Combat Edge

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LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM M. FRASER III, COMMANDER

COLONEL CREID K. JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF SAFETY

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ACCent on Safety

Mission Complete

I would like to thank the ACC Director of Safety for allowing me, upon my retirement, 3 months short of 23 years active duty service, the opportunity to say farewell. In my career, I've had safety jobs in four different MAJCOMs: MAC, SAC, AETC, and ACC. Throughout those years, the tragic losses of far too many classmates, squadron mates, and even a student pilot, whose wings I pinned, has never gotten any easier to accept.

Early on, my work with a C-21 Class A Safety Inspection Board had a profound effect on my perspective of flying safety. Later, Flight Safety Officer training led to my investigation of a B-1 Class A mishap in which the investigators ironically became part of another Class A mishap when the UH-1 Huey that was ferrying us to the accident site made an autorotation forced landing in the Utah Test and Training Range -- fortunately I was prepared for that survival situation!

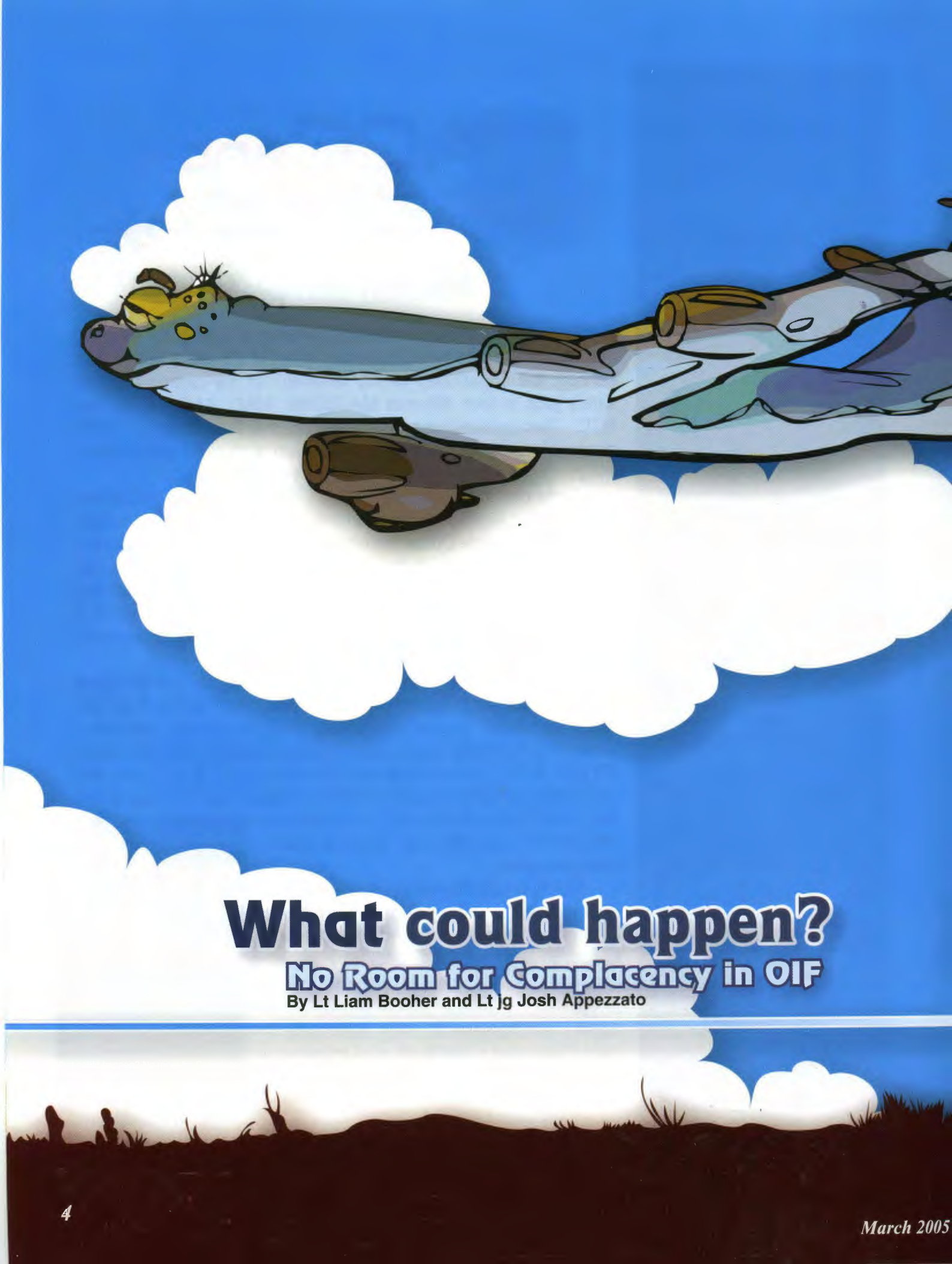
During nearly 4 years on the MAJCOM staff, I've struggled with the intangible nature of safety; you never know if or how many accidents you've prevented, only those you haven't. I joined the ACC/SEF team after 2 historic low mishap rate years (FYs 00 & 01), only to see abrupt spikes in 02 & 03. I'm very proud that we've achieved an all-time record low last year in 04, and we're on-track to meet or exceed the SECDEF's mandated 50 percent mishap reduction goal.

Flying is not inherently dangerous; yet, it can be quite unforgiving of three things: ignorance, arrogance, and complacency. I got to be an "old pilot" by making conservative decisions on the ground and in the air. I challenge you to always do the same. I'm honored to have flown with the truly finest and I salute all who continue to serve our great nation. Godspeed!

Mission Complete, H+11 OUT

Courtesy Photo

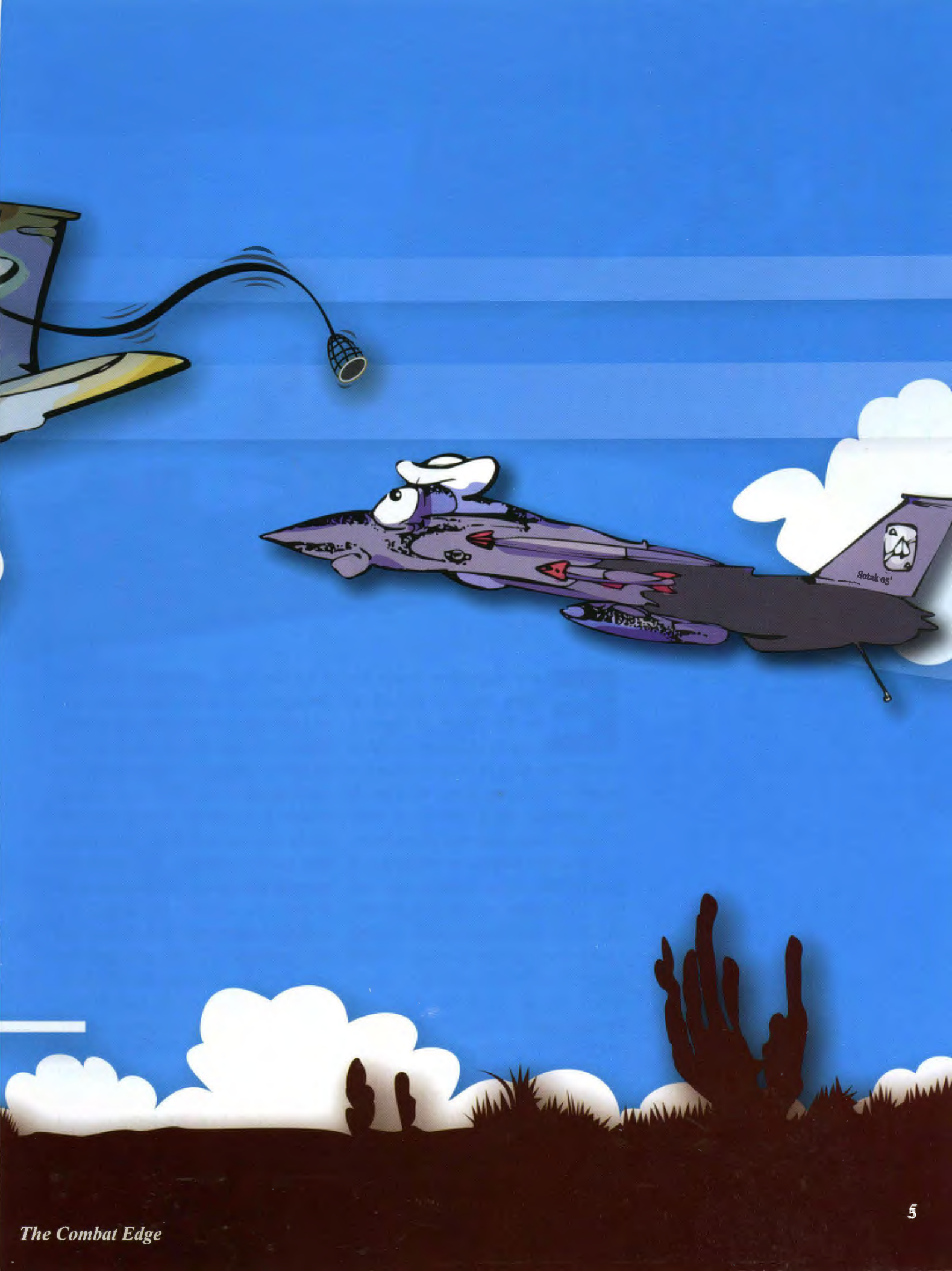
Lt Col David Hagginbothom,
ACC Flight Safety



What could happen?

No Room for Complacency in OIF

By Lt Liam Booher and Lt jg Josh Appezzato


Sotak 03'

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

Early September found the Black Aces of VFA-41 in its fifth month of flying in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Most of the aircrew in the squadron, including those involved in this particular flight, had been "over the beach" more than two dozen times; they had seen a myriad of missions and were familiar with operating in Iraq. We had not dropped ordnance in months, and things had become fairly routine. Today was to be our final day of flight operations in theatre before the Battle Group was to depart the AOR, and the last words of the OPS brief were ominous: "Whatever you do, DO NOT DIVERT!!!" What bad could happen?

The beginning of the mission went off without a hitch. The squadron's F/A-18Fs had performed admirably throughout our time in the Persian Gulf, and this was shaping up to be another routine Shared Reconnaissance Pod (SHARP) mission. We completed the first half of our route, and went in search of our tanker. The KC-135 was on its way up from Qatar, and was a little behind schedule. We decided to expedite the join-up and pressed south to meet the tanker. We executed a textbook rendezvous and noticed that this particular KC-135 was equipped with Wing Air Refueling (WARP) pods; therefore, we would not have to face the refueling boom-mounted basket, also known as "The Iron Maiden." As the lead jet, we moved into pre-contact position on the starboard pod, while our wingman took the same position

on the port pod. Once cleared in, we plugged and waited for our wingman to do the same, and this is where things got sporty.

Once the aircraft probe engages the basket, the pod is supposed to take up any slack in the refueling hose, keeping the hose taught between the two aircraft. But there was no take-up response on the starboard reel, and within seconds of plugging, the pod's amber light illuminated and began flashing. With our aircraft at idle we watched helplessly as the refueling hose formed a large sine wave that began to travel back towards our probe. There was nothing we could do; with a hard shudder and a blinding deluge of jet fuel, the front part of our probe was torn asunder. For a brief moment, it dangled in the basket and then the drogue flung our broken probe past the vertical stabs and towards the Iraqi desert below.

We backed off the tanker, moved to a safe starboard observation, and passed to our wingman that we were all right, but that we were definitely going to have to divert. Thankfully, we were loaded out for a reconnaissance mission, and had plenty of gas to divert. Our wingman, however, needed to get some gas before we pressed to the divert field. He plugged on the left side and encountered the same problem. Again there was no take-up response from the pod, and he came within moments of losing his probe to the whip-like sine wave. We decided then and there that this just wasn't our day and that it was time to go. With no probe, we could not return to the carrier with our current fuel state; we would have to divert.

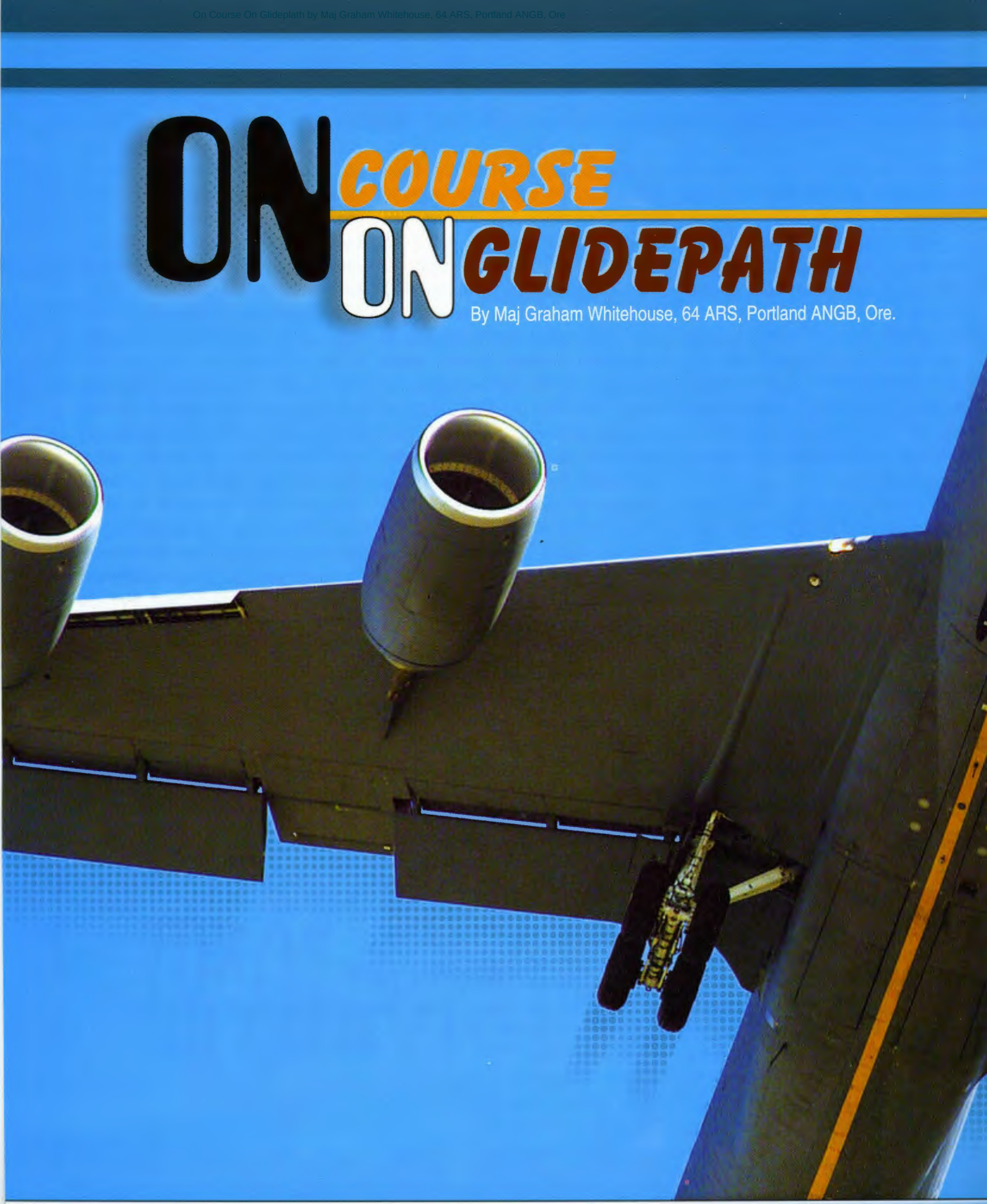
Here is where the beauty of the two-seat cockpit comes into play. While the two pilots in the formation discussed on-deck fuel states and checked each other's jets for damage, the lead WSO coordinated with the controller and passed, contrary to the tanker's claim, that the KC-135 was definitely sour. The tanker then confessed to a degraded hydraulic system, which accounted for the malfunction of the take-up reel. We put Tallil airfield on the nose and double-checked each other's fuel calculations for the 250-mile transit. Thankfully, it was a clear afternoon in Iraq and getting a visual on the runway was not difficult. After individual straight-ins we were safely on deck, where the USAF folks took great care of us.

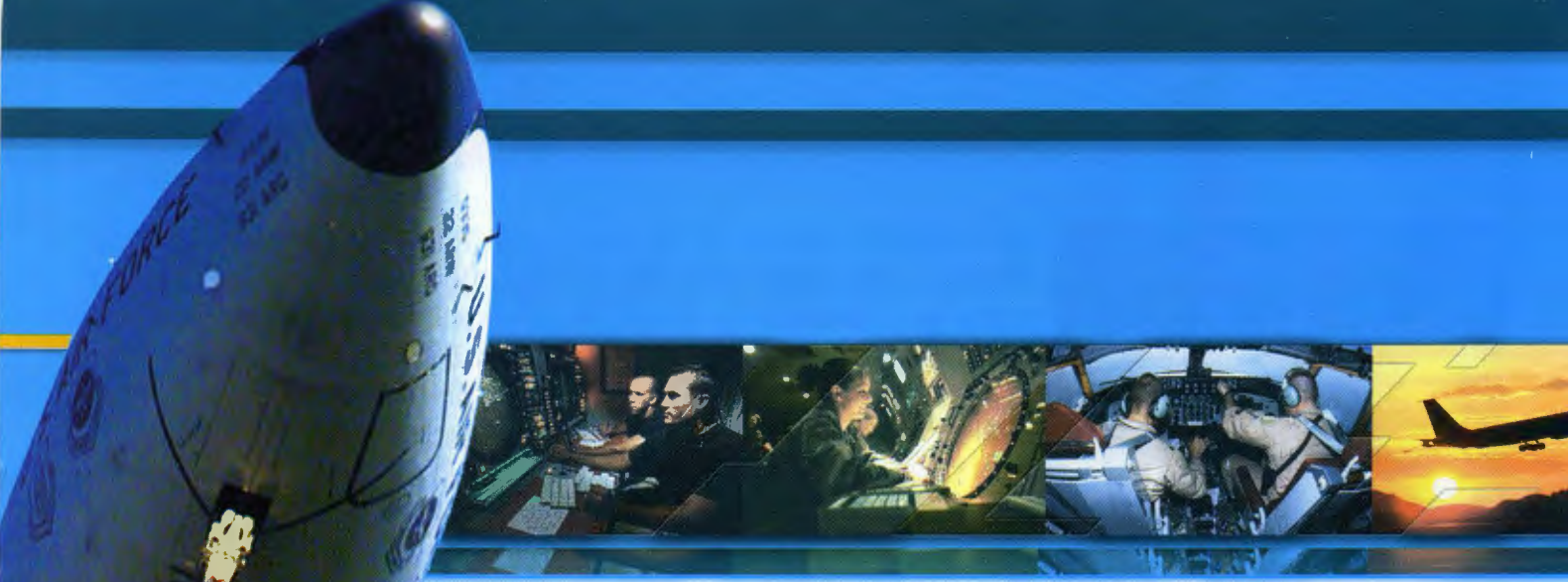
There are several good lessons to be learned from our experience. Complacency is difficult to combat, especially flying long missions day-in and day-out. Thankfully, all aircrew involved were familiar with theater diverts, and it took zero time to decide where we would go and just how much gas we would need. Adherence to procedures was paramount; when the lead pilot lost his probe, he instinctively backed away from the tanker and took a safe position on the tanker's bearing line to troubleshoot. Out of habit, his only mistake was to momentarily cycle the probe, but he caught it before it retracted. Our wingman flew good mutual support and stayed with us. Sanitized cockpits kept ICS chatter down and SA high, as four heads in two airplanes covered all of the contingencies while setting up for our first field landing in 6 months. The effects of: anti-skid, lights, runway length, field emergencies, arresting gear, and carrier-pressurized tires and struts were carefully considered and discussed in both cockpits. Of course, surface-to-air threats were also in the backs of our minds as we approached the runway. As for our triumphant return to the carrier, fuel was still a major concern. With our reconnaissance loadout, we had a very low max trap and would only have 2 good looks at the ship before we would have had to divert to Kuwait since we would be unable to refuel. Fortunately, it was a clear night and we had no problems snagging the third wire on the first pass, but divert numbers and field info were part of our brief. Perhaps most importantly, the carrier aviators involved also learned not to walk off the tarmac in Iraq for fear of unexploded bomblets and land mines, a lesson they thankfully didn't have to learn the hard way!

Lt Booher and Lt jg Appezzato fly with the World Famous Black Aces of VFA-41.

ON COURSE ON GLIDEPATH

By Maj Graham Whitehouse, 64 ARS, Portland ANGB, Ore.





My crew and I were recovering our KC-135 into Nellis AFB, Nev., after participating in a rather uneventful Red Flag sortie on the Red Air side. It was mid-afternoon, the skies were clear, the descent checklist was complete, and Nellis was landing on a runway that did not require an aggressive noise-abatement descent. The last of the fighters was just landing, and there was only one other aircraft for us to be sequenced behind before I could do my planned visual straight-in to a full-stop landing. I recognized the other plane's call sign, Hydra 37. It was a tanker from my squadron, which had been refueling Blue Air. There was going to be no problem matching speeds to deconflict the arrival. In short, a smooth end to a smooth sortie.

From an extended visual downwind, we picked up a vector for sequencing behind the other tanker. Around this time, Air Traffic Control (ATC) called to see if we could do a Precision Approach Radar (PAR) approach for them. Knowing how rarely Nellis grants instrument approaches, I figured they must be making the request for controller training. "Sure, we can do that," I replied. PARs are pretty hard to get these days. Anyway, the radar controller probably needed the practice. ATC set us for about a 15-mile base to final.

I configured the aircraft with gear down and flaps at 30 degrees, which is the intermediate setting we normally use until we put in full flaps at glideslope intercept. We got turned to final and performed the standard controller-aircrew communications ("Do not acknowledge further transmissions, fly heading 203..."). Before long,

the controller instructed us to begin descent. This caught me a little off guard, but I chalked it up to my not having flown a PAR approach in ... how long had it been? Six months? A year? I called for full flaps and lowered the nose to pick up the glidepath.

It wasn't long before things started looking a bit strange. We were being told that we were "on course, on glidepath," but it still didn't look right. The runway was abnormally far off to the left side -- OK, I was cheating by looking out the window -- and it seemed to me that we were low. I now saw 12 miles on the Distance Measuring Equipment (DME). I knew the terrain steeply rose off this end of the runway, but I wasn't too concerned because the weather was totally clear, and I had the ground in sight.

"On course, on glidepath" continued to be the guidance we heard from the PAR controller. Still, it felt uncomfortable. I'd been slowly shallowing my descent, but we now looked really low, and we weren't any closer to the runway centerline than we had been a minute before. I decided to level off until we intercepted a more normal glidepath.

ATC again repeated, "on course, on glidepath." How can that be? I looked at the DME (7.5 miles from the field) and the radio altimeter read 730 feet! -- What am I doing that low? I looked out the window and there was now a small mountain between me and the right runway, although I could barely make out the approach end of the left runway. I decided to continue flying visually.

After another minute or so of flying level at 700 feet above ground level, there were the controller's words yet again "on course, on glidepath." I corrected towards the approach end and called the controller.

"We've been level for the last 3 miles or so, and you're calling us on the glidepath. I think you need to recalibrate your equipment. We'll take over visually from here." The controller acknowledged and handed us off to tower. As we lined up with the runway, we saw Hydra 37 on landing roll out. "Maybe the controller was looking at the wrong airplane on the scope," my copilot suggested.

A telephone call to radar approach control after we landed confirmed that this had indeed happened. The PAR controller had mistaken Hydra 37 for us, and since they were following the course and glidepath to the same runway (although on a visual approach), it looked like they were following the controller's instructions. The watch supervisor promised me he'd look into the situation and take whatever remedial action was necessary. It was only then that the full gravity of the situation struck me: If we hadn't been in visual meteorological conditions, they could have vectored us right into the ground, and the PAR controller would not have known it was even happening until after our emergency locator transmitter started going off.

I began reviewing the approach in my head and recognized a few things that I could have done differently that would have helped me to recognize the problem earlier:

I didn't back up the PAR with another instrument approach. Full-scale glideslope and/or course

deflections would have been hard to ignore or write-off to poor controller proficiency. Besides, while Air Force Manual 11-217V1, *Instrument Flight Procedures*, does not quite require a backup approach, it strongly suggests the use of one in case communications are lost. If I still wanted to avoid "cheating" on the PAR, I could have had the copilot monitor the instrument landing system.

I didn't set limits of what deviations I would accept ahead of time. It's hard to quantify course and glidepath discrepancies visually, but once there's an instrument approach procedure to look at it becomes a lot easier. For example, limits like one dot to the left or right of course or below glidepath or no lower than the minimum descent altitude/step-down altitudes for non-precision approaches would have kept me out of trouble. Once I found myself approaching those limits, I would have then transitioned to the backup approach, made the necessary corrections, and told the controller what I was doing.

I didn't fully brief the approach when it was given to us. Sure, it was clear and a million. Yes, I was familiar with the airfield and the surrounding terrain. Both of these facts certainly kept me from flying the jet into the rocks, but habit patterns are what keep us alive when the weather's down to minimums and there's no room for error. By looking at the approach ahead of time, I could have figured out approximate altitudes and DMEs to use as targets. If I had done this, I would have recognized that the "begin descent" call was too early. Even if I had been flying to a radar-only airfield with no other navigation aids or instrument approaches, I could have used the flight management system as a backup to maintain maximum situational awareness.

I disregarded the warning signs I did have and was too willing to put my fate in the hands of the PAR controller. The first clue should have been that I wasn't prepared for the "begin descent" call. At the time, I thought I had just gotten behind the jet. My next clue should have been when it became obvious that we were neither on course nor on glidepath. Again, at the time I just figured the controller was out of practice or maybe this approach was designed differently because of the terrain off the approach end. In fact, I already knew that precision instrument approaches have to be aligned with the runway heading and if they can't meet terrain clearance criteria, then they just don't build a precision approach there. Finally, it was a clear sign that something had already gone wrong when we saw the mountain between the airfield and us.

It is true that a few other factors would have had to be present in order for our situation to have turned really serious. The most obvious one is if the weather had been down near minimums. In that case, perhaps ATC would have handled their sequencing and radar identification differently. Even if the weather had been poor, maybe our Ground Proximity Warning System (GPWS) would have clued us in early enough for us to recognize what was happening and go around. Nobody I know, though, ever wants to be in a position where they have to find out just how good that GPWS really is.

My crew and I came away from the experience with a new appreciation for the extent to which we routinely put our trust in other people outside the jet to do what's right for us. We also have a better sense of where and how we should place limits on that trust. In the future, I'll trust that people will do their jobs correctly, but I will also establish boundaries to remain within and have a plan for how to recover when those boundaries are exceeded.


0049

Armed & Dangerous

by SSgt Jeffrey R. Banner, Minot AFB, N.D.

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

Courtesy Photo

Even though safety is a term that is more familiar to us as Air Force members, how many of us truly incorporate it into our daily responsibilities. As an Ammo troop, I'm asked all the time, "Are those bombs safe?" My response is, "Yes. They're as safe as the respect given to them by those who store, inspect, build, load, and eventually drop them in the name of freedom." In the munitions world -- as in many other Air Force specialties -- anything other than strict compliance with technical data can have devastating results. Yet, how many of us can actually say that we have never taken a shortcut at one point in time during our military careers? Thankfully, most of those shortcuts do not result in significant mishaps, but that is not always the case.

I encountered such a potentially disastrous situation during a deployment to a forward operating location in support of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM. A trailer configured with General Purpose (GP) bombs had just returned to the Munitions Storage Area after being downloaded from an aircraft. The driver unhooked and was dispatched to his next location. Moments later one of the shift supervisors, who was in the process of performing area checks, identified that at least one of the bombs on that trailer had a partially armed fuze. The immediate area was promptly evacuated and our control element was notified of the situation.

Now I know many of you bomb builders are shaking your heads because you know that several steps are required in the functioning chain of our fuzing systems. Here's a question to consider: How did the load crew, who downloaded it, and the line delivery crew, who transported it, accurately access the stability of that line item during both processes?

Thankfully, after all the emergency responding agencies had been notified and were standing by to respond, the GP bomb was returned to a completely safe state. That means for all you bomb builders, all pins and flags were in place and, of course, there was all green and no red.

Some of you may be thinking that because the situation was resolved no harm was done. But harm was done. Personnel were needlessly exposed all because procedures were not followed as they should have been prior to the transport of that trailer. The time that was saved by a couple of people taking this shortcut was more than lost when operations had to come to a stop to eliminate the hazard. Now consider what might have happened had things not worked out as well as they did. Shortcuts are dangerous. Saving 5 minutes here or there can never make up for losing the life or lives of you or your coworkers in a similar scenario with a different ending.

Safety requires discipline from each one of us in our respective job areas as we accomplish our daily Air Force missions. Remember your superiors, peers, subordinates and family are all counting on you to do the dangerous tasks we do every day right the first time without the shortcuts.

Ultimate Responsibility

by SSgt David Fletcher, Ellsworth AFB, S.D.

The purpose of this article is to remind people about their responsibilities regarding the safety of themselves and the men and women working with them. As a supervisor or a subordinate, safety should always remain your top priority, especially when dealing with explosives.

Whenever you hear about a mishap involving safety, you often hear someone mention that somebody else was supposed to check to ensure items were safe, or "they said they installed the safety devices..."

About 10 years ago I learned that in the end, you are the one ultimately responsible for your personal safety. I was tasked to download BDU-33 practice bombs with a crew I had not previously worked with before. The team chief was an experienced loader, and I felt good about working with him. He safed the aircraft and we proceeded to download the bombs. When we got to the third bomb, I pulled the safety pin and held onto the bomb as he attempted to release it with the download tool. For no discernable reason, the bomb failed to release, and the team chief decided to proceed to another bomb, remarking that "we could come back to this one later."

I went to re-install the safety pin, and he stopped me saying, "Don't bother pinning it. It will only take a second to drop this other one."

I knew better, but he insisted so I reached over to hold the other bomb. Just as he went to download the other bomb, I heard a click ... it came from the previous rack ... the one I didn't put the pin back in. I quickly reached down, and caught the bomb by its tail. The nose of the bomb came less then an inch away from hitting the ground. We were lucky. I didn't realize how lucky until I looked down and discovered that the safety clip on the bomb's plunger was not installed. He hadn't safed the munitions prior to our downloading them, and here I was holding one between my legs, nose nearly striking the ground, less than an inch from being seriously injured or killed. Needless to say, it caught my attention.

For a long time, I was angry with him for not making sure things were safe, but now that I am older and wiser, I realize I should have been angry with myself. Even though he was supposed to have safed the aircraft, I should have checked to be sure the bomb was safe before even touching it, and I should have taken the few seconds to pin it even though I was told not too.

Ultimately, I was the only one truly responsible for my safety. That lesson has stuck with me, and as a result, I have not had a single incident resulting in injury or damage to equipment in over 10 years of service. As a weapon's load crew member, it is important to trust your team members to do a good job;but when it comes to my own safety, I always take a few minutes to double check. Whenever I get the urge to rush or cut a corner, I remember what it felt like to be that close to a catastrophe. There is not any job that needs to be done so fast that you do not have time for a second glance. Be safe!

Tragedies Of WAR

By TSgt(Ret) Rodney R. Krause, Minot AFB, N.D.

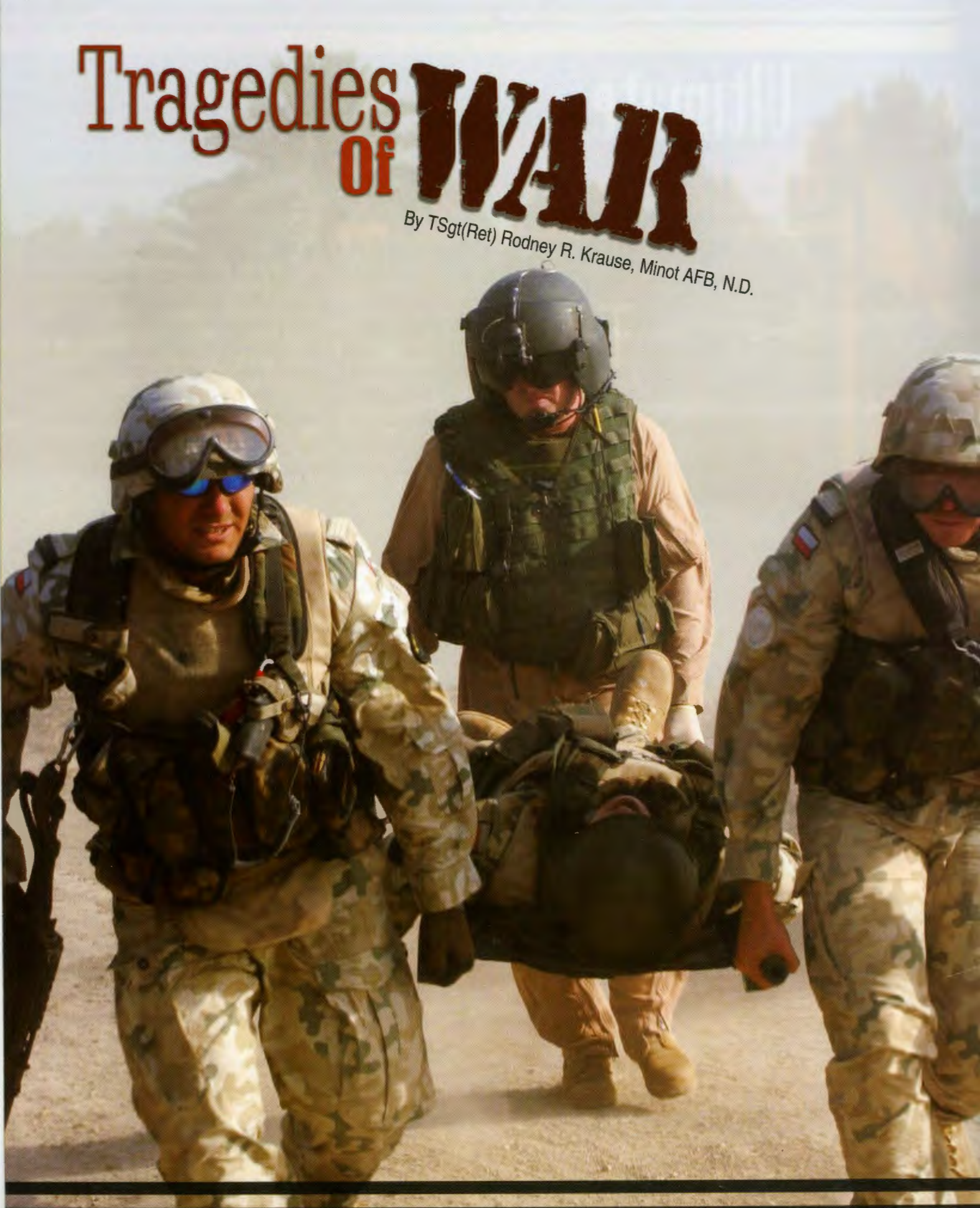


Photo by Sgt Jose M. Hernandez

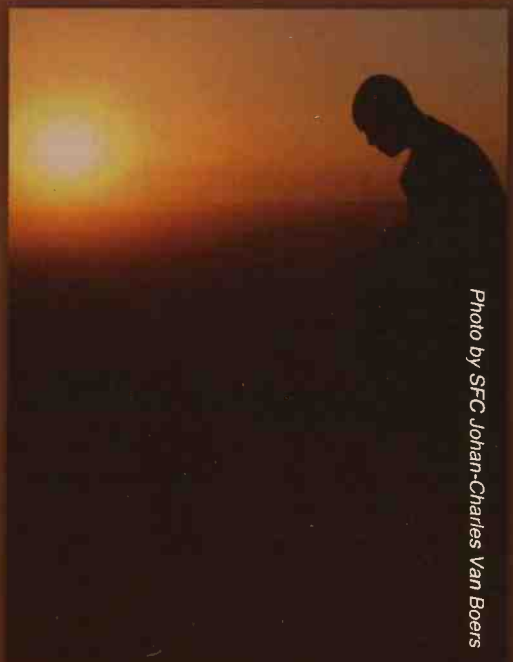


Photo by SFC Johan-Charles Van Boers

Life has a way of slinging an inside curve ball at your chin every once in a while, giving you a wake up call. For me, it happened on my last deployment to the AOR as an active duty Safety Technician when the war we all watch and read about materialized right in front of me. It taught me a valuable lesson in life and leadership.

After several previous flights into Kandahar hauling "beans and bullets," the missions once filled with trepidation had now become routine. The flight was supposed to be just another "check ride," flying with a crew handling an emergency aero medical evacuation mission out of Kandahar, Afghanistan.

That's where the story all started.

All our crew knew was that someone had been shot in the face while on patrol. The critical care air transport team traveling with us also had very little information. Upon arrival, the surgeon tending to the patient briefed the medics, then the flight crew. "John" (not his real name, but nonetheless a very real person) had been leading his unit through a crowd in Kandahar, when out of nowhere someone shot him in the left side of his face with a small caliber weapon. The bullet shattered his lower jaw, traveled through his mouth and exited his right cheek. According to all accounts, he then walked to a vehicle and was driven to a medical care facility.

When I first saw him on the stretcher, his head was completely bandaged, much like a winter cap that only reveals your eyes, nose and mouth. On the 5-hour flight, the medical team worked to make him as comfortable as possible. After we landed, a specialist immediately saw him and said he should continue his journey to somewhere with more advanced facilities.

While those arrangements were being made, I stopped to talk to John. Despite the numerous tubes and IV lines, he was in good spirits. I suppose enough morphine has a way of doing that for you. He communicated by writing questions on a note pad, and answered in the same manner. At one point, despite his condition, he had the energy to play an electronic game a nurse was carrying, which I found extraordinary.

John was one of the many members of the armed forces doing the work the President asked us to complete after Sept. 11, 2001. He did this dangerous task anonymously, in less than-desirable conditions. Watching and talking to him, I suddenly felt the brutality and reality of war. Another human being with more guts than I will ever have was just doing his job when a nameless, faceless coward took a cheap shot, slithered back into the crowd and changed John's life forever. These are the kind of people we are fighting.

The experience taught me a lesson in leadership. In 1910, President Teddy Roosevelt gave a speech in France entitled "Citizenship in a Republic." His famous "Man in the Arena" comments were gleaned from it, and if you've never read the speech, I encourage you to do so. It is an excellent example of the men and women currently waging the war on terrorism -- the kind who put it on the line every day knowing the risk they take. They are the kinds who are not afraid to try and make the world a better and safer place for everyone. They are the kinds who, when the curve ball comes in chin-high, lean out over the plate a little more the next time. They are true leaders -- the ones who encourage others to keep fighting regardless of the odds against them.

I eventually helped carry John's stretcher to a waiting ambulance. I gave him my squadron patch so when the morphine wore off, he would have a "road map" of those who helped get him to his destination. The nurse put it with his growing collection of unit patches, and with a handshake and a "thumbs up" they took him away. I hope to see him again someday, standing and smiling this time, so I can thank him for the lesson in life I learned that summer's night.

They are the kinds of men and women President Roosevelt would have loved. They are the true heroes.

Monthly Award Winners

Ground Safety
Award of Distinction

SSgt Krista Patton is the Unit Safety Representative for the 31st Combat Communications Squadron and has aggressively taken the "seat belt awareness campaign" for the 3rd Combat Communications Group (3 CCG) head on. During the first quarter of FY05 SSgt Patton led a three-man seat belt compliance team in accomplishing an astonishing 1,093 seat belt compliance checks. She strategically placed the seat belt compliance team at rotating checkpoints throughout the compound to ensure every 3 CCG member was aware of the program. SSgt Patton's seat belt awareness efforts exemplified community partnership by combining resources with the Oklahoma Highway Safety Office, Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center Safety Office, and the 3 CCG Safety Office in an all inclusive educational effort to increase seat belt safety awareness. She led an aggressive seat belt awareness promotional blitz prior to the holiday season via safety briefings, e-mails, informational flyers, and unit safety boards to ensure 100 percent awareness of the dangers of not wearing seat belts. SSgt Patton's sustained efforts are the driving force behind the 3 CCG's 99 percent seat belt compliance rate and the efforts of SSgt Patton ensure seat belt wear is a habit for the 3 CCG members on and off duty.

SSgt Krista M. Patton, 31st Combat Communications Squadron
3rd Combat Communications Group, Tinker AFB, Okla.

Flight Line Safety
Award of Distinction

On the night of 4 Nov 04 at approximately 2100 hrs, TSgt Hall, SSgts Farnell & Womack and SrA Hess were performing end-of-runway (EOR) checks on a two-ship of F-15Es. TSgt Hall discovered the landing light on aircraft 87-0484 was cracked, presenting a major FOD potential, and he quickly directed the aircrew to shut the aircraft down. Upon further inspection, SSgt Womack noticed several pieces of glass missing from the light assembly. SSgt Farnell immediately inspected both engines for evidence of FOD while SSgt Womack and SrA Hess replaced the light assembly. Upon removal of the light assembly, the unit came apart spreading glass across the EOR area. TSgt Hall immediately began marshalling aircraft around the affected area to alleviate FOD to any other aircraft while SSgts Farnell and Womack and SrA Hess cleaned and inspected the entire area. After finding no immediate damage to the engine, they turned their attention to the landing gear and wheel and tire assemblies. After a thorough inspection of the aircraft, TSgt Hall had the aircraft re-start and continue its launch sequence, resulting in an on-time takeoff. The EOR team then reported possible FOD on the taxiway and directed a sweeper to ensure no potential FOD had been left behind. Failure to identify this unsafe condition could have resulted in severe engine damage due to FOD ingestion, or catastrophic damage due to tire damage on takeoff or landing.

TSgt David Hall, SSgt Jamie Farnell, SSgt Aaron Womack,
SrA Aaron Hess, 379th USCENTAF Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron

Pilot Safety Award of Distinction

On 10 Nov 04, Capt Christina Szasz was taking off on the third Surface Attack sortie of her initial F-117 qualification training at Holloman AFB, N.M.; only her seventh sortie in the aircraft. At 150 feet above ground level, the left Bleed Duct Overheat light illuminated, along with the Master Caution light. Similar bleed duct leaks have resulted in the loss of two F-117s in the past, so the situation is treated very seriously and is a boldface procedure. Capt Szasz applied the boldface, turning off the bleed duct switch associated with the light and went 100 percent oxygen on the regulator to avoid breathing possible smoke and fumes in the cockpit. She then maneuvered the jet away from populated areas and gained altitude while simultaneously dumping fuel to reduce gross weight for landing. The accompanying instructor pilot in the chase T-38 provided mutual support and backed up Capt Szasz with the F-117 checklist. Once on downwind, Capt Szasz referenced the Bleed Duct Leak checklist. The bleed duct overheat light had not extinguished when she turned off the switch; indicating a possible bleed air leak between the engine and the shutoff valve. This could mean the existence of high pressure air at 750º Fahrenheit burning through critical components in the engine bay which could quickly result in the loss of aircraft control. The checklist called for an engine shutdown and immediate landing. Single engine flight is difficult in the F-117 due to thrust limitation, and the high density altitude at Holloman AFB. Following the checklist, Capt Szasz shut down the left engine and flew a perfect single engine approach and landing. When Capt Szasz activated the drag chute upon landing, she noted a distinct lack of immediate deceleration, indicating that the drag chute did not deploy. Realizing the need to slow the jet immediately, Capt Szasz quickly applied maximum braking, stopping the jet with just a thousand feet remaining. Despite being very inexperienced in the F-117, Capt Szasz performed flawlessly in a worst-case scenario straight out of an emergency procedures evaluation, preventing further damage to the aircraft.

Capt Christina G. Szasz, 7th Combat Training Squadron, 49th Fighter Wing, Holloman AFB, N.M.

Unit Safety Award of Distinction

AMMO absolutely made it happen! From 01 - 15 Nov 04, the 379 EMXS Munitions Flight successfully transitioned production operations for 98 personnel, 52 vehicles, 70 munitions trailers, test/support equipment, and 585,500 pounds of explosives from its former facilities to a newly constructed 550-acre munitions storage area with ZERO mishaps. With the new facilities still under construction and a tight host-country deadline looming, AMMO initiated the 2-week long relocation process, traversing nearly 600 miles over mostly unpaved roads with explosive-laden vehicles. Nearly 200 trips were required to transport the 75 million dollar inventory. AMMO safely relocated 185 2,000-pound bombs, 316 500-pound bombs, 120 missiles, chaff, flare, and 20MM ammunition. Additionally, nearly 5 million dollars of sensitive test equipment and accountable items made the trip without incident. This move, into an active construction site, was finished with NO injuries, incidents, or damage to equipment while maintaining 100 percent on-time munitions delivery and uninterrupted munitions flow in support of the Air Tasking Order.

379th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron, USCENTAF

Monthly Award Winners

AirCrew Safety
Award of Distinction

Capt Knight was number two of a two-ship night Close Air Support (CAS) sortie supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. During takeoff in full afterburner at approximately 120 knots, Capt Knight hit an unknown dip in the runway followed 3-5 seconds later by his landing light extinguishing. After takeoff, Capt Knight suggested his flight lead inform the Supervisor of Flying (SOF) to warn follow-on missions of the hazard. The SOF, Capt Baumgartner, had the runway searched for debris/damage while preparing for a shift change with Capt Lyons, the incoming SOF. The search discovered a large piece of tire, likely from an F-16 nose tire, on the runway at a distance coincident with the dip. With weather conditions expected to approach near zero-zero within 30 minutes, and anticipating the need for an approach end cable arrestment, the SOFs relayed through CRC to have the flight return to base. Due to poor visibility across the AOR and Capt Knight's lack of a landing light, divert options were limited. Using a bit of ingenuity, the SOFs had the Base Ops truck shine its headlights onto the arresting cable, thereby illuminating it. The SOFs then led Capt Knight through the applicable checklists, and coordinated with CRC to jettison his bombs. After successful bomb jettison, Capt Knight lowered his landing gear and his flight lead verified with NVGs what the SOFs had expected -- the tire was gone, but thankfully the rim was still in place. Poor weather was now over the airfield's north end, and time was of the essence. The flight lead landed first, relayed conditions on final, and offered techniques to help Capt Knight find the dimly lit runway. Following the SOF and flight lead's guidance, Capt Knight landed the jet 400 feet down the runway without a landing light, on-speed. He engaged the cable in a textbook three-point attitude per the checklist. The aircraft came to rest 10 feet from the edge of the runway with minimal damage. Capt Knight, Capt Smith, Capt Lyons, and Capt Baumgartner displayed superior CRM in handling this complex nighttime emergency situation in a hostile AOR with deteriorating weather.

Capts Todd T. Knight, Jason L. Smith, Andrew T. Lyons, and Dylan S. Baumgartner, 421st EFS, USCENTAF

Crew Chief Safety
Award of Distinction

On 1 Dec 04, A1C Mitchell prevented extensive F-16 airframe and engine damage while launching an aircraft for a training mission. Just after engine start, Airman Mitchell identified an aircraft ladder sliding across the parking ramp toward his airplane. Without hesitation Airman Mitchell directed the pilot to immediately shut down. The ladder had been blown across the parking ramp by another F-16 and came to rest directly under the intake of Airman Mitchell's aircraft. The quick thinking by Airman Mitchell prevented possible structural damage and ingestion of the ladder by the aircraft engine. After this event, Airman Mitchell was quick to inform the pilot of the reason for the shutdown and immediately began a thorough aircraft inspection. His quick analysis allowed the aircraft to quickly launch after it was determined that there was no damage. Following this incident Airman Mitchell took proactive steps to identify the hazards associated with the current aircraft parking configuration, highlighted these hazards to his supervisor, and ensured that a similar event would not take place in the future. This was an overall outstanding effort by a professional warrior.

A1C Brian J. Mitchell, 57th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 57th Wing, Nellis AFB, Nev.

ACC Safety Salutes Superior Performance

Maj Jay O. Aanrud
Flight Commander, Current Operations
20th Operations Support Squadron, 20th Fighter Wing
Shaw AFB, S.C.

A1C Jesse A. Wells
Air Traffic Control Apprentice
7th Operations Support Squadron, 7th Bomb Wing
Dyess AFB, Texas

MOUNTAIN of TROUBLE

By Maj Gregory S. Laffitte, Moody AFB, Ga.

Much of my youth was spent in the outdoors doing the typical weekend campouts with the Boy Scouts and the occasional long-term summer camp. My dad and I spent countless hours on the water fishing and duck hunting anywhere from Louisiana to Michigan. I guess you could say that the outdoors was a place where I truly felt that I was in my element, and was confident that I could handle just about any outdoor situation – the proverbial "anywhere, anytime" type of attitude.

Camping and hiking in the woods prepares a young man and makes for an ideal transition to military life, so it came as no surprise to my parents when I announced that I would join the Marine Corps after graduating from college. A thorough course in land navigation with all of the map reading, terrain association, declination angle computations, and the like were the standard for brand new second lieutenants attending The Basic School at Quantico, Virginia. My Marine training was fantastic, and I graduated as a land navigation machine. The tools were in place. I could take a map and navigate from point A to point B with my eyes closed. Anytime, anyplace standard complacent attitude.

I spend as much time with my kids as I can. We enjoy outdoor activities like camping, fishing and hiking, so receiving orders to Nellis AFB, Las Vegas, Nevada, with all of its outdoor recreational opportunities was a dream come true. Several years had passed since my days as a Marine second lieutenant to the morning when I planned to take my kids out for a morning hike in the mountains just north of Nellis AFB. You could see the range where we were headed that particular morning from the front yard of our quarters in base housing. I had been through the area in my truck, and studied a map of the terrain features and the heights of the various mountain tops before the hike, so I was very familiar with the basic lay of the land.

It was January third and my kids were still enjoying Christmas gifts and

"It was only supposed to be a morning hike with the kids"

their remaining time off from school when I began to pack for the hike. I had planned to surprise my kids on Christmas morning with the gift of a go-cart, but the only way to keep the gift a secret was to bring the go-cart home and hide it in the garage; the only way to fit the go-cart in the back of my truck was by taking the spare tire out and leaving it behind in my garage. The go-cart was a huge Christmas morning surprise and the kids were having a blast driving their new go-cart around the yard that morning as I began packing for the hike, but somewhere along the way I experienced a complete loss of "situational-awareness" and failed to put the spare tire back in the truck.

Around Nellis, early January means mild desert afternoons with fairly cold nighttime temperatures. I packed a small one-burner backpacking stove, a bag of rice, two cans of kidney beans, and a mess kit for four people in my backpack. I also threw in two canteens of water and a flashlight (even though we weren't staying out after dark), the map from my office as well as my lensatic compass. My middle son was so excited about the trip and had his bag packed as if we were planning to summit Mt. Everest. He packed extra socks, shirts, and pants as well as extra matches, water, and had even thrown in a warm sweat shirt and our popular military camouflage poncho liner. I remember telling him that we're "only going to be gone for a few hours and that I did not think that all of his 'extra' gear was really necessary but that if he really wanted to carry all that 'stuff' then it was his decision."

As it turns out, he was much wiser than his father. My older son and younger daughter had prepared by wearing their hiking boots, jeans, and long-sleeved shirts. Again, this was just supposed to be a simple 4- or 5-hour trip and then return home because dad was going to the movies with mom later on that night.

Before we left, I told my wife exactly where we were going and that we would definitely be back by 4 p.m. to make our movie date later that evening. Everybody was packed and loaded up. I told my wife good bye and after a kiss and a hug, we headed for the mountains.

The Bureau of Land Management oversees thousands of acres open to the public for mountain biking, four-wheeling, and just about anything else you would want to do in some pretty rugged and remote terrain. The area we were headed to had numerous mountain peaks ranging from 2,000 feet to almost 6,500 feet. I had picked out one known as Gass Peak, which was right at about 6,000 feet and was easily recognizable due to the numerous antennas placed on its highest point. We were driving on some fairly rough trails, generally limited to four-wheel drive type vehicles, and had finally arrived at the spot from which we would begin our hike. The location was about 14 miles from the nearest paved road, and while pulling into a place to park the truck, I began to hear an obvious hissing noise coming from the rear of the truck. Upon further inspection, I discovered that a hole in the side-wall of the left rear tire was the source of the hissing and that within just a few minutes the tire had gone completely flat. It was about this time that I had regained my "situational awareness" by realizing that I had not put the spare tire back into the truck before we had started for the mountains. A perfect case of excessive motivation!

Not wanting to spoil the day's activities, I told the kids we would go ahead with our hike up Gass Peak

and then come back down to the truck and hike out the way we came in. At the time it seemed like a sound plan, besides, "anytime, anyplace."

The hike to the top was uneventful. We made extremely good time and we were having a blast. Up on top there wasn't a cloud in the sky; it was nice and cool and we could see all the way out to the Vegas "strip"; life was good. I fired up my backpacker's stove and cooked up my version of hobo chow with rice and kidney beans. We all had generous portions and after relaxing an hour or so, I decided it was time to head back to the truck. This is where old dad lost his "Situational Awareness" once again.

I remembered that we had parked the truck at least 14 miles from a paved road which would take me to a phone to call home for help. Standing from where I was on top of Gass Peak, I could actually see the road where I would be able to find a pay phone to make that call. A classic case of "get-home-itis" was being born!

I flattened out my 1:200,000 map and did a quick study of the lay of the land. The map provided a great deal of orientation information, but was not a good choice for actual land navigation when it came to depicting contour intervals. The map didn't provide me an appreciation of the ruggedness of the surrounding terrain, and I was falsely convinced that there was a safer and shorter route back to the main road. I figured "why back track all the way back to the truck and then hike 14 more miles back to the main road when we could save a lot of time by bush whacking?" Bad choice!

The sun sets early during the winter months and the desert is a place where it can get real cold in a hurry. We hiked along one ridge line after another, up one draw and then down another. Each time we would reach a place too steep and too dangerous to attempt to descend, so we would retrace our steps and search out another way to go. My kids were tough, but they eventually began to show signs of fatigue. We watched the moon come up, and rested until it had sufficiently illuminated the landscape; enabling us to continue down the mountain. It was really amazing how moonlight would cast shadows obscuring and giving false impressions of the lay of the land.

At 1 a.m. we heard the sound of what we thought was a helicopter. I knew that the only way a rescue helicopter was going to find us was if we were in a location where they could see us. We continued along a ridge line and eventually found a spot where we thought we could be seen. We were too tired to go any further and with each step it was getting more dangerous to proceed. Cold, tired, and hungry we found a spot and settled in and waited for the sun to come up. It's one thing to go out and make bad choices that impact yourself, but it's an entirely different matter when you make bad choices that impact other people, and more importantly I had placed my children in a very dangerous situation.

"more importantly I placed my children in a very dangerous situation"

A rescue helicopter from the Clark County Sheriff's Department found us at 2:30 a.m. and plucked us, one at a time, from the mountain. The rescue crew knew the general vicinity of where we were and had reason to believe that something had happened based upon our failure to return as planned. In fact, the only reason we were found was because I had told my wife where we were going and when we were supposed to return.

My personal confidence in orienteering and high degree of comfort in the woods created a complacent attitude which led to a potentially dangerous scenario for me and my children. The age-old cliché of "it will never happen to me" was alive that day right along side his best friend "get-home-itis." Fortunately, it hadn't rained, because the temperature was in the teens, so we were lucky to only be tired, cold, and hungry. This experience now serves as my personal reminder to follow the principles of Risk Management and to always strive to maintain solid Situational Awareness.

Our overnight ordeal has been talked about amongst family members for years now, and though it was a big adventure, I have vowed to never let my guard down again. Since then we have had numerous outdoor camping trips, and I am happy to report that all have ended without the assistance of a helicopter rescue.

PASSING The BUCKS

By Anonymous

I have spent a lot of time riding my motorcycle with a group and have learned that riders tend to let their guard down in a group setting. It is critical that those of us who ride in groups maintain our situational awareness at all times. This principle was recently reinforced a few times during a 400-mile trip I took from Abilene, Texas, to Ruidoso, N.M., to attend a week-long motorcycle rally.

Besides my friend running out of gas (which is a whole different story), the trip to Ruidoso was, for the most part, uneventful. If you've ever had the pleasure of making this particular ride, you'll know that it's a straight flat shot all the way until you get into Lincoln County, N.M. Because of the construction in this area, the ride can become more challenging.

What was once mostly a two-lane road with more than its fair share of twists and bends will eventually be a four-lane highway with slow bending curves. Because of all the changes and detours that come with any construction project, the white and yellow stripes that illuminate the center and shoulders of the road have been removed and laid down several times. Because the removal process involves grinding off the lines, there were grooves in the road where the lines used to be.

My riding group happened to reach this area after dark which made it difficult to see where the grooves were. Whenever I came across those grooves, the bike took on a mind of its own and tried to follow along the grooves like a toy car on a slot car racing track. It was pretty unnerving when my bike would try to go off by itself down one of these grooves, especially when the direction was into oncoming traffic! I was forced to slow down to a crawl and pay special attention to everything going on around me.

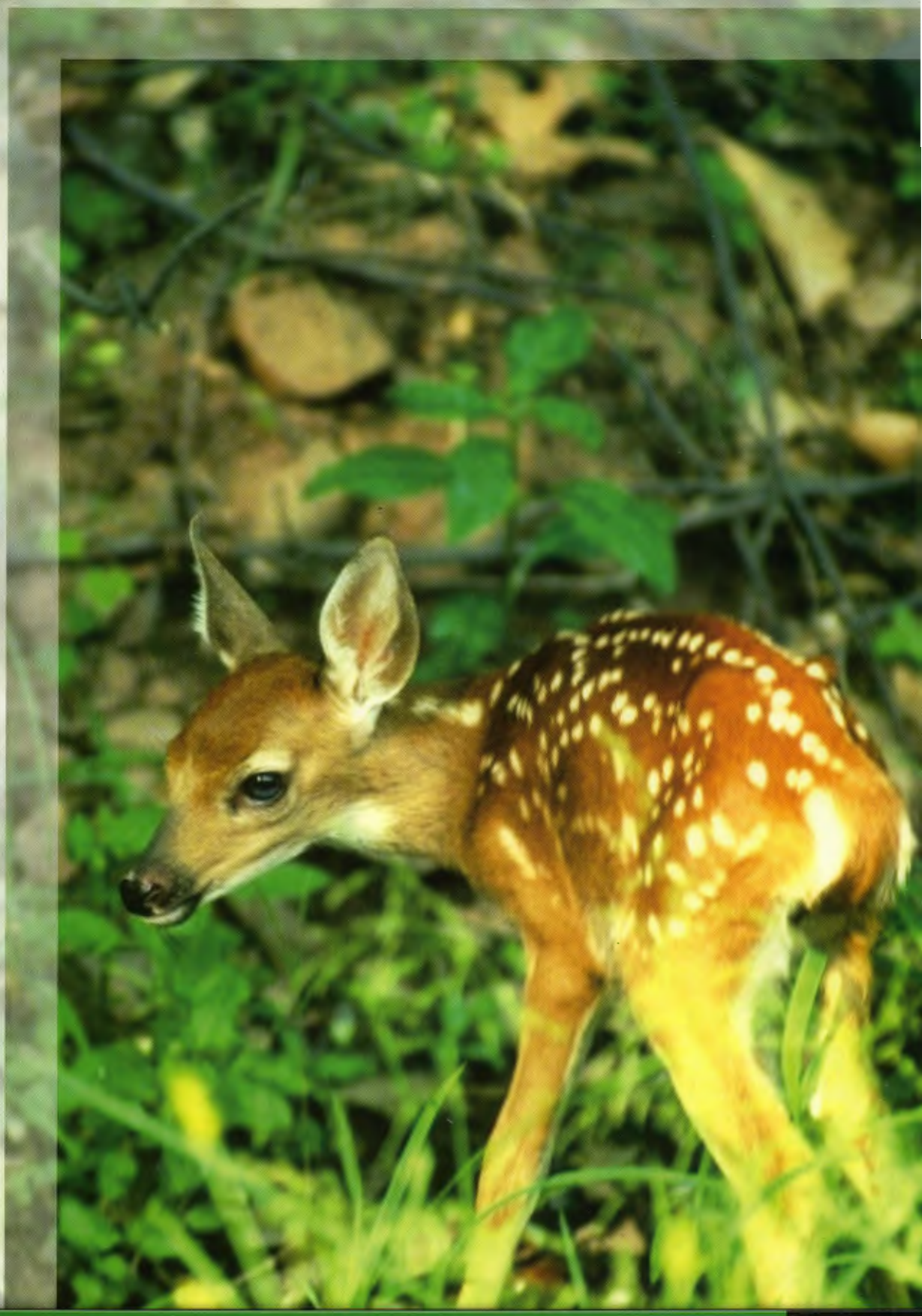
When traveling in a group, it is also important to maintain the proper following distance from the rider in front of you. While the group I ride with is very good about pointing out potentially hazardous debris on the road, it is still up to the individual riders to maintain situational awareness. If you follow too closely, you won't allow yourself enough time to maneuver around debris. My friend did exactly that and struck a 2 x 4 board lying in the road with a nail sticking straight up out of it. Yup, you guessed it; the nail went straight into his tire.

He was very lucky that the tire just went flat and didn't blow. He could have lost control of his bike, wrecking it and causing injury or even death. Fortunately, his lack of attentiveness only cost him the price of a new tire.

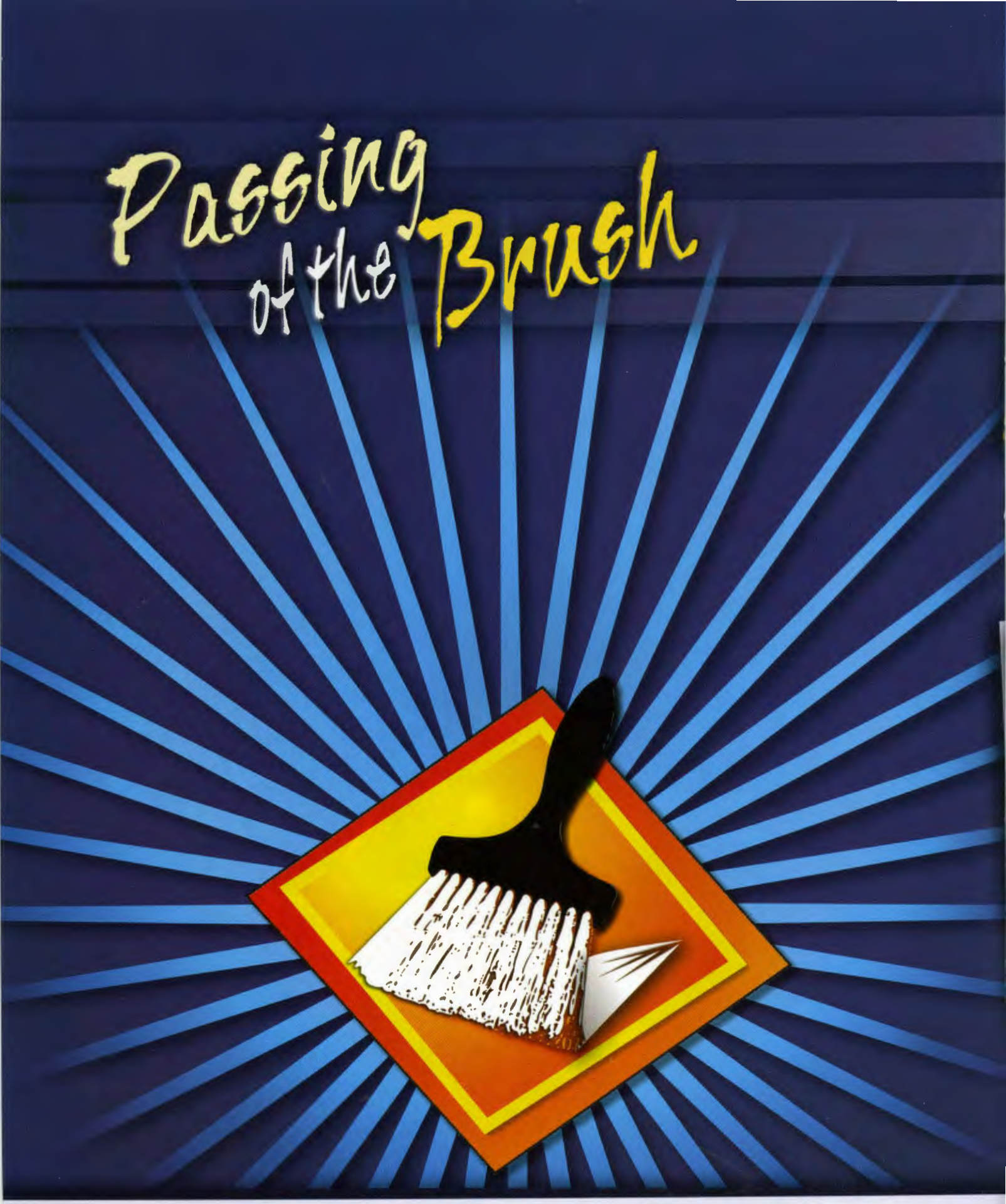
Another incident that illustrates my point about situational awareness happened one night when we were riding through the mountains. The cold mountain air was exhilarating. When we reached a particularly dark area of the road, the group leader came across a beautiful six-point buck. He immediately pointed him out to the rest of us so we could avoid him. We all were so taken by the sight of him that we ignored the opposite side of the road where another two bucks and a doe were just about to cross. Needless to say, we were very grateful that the rumble of our bikes scared them back in the direction they came from. Had they continued across the road, there's no telling how much damage or injury those animals could have done.

"the bike Took on a mind of its own"

Riding motorcycles takes skill and attentiveness. Riding motorcycles in a group might cause some riders to pay less attention to what they are doing. It is paramount to maintain situational awareness at all times, during all circumstances when riding. It just may save your life.

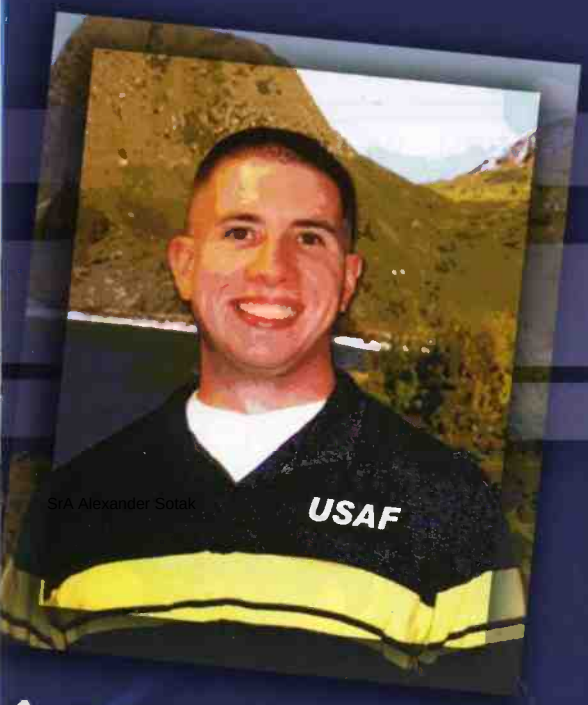


Passing of the Brush



Passing of the brush

"Enthusiasm is that spark of energy and sense of interest and inspira



SrA Alexander Sotak

SrA Alexander Sotak

SSgt Carrie Atwood

A "Hail and Farewell" ceremony normally signals change for people and organizations as we move from place to place throughout their Air Force career, and we here at *The Combat Edge* are no different. Joe Oldham, a past editor of *Popular Mechanics*, once wrote that no one person "owns" a magazine; they just guide it along, and then turn it over to another when their time is done. For the staff of *The Combat Edge*, our public face is that of the magazine; people often join the magazine, leave their mark, and move on with little fanfare. I am changing that.

This issue of the magazine marks a "changing of the guard" for our Graphics Design personnel. I have always said that "I enjoy working with professionals" and talented people and that positive trend continues with the addition of Senior Airman Alex Sotak to our staff. Alex comes to *The Combat Edge* staff from the Visual Graphics section of the 1st Communications Squadron here at Langley AFB, and this issue includes some samples of his original artwork which give the magazine an "old school" look and feel. A gifted, accomplished artist, Alex brings unique talents and abilities to the magazine and I am looking forward to letting him showcase his talents in future issues of the magazine.

My ROTC instructor once said that supervisors should always "strive to promote your people out of a job," and such is the case for our outgoing publications designer, SSgt Carrie L. Atwood as she leaves *The Combat Edge* after 2 years of service. When I became the editor, I looked to her to implement the first full cover-to-cover redesign of the magazine in over 5 years, she did an incredible job, and her lasting mark will be the classy, professional level of quality she brought to the magazine over this past year. After teaching me the ropes, it's very appropriate that SSgt Atwood leaves to become an instructor at the Defense Information School, based out of Fort Meade, Maryland. After a short training period, she will be responsible for training the next generation of graphic designers for all of the armed services, and I'm positive that she will be one of their best.

Carrie was my troop, my teacher, and a mentor and it has been my privilege to work with her.

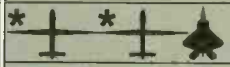
Lt Col Anton Komatz,
Executive Editor

ion that ignites effort, good ideas, intention, creativity, and hard work."


Fleagle
THIS DESERT DUTY SURE IS A LOT OF ENDLESS NOTHING.
YEP.
HARRISON
NO MATTER WHERE YA'LOOK IT ALL LOOKS TH'SAME.
YEP.
WELL, WE AIN'T GOT MUCH LONGER BEFORE WE GO BACK TO THE STATES.
YEP.
PEDO, YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE NO TROUBLE ADJUSTIN' TO THIS WAY OF LIFE.
I HAD A GOOD TEACHER.
AF STUF
WHO?
YOU'LL SEE.
TINY...?
I THINK HE'S KINDA CUTE.

FY05 Aircraft

As of January 31, 2005

	Fatal	Aircraft Destroyed	Aircraft Damaged
8 AF			
9 AF			
12 AF			
AWFC			
ANG (ACC-gained)			
AFRC (ACC-gained)			

FY05 Ground

As of January 31, 2005

	Fatal	Class A	Class B
8 AF		2	
9 AF			
12 AF		2	
DRU's			

FY05 Weapons

As of January 31, 2005

	Class A	Class B
8 AF	0	0
9 AF	0	0
12 AF	0	0
AWFC	0	0

Aircraft Notes

Nice work. ACC's only Class A in January was non-rate producing. An MQ-1 crashed during an AOR mission after losing its data link. Last week, I was working to get airborne when a caution light came on in the cockpit. "Clearly," I reasoned, "it's too cold for this 1978 jet. I'll just let the hydraulics warm up, cycle the switch and be on my way." No dice. So I asked a wise old bird, "Sir, do you know any tricks to get this light to go out?" Again, no dice, but the spare worked fine. If you know a fix that is not in the official guidance or have a cheat sheet labeled "Witches in the Systems," get it published. See Safety for the forms so the young pups have the trick when they cross the fence into the AOR. Check yourself before you wreck yourself. Fly Safe!

Ground Notes

As of 1/31/05, ACC has reduced Class A mishaps by 50 percent over FY04. Fatal mishaps have been reduced by 63 percent, lack of seat belt use has been a factor for all 3 Class A motor vehicle mishaps this year. Alcohol also has been a factor in 75 percent of the mishaps.

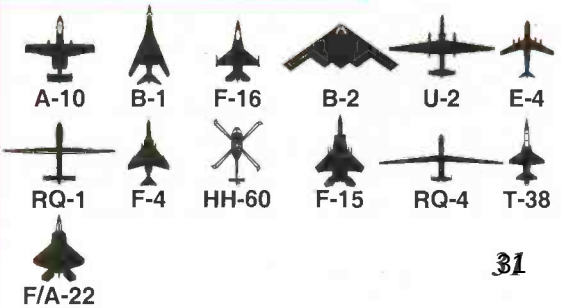
Weapons Notes

Surprise! Mishaps are on the rise! We had a series of missile mishaps throughout the command this quarter. Four of these mishaps were sheared umbilicals on AIM-9s and AGM-88s. All were due to inattention to detail and not following written guidance. Surprise again! Over the last three quarters we have seen an alarming increase in tech data violations that resulted in mishaps. Make a conscious decision to follow guidance and ensure others do the same. By doing so we can reduce mishaps and keep resources ready for the battlefield instead of in the repair shop.

Legend

Class A - 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 $20,000 and $200,000
*Non-rate Producing

Symbols for Mishap Aircraft

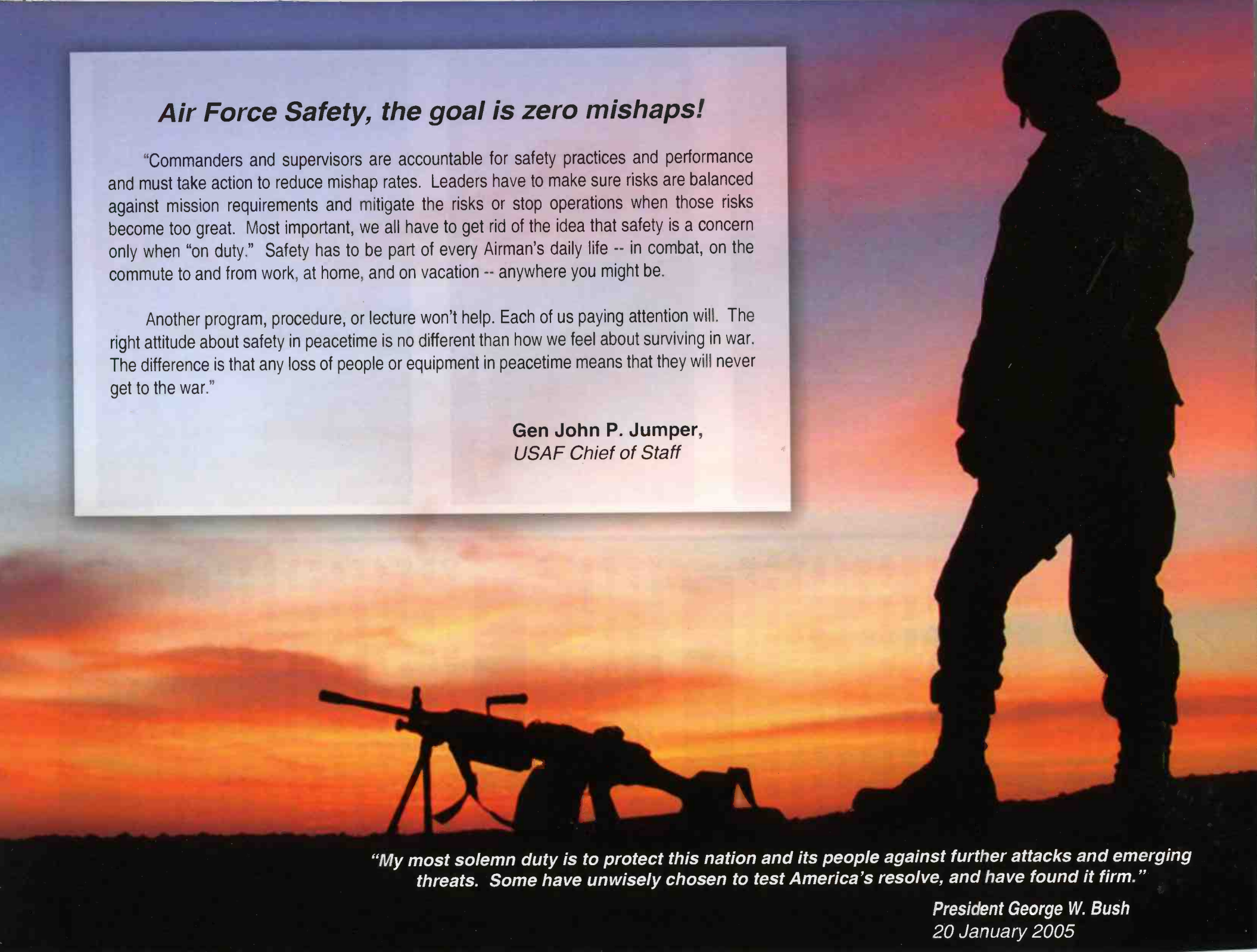


Air Force Safety, the goal is zero mishaps!

"Commanders and supervisors are accountable for safety practices and performance and must take action to reduce mishap rates. Leaders have to make sure risks are balanced against mission requirements and mitigate the risks or stop operations when those risks become too great. Most important, we all have to get rid of the idea that safety is a concern only when "on duty." Safety has to be part of every Airman's daily life -- in combat, on the commute to and from work, at home, and on vacation -- anywhere you might be.

Another program, procedure, or lecture won't help. Each of us paying attention will. The right attitude about safety in peacetime is no different than how we feel about surviving in war. The difference is that any loss of people or equipment in peacetime means that they will never get to the war."

Gen John P. Jumper,
USAF Chief of Staff



"My most solemn duty is to protect this nation and its people against further attacks and emerging threats. Some have unwisely chosen to test America's resolve, and have found it firm."

President George W. Bush
20 January 2005