

# THE COMBAT EDGE

OCTOBER 1996



*Global Power for America*

# The Combat Edge

AIR COMBAT COMMAND  
SAFETY MAGAZINE

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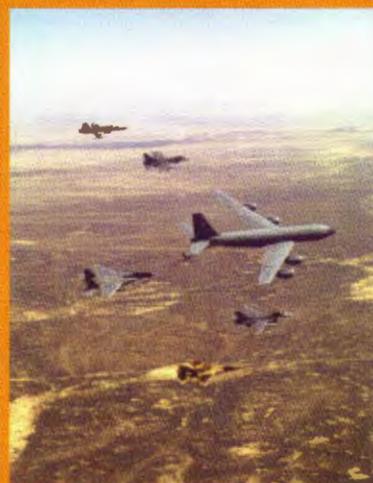
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### ON THE COVER

After a Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT) sortie, American and Jordanian planes fly in formation on their way back to Shaheed Mwaffaq Salti Airbase in Jordan. The joint training was a part of the 4417th Air Expeditionary Force Mission.

Photo courtesy of  
SrA Craig W. Kiziukiewicz



# *ACCent* *on Safety*



**T**he leaves have all turned color, there's a chill in the air that's been long absent and, the most sure sign of fall, there's football every weekend!

October is more than the start of a new fiscal year, it's also one of our busiest months as we try to take advantage of the last good flying weather before the days get too short. For the night kind of guys, it's the first month where sunset is early enough that you can land from your LANTIRN mission and still catch most of the Monday night football game. October is new money, good weather and usually a period of minimal personnel turmoil. Consequently, we tend to make some fairly significant changes in the way we do business. The gradual drawdown of September's fiscal closeout is replaced by the need to surge, exercise and deploy before winter and the holidays close us back down. Even though all this change in activity would seem to increase our susceptibility to mishaps, historically we have enjoyed just the opposite impact. Perhaps it's because the change is so obvious, people tend to pay more attention to what they're doing. By August, long, hot days of hard work had seemed to be the norm and we had grown accustomed to them. As things became customary, we often grew complacent about what we were doing. I think it should not be too surprising that the latter part of summer has usually meant a rash of mishaps, and this year was no exception. For those who like to draw some lessons from the past, history says that we will see another upswing in mishap occurrences in November (about the time we become accustomed to October's changes?).

Our challenge is to wisely use the opportunity that October presents us and to bolster our safety culture so that it will carry us on for many months. Continually challenge yourself to identify risks and take the steps now to manage those risks before you are so accustomed to them that you begin to readily consider the risks "acceptable." The key to keeping in control is to force yourself to constantly make an honest assessment of what is going to jump up and bite you and what you can do about it. So, between plays on the field and during the commercials, put down the popcorn and cold beverage and take a minute to think — it might make a difference in whether you're around to watch the Super Bowl in January! ■

*Colonel Turk Marshall*  
*Chief of Safety*

# YOU'LL GET BIT A

## When the Fangs

**I**t was a great deployment so far; 3 jets, 4 pilots, minimal adult supervision and great flying. We were flying our A-10's out of NAS Lemoore, supporting the Army at Fort Hunter-Liggett. Imagine that, Air Force pilots staging out of a Navy base and flying with the Army, not exactly an ideal setup, but we were making it happen with minimal problems. Our job was to provide adversary support for the Army while they were testing a new air defense system.

Each sortie consisted of a low level to the MOA, coverage of at least a 30-minute TOT and a low level back, gas permitting. During the TOT's we made high-threat attacks against live tanks and vehicles (a veritable smorgasbord for us Hog-drivers). Our jets were equipped with a laser pod that simulated Maverick and gun usage. Drawbacks of the laser system included the fact that it required a higher dive angle to place it on the target, and you had to keep it on the target for 3-4 seconds to register a kill. Both of these limitations became large factors on one particular sortie for me.

Everything was "ops normal" so far on the sortie. I was a two-ship element lead and 100' qualified, and my wingman that day was an IP and the DETCO. We checked in with the ground FAC and air battle captain and were sent to the northern IP. Excellent! The northern IP was just south of Big Sur, so we could hold at 12,000' MSL and make our attack runs to the south while descending through the canyons to the target area which had an elevation of approximately 2,000'. This was great for the performance of

the Hog since it was December and cold air meant more speed. We were able to hit the target area with Max Wart Speed and still have excellent energy departing the target area. We made several attacks, and the hunting was most excellent; we were wreaking much havoc and mayhem amongst the armored forces. This was hog heaven, my fangs were definitely out, and life was good!

The ground FAC passed us another 9-line, and it sounded great too; more tanks on the move. We departed the IP, rocked and rolled our way through the canyons, then contacted the air battle captain about 2 minutes out. Just as I was ready to pop he radioed, "Hog flight! I've got tanks on the move, your right 1 o'clock 1 mile." I actioned left and popped back to the right while trying to get a visual on the tanks. Just as I was about to come off dry, I saw a tank sitting on a small knoll off my nose less than a mile. I thought to myself, "This is tight, but I can make it work" — that was mistake number one. I pulled my nose back up in an attempt to buy enough tracking time to shoot him and then had to bunt back down to get the 10 mil boresite on the tank. The bunt increased my dive angle significantly, but I squeezed the trigger. I started to get some ground rush but continued to hold the trigger down so I would get the kill — mistake number two. When I thought that I had tracked him long enough, I realized that I was probably going to kill him by ramming my GAU-8 into his turret. Life was definitely not good! I yanked the stick back into my lap and felt the jet begin to stall, then

# OR SURE

## Are Out



mush further down. Oh #%\*&@#! My only option was to release some back stick pressure to break the stall. Meanwhile the descent continued and the tank was getting impressively larger! I actually considered pulling the ejection handles, but I knew it was too late; I would hit the ground if I let go of the stick. I kept as much back stick pressure in as I thought possible, and my descent stopped right over the top of the tank at less than 50' AGL. It was so close that I could see their whip antenna, and I thought I might have hit it. As I egressed, I looked back and could see their antenna waving in the jet blast I had just created on top of them. I'm sure the tank crew was impressed, but not half as much as I was! In my deepest and most casual voice, I informed the air battle captain that

we would be egressing the target area and holding at the IP for a few minutes before we would be ready for another attack. As it turned out, that was our last attack for the day, and we headed home for a much appreciated beverage break and the surgical removal of the seat cushion from my posterior.

The remainder of the deployment was fairly uneventful, as I throttled back considerably and kept my fangs in during the attacks. I had just relearned the lessons that in peacetime there's no target worth dying for; the targets will probably still be there when you reattack. Simulated SAMS have never shot anyone down, and if it doesn't look right, take it through dry. I have since tripled my number of hog hours, and I carry those lessons with me to this day. I hope that you can learn those same lessons by reading this article instead of reading a mishap report with a friend's name on it. Good luck and good hunting! ■



*Capt Neal C. Phillips  
358 FS  
Davis-Monthan AFB AZ*



# Is High Performance A Pain in the Neck?

*"Every year, hundreds of training/operational flying hours are lost to neck injuries incurred as a direct result of G level situations..."*

**It** seems that high performance flying and neck pain are becoming synonymous; and as aircraft power and agility increase, so does the likelihood of increased physiological problems.

Every year, hundreds of training/operational flying hours are lost to neck injuries incurred as a direct result of G levels in situations ranging from ACM engagements to air-to-ground, looking back through 6 and pulling on the stick.

Even though the more severe cases of skeletal/cervical type injuries occur in the higher G ranges of 7 G to 9 G, painful muscular strains can still occur through the entire G range from +3 G and up. Some will be immediately obvious and others can go unnoticed until after the event when the muscle tissue begins to cool down and pain plus the lack of mobility become apparent. At the time of injury the only indicator may have been nothing more than a hot sensation in the immediate area; but because of the cockpit activity at the time, it went unnoticed until NOW!!! These strains, as anyone who has ever had one can attest, are extremely painful and debilitating; and when suffering from one of these injuries, you are no longer a fighter pilot... you are Joe Ops Desk, etc.

Within the G-STEP (G Stress Exercise Program) we have developed an exercise



Figure 1

# Performance Flying the Neck?

Sgt J. B. "Mac" MacWilliam  
G-Step Coordinator  
Canadian Air Force

regime which targets the neck area as being a critical area and have effectively lessened or eliminated neck strain among participating pilots.

During an initial trial and development period at the 410th Squadron, 4th Wing, Cold Lake AB, a group of 20 FA-18 pilots completely eliminated neck injuries from their ACM phase of training. Some pilots admitted that it was the first time they had gone through ACM without a strain of some degree. Others stated that the neck area was much stronger and they didn't feel any fatigue usually associated with clean jet ACM.

The focus of this neck regime is to develop increased strength through a full range of motion by using light to moderate resistance. We try to duplicate as closely as possible, under resistance, lateral and rotational motion that is required while flying aggressive air-to-air and air-to-ground missions. The theory is the same as any resistance training program; train specifically beyond the required level. Unfortunately, this has rarely ever been applied to the critical neck area.

The importance of training through your full and complete range of motion cannot be overstressed. I personally have seen many cases where an individual was doing isometric contraction type exercises, upright position, from the back, front and both

sides. This will increase strength in a head up, straight forward position, but injuries usually don't occur in that position. Injuries under G-load happen in an extended and turned neck back profile. Although it is recommended that when you're pulling hard, you get yourself into the ideal position, that isn't always practical or possible.

All the neck exercises are performed with the use of a neck sling (as seen in *figure 1*) and a partner. *Figures 2 thru 10* illustrate how to properly perform the series of exercises which should take only about 5 minutes per day, 3 to 5 days a week. If possible, try to use the same partner as you will quickly become familiar with each other's strength profile and will know where to resist more in stronger areas. Ensure your partner only applies enough resistance to increase the workload as you exercise. Whether working laterally or rotationally, your weakest areas will become immediately obvious and generally found at the more extended positions of the neck exercise.

Something to consider — the area targeted by these exercises is comprised of networks of small muscle groups. You don't need a lot of resistance to make a big difference. Start slow and easy. Results will come surprisingly quickly. As your strength increases, so can the resistance, but be reasonable. The objective is to prevent injury.



*Figure 2*



*Figure 3*



*Figure 4*



*Figure 5*

*Exercises demonstrated by Sergeant "Mac" MacWilliam and Corporal Mark Hillier*

After completing your warm-up, *figures 2 thru 5* show the proper technique for basic neck exercises:

- Sit upright on a bench supporting your upper body by grasping the bench with your hands (arms locked). This will isolate all the exercise movement to the neck area.

- *Partners* — Place the sling comfortably over the subject's head, ensuring that your hand remains directly in front of his/her eyes. This will ensure that they are always pulling directly against a point of resistance.

- Start in a chin-to-chest position and, under resistance, pull your head back through its full range of motion. You will go through ranges where you will notice considerably more strength than others. Talk to your partner. Indicate where you want more or less resistance. The idea is to develop the entire range of motion.

- *Partners* — Ease off a little or as much as required to allow full travel through the exercise range. There will be areas which will require surprisingly little resistance and others that will be extremely strong.

- After pulling your head back full range, relax, bringing head forward, and repeat!

- Try to keep your body as stationary as possible, ensuring that all the work and movement is restricted to the neck region.

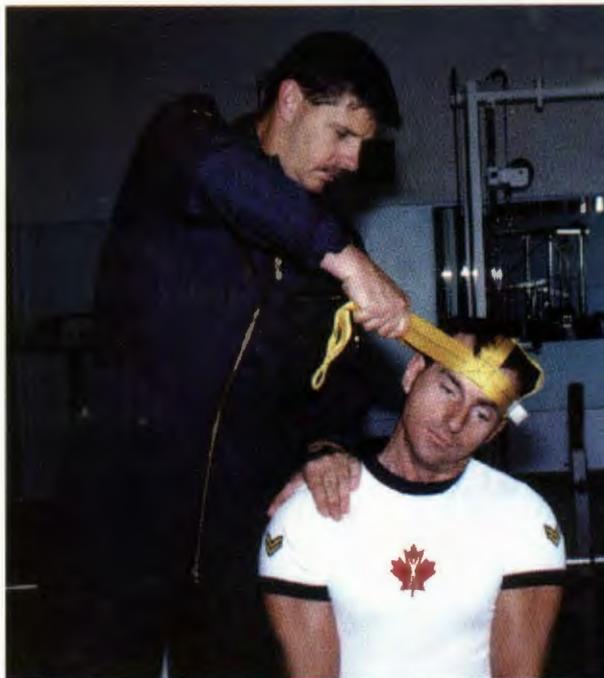
*Figures 6 and 7* show the method of working in a side-to-side motion/direction to strengthen the anterior areas of the neck.

- The start position is as per figure 6 with the head placed down as close to the shoulder as possible. Pull in a straight line directly over to the opposite shoulder. Relax back to start position and repeat.

- *Partner* — Ensure that the strap hand is kept "in line" with the ear so to pull directly against resistance load. Work both



*Figure 6*



*Figure 7*

sides equally, such as 6 repetitions to the left side and 6 repetitions to the right.

*Figures 8 thru 10 (next page)* show the proper technique for developing rotational strength for "checking 6" under G load.

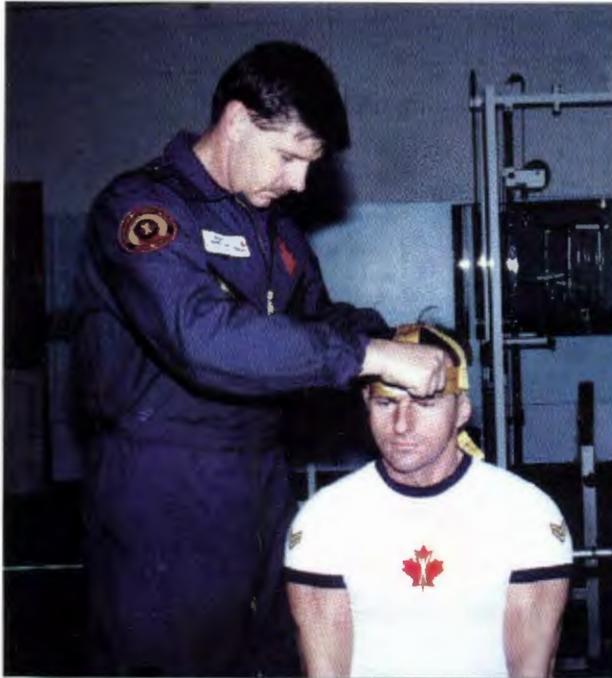


Figure 8



Figure 10

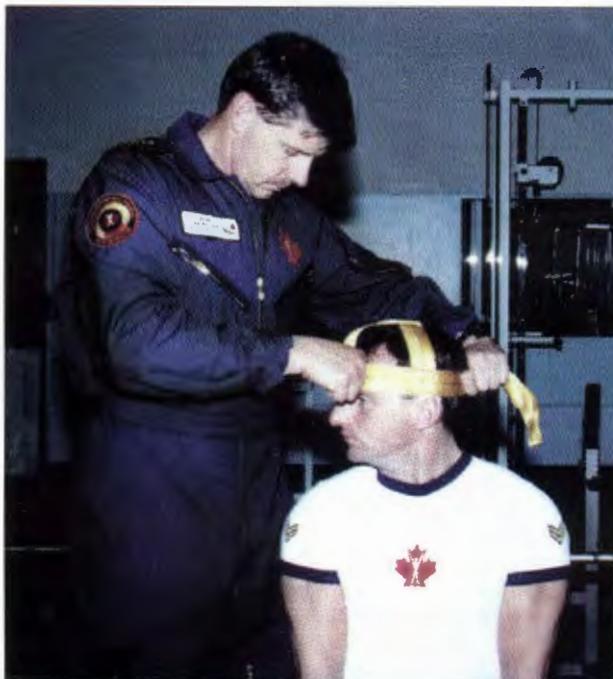


Figure 9

- The sling is placed around the subject's head and held firm by the lock straps and the thumb tab.

- The subject, under resistance, checks 6 left and right, moving only the head and neck. Resistance is continuous and is not relaxed at the

furthest points left and right.

- *Partner* — When the head is moving through a range with greater strength, apply a little more resistance. Conversely, when working through a weaker area, ease off. Full range of motion is very important.

This program has been extremely effective in lessening and even eliminating muscular neck injuries with pilots that have followed the G-STEP program. It is part of a total fitness program and should be incorporated into your personal training regime. For further information about G-STEP, see the Jan 94 issue of *The Combat Edge*.

If you have any questions or comments, contact me, Sgt Brian (Mac) MacWilliam, Chief Instructor G-STEP, Canadian Air Force, CFB Edmonton, Canada, at (403)-457-8862/8142, (DSN 530), or send a Fax to 8141. ■

*NOTE: The neck slings can be made locally. Soft rubber with felt backing has been sewn into the inside surface for the rotational exercises, with a thumb tab sewn on the front for exercise balance and support.*

# Writing an Article for The Combat Edge

*The Combat Edge* is Air Combat Command's mishap prevention magazine dedicated to providing command personnel with flight, weapons, and ground safety information. It is ACC people writing about their experiences for their fellow ACC team members. Your articles are the fuel needed to keep the magazine running and help us fulfill our mission of *mishap prevention through safety education, recognition, and marketing*.

When you write an article for *The Combat Edge*, you're writing for a world-class publication. We print and distribute over 15,000 magazines each month for a reader population estimated at 150,000 people. Our audience includes Air Force, other military services (Army, Navy, Marines), DoD, private industry, and allied foreign national readers. We routinely receive requests from other safety agencies and magazines including foreign magazines and schools to reprint our articles. Writing an article for *The Combat Edge* is truly an opportunity to become "world famous."

Our purpose in life is to educate — to stimulate thought in order to learn from the pages of a magazine rather than from painful personal experience or the pages of a mishap report. From the beginning, the magazine has relied on you — ACC team members and readers — to produce much of each issue. After all, *The Combat Edge* is **YOUR** magazine. Only you possess full knowledge of the active undercurrent of ACC's mission, the problems you encounter, and the solutions you reach. *The Combat Edge* is your communications medium to get your ideas to others within the command and the Air

Force. The magazine will only be as good as YOU make it through YOUR articles, inputs, and feedback. If you aren't seeing a particular type of article — it's largely because you, or someone like you, haven't written it. We are committed to giving you the best quality product possible, but we can't do it alone — we need YOUR ideas to continually enhance the ACC culture of safety. By working together, we can make ACC safer and more effective!

Writing an article for the combat edge

## AUTHORS

Perhaps you've never written an article before. Don't let that scare you. It can be surprisingly easy and the results can be quite rewarding. You don't have to be a professional writer to contribute to *The Combat Edge*. Our authors come from all branches and services, with ranks varying from airman to general, and from civilians as well. Most of them felt as reluctant as you when they decided to write for a magazine. But they had something that needed saying, and they said it. After all, that's really all anyone has to do. Contributions are welcomed from anyone who has something to say about safety. Don't let anything in this guide scare you away from contributing. Please, make the effort.

## THE STORY

Writing an article is a lot easier than it may look to you — trust me. I believe that's why a lot of people don't write articles for us; they think it's a "mission impossible." Really, it's not! And once you've done it the first time, the second, third, and so on

"You don't have to be a professional writer to contribute to *The Combat Edge*. Our authors come from all branches and services, with ranks varying from airman to general..."

will be even easier.

How do people talk to each other? They tell stories and compare experiences. In the Air Force, we often refer to these shared experiences as “war stories” or “there I was...” stories. War stories are experiences that have left a lasting impression on you. Everyone has a war story because that’s how we learn — by experience.

People like to trade these stories because it gives them a chance to share experiences and possibly to learn things they haven’t encountered before. Sometimes we find ourselves in an emergency situation and our readers want to find out how we handled it. What were we thinking about? What was our first impression? What would we do differently if it happened again? Answering these kind of questions holds the reader’s attention. However, you don’t have to be flat on your back, running out of airspeed and ideas, or in the middle of a fully loaded munitions storage area surrounded by a raging fire to have a valid war story. Many times we have an emergency or a problem; and although nothing exciting happens, a lesson is learned. These firsthand experiences are extremely effective in teaching, proving a point, or supporting your way of doing things; and everyone can identify with them.

Sometimes we don’t have a war story but rather a thought or idea about a better way to do something. Again, share these ideas and thoughts with others. If your thoughts or ideas are safety related in any way, write them down and send them to us. Don’t prejudge the applicability of your article — we get paid to make those calls. Send us the material, and we’ll decide if the theme is appropriate for *The Combat Edge*.

## WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Each one of you has a myriad of experiences, personal stories, and insights which you can share with the rest of us. If you’re a wing commander, perhaps you can share

a great idea which your wing has developed and proven in the field. Senior leaders in both the officer and enlisted ranks can share personal experiences they’ve had and pass along the “lessons learned” to the younger folks who look up to them.

Here’s a quick potpourri of potential areas and subjects where we’d love to see articles:

**OFF DUTY:** Seat belt experiences, recreational incidents, sports safety, home workshop tips, how to survive the summer, winter, spring, and fall at home safely, safety in the kitchen, how to get to and from work without a mishap.

**FLIGHT:** Great ideas on how to keep from being that next flight mishap statistic, flying safely and effectively in the low-level, deployed, air-to-air, air-to-ground, over-water, bad weather, night, on the tanker, mass gaggle, on the range, in combat, and clear VFR (certainly not all at the same time) environment. How does your squadron pass along the hard-learned lessons from other flying incidents or mishaps from throughout the CAF? What does your squadron/wing/NAF do effectively that seems to get the word out? What’s the role of a good aviator, flight leader, element leader, wingman, flight commander, etc.? What have you done (unwisely or for whatever reason) which got your attention (i.e., scared the wits out of you) that you’d rather not see anyone else have to experience? What’s the dumbest thing you ever did?

**GROUND:** What does it take to be a great maintenance person or crew chief? What are the important ingredients to having a good flying jet, Top Wheels vehicle, safe work place? How does your organization ensure the mission gets done right the first time — safely? What’s the role of the maintenance, supply, security, POL, transportation and operators all working together? What sort of experiences have you had in or around the flight line, office, hospital, dining hall and work site that you don’t ever want to have again? What happens when complacency, misprioritization,

lack of attention to detail, etc., get the upper hand?

**WEAPONS:** Have you ever dinged a bomb, missile, TER, jammer, etc.? What could you have done to prevent it from happening? What's it take to operate day in and day out safely and mishap-free with munitions — both training and live? How can you ensure the most efficient and successful combat turnarounds? What lessons did some of you pick up on getting the mission done right during DESERT SHIELD/STORM, PROVIDE COMFORT, SOUTHERN WATCH, etc.?

Well, that should give even the most non-creative thinking reader some germ of an idea for a potential article.

## HOW TO WRITE THE STORY

Remember, you are writing for people just like yourself. How do you tell a story to your friends, your family, or around the coffee bar? It's the same for the magazine. Most people don't talk about the energy scaling of phase-conjugate solid-state lasers and the ramification on eye protection while operating laser test equipment. So, don't write like that for the magazine.

Figure out what point or lesson you're going to try to relay to the reading audience and build your entire article around that idea. Don't try to write about the entire history of USAF maintenance or every possible sortie that can be flown by a C-130. Just pick one idea and work on that. If we need to broaden it a little, we'll tell you.

Don't be afraid to tell it like it really happened. You get more points for spreading the word than you lose by admitting to an error. Tell the reader why you think you made a mistake. Give a good reason. No one has ever gotten into trouble by writing an article for *The Combat Edge*.

**INTRODUCTION:** One good way to get your reader's attention is by sharing a short story or scene which relates to the subject you want to discuss. Whatever you use, there needs to be something to lead

your readers into the article.

**MAIN BODY:** This is the area where you go into greater detail about the subject you're writing on. If it's a personal experience, then tell us about it. If you're telling us about a great idea to eliminate flight, weapons and ground mishaps, give us the story "1,2,3, etc."

**CONCLUSION:** Finally you come to the part where you summarize what you've been telling the readers and bring the article to a close. Perhaps this is the only time where you actually say what it is that you're trying to get across to your audience. Sometimes it's effective to summarize your entire article in only a short phrase or a single sentence.

Which of the following styles would make you want to read the story?

*The Military Unique Work area is impacted by OSHA standards and their application.*

or

*"Can't Do!!" is NOT a PROACTIVE attitude, especially when dealing with safety issues and deficiencies. When a safety deficiency is discovered, there is usually something that can be done to correct or minimize the hazard.*

*Emergencies are very serious and can be dangerous.*

or

*There are three judges that sit on the Aviation Court of Last Resort: Mind, Senses, Hand. If you have an emergency and slowly or quickly enter the court, these judges will determine whether you live or die. One thumbs-down and you'll be sentenced to death.*

Write accordingly — the goal is to communicate!

In summary, if the article logically and interestingly communicates the experience or idea intended and is written in an appropriate tone with acceptable English — send it to us!

## SUBMITTING ARTICLES

There are no regulations, supplements,

or directives concerning the submittal of articles. We are completely dependent on voluntary submission of articles written by people who care and have something to share with their team members. The magazine, however, has 32 pages each and every month and needs many more stories than we receive. Since emergencies, learning experiences, and great ideas occur on a less than regularly scheduled basis, it is best to submit articles as incidents occur or ideas are conceptualized.

We have no requirement that articles be routed through any OPR or review process other than from the author directly to us. However, be sure to check with your chain of command as to the acceptability of this process. We will look at any article sent to us, no matter where it originates or who writes it.

In planning on specific topics, keep in mind that it takes 2 to 4 months to get an article into print. The hot weather/heat stress article we receive in August doesn't help until the following May.

Drafts should be submitted double-spaced and typewritten. Feature length articles of approximately 1000 to 1500 words or about 4 double-spaced pages normally allow us to do a 2 page layout with artwork. Longer is acceptable as is shorter. The bottom line — use whatever length is necessary to tell your story. When we receive your article, we will send you a letter acknowledging receipt and explaining our article review process. As your article progresses toward publication, you will receive periodic updates on its status. If at any time you have a question concerning your submission, give us a call. Remember to include some information about yourself and your organization.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Pictures, slides, and drawings are fantastic additions to any story. Photos often make the difference between an article that is read and one that is ignored. They draw the reader's interest. The reader sees the photo and wants to know more. Our

magazine is always in need of current photographs to put in the magazine and to use as a reference for illustrations. Please include the photographer's name, if available, on any submissions.

**MISHAPS:** Any photos that depict an actual mishap go a long way in breathing life into an article. In almost all mishaps, an official photographer will exhaustively document the scene. A little coordination on your part can yield spectacular results. We will take care of protecting sensitive information and identities.

**ACTION:** Strive to portray action. Avoid static, overly posed photos. Photograph people actually doing something, not just pretending to do it. Photos for an article do not necessarily have to be literal versions of the words. Small details or unusual perspectives can attract the reader and illustrate a story without being obvious or predictable.

**EXTRA PHOTOS:** We are in constant need of photography of anything that goes on in the Air Force. We like to credit the photographer, so please include his/her name with the submission. A standard PA shot of aircraft, buildings, ceremonies, etc., would be greatly appreciated as well as any candid shots of activity in your organization. If you're cleaning out your photo files, think of us.

**TECHNICAL:** Photos for use inside the magazine can be black and white or color glossy prints at least 5-by-7 inches, as well as 35 MM slides. They must be sharp and clear throughout. Flaws in the print or slide (such as excessive grain) will be magnified in reproduction.

**LIGHT:** Try not to use direct flash. If you cannot shoot in available light, use diffused or bounced flash to avoid the impression that the subject is looming out of the darkness.

**CAPTIONS:** Photo captions explain the action, identify the subject(s), and credit the photographer. Keep captions short — don't repeat information contained in the article. Type or write the caption in double-space; smooth and tape it to the back of the photo. Do not use staples or paper clips. Do not

write or mark on the photograph.

**MISCELLANEOUS:** Protect your prints and slides in the mail. Label them as photographic material, and use stiff cardboard to protect them from bending. Include your full name, address, and DSN number.

A stunning picture from your files may find its way to our cover? You'll never know until you send it in. All pictures, drawings, and artwork will be returned, undamaged, after the magazine is published.

## ANONYMITY

The question of anonymously written articles has arisen in the past. We prefer to use the author's name and organization so that they can be appropriately recognized and rewarded for their efforts. However, if you feel anonymity is essential, send us the article along with your name and phone number so we can contact you concerning any questions about the article. When the article is published,

your anonymity request WILL be honored and your identity protected.

## REWARDS

Unfortunately, as an official publication, *The Combat Edge* cannot offer monetary rewards for material published. What we can offer is the opportunity for you to make our safety culture better. By sharing your knowledge you make a valuable contribution to those who need your information to do their jobs more safely. It may sound trite, but your input — whether a long feature or a simple tip — might just save someone from injury. It might even save a life.

If you still have questions about your article or need to refine your approach to a subject, pick up the phone and call the editor at DSN 574-3658. If I can't give you at least 4 different ways to approach your topic or some suggestions for articles, then I'm not doing my job. ■

Send YOUR articles to:

Editor, The Combat Edge

HQ ACC/SEP

130 Andrews St Ste 302

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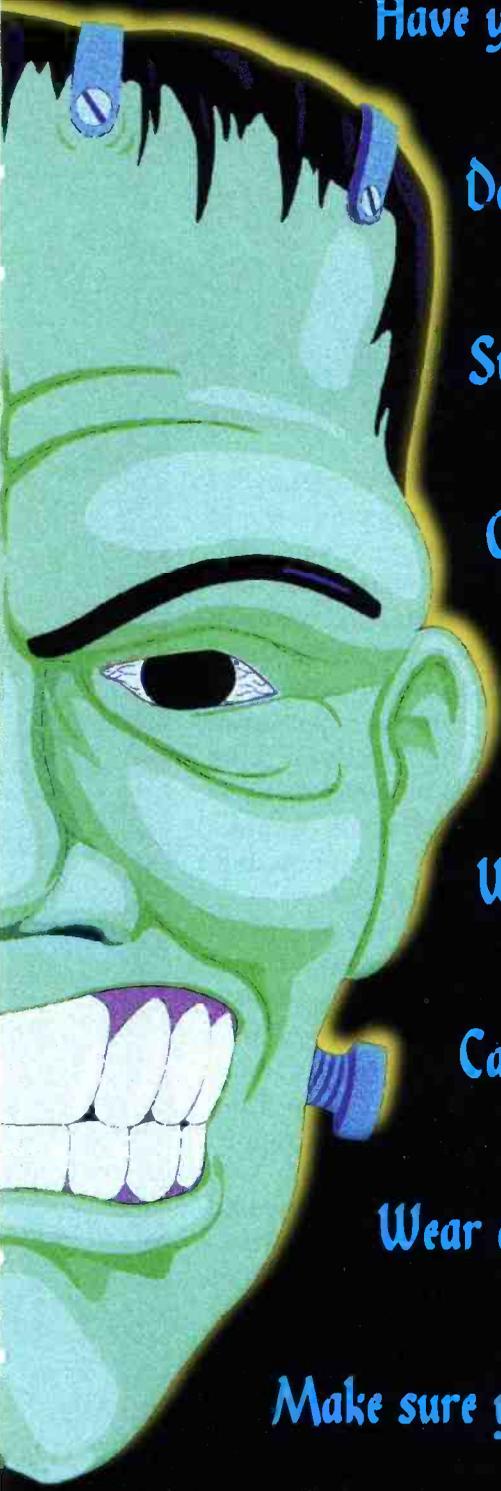
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# Halloween Safety Tips



Make a copy of this for your kids at home.



Have your parents check your treats before you eat any.

Don't go out alone.

Stay away from unfamiliar neighborhoods.

Go only to houses that you know.

Stay on lighted streets and in well-lighted areas.

Watch for cars.

Carry a flashlight.

Wear a white or reflective costume.

Make sure your costume fits and you can see well.

Follow all local trick-or-treat restrictions and times.

# Who Cares

MSgt Russ Kjose  
355 LG/CRS  
Davis-Monthan AFB AZ

## "We Do" That's Who!

*M*y name is MSgt Russ Kjose, and I have been a first sergeant for quite some time. In my opinion, the "We Care" program is one of the best things to come out of the safety arena. Many of you probably know about the "We Care" program; but for those that may

Master Sergeant Russell Kjose, 355th Component Repair Squadron, was Davis-Monthan's "1995 First Sergeant of the Year." Kjose developed a sound and effective "We Care" program which was benchmarked by other squadrons. He also provided sound advice to the commander during numerous administrative actions and provided practicable options, keeping the welfare of the member and the squadron in mind. Kjose also managed the Davis-Monthan First Sergeants' Safe Ride program which, over the last 2 years, contributed to a 50 percent reduction in people receiving citations for driving while intoxicated. Kjose encourages all members of the squadron to become involved in squadron activities to raise morale, foster good relations between flights, and to get to know each other. Knowing is caring.

not, it is a prevention tool used to detect potential problem situations and prevent mishaps through education and counseling. On a personal note, I say throw out the numbers! The numbers may be a guide to who your potential problems may be, but I rely on identifying "We Care" folks the old fashioned way — get to know your people. First sergeants and supervisors must realize that early intervention is what makes this program work. Be proactive; let your people know their well-being comes first.

Another facet of the program I like is that it's non-punitive in nature. Sure you're going to have "We Care" participants who are identified as a result of negative actions, but look further. You are not limited to who is enrolled in the program. A recently married airman in my squadron found out his spouse had left him and was filing for divorce. He had done nothing wrong, but I put him in the program to let him know "We Care" about him. I offered support and made myself available for counseling and arranged for agencies to help him through a tough situation. It was the right thing to do. He felt it was great that we cared enough to check with him and give him someone to talk to, and I kept my peace of mind knowing his emotional and financial well-being were being taken care of. This airman has since moved on and is doing fine.

Another part of the program that I like is that members' problems or situations are kept confidential. I keep it that way on purpose. First sergeants, I urge you to take a look at your "We Care" program and make it work for you. It pays dividends and takes care of our most important resource — OUR PEOPLE. ■

## INJURY PREVENTION:

# "Common Sense" LOCKOUT/TAGOUT

**R**eading and understanding the OSHA lockout/tagout standard, 29 CFR 1910.147 can be a difficult task. However, if one cuts through the legal jargon and does a bit of reorganizing, the standard is revealed as largely common sense and good management.

Lockout does not mean simply throwing a machine's off switch. According to the standard, lockout involves the placement of a "lockout device" on an "energy isolating device" so that the machine cannot be operated unless the lockout device is removed. In many cases, the lockout device will be a padlock and the energy control device will be an electrical power box with a lever so constructed that when a lock is inserted, the lever cannot be moved from the off position. There are also lockable covers for valve wheels as well as lockable covers to isolate electrical plugs. The idea is to guarantee that the machine stays off until the maintenance person is out of danger.

Tagout, simply stated, is a warning tag that is used instead of a lock. Tagout is grudgingly accepted by OSHA in cases where the machine is not capable of being locked out. An example might be an old machine connected to an antique power box constructed without provision for a lock. However, the standard requires provision for a lockout device

whenever such equipment is replaced or undergoes major repair.

Tagout can be used for machinery capable of accepting a lock, but only if the program supervisor can demonstrate that tagout provides full employee protection. Lockout is intrinsically more positive and more protective than tagout; most supervisors select this alternative.

The lockout/tagout standard does not cover hazards when machinery or equipment is in normal operation. It also does not apply to minor tool changes and adjustments, or other minor servicing activities during normal operations, provided they are routine, repetitive, and integral to the use of the equipment and effective protection is provided by other control measures. However, if in the course of normal operation an employee must remove or bypass a guard or other safety device, then the lockout/tagout standard does apply. As you can see, compliance involves more than just keeping a few padlocks in a tool drawer.

This standard addresses a very serious problem because lockout injuries include a high percentage of amputations and fatalities. Considering these potential risks, establishing a good lockout/tagout program is well worth the effort. ■

*SMSgt Gary Reniker  
442 FW/SE  
Whiteman AFB MO*

# ANY BOMBS IN YOUR CLOSET?

*Reprinted from USAF News Release  
by TSgt Rob Fuller*

**I**n the early 1940s who would have known that an unlikely time capsule would fall to earth in the Midlands of South Carolina, and today be used to educate people about the hazards of unexploded ordnance.

The 20th Fighter Wing explosive ordnance disposal team members SSgt Terry Conroy and SrA Robert V. Tye received a strange call April 30 asking them to check out a World War II era bomb. Col Mel Leboe, South Carolina law enforcement division, and Lt Billy Joe Abercrombie, Lexington County



Sheriff's department, asked EOD to take a look at the bomb because it appeared to be military vintage. The law enforcement officials relayed the following story to the EOD team.

An anonymous citizen brought the device into the sheriff's office after some 50 years, realizing it may be wrong to keep it. He felt prompted by the recent media attention to turn it in to the proper authorities before it could fall into the wrong hands.

He went on to say that he was fishing on Lake Murray in the early 1940s and could see bombers practicing their runs over "bomb island," an area used by Lt Col James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle and his unit while practicing for their 1942 raid over Japan. He saw a stray bomb hit the lake and literally skip across the water before coming to rest on the shore, unexploded. He picked up the device assuming it to be a practice bomb and took it home.

When EOD arrived at the sheriff's office they assessed the device. "We had no technical data with us on this type of device, but it definitely looked dangerous," said Tye. "We X-rayed it and saw gears and fuses which told us it was too sophisticated to be a normal practice device."

The EOD team secured and sandbagged the device, according to procedure, and returned it to their facility here for a more formal assessment.

"After researching the technical orders we identified the bomb as an MK-3, 25 pound practice bomb, definitely from the 1940 era," said Tye.

Using the data from the technical orders, the team rendered the device safe. "Explosives become more volatile as they age, which means you have to be extremely cautious," said Tye.

But the question still lingers, why would someone keep such a dangerous

device, for so long? "After 14 years of seeing this type of thing, it didn't surprise me," said Conroy. "We discourage people from doing this every chance we get."

As strange as this scenario might seem, it's something that occurs quite often; "once or twice every year when people venture outdoors," said Tye.

It's not just World War II explosives that are recovered. "Even Civil War-era cannonballs and ammunition are often found in this region. But most people don't realize that cannonballs may be explosive," said Tye.

The best way to deal with any suspected unexploded ordnance is to stay away. "Is that souvenir really worth your life or your family's life?" asks Conroy.

"Leave it where it lays, get the best description possible, take good notes of the location and notify the local police department. If it's found on the base, notify the command post," said Tye. "Stay away, and stay alive!"

Now, where is the questionable Doolittle bomb? The EOD section has custody of the device, because it is military equipment. But, Lexington county officials would like it returned so it can be added to a historical display they're recreating from a B-25 bomber pulled out of Lake Murray.

"We're processing the request now," said Conroy. "Returning it would enhance the historical value, and the bomb would get more exposure from a safety awareness standpoint, than it would here."

Over 50 years ago, Doolittle and his heroic men delivered a deadly package to an unsuspecting enemy. Today, remnants from that era, and some battles before it, lie waiting to be uncovered by unsuspecting hikers, campers, tourists or farmers. Don't let a potential souvenir ruin the rest of your life. ■

# Monthly Awards



## PILOT SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*Capt Ralph deClairmont*  
33 FW  
Eglin AFB FL

During the third engagement of an air combat training mission, Capt deClairmont encountered a serious flight control anomaly. While conducting a high speed 135 degree maximum performance slice back during engaged maneuvering, a horizontal stabilator bracket failed. Once loose, this part rotated out of position. This malfunction caused significant stick binding and it severely restricted the stabilator's range of motion. Capt deClairmont quickly recognized the onset of an unusual flight control condition and smoothly brought the aircraft to level flight without aggravating the potentially unrecoverable situation. After ensuring the engagement was terminated, he declared an inflight emergency with the controlling agency and coordinated for an immediate recovery. En route, he consulted thoroughly with the supervisor of flying and he orchestrated a comprehensive battle damage check with the other member of his element. Discovering no external evidence of damage, Capt deClairmont was confronted with the always difficult task of determining to what extent an unknown internal failure affected the ability of his crippled aircraft to perform a safe recovery and landing. He carefully executed a controllability check in accordance with technical order emergency procedures and discovered the stick movement was reduced by about two thirds of its normal range. Nevertheless, he determined the aircraft could land safely. After completing all of the required normal and emergency checklist actions, he accomplished a flawless straight-in approach. Fully anticipating difficulty performing an aerobrake after landing, he selected the longest available runway; he carefully controlled his airspeed and touch down point. He was fully prepared to utilize the departure end barrier, if the conditions had warranted such action. This incident was a model of expert analysis, inflight coordination, judgment and execution.

## AIRCREW SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*Lt Col Jake Tweedy, 4 OG  
Lt Col Bob Eskridge, 334 FS, 4 FW  
Seymour Johnson AFB NC*



Lieutenant Colonel's Tweedy and Eskridge were originally number three of a four-ship LANTIRN air-to-ground student training sortie to Air Force Dare bombing range. After two of the four aircraft aborted during ground operations, Cols Tweedy and Eskridge assumed the lead of the remaining two aircraft.

Take-off and en route to the low-level entry point were uneventful. Just prior to entry into the low-level structure, Cols Tweedy and Eskridge noticed unusual aircraft vibrations emanating from the engines. They quickly terminated, instructed the wingman to rejoin, and turned back towards their home base. During the next five minutes, the vibrations became more severe, although cockpit indications were normal and no warning or caution lights were present. The crew tried to isolate the vibration to one of the engines but was unsuccessful. While the wingman was rejoining, Cols Tweedy and Eskridge felt and heard one of the engines bang twice. At the same time, the wingman reported a large 30-to-40 foot flame coming from the right engine. The crew promptly shut down the right engine with the throttle and pushed the engine fire button, shutting off all fuel flow to the damaged engine. One minute later, the wingman again reported a fire in the right engine. The crew discharged the fire extinguisher bottle, and the fire appeared to go out. They then proceeded to their home base for an uneventful landing. During the recovery, the wingman reported smoke again trailing from the right engine. Investigation later revealed significant engine internal damage.

## CREW CHIEF EXCELLENCE AWARD

*SSgt Eric D. Burns, SrA Kirk A. Dudley, 33 FW, Eglin AFB FL*

During a normal engine start for a routine air combat training mission, the jet fuel starter (JFS) of an F-15 aircraft overheated and began to smoke. The situation rapidly deteriorated and a fire erupted in the JFS bay. Although they were performing maintenance tasks several parking spots away, Sergeant Burns and Airman Dudley witnessed the evolving emergency. They realized the fire guard was unable to control the situation without assistance and they immediately responded to the scene. Sergeant Burns assisted the fire guard and personally manned another 150-pound halon extinguisher. As the flames continued to reignite, Sergeant Burns continued to fight the fire, which had spread across the bottom of the aircraft, until he was overcome by smoke and fumes. Meanwhile, Airman Dudley coordinated the engine shutdown and helped with the safe emergency ground egress of the pilot. He then proceeded to assist Sergeant Burns to safety and returned to continue the fire fighting effort. After several more bursts from his nearly empty extinguisher, Airman Dudley was able to stop the flames. He maintained his vigilance until relieved by the fire department. Both Sergeant Burns and Airman Dudley were treated at the base hospital for inhalation of smoke, fumes and halon agent. They were later released and returned to duty. The actions of Sergeants Burns and Airman Dudley were directly responsible for saving a multi-million dollar F-15 aircraft.

## FLIGHT LINE SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*MSgt Edward Freda, SSgt Michael Radke,  
SrA Jason Ackerman, TSgt William Selanders,  
SSgt Malcom Overton II, TSgt Eric Jackson,  
SSgt Paul Jacobson, SSgt Gerald Dickson,  
SrA Paul Young, SSgt Arthur Ford,  
TSgt Antonio Horne, SSgt Thomas Washington  
95 RS, 55 WG  
Offutt AFB NE*

On 26 Jun 96, Flight Line Maintenance Team "A" was attempting to launch an operational reconnaissance mission, when an improperly installed fuel filter caused a massive fuel leak while starting engine #2. The engine

had already ignited when the leak became visible, and fuel started spilling rapidly out the lower engine cowling onto the ground. SSgt Radke immediately notified the aircrew of the fuel spill, and advised the pilot to shut down all engines. Meanwhile, the ground crew shut down all AGE powered equipment to minimize the fire hazard and prepared to respond to the gushing fuel leak.

As soon as the aircraft engines were shut down, MSgt Freda declared an aircraft ground emergency with the 100 ARW Command Post and requested fire coverage. The leak pressure dropped after engine shutdown, but the remaining fuel gathered in the cowling continued to drain. MSgt Freda and SSgt Radke monitored the crew egress, and as soon as the immediate hazard had passed, the "A" team converged to contain the spill. Team members quickly dammed the spreading fuel, stabilized the spill with absorbent, and used nearby engine covers to catch the fuel draining from the cowling. Once the spill was contained, the team began mopping up the fuel and cleaning the spill area.

Once the fire coverage arrived, MSgt Freda coordinated with the on-scene commander to report the situation and confirm all crew members had egressed the aircraft. As the team continued the cleanup operation, the Fire Chief terminated the ground emergency. MSgt Freda then coordinated for one fire truck to remain while the team finalized cleanup and carried out troubleshooting. The team quickly found the improperly installed fuel filter and replaced it. Then, after the spill cleanup was finished, MSgt Freda called for the aircrew to return to the aircraft. The subsequent engine start, taxi, and takeoff were uneventful. The aircraft was able to launch within 30 minutes of its scheduled time, despite the potentially serious fuel spill incident.

## GROUND SAFETY INDIVIDUAL AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*SSgt Douglas Rogers, 314 SUPS, 314 AW, Little Rock AFB AR*

Staff Sergeant Rogers made significant contributions to the 314th Supply Squadron's mishap prevention program. Specifically, Sergeant Rogers conducted in-depth safety briefings regarding the hazards of hydrocarbon fuel, proper personal protective equipment, flight line driving, and home fire prevention. In addition, he prepared an extensive confined spaces training program and trained 76 personnel within 1 week, thereby ensuring they were knowledgeable of the hazards associated with these working conditions. Sergeant Rogers prevented a potential mishap by halting a contractor from welding near a 1.1 million gallon fuel tank receiving fuel. Furthermore, Sergeant Rogers researched and procured state-of-the-art spill response kits decreasing spill containment time over 50 percent and clean up time over 200 percent. He also completed a first-rate video highlighting the proper use of the new response kits.

Sergeant Rogers is an outstanding NCO always looking for safety process improvements.

## UNIT SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*Traffic Management Flight, 314 TRNS, 314 AW, Little Rock AFB AR*

The 314th Transportation Squadron, Traffic Management Flight, instills safety and mission support into each member. The flight's mission is to move people, personal property, and government equipment a safe expeditious manner. A proven safety record of no mishaps in the past 8 years and comprehensive training techniques were tested when Little Rock AFB was unexpectedly tasked to change out Patriot missiles assigned to Korea. Traffic Management personnel seized the initiative, alerting and meeting with appropriate base agencies prior to handling 16 flatbed trucks containing 64 Patriot missiles with a total high explosives weight of 9,280 pounds. Safe, rapid response minimized the holding time of these valuable assets to 12 hours. During a recent Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) exercise, the flight safely handled 382,000 pounds of equipment that included ammunition and other hazardous items. The Traffic Management Flight has an on-going commitment to safety. Personnel are empowered to improve operational and safety procedures to enhance readiness and a "Yes, We Can" attitude.



## WEAPONS SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*Munitions Flight  
4 EMS, 4 FW  
Seymour Johnson AFB NC*

The men and women of the 4 EMS, Munitions Flight have identified themselves as an outstanding unit in the area of weapons safety. Together, their efforts helped the 4th Fighter Wing achieve a "zero defect noted" during the 1995



Department of Defense Explosive Safety Board evaluation, the FY95 USAF Explosives Safety Plaque, 22 consecutive months without a reportable incident, zero Class A incidents, no Class B reportable incidents since Oct 90, and no Class C reportable incidents since Aug 90. During the third quarter of FY96, the 4 EMS Munitions Flight moved over 72,000 pounds of Net Explosive Weight including over 1,710 tons of munitions to flight line aircraft. Included in this exceptional management feat is a live missile account of 180 AIM-120 AMRAAM, 244 AIM-9M Sidewinder, and 69 AIM-7M Sparrow missiles. The unit was tasked through Executive Orders to maintain an alert posture to provide defense for a civilian flotilla off the coast of Cuba, code name STANDOFF FOUR. This produced the assembly and delivery of 48 GBU-12 guided bombs, 22 AIM-9M and 22 AIM-120 missiles, 1,680 chaff and flare countermeasures, 5,100 rounds of 20mm High Explosive Incendiary (HEI) ammunition in less than 9 hours—3 hours ahead of deadline! This same period included a highly successful Phase II exercise, CORONET EXTEND 96-03, which included a breakout, assembly, and delivery of 840 tons of munitions to support 294 combat sorties in just 3 days. Finally, the men and women of the 4 EMS Munitions Flight were tasked to provide munitions support to nineteen aircraft as the 4th Fighter Wing set out to test the newest concept in Air Force Doctrine, the Air Expeditionary Force III. This support included two AIM-9M, 2 AIM-120, 4 RR-188 chaff modules, 4 MJU-10 flare modules, and 500 rounds of 20mm HEI to each aircraft.

The men and women of the 4 EMS Munitions Flight have proven, through their exceptional record, that they consistently and professionally do the job with the utmost of safety.

# DOZING + DRIVING = DEATH



SMSgt Gary Reniker  
442 FW/SE  
Whiteman AFB, MO

**A**void the dangers of drowsy driving. A drowsy driver can be as deadly as a drunk driver. Lack of sleep impairs your ability to think clearly and react promptly. On driving simulation tests, drowsy drivers performed as poorly as intoxicated drivers.

Estimates suggest up to 30 percent of highway vehicle accidents are related to driver fatigue and sleepiness.

#### **Some of the Warning Signs:**

- Having trouble keeping your eyes open, focusing your vision, or keeping your head up.
- Tailgating or missing traffic signs.
- Having trouble maintaining a constant speed.
- Having wandering, disconnected thoughts.
- Having no memory of the most recent minutes of your drive.
- Drifting across lanes or off the road.

If you experience even one of these symptoms, stop at a safe place to rest and remember to lock the car doors and roll up the windows.

#### **What doesn't help:**

- Toughing it out.
- Driving faster or slower.
- Opening your car window.
- Turning up the volume on your radio.
- Caffeine. It's no substitute for sleep. Caffeinated drinks can help you feel more alert, but the effects last only for a short time.

#### **What does help:**

- Get plenty of sleep one to two nights before the trip. Seven or eight hours is not enough for all people.
- Avoid alcohol or medicine that causes drowsiness.
- Try to drive during the time of day you're usually awake and active. Particularly dangerous times: midnight to 6 a.m. and the middle of the afternoon.
- Have someone travel with you to keep you awake or help with the driving.
- Make frequent stops for naps or activity.
- If you suffer from chronic sleepiness, see your doctor, it can be treated.

Falling asleep at the wheel for even a few seconds can kill you or someone else. An alert driver is a safe driver. ***Drive alert, arrive alive!***

# ACColades

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS CONCERNING DATA ON THIS PAGE SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO HQ ACC/SEF, DSN: 574-7031

	TOTAL			ACC			ANG			AFR		
	AUG	THRU AUG		AUG	THRU AUG		AUG	THRU AUG		AUG	THRU AUG	
		FY96	FY95		FY96	FY95		FY96	FY95		FY96	FY95
CLASS A MISHAPS	5	15	16	4	10	11	1	5	4	0	0	1
AIRCREW FATALITIES	9	9	10	8	8	3	1	1	1	0	0	6
* IN THE ENVELOPE EJECTIONS	2/1	10/1	12/0	2/1	7/1	9/0	0	4/0	3/0	0	0	0
* OUT OF ENVELOPE EJECTIONS	0	1/0	0/1	0	0	0/1	0	0	0	0	0	0

\* (SUCCESSFUL/UNSUCCESSFUL)

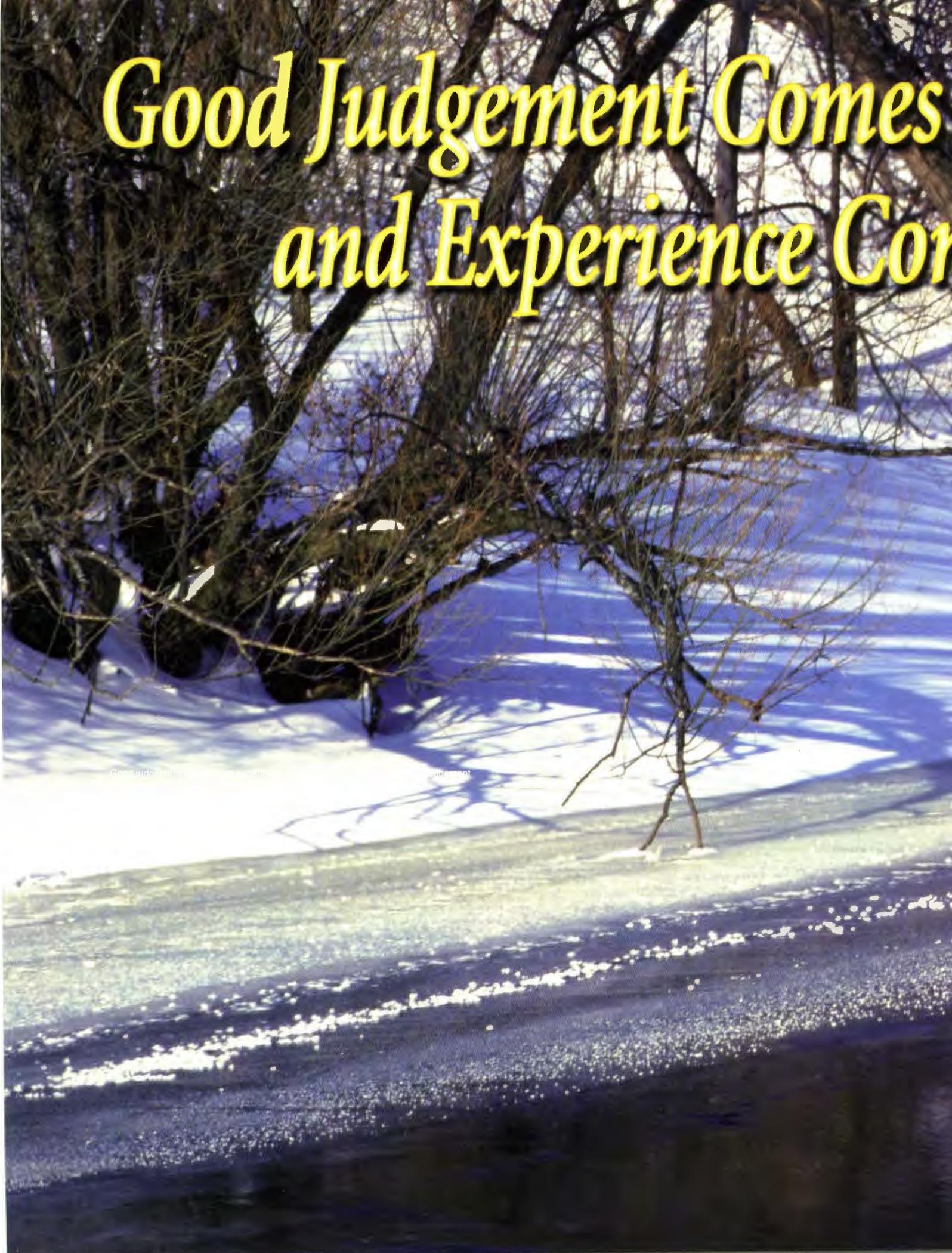
## CLASS A MISHAP COMPARISON RATE

(CUMULATIVE RATE BASED ON ACCIDENTS PER 100,000 HOURS FLYING)

		(CUMULATIVE RATE BASED ON ACCIDENTS PER 100,000 HOURS FLYING)											
		FY 95	FY 96	FY 95	FY 96	FY 95	FY 96	FY 95	FY 96	FY 95	FY 96	FY 95	FY 96
ACC	FY 95	2.1	1.1	0.7	0.6	0.9	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.6	2.3	2.0
	FY 96	0	1.1	0.8	0.6	0.9	1.2	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.4	2.1	
8 AF	FY 95	0	0	0	0	1.8	1.5	1.3	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.6	1.5
	FY 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.2	1.0	1.7	
9 AF	FY 95	0	0	0	0	0	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.7	1.9	1.8
	FY 96	0	0	0	0	0	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.8	2.1	1.9	
12 AF	FY 95	6.5	3.3	2.3	1.7	1.4	1.2	2.0	2.6	2.4	2.1	2.6	2.4
	FY 96	0	3.4	2.4	1.8	2.9	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.5	1.4	3.1	
DRU	FY 95	0	0	0	0	0	5.3	3.7	3.5	3.3	5.6	5.6	4.9
	FY 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
ANG	FY 95	0	0	0	0	0.8	0.7	0.6	1.0	1.4	1.6	1.5	1.4
	FY 96	0	1.9	1.3	2.2	1.8	2.2	1.9	1.7	2.0	1.8	2.0	
AFR	FY 95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0	0.9
	FY 96	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL	FY 95	1.3	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.8	1.1	1.1	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.9	1.8
	FY 96	0	1.3	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.1	1.9	
MONTH		OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP

# Good Judgement Comes and Experience Comes

Good judgement comes from experience, and experience comes from bad judgement.



# From Experience Lessons From Bad Judgement

One of the things we were fond of saying back at the beginning of my career was that the Lord smiles on fools, children, and fighter pilots. I was always convinced that I qualified on two of the three criteria. I spent more years than I care to admit flying fighters. I am a shining example of the Peter Pan syndrome, having absolutely refused to grow up. But, I firmly believed that I normally exercised prudent judgment when it came time to make good, tough decisions.

One of the lessons that was drummed into us over and over and over again was not to let the desire to get home, or wherever it was that we were going, get in the way of our good judgment. I probably read several hundred incident and mishap reports where “get home-itis” got in the way of the pilot’s judgment and was the ultimate cause of the mishap.

I’ll have to admit that on one or two occasions I didn’t quite take the most conservative (smart) approach and found myself in a rather narrow corner that required every ounce of skill I could muster, and a measure of luck, to get out of the situation without bending an airplane or hurting anyone. I came through those incidents with a healthy respect for the lessons the old heads had tried to teach us and a vow to not repeat such lapses in judgment.

I firmly believe I have been pretty successful in not repeating past mistakes, but an incident in January took me down a peg or two...

What had been planned as a relaxing Christmas vacation at home started out pretty lousy as fog resulted in one flight after another being canceled. The delays and missed flights turned a 5-hour trip into one that lasted over 16, but at least we made it home. The trip, however, turned into one of those un-

happy times when my father-in-law's cancer reappeared and it became obvious he only had weeks left. I only had a limited amount of vacation time; so I had to head back to work, leaving my wife at her parents. The trip home was also hampered by weather and aircraft mechanical problems; so I made a mental plan that if my remaining leave and the weather allowed, I would drive back for the funeral.

I talked to my wife every day and it became obvious that the stress of caring for her father was becoming an increasing burden. I was frustrated that I wasn't there to support her. When her father passed on and the date for the funeral was announced, I set about making travel plans.

The initial long-range weather forecast between Florida and Minnesota was typical for winter, cloudy but clear, with a chance of some light snow. A few days later, the forecast was somewhat worse both at the airports en route and in Minnesota, but not bad enough to significantly affect driving conditions, so I made the decision to drive.

It seemed like a wise decision as I made good time the first day. Later on that evening, however, the next day's forecast was much worse — rain, freezing rain, sleet, and 1 to 3 inches of snow throughout the southern half of Illinois for at least the morning hours. I made some calculations. It was about 2230 and I was starting to get tired. I knew I could make it for another 3 to 4 hours and that would get me at least halfway through the problem area before I had to stop. My plan was to make it far enough north so the temperatures were freezing - a better chance of encountering only snow. I also knew it was going to be a struggle to stay awake and that I had another hard day of driving the next day. Being from the north country, I had successfully driven in every kind of winter mess mother nature could throw at me. Whatever came the next day wouldn't be any different, so I

stopped and rested for the night.

I got a relatively early start the next day and everything looked good for the first 2 hours, even though the rain had started. It soon changed to a mixture of sleet and snow, with the snow in bands so the road conditions were mostly good, but occasionally there was a lot of slush in the left lane.

Traffic was moving somewhere between 35 and 50 MPH on the interstate. There were areas where it was safe to pass slower moving traffic, and I was moving along fairly decently. I told my wife I would be in Minnesota in time for the visitation that evening and I meant to keep my word. I was behind two semi-trailers and I could see it was clear ahead of them for quite a ways.

I was careful to watch the slush in the left lane because I didn't want to start sliding around and have an accident. I eventually came to an area where I was certain it was safe to pass. I made it by the trucks without any problem, but now the slush was thicker and I couldn't immediately pull back into the right lane. I was about 200 feet past the last semi when I started easing back into the right lane. I could feel that if I tried to move normally back into the right lane I would lose control of the car. Unfortunately, as I continued on, the slush grew even thicker.

When I reached the point where the dotted line dividing the traffic lanes was right under the center of the car, the drag from the slush on the left wheels made the car start to skid - almost imperceptibly. I counter steered as gently as I could, using pressures on the steering wheel instead of actual movements, knowing what would happen if I over controlled. I didn't touch the brake and I eased back on the gas pedal. Just at the moment I was certain I had the car back under control, the rear wheels broke completely loose and in the proverbial nanosecond I was going sideways looking directly at the ditch on the right side of the road. Besides sliding left at

about 40 MPH, I was also moving towards the shoulder. Just about the time I could really comprehend what had happened, the semi I had passed hit me in the rear door on the right hand side of the car. This hastened my departure from the roadway and sent me spinning to the left. The 18 inches of accumulated wet snow in the broad, gradually sloping ditch, did a good job of stopping the car without any further incident.

The truck driver managed to stop about a quarter mile up the road and make his way back to me. He said he was sorry for hitting me, but due to the conditions, could not brake without jackknifing his truck and having about 10 other trucks on top of both of us. Needless to say, I was thankful for his situational awareness and skill in making up for my lack of good judgment. Oh, I didn't make it for the visitation, but I did make it for the funeral. After being towed out of the ditch, the car turned out to be drivable, but not real pretty. The return trip home was far less eventful....

In retrospect with 20/20 hindsight, I should have flown and let someone else make the go/no go decisions. At the very least, I should have stopped driving as soon as it got slippery, or else slowed down to a moderate speed where control was assured instead of "iffy." I had it in my mind that I re-

ally needed to get home in time for the visitation and nothing was going to keep me from doing that. If I had to take a few risks, well, so what. I almost killed myself and others — that's what! Imagine how my wife would have taken the news had I been injured or killed, on top of what she had already gone through. Get home-itis almost got me, don't let it get you. ■



*Anonymous*



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