accessible before you start your vehicle.
2. Have a passenger change the radio station, deal with GPS or fish out an ID card.
3. Your rearview mirror is not for doing make-up or grooming.
4. Eating/drinking isn't a good idea while behind the wheel.
5. Don't talk on the phone or text while driving.

— Senior Airman Alexis Siekert

'I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN HERE HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR TOMMY'



Lt. Col. Maynard Swartz led a squadron of RF-80 jets (like the ones pictured) in 1952 when he encountered a harrowing in-flight emergency. He lost vision because of cabin depressurization, and his wingman had to guide him to a safe landing.

SON MEETS PILOT WHO SAVED DAD

By **DAVID DEKUNDER**

In February 1952, Air Force Lt. Col. Maynard Swartz was leading a squadron of several RF-80 jets from Lawson Air Force Base, Ga., to Germany when he suddenly lost his vision while in the air.

Fortunately for Swartz, Lt. Col. Tommy Temple, his wingman and a World War II veteran, was flying beside him. It was through the quick thinking actions of Temple that Swartz survived and landed safely at a base in Iceland.

Swartz passed away in 1995. His son,



Lt. Col. Thomas Temple



Lt. Col. Maynard Swartz



Jerry, got to meet the man who saved his father's life Oct. 30 at the invitation of the 12th Flying Training Wing at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas.

It was the first meeting between Temple and Jerry Swartz. The meeting occurred on Temple's 92nd birthday.

Jerry Swartz told the story of how Temple saved his father's life before Temple's family members gathered at the 435th Fighter Training Squadron. Swartz said the



incident occurred two years before he was born.

"I wouldn't have been here had it not been for Tommy," Swartz said. "My dad held an extremely high regard for Tommy."

Swartz said his father and Temple were flying from Greenland to Iceland, on their way to Germany, when the elder Swartz became dizzy and began to lose his vision because of depressurization in the cockpit.

Unable to focus his eyes, Swartz said his father could not read the instruments in the cockpit and could only distinguish between light and dark shades. Temple took control by talking and guiding Maynard Swartz through inter-ship communications. Aided by Temple's instructions,

the two pilots arrived at their destination over Keflavik Airfield in Iceland with sufficient fuel for a normal landing. Temple guided Swartz to the runway, told him when to drop gear and flaps, then mobile control talked him in the rest of the way to a safe landing.

Swartz said he was online a month ago doing research when he came upon an article about the incident from a 1952 Air Force safety magazine.

Coincidentally, the article had been posted onto a blog by Warren Andrews, a great-nephew of Temple.

That led to Swartz contacting Temple's family members, who helped him get in touch with Temple and arrange the meeting between the two at JBSA-Randolph.

Temple said getting to meet the son of his squadron leader and friend was "tremendous."

"I thought he was a very remarkable, wonderful man," he said.

Lt. Col. Scott Di Gioia, 12th FTW chief of safety, said Temple is an example for all pilots to follow.

"I hope our wingmen can take something from it as they go forward in their careers," Di Gioia said.

Temple, who was accompanied by his wife Tawana, got to see and get pictures taken in front of a P-51 Mustang and T-33 aircraft displays that were part of the Joint Base San Antonio Air Show held Oct. 31-Nov. 1. Temple flew P-51 Mustangs while serving in the Army Air Corps in World War II,

providing fighter support for bombers attacking Japanese targets. Temple entered the military in 1944 and retired from the Air Force in



1975, in a career that included service in both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Swartz was in the service from 1941 to 1953, participating in the D-Day invasion in 1944 by piloting a C-47 Skytrain that parachuted members of the 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions into France. In 1952, he became commanding officer of the 160th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron in Germany.

DeKunder is with the 502nd Air Base Wing public affairs office at JBSA-Randolph, Texas. (AETCNS)

Col. Michael Snell, 12th Flying Training Wing vice commander, greets retired Lt. Col. Tommy Temple during a tour of the 435th Fighter Training Squadron at JBSA-Randolph, Texas.



DISPELLING REMOTELY PILOTED AIRCRAFT MYTHS

Public interest in remotely piloted aircraft continues to grow thanks to increasing non-military uses and portrayal in popular culture. For the Air Force, RPAs are and will continue to be a vital mission set delivering vital airpower to combatant commanders throughout the world.

MYTH: Because they are unmanned, RPAs are less safe than manned aircraft.

FACT: For every RPA, there is a pilot with a crew in continuous control of the aircraft, ensuring not only operational precision but complete ground and flying safety. Air Force RPAs have safety rates comparable to our manned aircraft. RPA systems have been getting safer as aircraft and communication technology and the institutional experience of operators mature. Historically, even during periods when there was an immediate requirement for extensive RPA operations in demanding operational environments, the mishap rate decreased over the long term.

MYTH: There is no demand from combatant commanders for RPA capability.

FACT: Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions continue to be the number one most requested capability of combatant commanders at multiple locations throughout the world. RPAs are in demand and Air Force RPAs operate on a 24/7 basis. Through December 2014, the Air Force had flown MQ-1B Predators and MQ-9 Reapers more than 2,208,985 hours (RQ-4 Global Hawk/MQ-1 equals 1,661,887 hours and MQ-9 equals 547,978).

While the demands placed upon the many Airmen charged with this mission are becoming better known, there are still myths strongly associated with this mission. Here are some “fact and fiction” topics concerning the highly in-demand world of RPA operations. ...

MYTH: RPAs do not have to comply with Federal Aviation Administration requirements.

FACT: RPA training flights within the United States are conducted under federal authorities granted to the service to train pilots and crew members preparing for real-world missions. This includes all Air Force pilots being trained to FAA instrument rating requirements. These missions are flown in accordance with federal law, executive orders, and Defense Department and Air Force instructions that balance the need for operational readiness with protection of personal privacy. Unmanned aircraft that operate within the national airspace system are held to the same level of procedures and compliance, or higher, than manned aircraft.

MYTH: To achieve the RPA mission only requires a crew of two — pilot and sensor operator.

FACT: For every RPA combat air patrol there are nearly 200 people supporting the mission in various capacities. This includes mission intelligence personnel; aircraft and communications maintainers; launch and recovery element personnel; and intelligence personnel conducting production, exploitation and dissemination operations.

MYTH: RPAs only conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

FACT: MQ-1Bs and MQ-9s are multi-role aircraft capable of conducting several mission sets beyond ISR. They perform numerous additional tasks to include support to combat search and rescue, dynamic targeting, close air support, air interdiction, and strike coordination and reconnaissance. The Predator and Reaper are unique, as they also provide precision-strike missions against carefully chosen targets, minimizing risk of collateral damage.

MYTH: Conducting an RPA mission is like playing a video game.

FACT: New pilots of RPAs undertake a very intense training program before they fly operational missions, making it the furthest thing from picking up a controller and playing a video game. This training curriculum lasts approximately one year, and many current Air Force RPA pilots and trainers have already completed undergraduate pilot training in manned aircraft as well.

— Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs



“MYTH: Because they are unmanned, RPAs are less safe than manned aircraft.”

An MQ-9 Reaper, armed with GBU-12 Paveway II laser guided munitions and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, and piloted by Col. Lex Turner, flies a combat mission over southern Afghanistan.

BY LT COL. LESLIE PRATT

CREWS LAND ON GLACIER TO RECOVER REMAINS

An Alaska National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk lands on a glacier in Alaska to drop off a crew to search for human remains and aircraft debris from an aircraft mishap that happened more than 60 years ago.

ALASKAN WEATHER CAUSED C-124 TO CRASH 63 YEARS AGO, KILLING ALL 52 ON BOARD

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska (AFNS) — Aboard an Alaska National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk, the team breaks through the clouds and acquires the first glimpse of the beauty Alaskan glaciers offer. For many miles, all that is seen is ice 50- to 100-feet high with crevasses highlighted in a light bluish color. Upon landing on the glacier and exiting the helicopter, it doesn't take long to realize a tragedy occurred in this picturesque, but dangerous, place.

Mangled aircraft debris spreads for hundreds of yards.

In November 1952, an Air Force C-124 Globemaster II with 41 passengers and 11 crewmembers aboard took off from McChord Air Force Base, Wash., en route to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. As the aircraft neared its destination, volatile weather caused the C-124 to crash into Mount Gannett, less than 40 miles from Elmendorf.

A search party was dispatched to the crash location, where they spotted a portion of the aircraft's tail. But the harsh weather conditions and austere Alaskan environment thwarted efforts and necessitated the suspension of the recovery effort.

The wreckage lay at the base of the mountain upon a glacier, burying all evidence of the crash as well as the hope to recover the service members.



Navy Lt. Cmdr. Paul Cocker, the Alaskan Command deputy chief of future operations and Operation Colony Glacier project officer, shows local media some of the aircraft debris from the 1952 C-124 Globemaster II accident.

PHOTOS BY TECH. SGT. JOHN GORDINIER

Almost 60 years later on June 9, 2012, an Alaska National Guard Black Hawk crew on a training mission noticed some debris on Colony Glacier. The National Guard sent a team on foot to examine the site. They retrieved items identified as being from the C-124 crash.

Since then, every summer during a small window of opportunity, Alaskan Command and Alaska National Guard personnel have been supporting the joint effort of Operation Colony Glacier. ALCOM coordinates mission planning and performs aircraft debris recovery while the National Guard provides specialists and transportation.

Since the discovery a few years ago, 17 of the 52 Airmen aboard the aircraft have been identified and returned.

"It is an honor and privilege to be part of this mission ... to possibly provide closure for all the families involved," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Paul Cocker, the ALCOM deputy chief of future operations and Operation Colony Glacier project officer. "We are committed to assisting in the safe recovery of any human remains, personal effects and equipment at the crash site."

"Our hope and our goal is to find and return home the remaining 35 service members."

— Tech. Sgt. John Gordinier
Alaskan Command Public Affairs

SPATIAL DISORIENTATION LEADS TO FATAL CRASH FOR F-16C PILOT

LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. — Spatial disorientation and a loss of visual contact with his formation's lead aircraft led to an F-16C Fighting Falcon pilot's fatal impact into the Gulf of Mexico on Nov. 6, 2014, according to a recently released Air Combat Command Accident Investigation Board report.

Matthew J. LaCourse, a civilian employee with the 82nd Aerial Targets Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., died in the crash. The F-16C, valued at \$22 million, was destroyed. There was no damage sustained to private property.

According to the investigation report, the

mishap occurred during intercept training with another aircraft. While attempting to intercept the other aircraft, LaCourse performed a series of aircraft dynamic maneuvers that stimulated fluid in his inner ear canals which are responsible for perceptions of gravity, balance, movement and direction.

As a result, he misperceived his angle of bank, angle of pitch and general position and became spatially disoriented, which resulted in his crash. In addition, the board president found that LaCourse's loss of visual contact with the formation's lead aircraft substantially contributed to the mishap.



An F-16C Fighting Falcon, valued at \$22 million, was destroyed when it crashed into the Gulf of Mexico.

BY MASTER SGT. SCOTT WAGERS



BY SENIOR AIRMAN ARMANDO A. SCHWIER-MORALES

After exceeding its design limit load, an AC-130J Ghost Rider was no longer airworthy and thus considered a total loss.

REPORT SAYS AC-130J GHOST RIDER 'OVER G'd'

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Air Force Materiel Command in November released an accident investigation board report outlining the causes for an April 21 AC-130J Ghost Rider mishap that left \$115 million in damages.

The aircraft and crew, from the 413th Flight Test Squadron at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., were conducting a medium risk flying qualities test sortie over the Gulf of Mexico, about 40 miles south of Eglin, at the time of the mishap.

The crew nor anyone on the ground suffered any injuries, but the aircraft is considered a total loss, the report said.

The investigation board found the cause of the accident to be the AC-130J pilot's excessive rudder input during the test point followed by inadequate rudder input to initiate a timely recovery from high angle of sideslip caused by an over-controlled or under-

controlled aircraft and wrong choice of action during an operation.

The board also found four substantially contributing factors: instrumentation and warning system issues, spatial disorientation, confusion, and inadequate provision of procedural guidance or publications to the team.

The incident occurred while the crew performed steady heading sideslips at an altitude of nearly 15,000 feet. The aircraft exceeded the targeted angle of sideslip until it departed controlled flight and momentarily inverted before being recovered after losing about 5,000 feet of altitude. The aircraft returned to base and landed safely without further incident.

As a result of the mishap, the aircraft "over G'd" and exceeded its design limit load, thereby nullifying the airworthiness of the aircraft, the report said.

F-35 LIGHTNING II



“The air is an extremely dangerous, jealous and exacting mistress. Once under the spell most lovers are faithful to the end, which is not always old age. Even those masters and princes of aerial fighting, the survivors of fifty mortal duels in the high air who have come scatheless through the War and all its perils, have returned again and again to their love and perished too often in some ordinary commonplace flight undertaken for pure amusement.”

— Sir Winston Churchill, 1932



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