A dramatic photograph of a helicopter hoist rescue. The helicopter's rotor blades are visible at the top, and a hoist basket is suspended in the air, containing two red life preservers. Two crew members in yellow survival suits and red helmets are on the deck of the rescue boat, managing the hoist. The sea is choppy, and the sky is overcast with soft light.

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The Combat EDGE

Volume 8 Issue 4

September 1999

ACC SP 91-1

Air Combat Command's Mishap Prevention Magazine



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Cover Photo:

U.S. Coast Guard Seaman Apprentice John Grant (left) and Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris Horn, from Cape Charles Coast Guard Station, demonstrate the proper technique for capturing a rescue basket to Langley Air Force Base firefighters.

-Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jack Braden, 1st Communications Squadron, Langley AFB



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The Combat Edge (ISSN 1063-8970) is published September by the Air Combat Command, HQ ACC/SE, 175 Sweeney Blvd, Langley AFB VA 23665-2700. Second-class postage paid at Hampton VA and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Combat Edge*, HQ ACC/PAVM, 175 Sweeney Blvd, Langley AFB VA 23665-2700.

DISTRIBUTION: F(X). OPR: HQ ACC/PAVM. Distribution is controlled through the PDO based on a ratio of one copy per 10 persons assigned. Air Force units should contact their servicing PDO to establish or change requirements. Other Department of Defense (DoD) units have no fixed ratio and should submit their requests to the OPR.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: Available to non-DoD readers for \$30 (\$37.50 outside the U.S.) from the Superintendent of Documents, PO Box 371954, Pittsburgh PA 15250-7954. All subscription service correspondence should be directed to the Superintendent, not HQ ACC/SEP.

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 Denotes images digitally manipulated.

ACCent on Safety

Has it been hot enough for you? Here on the East Coast this has felt like one of the hottest summers ever.

Heat exhaustion, sunstroke and dehydration are real enough dangers, but the heat also presents dangers in other ways. When we're seeking to cool off, we can often take chances we might think better of under normal conditions — a brisk and breezy motorcycle ride *sans* helmet and with only sandals, shorts and T-shirt, or a cooling dip in the waters of a local stream with "No Swimming" signs posted, as it hides a bottom littered with broken glass and rusty cans.

I congratulate those of you who managed to keep your thinking caps on this past summer and weigh all the risks before rushing off for some quick gratification. For those of you who didn't, well, Mother Nature intended pain to be an effective teacher — so learn from it.

This month's issue presents a slightly different approach to an article than we have typically taken. I encourage you to read Captain Dean Stephens' article, "A Wing Trying To Fly." We found it so thought provoking that we turned to the Air Combat Command Operations Directorate Headquarters to see if anyone would care to pen a response. You'll find that here, too. Together, the two articles present a frank review of the many difficulties most flying units have been encountering over the last few years. Now don't get us wrong; we don't think that just writing an article will resolve problems like these, but we do commend our contributors for their honesty and willingness to raise the level of awareness. Before we can find the "light at the end of the tunnel," we must first have someone who is willing to cry out at the darkness.

This is my last ACCent as I will soon be making the transition to the retired list. It's been great fun for 27 years, 4000+ flying hours (accident free, I might add), and countless days on temporary duty or on alert. I commend all of you Air Force professionals on the superb manner in which you carry out your duties and I wish you nothing but clear skies and a trailing wind....

Y'all keep safe
Colonel Turk Marshall
Chief of Safety

A Wing Trying to Fly



Capt. Dean "Stag" Stephens
33rd Fighter Wing Flight Safety
Eglin AFB, Fla.

“We’ve just lost one of our aircraft!” These words strike up strong feelings of anger, confusion, nausea, and maybe even despair among flyers and support troops alike. Panic may be a subsequent feeling for many — especially supervision. This is not a “there I was” or a “here we are” story. The purpose of this article is to explain what the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin AFB is facing and to highlight areas of concern applicable to other wings in Air Combat Command (ACC), as well. Let’s face it — nobody wants the opening quote to be the end result for anyone.

Take a Step Back?

This past January’s Safety Day reminded us to *take a step back* upon returning to flight operations after the holidays. However, encouraging us to *take a leap back* to get a broader view of the big picture might have been a better message in light of the wing’s status. The young wingmen and maintainers cannot comprehend why we cannot generate enough sorties from a ramp overflowing with aircraft. So, where is our wing going?

The wing is currently rotating squadrons to complete the second part of a desert tasking. The pilots being sent over are qualified, though not necessarily proficient. The maintainers being sent over are profi-



cient. Realistically though, “proficient” mostly applies to the 5- and 7-level personnel. They have been performing maintenance at the expense of accomplishing necessary training for the 3-level airmen. Still, the pilots and the maintainers must deploy... and they’ll do a professional job, as everyone knows. Due to sacrifices made by the departing maintainers, the returning squadron has a ramp replete with aircraft, ready to storm the sky in multiple aircraft formations. The scene may look better on the surface of the ramp, but the returning squadron faces the same underlying concerns as they resume training operations. We have to take that aforementioned *leap back* to determine causes for our concerns.

What About Pilot Proficiency?

Back in November, the Alpha squadron (applicable across ACC) was packed up and ready to deploy. Life at the wing was okay, if not good. Meanwhile, the deployment was subsequently slipped due to an Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) activation. A skeletal flying schedule was developed to balance deploying aircraft phase times with the Alpha’s deploying pilots’ need to remain proficient. The effort to keep the pilots

proficient was augmented by other squadrons’ sorties.

A pilot proficiency discussion is not complete without mentioning the qualifications of personnel assigned to fill pilot manning levels. Our wing is currently manned for pilots at 105 percent. This slight over-manning is necessary to keep the experience level in line with the large influx of new pilots fresh from a flying training unit (FTU). On paper, our wing possesses a 41 percent experience level of “proficient” pilots, which isn’t bad for this day and age in ACC! But the level drops to 38 percent if you do not count those recently returned to the aircraft. These “experienced” wingmen, along with our high level of inexperienced FTU wingmen, increase the amount of training sorties needed.

As operations’ manning is driving up the required sortie count, maintenance’s manning problems are driving down their ability to generate sorties. The result is a large disparity between operations’ home station sorties required for the year, and maintenance’s ability to generate sorties. This disparity explains why the assigned combat mission ready (CMR) pilots averaged a meager 7.4 sorties per month in November and December, and the attached basic mis-





sion capable (BMC) pilots averaged 4.7 sorties. These are averages; but they reflect the long-term outlook for pilot proficiency. Honestly folks... in the long run, it doesn't look good.

"Knock-It-Off!"

To fight the proficiency battle, the two squadrons built a combined flying plan to prioritize deploying pilots over pilots not deploying. This was happening in December with down time still required for the actual deployment launch and for the holidays. The obvious solution was a surge week in December. From an operations perspective, everything was working as planned. That was until, in the middle of the surge, maintenance called a "knock-it-off." This KIO call, due to the maintenance superintendent's professionalism, brought the surge and the subsequent flying for the month to a screeching halt. From this point on, each sortie maintenance produced was basically used for pilot "currency" versus pilot "proficiency."

There are two basic causes warranting the "knock-it-off" call and the drop to minimal flying. One cause is the maintenance requirement of multiple aircraft, and the second is inadequate manning on the ramp. Why would a large number of aircraft be a problem? The answer lies within a numbers game based on how many aircraft are available versus how many we can maintain.

KIO and the Maintenance Requirement

Both of our squadrons have 28 aircraft assigned. Eighteen of these aircraft deployed in December. The remaining 10 Alpha squadron aircraft were added to Bravo's 28 assigned aircraft. Now, of the 38 total, two are at depot, four are in cannibalized status (each squadron had two in cannibalized status), and 10 cannot fly due to maintenance. Consequently, the number of airworthy aircraft decreases from 38 to 22. We can easily knock out 18 sorties per day using the

airworthy aircraft, right? Wrong — we have full manning on the ramp for 18 aircraft, but we still have a total of 36 (not including those at depot) that need to be maintained! Let's focus on the idea of only having enough maintainers for 18 aircraft.

KIO and Personnel Manning Levels

Personnel manning levels are a second cause bringing flying to a screeching halt. Current manning levels range from crew chiefs at 100 percent for squadrons with a primary mission aircraft inventory (PMAI) of 24 to specialists only manned for 18 PMAI squadrons. Additionally, the deployment's tasking requirements shortchanged the number of Alpha personnel left behind. So basically, the squadron left behind more aircraft with fewer people available to maintain them.

Normally, for 18 deploying aircraft, a squadron would prefer to take roughly 250 personnel, in order to balance at-home and deployed operations. The deployment required manning document (DRMD), based on tasking an 18 PMAI squadron, called for at least 300 personnel. This time, the tasking was to fully man the DRMD, which cleared out all the deployable squadron specialists plus depleted a large portion of the wing's back shop and support personnel.

Maintainer Qualifications and Cannibalization

A maintenance-oriented discussion on manning levels would not be complete without mentioning qualifications of personnel attempting to fill our manning billets. On paper, a 5-level is proficient (i.e., experienced), but a 5-level ranges from 18 months to seven years time in service. We have a large influx of new 5-levels, and many of our 5- to 7-levels are actually recent transfers from a different airframe. This means many of the 5- to 7-levels are actually "experienced" 3-levels awaiting training on our airframe (similar to an "experienced" wingman pilot). Thus, we have 3-, 5- and 7-levels needing ongoing training, aircraft

requiring maintenance, and canned aircraft needing repair.

I keep mentioning the canned aircraft because these aircraft require huge amounts of man-hours to bring them back to flying status. The process of cannibalizing one part off of an aircraft actually triples the work involved in acquiring the part. If the canned aircraft is not returned to flying status quickly enough, then it requires even more man-hours to perform an additional phase inspection prior to being airworthy. The Bravo squadron was forced to set aside some training opportunities while personnel who were qualified to perform the required training performed the required maintenance instead.

The Realistic Outcome

Now you have a better frame of reference on how personnel and aircraft numbers compound to cause the problems of pilots not flying enough to maintain proficiency, sortie generation not being able to provide enough aircraft for required sorties, and maintenance not being able to accomplish necessary training. What then would be a realistic effect of these problems? Remember the opening statement? That's right; losing an aircraft is a realistic, if not probable, outcome for our current situation. An even worse outcome would be losing a life as we scramble to train, upgrade, maintain, and fly.

Since we are aware of the situation, the onus is on each and every one of us to accurately perform our jobs while staying alert for possible indicators of things going astray. Some indicators pilots can watch for include: (1) other flight members' mission preparation, (2) the aircraft's readiness (i.e., general condition of the aircraft as well as accuracy of forms), and (3) the crew chief's familiarity with the aircraft (i.e., whether he's been working on a different aircraft each day). Some indicators maintainers can watch for include: (1) equipment movement on the ramp, (2) maintenance being done correctly the first time, (3) forms properly filled out and waiting at the aircraft ready to fly, and

(4) monitoring and backing up the pilot's actions (i.e., skipped or missed checklist items). Increasing awareness, while telling our troops to "take a step back and be extra cautious," is not a solution. Solutions come from reasonable actions being taken from good, sound, basic ideas.

Be an Overcomer!

I hope this article has inspired you to think about fixes that your wing may need to accomplish — in spite of manning, equipment and training problems. As ACC professionals, we **MUST** be willing to truthfully admit where we have problems. But at the same time, we are a command made up of a whole lot of smart people who are able to work together to overcome the difficult obstacles before us. On a personal level, my challenge to you is to "be an overcomer!" Don't put it off — start right now! Ask yourself the following question: "What are some of my thoughts for fixing these problems?" Write them down, and forward them to your superiors. Do not assume your superiors see the same problems you do and know everything that is going on around the wing. Realistically, for the short term, we have to do the best we can with what we have and remain cautious for potential problem indicators.

The Bottom Line

The 33rd Fighter Wing confronted a bleak start to flight operations in the New Year. The pilots faced the frustration of not flying, only knowing their proficiency was dwindling. The maintainers faced a similar frustration of knowing their efforts to fix the multitude of aircraft would not be enough to generate the required sorties. These are historically bad months for mishaps... even without situations like ours. So what's the bottom line? Well, it's simply this — we are "a wing trying to fly," and there is a huge potential on our horizon to lose an aircraft or even a human life. I hope our professionalism and efforts to safely accomplish the mission will prevail as we strive to prove history wrong. ■

Maj. Sid "Scroll" Mayeux
ACC Operations Directorate Action Group
Langley AFB, Va.



A Command Trying to Fly

It's not a pretty sight — a chaplain walking the long, forlorn walk to the new widow's front door... an empty chair and down-turned glass at a dining out... a crash site, its fires finally cooling after consuming all that will burn... a flight line full of aircraft, with flyers and maintainers itching to fly them, yet they can't. Wait a moment. That last one seems a bit out of place in this horrid list, depending on whom you ask. The good people of the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin Air Force Base got pretty frustrated seeing all those aircraft on the ground not flying, but they got that way by choice. Rather than ignoring what they perceived was a very clear and present threat of losing one of their own, they chose to "stand down" and take a really close look at themselves.

This article serves as a notice that your leadership here at Air Combat Command Headquarters couldn't have been happier with the 33rd's choice. Our warfighters had the wherewithal and initiative to call a "knock-it-off" when things got a little too hot. That's exactly what the generals here expect from our ACC professionals.

The Big Picture

In the 33 FW article, "A Wing Trying to Fly," the author asked, "do the commanders know about this?" Let it be known that HQ

ACC is listening, sees "the big picture" and is fighting for you. Fact is, you aren't alone in your difficulties to keep aircrews, maintainers and airframes full-up through deployment ups and downs. At this writing, 246 of ACC's 782 combat-coded aircraft are deployed solely to combat areas of responsibility (AORs). That's just under one-third of our aircraft, and that doesn't include exercise deployments like Red Flag, Roving Sands, Weapon System Evaluation Program (WSEP), or the like.

The 33 FW is one of four ACC fighter wings that possess only two combat-tagged squadrons. Two of the other wings, Holloman's 49 FW and the 4 FW at Seymour Johnson, are different. Holloman possesses a third and Seymour a fourth non-combat squadron dedicated to training replacement air and ground crews. Thus, if necessary for "hot-hot" contingencies, they each possess an extra pool of people, parts and planes from which they can "plunder," without creating too much of a ripple across their wing's readiness.

Eglin didn't have that luxury, and the haphazard scheduling of world crises certainly didn't help. Between Operations Desert Fox, Deliberate Forge and Noble Anvil, Eglin's 33 FW did the best it could to meet its mission abroad while still trying to train folks at home. We won't say that the 33 FW is the only wing with problems, but likewise, we owe it to our warfighters not to just say "shut up and color," since everyone's got the same problems and we all have to bear with them. That's no way to fix things.

Congressional Testimony

This year, Gen. Richard Hawley, the former

ACC commander, and Maj. Gen. David MacGhee, ACC Director of Aerospace Operations, appeared personally before the Senate and House Armed Services Committees to fight for help. They repeatedly addressed these issues with individual members of Congress for everything from supplies to training and ranges, and from manning to operations tempos. Do any of the following thoughts sound familiar?

“A number of commanders have outlined significant problems with recruiting and retaining military personnel in general, and key specialties in particular,” Hawley said. “Many of these problems have been attributed to military salaries being substantially lower than their civilian counterparts; a retirement system that treats some military personnel differently than others; OPTEMPO rates and deployments that cause significant turbulence in service members’ lives; and poor quality barracks and family housing that contribute to the perception of a declining quality of life. Decreased retention rates result in diminished skill levels. As experienced pilots are replaced by new pilots, we must devote more time to training fundamentals versus intense training, such as at exercises like Red Flag and Air Warrior. Increases in contingency deployments only compound the inability to train.

“The result of the enlisted exodus is inexperienced and undermanned units. We no longer have an adequate number of journey-men (5-level) and craftsmen (7-level) per shift. This impacts the amount of apprentice (3-level) training that can be accomplished and affects the number of flying sorties needed to train new pilots. As a result, the average number of hours per crew per month has been on a slow decline since the Gulf War... this inability to train increases the risks our crews face every time they go into the air, and could potentially exhaust a force critical to our national security mission.”

We Hear You

This article probably doesn’t hold any answers for Eglin AFB or anyone else, and that’s not why we wrote it. For what it’s worth, to the “fighting 33rd” and all you other hard-working warriors who somehow succeed in squeezing yet another few precious drops of blood from the turnip every day, we want you to know this — your commanders hear you and are doing everything they can within a democratic society’s military means to help you do your job.

In “A Wing Trying to Fly” the author’s wing sought to avoid a mishap during “historically bad months for mishaps, even without situations like ours.” Congratulations — you folks did it! You did what it took to prove history wrong. You called a “knock-it-off,” knowing the impact on future readiness capability. HQ ACC applauds your sense of priority. We want you to fly, to train, to fight, and will do what we can to give you what you need to do so safely. Nevertheless, when you call a “knock-it-off” because things are just too nuts, because you’ve reached your limit... now that’s a pretty sight! ■



Passing the Pen

For the past 2 1/2 years I have had the honor of serving as editor of THE COMBAT EDGE. Not long after I took my place in front of the editor's computer, I began to feel the safety challenge. Within six months, I was deeply involved in getting every pertinent bit of safety information published so that I too could help save lives and protect our nation's valuable military assets. After a year or so I felt every bit a safety professional as the "real" professionals I was working with in Flight, Weapons, and Ground safety. Soon after taking the reins of the magazine I found that there just weren't enough hours in the day to write, edit, and do all my other magazine-related duties. Even with a staff of four great folks, we couldn't possibly continue to pump out a 32-page magazine every month, especially one with timely, pertinent, and accurate data for our readers to use. Well guess what? That's where you, the operators, maintainers, loaders, and every other specialty in Air Combat Command, really came to the rescue! You heeded my pleas for articles and, somehow, there were always enough to put a magazine together (a superb one in my opinion).

Before I knew it, the time came for me to pack up my uniform and move on to another phase in my life. Twenty-five years as a blue-suiter were great, but it became time to "pass the pen."

Let me introduce you to 1st Lt. Erin Bradley, the new editor of THE COMBAT EDGE. She's young, energetic, enthusiastic, and has lots of good experience in Public Affairs at the 1st Fighter Wing. She even has the journalism background to specifically qualify her as an editor (I had to "wing" it). However, even with all of her qualifications, she still has the same critical needs that I had. She needs your untiring support and dedication. As in my case, she is not a safety professional. Those of you who are need to provide her with your expertise, experience, and guidance. Please share your safety "war stories" with her and the rest of ACC by submitting articles, so that others might learn by reading from the pages of this magazine, versus through personal experience.

THE COMBAT EDGE is your magazine. You make it what it is — a world-class safety publication. Keep those articles coming, and... BE SAFE! ■

*Lt. Col. Adrian Robbe
Former Editor*



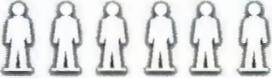
Ground Safety Stats

ACC Losses for FY 99

(1 Oct 98 - 31 Jun 99)

Practice the principles of Risk Management both on and off duty.

Ground Mishap Fatalities

8 AF	
9 AF	
12 AF	
DRU	

Number of Ground Mishaps/Dollar Losses

	Class A	Class B	Class C
8 AF	6/\$1,318,037	0/0	105/\$540,705
9 AF	1/\$125,000	0/0	111/\$912,536
12 AF	4/\$1,683,330	1/\$115,120	178/\$891,234
DRU	0/0	1/\$894,548	66/\$287,265
FY 99 Totals	11/\$3,126,367	2/\$1,009,668	450/\$2,631,740
FY 98 Totals (for comparison)	9/\$2,590,000	0/0	520/\$2,242,643

Class A - Fatality; Permanent Total Disability; Property Damage \$1,000,000 or more
 Class B - Permanent Partial Disability; Property Damage between \$200,000 and \$1,000,000
 Class C - Lost Workday; Property Damage between \$10,000 and \$200,000

Maj. Lee Levy
9th Munitions Squadron
Beale AFB, Calif.

Excellence Personified



EXCELLENCE PERSONIFIED — this is the best definition for the Air Force Combat Ammunition Center (AFCOMAC), located at Beale AFB, California. Never heard of it? Well, continue reading and you will understand and agree.

In layman's terms, AFCOMAC's goal is to pass on the munitions experience and lessons learned from recent conflicts such as the Vietnam War and Operations Desert Shield and Storm, and to provide munitions students the training, background and confidence needed to successfully support large-scale munitions operations in combat.

AFCOMAC is the only training environment in which students receive training on live munitions. Over 13 years of operation, more than 6,500 munitions personnel and 580 senior officers have graduated from AFCOMAC; also, more than 137,000 live bombs have been built without a single explosive mishap — not a single Class A, B, or C mishap. Got your attention? Well, now let me tell you how AFCOMAC used Operational Risk Management (ORM) to become

even more effective.

Here is the scenario: the Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board (DDESB) requested, through the Air Force Safety Center Headquarters and Air Combat Command Headquarters, that AFCOMAC perform a formal risk assessment concerning their continued use of live munitions during AFCOMAC Iron Flag exercises. Iron Flag is the "final" exam that validates graduate competence with live munitions — no room for error here! The study was accomplished in accordance with Air Force Pamphlet (AFPAM) 91-215, ORM Guidelines and Tools. Our ability to continue training with live munitions was at risk.

The entire munitions operation during the Iron Flag exercise was closely scrutinized. The evaluation included a breakout of munitions in igloos, delivery and assembly at approved sites, munitions delivery, disassembly and repacking, and restoring munitions back into the igloos. For the study, each munitions operation, such as bomb production, was broken down into individual activities (i.e., lifting bomb pallets with a

forklift). To make a long story short, AFCOMAC's risk assessment validated previously instituted risk mitigation measures, and ensured that AFCOMAC provides a realistic yet safe "combat" training scenario.

The benefits of using ORM to analyze and validate munitions training were invaluable. During the evaluation all hazards were identified. The severity of a mishap was based upon

operation even safer...more effective...and reduced risk even more. **This is the intent of ORM – to become a catalyst for minimizing risk and maximizing operational success.** It would have been easy for AFCOMAC to rest on their outstanding record; however, they used the ORM process to get even better. **Isn't that the Air Force way - striving for constant improvement?** Now



The benefits of using ORM to analyze and validate munitions training were invaluable.

the worst-case scenario — a detonation of explosives. For most of the hazards, the chosen worst-case scenarios were at the "catastrophic" level. The hazard probability of an explosives mishap occurring was deemed as "unlikely." Using the Risk Assessment Matrix from AFPAM 91-215, the corresponding risk level for most of the hazards was "medium." Then the hazards were prioritized based on their frequency of occurrence during the entire munitions operations cycle and the risk level identified on the matrix. Finally, a total of 42 risk control measures were identified that reduced the possibility of an explosive mishap. Thirty-five risk control measures were already implemented and seven were prioritized for action.

Get the picture? Here is an organization that passed a comprehensive inspection that validated its way of doing business. By using ORM, they made their

is a good time for an introspective look at your organization. Has your efficiency stagnated...were you a little uneasy the last time you departed on your last contingency tasking...do you have more supervising to do and not enough supervisors? Give ORM a try —it can only hurt not to! ■



Staff Sgt. James Baker, 325th Maintenance Squadron, Tyndall AFB, Fla.

“Many Heroes and a \$15 Helmet Save a Young Boy’s Life.”

When Safety Hits Close to Home



Of the many challenges faced by commanders, first sergeants and all others performing leadership roles, one of the most routine, yet challenging issues is how to get your troops' attention before they head out the door for the weekend. Not just filling a square by delivering some "canned" safety briefing, but actually delivering a message that sticks! What can you tell or share with your troops to get them to really think before they do something they know is unsafe, foolish or unwise? Is there something you can say that's different... something that will break the mold of the standard weekly safety briefing and actually penetrate into the hearts and minds of those

Nine-year-old Seth Peters of Hampton, Va., re-enacts the near-fatal bicycle-truck collision described in the following true story:

-Photo by Staff Sgt. Dave White

lined-up in front of you, most of whom are yielding that reassuring "deer in the headlights" look? Real-life stories can be effective in achieving that elusive "cranial penetration," especially if the story hits close to home. The following story may help.

Attached is an article written by a member of my squadron, Staff Sgt. James Baker, who had the misfortune of going through the experience of a near-fatal bicycle-truck collision that almost cost him one of the most dearest possessions he has in life... his son. Fortunately, however, this story has a happy ending. The young boy survived and has almost fully recovered from his extensive injuries. Once the details of the accident were made available, an extremely valuable safety rule and discipline surfaced that proved vital in giving the medical professionals a chance to save the young boy's life. That is the focus and lesson to be learned from this article. Although Staff Sgt. Baker admittedly takes a different twist with his article, his words will no-doubt offer you a couple of messages which "hit close to home" and may well serve as a solid foundation for a safety briefing with teeth.

*Maj. Bob Sanford
325th Maintenance Squadron
Commander*

Many Heroes and a \$15 Helmet...

That was the bold print over a small article in the hometown daily newspaper, tucked away in the back pages far behind the politics and the crimes of the day. The article read, "Thanksgiving Day... a 6-year-old boy rode his bike in front of an oncoming truck. After being struck by the truck, he was pulled underneath it. He was later rushed to a nearby hospital."

- There was no mention of his brave siblings — how his brother watched over and protected him from further harm while

his sister immediately ran for help to the closest house she could see.

- There was no mention of the kind and caring soul who quickly took in the boy's sister and aided her in summoning emergency medical assistance.

- There was no mention of the courageous and competent Emergency Medical Technicians who went right to work, not hesitating to make life or death decisions and making sure the boy was quickly transported to a hospital.

- There was no mention of the nurses, doctors and other medical staff who took the fragile pile of flesh and bones, applied their expert skillfulness, and somehow managed to transform the young, mangled body back into a small boy.

- There was no mention of the many heroes involved with saving this young boy's life and giving him the opportunity to reunite with his family and friends.

I will tell you this, no one is more grateful for the 'heroics' demonstrated by all those involved than this young boy's parents. I know that to be an absolute fact. I am the boy's father. It seems to me it would have been much more appropriate if the article that ran in the local paper was entitled, "**Many Heroes and a \$15 Helmet Save a Young Boy's Life.**"

To those of you reading this article, I have two messages. The first is obvious — a mishap like this **can happen** to you and your family. You and your family are not immune to bicycle mishaps. Secondly, those \$15 helmets and the discipline to wear them are **well worth** the investment. In order to help you and your family leave an accident alive, you must do your part to protect yourself and those you love. Thankfully my son had the discipline to be wearing his \$15 bicycle helmet... or I'm sure this story would have had a much more tragic ending. ■

**When you and your children go biking
— wear protective helmets!**

Taking Care

I want to tell you a true story about a situation I responded to several years ago in my role as an Air Force chaplain. In order to protect the surviving family members, the characters and story line have been altered.

Ken had been on active duty a little over eight years. He joined the military right after graduation from high school. After completing his Air Force technical school, he married his high school sweetheart, Mary. A year after their wedding, they bought a mobile home, a new car, and had twins. Mary had to quit her job because of her pregnancy and was politely told she might not get her job back for at least another year.

As time went on, Ken was sent on an overseas remote tour without his family. Shortly after his return, he was sent on a temporary duty (TDY) to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Storm. After his assignment in the desert was over, Ken and Mary had been married close

to 48 months, 20 of which were spent apart.

When Ken was home, Mary couldn't depend on him to do any work around the home; he wouldn't do any chores or help her in taking care of the twins. To make matters worse, Ken volunteered for a 90-day TDY without discussing it with Mary. He said it would get them a little extra money and a medal to help him

with his next stripe. Mary told her husband that they didn't need more money but rather more time together. Before leaving on his three-month deployment, Ken spent the night with his buddies at the club. In fact, he did very, very little to help prepare his family for the time that he would be gone. The morning of his departure, Mary was very upset and told her husband that he was a pathetic, selfish man.

After Ken deployed, Mary called her brother to come and pick her and the twins up. She told her brother, "I've had it with him!" In fact, she wrote a "Dear John" letter while he was deployed. When he received it, he felt angry, alone and depressed. He felt hopeless. This was compounded by the large mobile home and car payments for which he was responsible. When he returned from his TDY, he went home to an empty trailer. Shortly after that, he ended up selling the trailer at a loss and moving into the dormitory. The cramped space and lack of privacy in the dorm made him feel very abandoned, frustrated and sad. Ken felt like a total failure.

"I've had it with him!"
In fact, she wrote a "Dear John" letter while he was deployed.



of Our Own

He constantly called and begged Mary to come back to him, but she refused. He was willing to even get out of the military and receive counseling, but Mary refused his offer. Then... when all his attempts at reconciliation failed, he started drinking alcohol heavily.

Mary changed her phone number to an unlisted one. She even told Ken's parents that their relationship was over and would prefer if they did not come by to visit their grandchildren. She didn't want Ken to visit the children either. When Ken heard this, he wrote her and said, "If you cut the children out of my life, then I have no reason to live. My life is a failure. If I can't have the three of you, then I don't want to live any more."

Ken saw his life goals and plans fall apart within only a few months. Any open avenues turned out to be dead ends. He had no one to talk to.

Ken stopped going to the club, squadron intramural events and even the gym. A few of his buddies knew about his

marital separation and used it as an excuse

to give Ken "some distance."

No one took time to talk to him

about these deeper issues. He started selling his tools and guns at giveaway prices, and even parted with his prized fishing and model airplane equipment — he was cleaning house.

Two days later, Mary received his wedding ring, pictures and \$186 in a box. Inside was a note telling her that he was "going home." She called his dorm room, but there was no answer. She called his job, but they said he was 3 hours late for work. She called his First Sergeant and the local police... but they were all too late. Ken put the barrel of a rifle into his mouth, and splattered his brains out in his car.

The Problem

The ever-increasing demands of military life mean that suicide prevention needs continuous attention from all Air Force members. Though Air Combat Command's suicide rates have dropped significantly over recent years, it is important that we, as leaders, followers, friends, and family, remain ever vigilant in our efforts.

As we approach the end of the 20th century and the inauguration of a new millennium, the operational demands being placed upon America's military continue to increase. Since the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, the Air Force has shrunk approximately 40 percent in size. Over the last decade, there have been massive cutbacks in personnel and equipment as well as a large number of base closures, wing realignments and squadron mergers throughout the Air Force. These downsizing initiatives have resulted in a significant imbalance between the size and capability of the Air Force with its current overseas commitments.

As the operations tempo (OPTEMPO) associated with Operation Northern Watch in

Turkey, Operation Souther Watch in Iraq, and other hot spots throughout the world continues to rise, the stress being imposed upon our military members continues to climb. Extended working hours, long TDYs and numerous large-scale unit deployments impose a large amount of stress upon our Air Force personnel.

The tremendous strain caused by one or more of these events along with significant personal problems that may exist in a person's life (e.g., marital, legal, financial, or otherwise) can bring some people to contemplate the very desperate, selfish act of suicide.

The Warning Signs

Those contemplating suicide oftentimes give warning signs to other people. The following signs can serve as an indication that someone you know is in a state of despair and in need of help: (1) increased use of alcohol or drugs, (2) lack of concern for their personal appearance, (3) dramatic change in behavioral characteristics (e.g., not associating with friends and/or withdrawing from social activities), (4) loss of interest in school or their job, (5) sleeping and/or eating problems, (6) taking dangerous, unnecessary risks that clearly have no benefit, (7) giving away possessions that the individual has cherished over the years, and (8) and preoccupying their mind (sometimes to the point of obsession) with the subject of death and dying.

If you suspect a friend of yours is contemplating suicide, encourage the person to talk openly with you about his or her thoughts. If the individual has a plan in mind to commit suicide, you should take the person to a health care professional, chaplain or someone in the chain of command who can get him/her the assistance they so desperately need. This kind of assistance requires your personal involvement.

In reality, people who kill themselves are no different than anyone else. They are simply people like you and me. However, they are people who believe their circumstances are too overwhelming to live with and that suicide is the only way out of their problems. Suicide has no boundaries. No rank in the military —

officer or enlisted — is immune from suicide. Statistics have shown that women make more attempts at suicide than men, but it is the male population that is usually more successful in carrying it out to completion.

The Symptoms of Suicide

As a microcosm of our American society, the U.S. military has a much lower suicide rate proportionally than our nation as a whole. However, we must never shrink from taking care of our own. The military lifestyle calls upon both active-duty members and their spouses to make tremendous sacrifices on a daily basis. Even though individuals may be surrounded by many people, deep inside they can actually be very lonely and depressed.

What caused Ken's depression and subsequent suicide? First of all, Ken and Mary were caught in a downward spiral. They were unable to communicate with each other about their marital strife. They had no close friends to share their concerns with, and their despondency made them more resistant to professional help. Ken also had selfish expectations about his marriage and his job in the Air Force. His marital discord was a source of his frustration. Ken felt unfulfilled; he felt totally worthless and without support. There were several early signs that Ken was suicidal: his sloppy dress, careless work habits, foul language, negative attitude, and his total lack of concern for himself and others.

So what can the Air Force do to help individuals who are suffering and facing dead-end solutions like this? How can supervisors and

The intense
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deep
quicksand.

friends help a person who is contemplating suicide?

What Can You Do to Help?

In my role as an Air Force chaplain, I usually hear the surviving spouse or co-worker of someone who has committed suicide say something like, "what could I have done differently to prevent this unnecessary loss?" Well, as a supervisor, one thing you certainly can do is to get to know your people beyond a superficial level. Be sincere in finding out how you can help the person with their problems. Use chaplains (or other professional counselors) to assist your troubled friend. You may even consider setting up a buddy system for someone to spend time with the person who may be extremely lonely and has no friends.

If an individual like Ken does not have people to support him locally, it may prove helpful to encourage him to visit his parents or a good friend. Sometimes a change in environment and people, with the proper professional orientation, can give a person the hope that he or she needs.

Finally, taking up the challenge to help another requires great sacrifice on the part of a supervisor, friend or family member. It is easy to ignore the existence of a person's problem, but totally disregarding such difficulties will not help an individual in need. This type of apathy and/or lack of human kindness doesn't do anybody any good. In fact, lack of true concern for the person contemplating suicide may only serve as a catalyst for the individual to take his or her life. When someone is demonstrating unusual behavior, don't just express shock or talk about it to others. Be part of the solution by serving as a trusting friend who encourages openness in conversation; demonstrate a loving concern for the individual — you may be their only avenue of hope.

The combination of marital fracture, financial difficulties, and subsequent problems on the job merged to overpower Ken's weak mental, physical and emotional state of being. The lack of concerned friends with no professional help served only to compound Ken's despair. Commanders, supervisors and friends

need to take seriously any verbal or nonverbal clues an individual gives relative to suicide. Leaving someone to work out this type of problem on his or her own does not help prevent suicide. The intense despondency that people can experience is like sinking into deep quicksand. One cannot save oneself. Getting out of the suicidal state requires a rescuer — it requires personal involvement on our part.

In our Air Force community, you and I can play a part, even if it is only a small part, to help alert others as to the behavioral changes that warrant closer scrutiny. There are a variety of professional and confidential options available both on- and off-base. Many local churches in your area provide people and programs that can lighten a despondent person's burdens; they can guide one to get involved in support groups, outdoor activities, and worship. Being there, encouraging, and affirming another's struggle can pull peers out of their state of mental hopelessness.

Suicide's Other Victims

After a person commits suicide, the suffering is not over. In fact, it is just the beginning of suffering... that is, for the immediate family and friends. The spouse, children, and friends of a person who commits suicide suffer greatly, and this type of suffering lasts a lifetime. As an example, Mary felt guilt-ridden for years about Ken's suicide. The twins subconsciously recorded the abrupt absence of their father — a disappearance that will subconsciously unravel itself for the rest of their lives, especially around holiday seasons. In addition, economic hardship and public shame will hang over the heads of the immediate family and other relatives. Ken's buddies took it pretty hard, also. They blamed themselves for things they could have done to help him.

Against the backdrop of all these interrelated complications, there is hope (there is always hope) for people in despair who are contemplating suicide. As part of the Air Force family, make a committed effort to help those people who cross your path and may be considering suicide. After all, that's the Air Force way... *"taking care of our own."* ■

Preface. During the past year, I have taught Operational Risk Management (ORM) to over 800 people as part of the 8th Air Force ORM Roadshow. While some embraced the ORM concepts enthusiastically, I encountered many skeptics who thought this was just a passing fad. Although I truly believe in the concepts and tools provided within ORM, my belief is irrelevant; you must decide for yourself.

Just Another Fad? The idea of weighing risk and balancing it against a desired outcome, or mission, is not a new concept. Many personnel have used some form of risk management very suc-

obvious absence of common sense in combination with other human inconsistencies that caused these human error mishaps. A lack of apparent common sense can simply be described as not possessing a systematic or logical process to analyze and manage risk.

Just What is “Common Sense” Anyway? Quite often, the term common sense is overused or used out of context. How do you define common sense? Some would offer that common sense is simply possessing situational awareness. Others would define common sense as the ability to apply sound

Why Bothe

*Maj. Phillip P. Taber
8th Air Force Flight Safety
Barksdale AFB, La.*

cessfully throughout their careers. Although not a “new” concept, ORM merely offers a more formalized process that can be easily understood and used daily by anyone in their job. Why go through the pain of formalizing this systematic process of risk management? Primarily, because not everyone understands, nor uses the concepts of risk management... not everyone possesses this “sixth” sense often referred to as “common sense.”

Common Sense. One of the most common reactions to ORM is, “It’s just common sense.” On the surface, this reaction seems rational and logical; however, military and civilian mishap statistics reveal that over 80 percent of ALL mishaps are a result of (or can be attributed to) human factors/error. A review of these mishaps normally reveals an

and consistent judgment... regardless of formal education. For the sake of this discussion, we will assume you are new to your unit and are attempting to learn a new task, for which you have no previous exposure. Without some type of direction or formal guidance, you would likely develop your own technique or set of directions through trial and error. Even with technical directions or technical orders, you would still lack the depth of knowledge required to complete this new task with the skill and efficiency of a craftsman. A true craftsman represents the culmination of countless iterations of experimentation, searching for efficiency and mastery of a craft or process. A craftsman knows the “tricks of the trade” that were handed down to them from their mentor or teacher — from craftsman to apprentice. What is common sense to a craftsman is not necessarily common sense to an apprentice. Only after you observe and work with the craftsman do you begin to fully understand and learn their secrets, and in a sense, graduate

to their level of common sense.

Trial and Error. Currently, the U.S. military is facing monumental challenges of mission accomplishment in the face of shrinking budgets, extremely low retention rates and high operations tempo. We can no longer afford the luxury of allowing our “apprentices” (the young and inexperienced personnel), to become “craftsmen” through trial and error. The abundant supply of parts, equipment and experienced personnel no longer exists. The exodus of our experienced personnel (i.e., our craftsmen) is dramatically lowering our corporate knowledge. Without the benefit of our craftsmen, we are forcing our apprentices to perform at levels previously reserved for our most experienced personnel. To prevent or lessen the inevitable trial and error process, we must capture and transfer our collective experience and craftsmanship to our apprentices. This will avoid potential losses to our combat resources — our personnel and equipment.

The Perfect Tool.

ORM uses numerous

tools that are perfect for capturing and retaining valuable experience before it is forever lost. Many of the ORM hazard identification/analysis tools, such as the operations, preliminary hazard, change, or the “what if” analyses are ideal for capturing and incorporating the irreplaceable wealth of experience and knowledge still in the military. These types of structured tools are far more reliable in securing information than current processes, such as word-of-mouth or “out-of-date” continuity books.

Can Common Sense Be Taught? It would be simply naive to imply everyone who enters the military understands the concepts of risk assessment and possesses a systematic approach to risk management. Most basic/entry-level technical schools currently teach a compliance-oriented (i.e., no-brainer) concept of safety. While this is not a completely bad mindset, it is sometimes too rigorous and does not allow any room for flexibility and adaptation in a rapidly changing environment, such as contingency operations. Additionally, pure compliance-oriented safety can have a negative impact on mission outcome. This is one of the reasons that some people are willing to ignore or violate technical orders as well as existing safety procedures during real-world operations to ensure mission success.

In contrast, formal ORM emphasizes mission success through the identification and control of hazards/conditions that could lead to mission failure. Although not the focus of ORM, safety does indirectly benefit. For example, how many times have you heard, “If you do the smart/

tactical things, safety will take care of itself”? Lower mishap rates are a by-product of ORM... not its focus!

Bottom Line. ORM is not just another management initiative or safety program designed to be eyewash hanging on the wall for an inspector, or an annoying, time consuming, paperwork drill. Once fully implemented, ORM can provide the backdrop and tools to maximize combat capability and ensure mission success! *FLY SMART — FLY SAFE!* ■

Resc

*1st Lt. Erin Bradley
Editor, The Combat Edge
Langley AFB, Va.*

*Photos by Tech. Sgt. Jack Braden,
1st Communications Squadron
Langley AFB, Va.*

*1st Lt. Erin Bradley, editor,
The Combat Edge, is
lowered from an HH-60
Jayhawk helicopter onto the
deck of a Coast Guard
rescue boat as Langley
firefighters Billy Deatherage
(left) and Jim Fuhs ground
the basket for landing.*

As I rose and fell with each wave, my waterlogged boots feeling like giant weights and my flight suit blending seamlessly with the color of the water surrounding me, I wondered how anyone would be able to find such a little target in such a big bay.

But in the distance I heard the unmistakable beating of rotor blades as they sliced through the salt air. After an eternity of scouring the skies to glimpse the savior behind the sound, a bright red and white Coast Guard helicopter pierced the thick gray storm clouds and began to descend.

The bay churned ferociously, pelting my face with bullets of water and making it difficult to see through the haze. Each time I gasped for breath it seemed as though nearly half of it was saltwater.

As I struggled to keep my eyes on the approaching rescue, I saw a strange metal basket emerge from an open side door, and a

man in a bright blue flight suit and goggles began to lower it towards me. All the while, panicked thoughts kept running through my mind.

"Why are they lowering the basket so far from me? What if I don't have the energy to swim that far? What if I keep inhaling all this water and can't get enough breath to keep treading? What if the wind blows me against the helicopter?"

The basket dipped just beneath the surface of the white whirlpools, and then the helicopter dragged the basket closer. I swam into the basket and gripped the sides, and suddenly I was airborne, watching the bay ebb further away. When I realized that I was

2nd Lt. Kevin Cantera, 71st Fighter Squadron scheduler, waits to be picked up in a Coast Guard rescue basket July 13 during Langley's annual water rescue training in the Chesapeake Bay.

ue at Sea



In fact safely out of the water, I looked up to watch as two jets thundered over me from base. I followed them as they soared towards the coast, and out of the corner of my eye I glimpsed a boat in the water below. There on the side of the boat were some of the most beautiful words I'd ever seen written: "Langley Fire Department." They had come to take me home.

The helicopter rescue crew pulled me into the aircraft and asked if I was all right. I replied that I was, and they then told me that they were going to lower me onto a boat below, and that I should just keep my arms and hands inside the basket and remain calm. I said I figured I didn't have much choice.

So I was nudged back out of the warm womb of the helicopter into the thrashing winds and the abyss, but this time there was a group of people waiting to welcome me onto the deck of their boat. As the helicopter hovered ever closer, a Coast Guardsman reached for my basket with a grounding hook and pulled me towards them, and then a Langley rescue worker grasped the cage and guided it down onto the deck.

As soon as I touched down I scrambled out of the basket and up to the cabin. Rescue

workers helped me up the stairs, supporting me to ensure I didn't slip and fall as the boat lurched through the waves.

Though soaking wet and cold, I felt grateful for the whole experience. That may sound like an odd emotion to be having at a time like that, but I was grateful because everything I had just experienced wasn't real - it was simply part of the 1st Fighter Wing Fire Department's annual water rescue training with the Cape Charles Coast Guard.

"Participating in the simulated post-ejection water rescue was a real eye-opener," said 2nd Lt. Joe Radford, 71st Fighter Squadron scheduling officer. "In a real ejection scenario, I imagine that the excitement I felt at being picked up by an HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter would be overshadowed by fear, undoubtedly exhaustion, and possibly pain stemming from ejection-related injuries. It was, however, reassuring to witness the professionalism and dedication of the rescue workers. There seemed to be quite a lot of room for errors, but the combined Air Force and Coast Guard rescue team repeatedly executed the helicopter-to-ship recovery flawlessly."

Part of that flawless recovery was attributable to the training rescue workers gave to "victims" such as myself prior to proceeding with the exercise. I knew that, once the crew lowered the basket out of the helicopter, I had to let it be "grounded" in the water before I touched it, to avoid getting shocked by the built-up static electricity. Though the electricity is seldom enough to kill an unsuspecting victim, some have been shocked unconscious when they unknowingly touched the basket, making a water rescue

much more difficult and dangerous.

We also had to suppress our natural instincts as "victims" by waiting until rescue workers dragged the basket closer to us before swimming into it. Had there been a diver there to assist us in the water, we would have had to wait for him or her as well. Though it's hard to imagine having the presence of mind to follow procedures and remain patient and calm in a time of emergency, our reactions to a crisis often mean the difference between life and death. This exercise helped highlight that life-or-death aspect of safety, but this is true of many of the situations we as military members find ourselves in.

Recent visions on the nightly news of Coast Guard helicopters scouring the seas for John F. Kennedy Jr.'s downed Piper aircraft and its crew, and experts from Langley's Air Force Rescue Coordination Center discussing search and recovery procedures brought the military's mission home to many Americans. The sensitivity of

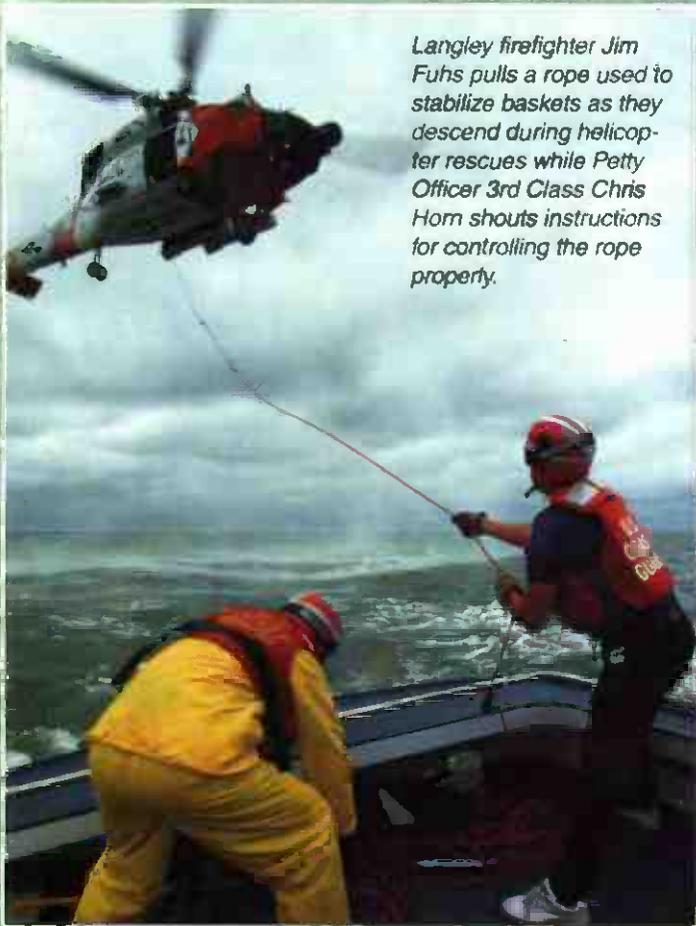
this tragic event served to highlight the necessity for water rescue training - not only to save the lives of service members, but also for the benefit of civilians.

"The Langley area is a haven for water activities," said Frank Koninski, 1st FW assistant fire chief. "The abundance of recreational water activities combined with the fact that our runway departs over the water provides opportunities for an array of emergencies. The goal of the water rescue training program here at the fire department is to make sure we're prepared for those emergencies."

This training has proven to be crucial to the Air Force and the Coast Guard over the years, as Langley rescue workers have repeatedly supported the Coast Guard on search and rescue missions during the peak summer months.

"This training gives the fire department the opportunity to learn what to do in case of a water medical emergency, so they can work with the helicopter and get a person to the hospital in a matter of minutes, versus a matter of hours," said Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Scott Leahy, boatswain's mate. "We look forward to training with the Air Force every year because we're training an agency of folks who don't normally do this stuff, but who help us out a lot. I know that if we had an emergency and needed them to help out, they could do it, and do a good job of it."

Though summer is indeed the peak time for water accidents to occur, my experience, from a perspective every pilot prays they'll never get, made me realize that when the temperature drops, so does the amount of time rescue workers have to save a life. This means that water safety is a year-round issue for the Air Force. No matter how much we train our people to boat safely, fly safely, and generally live around the water safely, accidents will happen, and the Air Force must be prepared to answer when duty calls. Langley's water rescue training with the Coast Guard was yet another example of Air Force people adjusting to adverse missions and environments to take the best care of one another possible. ■



Langley firefighter Jim Fuhs pulls a rope used to stabilize baskets as they descend during helicopter rescues while Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris Horn shouts instructions for controlling the rope properly.

MONTHLY AWARDS



CREW CHIEF SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Staff Sgt. Larry E. Walker
336th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Wing
Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C.

Staff Sgt. Walker was conducting a combined Basic Postflight/Preflight inspection on an F-15E Strike Eagle when he discovered the leading edge screw missing from the left vertical stabilizer radar warning receiver housing. Upon closer inspection, he noted the screw missing and the hole slightly elongated. After disassembling the housing, he discovered a seven-pound lead ballast was attached to the screw and was now free to destroy the fragile internal parts. Sgt. Walker's thorough inspection techniques and strict adherence to technical data averted further damage to the delicate and expensive Radar Warning Receiver (RWR) components. The discovery is relevant due to its location. The antennae are 18 feet in the air, and the hole less than half an inch in diameter. The antennae and vertical stabilizer were repaired and the aircraft returned to service. Sgt. Walker's meticulous efforts prevented a Class C mishap and possible structural damage to a multi-million dollar combat asset.

WEAPONS SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

*Tech. Sgt. John O. Klupenger, Staff Sgt. Jack D. Gross, Senior Airman Deyseano Georgianna
Airman 1st Class Travis S. Pinkerton, Airman 1st Class Daniel Miller, Airman Michael Land
366th Wing
Mountain Home AFB, Idaho*

While performing postload inspections on captive carry AIM-9 missiles, a forward hanger was found broken on the missile body assembly. Tech. Sgt. Klupenger immediately stopped the operation and contacted depot equipment specialists and command missile managers to gather information concerning related incidents. He then coordinated with wing weapons safety and quality assurance personnel to assess the potential effects to Air Force training stockpiles and determine a course of action. Once an appropriate course of action was determined, his crew developed an inspection schedule and coordinated the immediate download of assets from three flying squadrons. Sgt. Klupenger and his crew diligently conducted the one-time inspection on the forward hangers on 75 captive carry AIM-9 missiles and F-16 Acceleration Monitoring Assemblies (valued at over \$1.4 million) for possible stress cracks and concluded all operations in an astounding 24 hours.

During their inspections the crew identified an additional missile with an unserviceable forward hanger and repaired it the following day. Since these assets are considered critical for aircrew proficiency training, as evidenced by over 10,000 sorties flown during fiscal year 1998, the crew's expert planning and selfless actions guaranteed the availability of vital assets.



GROUND SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Senior Airman Jerimiah Grundy
524th Fighter Squadron, 27th Fighter Wing
Cannon AFB, N.M.

Senior Airman Grundy's attention to detail prevented a catastrophic engine failure, averted the possible loss of a multi-million dollar F-16C Block 40 aircraft, and more importantly prevented the possible loss of a pilot's life. He accomplished this while performing a 200-hour engine phase inspection on a General Electric F110-100 engine by detecting a half-inch nut that was caught in the lube and scavenge pump climb screen. The nut had already chaffed through most of the screen, and it was only a matter of time before it would have chaffed through the rest. It was later determined that the nut had migrated from the gearbox sump and would have destroyed the lube and scavenge pump. The inspection was completed ahead of schedule due to the squadron going into a combat employment readiness exercise the following week. This was important because the engine had 31 flight hours left before it would normally go through a 200-hour phase inspection. In the beginning of February, metal flakes were detected on the chip detector. On two separate occasions isolation runs were accomplished with no defects noted. The engine was restricted to local area flights by NDI even though the flakes were within limits and the oil samples showed no adverse trend. The aircraft flew for 10 flight hours with no defects noted and the restriction was lifted. Amn Grundy demonstrated his integrity and commitment to quality maintenance by accomplishing the requirement to inspect the climb and dive screens even when he knew that they were previously inspected twice the month before. The General Electric rep said, "the engine wouldn't have made it to the next scheduled inspection and that the engine's lube and scavenge pump would have failed!"



GROUND SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

Staff Sgt. Mark S. McCracken, Senior Airman Dominic O. Gaskin, Senior Airman Keith C. Jones
391st Fighter Squadron, 366th Wing
Mountain Home AFB, Idaho

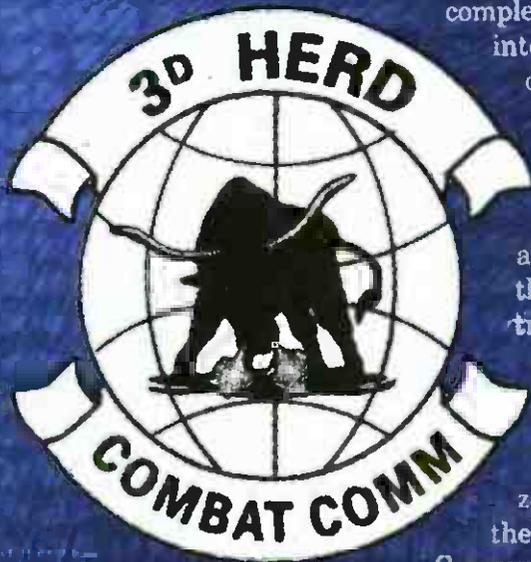
After landing in Southwest Asia, a Navy E-2C Hawkeye experienced a hydraulic leak in a brake line while taxiing back to the chalks. The hot brake fluid pouring from the line ignited a wheel fire that continued to grow as the aircrew applied brakes to stop the aircraft near the F-15E/FA-18 parking areas. A nearby 391st Fighter Squadron load crew comprised of Staff Sgt. McCracken, Senior Airman Gaskin and Senior Airman Jones noticed the fire in the E-2C Hawkeye's wheel well. Under their own initiative, the load crew aggressively ran over to the burning aircraft with dry chemical fire extinguishers in hand. Without further assistance and before the fire department had time to react, the weapons crew extinguished the fire before it could spread and possibly destroy the Hawkeye or surrounding USAF and allied aircraft. McCracken, Gaskin and Jones demonstrated outstanding initiative by their actions. In doing so, they prevented a near catastrophic incident and saved valuable USN and USAF assets.

UNIT SAFETY AWARD OF DISTINCTION

3rd Combat Communications Group, 552nd Air Control Wing, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma

The 3rd Combat Communications Group provides deployable communications, computer systems, navigational aids and air traffic control services anywhere in the world in support of Air Force, Department of Defense and other U.S. commitments. Because of this large commitment, personnel of the 3 CCG are professionals who have embraced the safety philosophy and integrated risk management into all facets of their operational mission.

As a one-year detailed process, they took a slow, step-by-step approach to integrate operational risk management (ORM) into everyday business practices. This process was completed March of 1999 through the stand-up of a safety page on the internet, CBT and video training, and a 100 percent review of our deployment processes. It should be noted, since that integration, zero reportable on-duty mishaps have occurred. In conjunction with the diverse mission capability, the 3 CCG maintains the largest munitions account on Tinker AFB with a total of 970 pounds of net explosive weight. This munitions account allows for the close replication of a battlefield environment through the use of extensive explosives and pyrotechnics during training exercises.



The four operational squadrons regularly move munitions over state and federal highways to nine training sites, one of which is located in the state of Arkansas 180 miles away. These operations were superbly carried out, as evidenced by zero reportable mishaps in three years. The 3 CCG also provided the only combat training school of its kind in the AF. The Combat Communications Readiness School (CCRS) and Air Traffic Control

Combat Skills course provide a realistic three-week course of academics, combat tactics, survivability, safety, and sense of pride unequalled anywhere in the AF. Annually, 600 students are provided with a replicated hostile environment targeting them as a class and as individuals. The third week culminates in a validation of student comprehension during a field training exercise. The students are targeted with level one and two threats mixed with peacekeeping scenarios from our permanent, dedicated "aggressor force."

Although the CCRS cadre and students endure some of the most austere environmental conditions and potential risk for physical harm to resources, they have achieved an outstanding zero reportable explosives and ground mishap rate for three years. In March, the group deployed 63 prime movers, 40 towed vehicles, 181.741 tons of cargo, 80.6 million dollars in communications equipment and vehicles for a total vehicle mileage of 13,390 miles round trip to Perry, Oklahoma. During this deployment they achieved zero reportable mishaps. The vehicle maintenance personnel deployed two wreckers with two personnel each to Perry, accumulating 300 miles, and additional 100 man-hours in support of the group training commitment without incident, in addition to their normal 1,280 man-hours per month.

The vehicle operations branch, the deployment backbone of the 3rd, is responsible for a fleet of 508 vehicles. Vehicle operations was routinely tasked to ready vehicles for visiting teams, dignitaries and as many as 150 vehicles for deployment at a moments notice and have superbly accomplished this task with zero reportable or recordable mishaps. It should be noted that vehicle operations have maintained this record for over two years now. These accomplishments are a direct reflection of the commitment and hard work that is put forth from all levels of the 3 CCG to achieve the best safety record in the AF for the type of mission we perform.

What's an



*Lt. Col. Mark Larson
366th Wing Safety
Mountain Home AFB, Idaho*

The Air Force has developed into an expeditionary force, making it even more imperative that we strive to have a "24-7" safety mindset.

Many units assigned to Air Combat Command (ACC) are now called on at a moment's notice to deploy anywhere worldwide in support of contingency operations. This requires a continuous commitment on the part of ACC personnel and a willingness to make personal sacrifices. The ACC mission of "providing the world's best combat air forces delivering rapid, decisive and sustainable airpower, anytime, anywhere" is paramount. If we perform our mission correctly and efficiently, safety should take care of itself. This is where the safety mindset comes in.

We don't have time to suddenly start practicing safe procedures when it's the real thing — it needs to come naturally as a part of our normal, everyday procedures. One area to emphasize is the concept of getting safely back into daily operations after returning from a long deployment or an extended leave. Picture this — you redeployed from the sandbox after drilling the proverbial holes in the sky for 90 days, not receiving very much of the necessary training you need to maintain your proficiency for the complex F-15E Strike Eagle mission. Upon returning

We don't have time to suddenly start practicing safe procedures when it's the real thing — it needs to come naturally as a part of our normal, everyday procedures.

home, you take a couple weeks of "R&R" at the beach... just what you need, more sand! After arriving home late Sunday evening, you call the squadron scheduling phone number to find out if you're on the next day's flying schedule. Lo and behold, the weary voice on the recording says you're leading a night terrain-following surface attack tactics mission. You'll be fighting your way past enemy Red Air for an attack on a first look target, and, oh by the way, you'll be surrounded by enough surface-to-air threats to light up your displays like a Christmas tree. *What's an aviator to do?*

If you're doing things right, you'll call a "knock-it-off" immediately and highlight the situation to your supervisor. Most wing and squadron leadership knows a situation like this is a foul, but sometimes things fall through the cracks. It's important to recognize here that individuals have the full-fledged support of their supervisors when they elect to bow out of a potentially hazardous situation such as this. How did this ever happen in the first place? Regardless, the root of the problem needs to be analyzed here first.

Understanding the principles and concepts of Operational Risk Management (ORM) should serve as the foundation for everything we do. First of all, we should never accept any unnecessary risks (i.e., those that have no benefit and clearly are not worth taking). Secondly, we should make risk decisions at the proper level and elevate, when necessary. Finally, we can

accept risk if the benefits outweigh the cost — but the decision to accept the risk must be based on sound risk management.

The basis for smart risk management is the USAF Six-Step ORM Process: (1) Identify the Hazards, (2) Assess the Risks, (3) Analyze Risk Control Measures, (4) Make Control Decisions, (5) Implement Risk Controls, and (6) Supervise and Review.

Our goal in ACC is to prevent mishaps while maximizing mission success. As former ACC commander Gen. Richard Hawley said, "There is no training mission so important that it is worth the loss of a life or an aircraft." For example, just because a certain individual has all of his currencies up to speed and is qualified to perform a specific mission, it may not be smart to have him flying that mission after coming right off a deployment and two weeks of leave. Sure... he may be a combat warrior (someone who's evaded enemy air and ground threats while dropping bombs on the bad guys), but that doesn't mean a specific peacetime mission may not actually be more of a "real-world" threat.

Air Force units need to comply with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's philosophy of "crawl, walk, run" when returning from an extended leave or temporary duty. Squadrons should emphasize the importance of ensuring their people get back into the swing of things smartly by assessing each individual's capabilities and situation. There are far too many

Aviator to Do?

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mishaps in which the root cause is putting someone in a bad situation with no way out. Figuring it out after the fact is too late. Much of this responsibility falls on the shoulders of

squadron supervisors — primarily flight commanders and the operations officer. They need to know their people's capabilities and what's going on in their lives. Each squadron member should know they have their supervisor's full support if they call a "knock-it-off," no matter what the reason is. These are the kinds of issues that are important to discuss at safety meetings conducted throughout the year, and it's crucial we're all marching to the same drumbeat.

This doesn't simply apply to aviators; it pertains to everyone in the United States Air Force. We deploy, employ and redeploy as a huge airpower machine, involving numerous specialists and important career fields. And it's not just the aviators that get some time off after arriving home from a long deployment — everyone gets an opportunity for time off, and deservedly so. In fact, it is important that everyone receives the added time to wind down and relax prior to returning to work after a lengthy TDY. This is where we need to keep a watchful eye. Each person is essential to the mission, and it's vitally important that people remain healthy and able to perform their part of the ACC mission efficiently and safely.

As it is wrong to schedule a flyer for a demanding mission after returning from an extended absence, it's also a foul

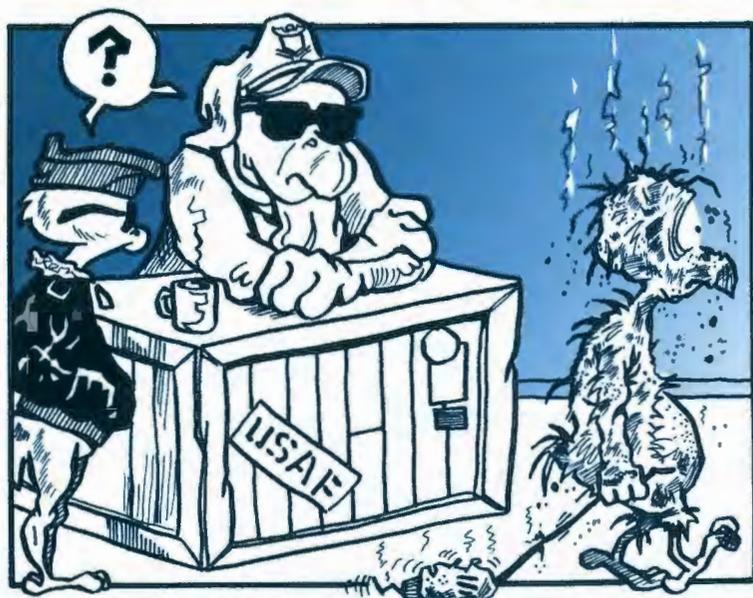
to throw a recently returned crew chief out on the flight line in a situation such as during surge operations with a wing exercise going on. His mind could very easily be back

"on the beach" while attempting to remember everything he forgot about launching a B-1B bomber, with a whole lot of action going on to distract him. The same thing can be applied to a weapons loader, forklift operator or cargo handler, to name a few.

World events do not indicate our operations tempo is going to decrease anytime soon, so it's even more crucial to do the right thing concerning time off and returning to duty. For many combat wings, down time simply means they're not deployed, but rather preparing to deploy. It's the time to train like we fight; and because of this constant activity, the threat of mishaps rises dramatically. This is all the more reason to ensure we have the right people performing the right jobs at all times. If this can't be achieved, then stop right there and regroup.

By keeping an open mind to new ideas and thinking outside the box relative to risk control measures, we can make great strides in overcoming many of the assessed risks we are confronted with on a daily basis. While carrying out our daily operations, it's imperative to keep ORM at the forefront of our thinking. In reality, we have been applying the ORM philosophy and methods intuitively and experientially for years — it is simply a common sense way of accomplishing the mission with reduced risks. In order to achieve these further dramatic reductions in our mishap rates, ORM needs to become a natural way of life for us in the Air Force.

This will take a focused effort on everyone's part, but by working together and helping one another to make smart risk management decisions, we will be able to accomplish this goal and improve the safety of our operations in ACC while preserving our combat dominance. So "what's an aviator to do" after an extended leave of absence if the assessed risks associated with a training mission are clearly not worth taking? Well, as I said before, "if you're doing things right, you'll call a 'knock-it-off' immediately and highlight the situation to your supervisor." Why? Because "there is no training mission so important that it is worth the loss of a life or an aircraft." Clear enough? ■





STOP