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Hour ACC/HC, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va.
by Chaplain (Col.) Scott A. Ofsdahl
Spirtual resiliEnce
9 RW/SE Beal AFB, Calif.
by Lt. Col. Matt Edwards
The simple answer is “yes” but the more complex response is “yes, but do we understand?” Life is not easy for any of us; understand that no one is alone in our force. A few months ago I was diagnosed with cancer — that quickly reaffirmed how important my faith, family, and friends are to me as well as others facing challenging times. I experienced a difficult period, but so did my family and friends. I’m truly blessed; I’m fine now, but I will never forget the unconditional support from my loving family and wonderful friends at home and on the job. Our immediate family and our Air Force family will always be our strength and center of gravity that we need to help us through that difficult moment. Remember that our creed notes, “I will never leave an Airman behind.” These are not just a few words—they mean something. Similarly, remember Lincoln’s words in the Gettysburg Address, “…the last full measure of devotion…” In our business, we are prepared to give our life for our comrades so please understand that our fellow Airmen will need us off the battlefield as well. Everyone has a story and someone can always help. Know that there’s probably someone else experiencing the same condition or situation as you, so never feel alone. We must have perseverance, and above all confidence in ourselves. Realize that reaching out for support or to help someone is a true sign of strength and bold character. Work hard to be the person you were meant to be—we need you all to “Be that Airman!”

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Everyone is out to get you
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“The first question which the priest and the Levite asked was: ‘If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?’ But … the Good Samaritan reversed the question: ‘If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?’”—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

What exactly is resilience? I like this simple definition: “resilience is the ability to bounce back.” Those with resilience are able to ‘bounce back’ from setbacks, disappointments, defeats and failures. Sometimes setbacks or life challenges come like a boxer taking continuous jabs and uppercuts that keep you off balance. Resilience is what allows you to recover and stay in the fight with your goal in mind. At other times, however, setbacks come like a roundhouse knockout blow. Out of nowhere, tragedy strikes and knocks you flat. When life hands you a knockout blow and you feel flattened, you must dig even deeper in order to dust yourself off, pick yourself up and stay the course. Sometimes this may take a long time. So where do we find this “strength” that can help us pick ourselves up? We find it through our spiritual, physical, mental and emotional pillars. This article will highlight the benefits of the spiritual pillar.
So what is “spiritual” resilience? Again, keeping it simple, I’d say that “spiritual” resilience is based on one’s purpose and meaning in life which may or may not come from faith-based resources. Your purpose and meaning in life provide an essential resource or compass for paddling through life’s whitewater. A perfect example of faith-based “spiritual” resilience is the life of Capt. Emil Kapaun. Kapaun’s story offers us important keys to finding our inner strength not only to overcome life’s jabs, uppercuts and knockout blows but his story also illustrates the power of a “purpose” driven life. A life defined by one of our core values—“service before self.”

On 11 April 2013, President Obama told the story of Father Emil Kapaun, an Army Chaplain from Kansas, who served in the US Army during the Korean War and then posthumously awarded him the Medal of Honor by the President’s own words (abbreviated with some editing):

After the communist invasion of South Korea, Kapaun was among the first American troops that hit the battlefield. As the President said, “this is the valor we honor—an American soldier who didn’t fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all, a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live.”

This holiday season, we might ask ourselves a few important questions. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate your own spiritual resilience? Love, faith, hope, forgiveness and service before self were keys to Kapaun’s ability to draw upon inner strength and overcome the trauma of war. Where do you go to find the strength to overcome? Have a happy holiday season.

When his commanders ordered an evacuation, knowing that he would be over run, he chose to stay—gathering the injured, tending their wounds. When the enemy broke through and the combat was hand-to-hand, he carried on—comforting the injured and the dying, offering some measure of peace as they died.

When enemy forces bore down, it seemed like the end—that these wounded Americans, more than a dozen of them, would be gunned down. But Kapaun spotted a wounded Chinese officer. He pleaded with this Chinese officer and convinced him to call out his fellow Chinese. The shooting stopped and they negotiated a safe surrender, saving those American lives.

Then, as Kapaun was being led away, he saw another American, US Army Staff Sgt. Herbert Miller—wounded, unable to walk, lying in a ditch, defenseless. An enemy soldier was standing over him, rifle aimed at his head, ready to shoot. Kapaun marched over and pushed the enemy soldier aside. And then as the soldier watched, stunned, Kapaun carried that wounded American away.

He carried the injured sergeant, for miles, as their captors forced them on a death march. When Kapaun grew tired, he’d help the wounded SSgt Miller hop on one leg. When other prisoners stumbled, he picked them up. When they wanted to quit—knowing that stragglers would be shot—he begged them to keep walking. In the camps that winter, deep in the valley, men could freeze to death in their sleep. Kapaun offered them his own clothes. They starved on tiny rations of millet and corn and birdseed. He somehow snuck past the guards, foraged in nearby fields, and returned with rice and potatoes. In desperation, some men hoarded food. He convinced them to share. Their bodies were ravaged by dysentery. He grabbed some rocks, pounded metal into pots and boiled clean water. They lived in filth. He washed their clothes and cleansed their wounds.

The guards ridiculed his devotion to his Savior and the Almighty. They took his clothes and made him stand in the freezing cold for hours. Yet, he never lost his faith. If anything, it only grew stronger. That faith—that they might be delivered from evil, that they could make it home—was perhaps the greatest gift to those men; that even amidst such hardship and despair, there could be hope; amid their misery in the temporal they could see those truths that are eternal; that even in such hell, there could be a touch of the divine. Looking back, one of them said that is what “kept a lot of us alive.”

Yet, for Kapaun, the horrific conditions took their toll. Thin, frail he began to limp, with a blood clot in his leg. And then comes the dysentery, then pneumonia. That’s when the guards saw their chance to finally rid themselves of this priest and the hope he inspired. They came for him. And over the protests and tears of the men who loved him, the guards sent him to a death house—a hellhole with no food or water—to be left to die. And then, as he was taken away, he did something remarkable—he blessed the guards. “Forgive them,” he said, “for they know not what they do.” Two days later, in that house of death, Kapaun breathed his last breath. He was 35 years old. His body was taken away, his grave unmarked, his remains unrecovered to this day.

As the President said, “this is the valor we honor— an American soldier who didn’t fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all, a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live.”

This holiday season, we might ask ourselves a few important questions. On a scale of 1-10, how do you rate your own spiritual resilience? Love, faith, hope, forgiveness and service before self were keys to Kapaun’s ability to draw upon inner strength and overcome the trauma of war. Where do you go to find the strength to overcome? Have a happy holiday season.
BY LT. COL. MATT “MANGO” EDWARDS

Many thanks to contributions from ACC/A3MH, 9 MKG, 9 PSPTS, and 9 RW/PA

So there I was ... above 60,000 feet on an operational U-2 mission in the Middle East when my left knee started acting up. This wasn’t new; I’d had pain in my knee before. One of the joys of flying the “Deuce” is that you learn early on that certain parts of your body get fatigued sooner when sitting for long periods of time, for me it was a high school sports injury that flares up around the 7.5 hour point. Like clockwork my knee started to twinge, but little did I know that I was actually starting to feel the beginning symptoms of Decompression Sickness (DCS), commonly known as the “bends.”

Within 30 minutes I had gone from minor aches to a sweating, groaning mess nearly incapacitated from the pain, even after dialing up the pressure in my suit. The slow buildup of nitrogen micro-bubbles in my body was pushing my muscles, tendons, and kneecap apart from the inside. Somewhere between gritting my teeth and the emergency descent I thought two things: “At least the bubbles are in my knee and not my brain!” and “Where’s that CARE modification when I need it?!?”

The Cockpit Altitude Reduction Effort (CARE) is the result of countless hours of effort throughout the Air Force to reduce the pressure altitude in the U-2 cockpit to avoid incidents of DCS and the possible loss of the pilot or the aircraft. DCS is caused by the inadequate elimination of dissolved inert gas (nitrogen) that becomes bubbles in the blood or body tissues as pressure decreases. In the human body, bubbles start to form at approximately 16,000 feet. More bubbles are generated the longer you stay above this altitude. Eventually you’ll show signs of DCS, not if, but when (think of it as twisting the cap off a soda, the faster you loosen the cap, the more gas comes out). This is why U-2 pilots perform a 60 minute pre-breathing of 100 percent oxygen, to force as much nitrogen out of the body and supersaturate the blood and tissues with oxygen. Research has shown that the risk of DCS increases very rapidly once an altitude of 21,000 feet is reached. The non-CARE modified U-2 cockpit altitude is 29,500 feet, roughly the height of Mt. Everest.

WE REALLY DO CARE!


THE COMBAT EDGE | DECEMBER 2013 - FEBRUARY 2014

Photo by: Airman 1st Class Bobby Cummings
From the inception of the U-2 in 1955 to June of 1998, there were no official reports of mishaps, deaths, or serious DCS symptoms (reported operational cases involved predominantly joint pain). Based upon previous DCS research, nearly all DCS incidents should occur within the first four hours of exposure. Also, using a U-2 mission altitude profile, analysis from the Air Force Research Laboratory DCS Risk Assessment Computer, calculated a 73 percent risk of developing DCS symptoms. Therefore, the true incidence of DCS in the U-2 program was probably higher than previously reported.

In 1999 the USAF aeromedical regulations changed the previous policy regarding permanently grounding pilots who reported DCS. Surveys of previous U-2 pilots revealed widespread under-reporting, revealing that 60-80 percent of respondents experienced DCS symptoms at some point in their careers, with 16-18 percent of these being neurologic DCS (NDCS), where nitrogen bubbles form on the brain.

Between 1991 and 2009, there were 67 U-2 pilot DCS incidents reported and an upward spike in these incidents, the 9th Reconnaissance Wing (9 RW) enlisted the help of experts from Brooks City Base (now located at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio) to find out why there was an increase and what steps could be implemented to reduce decompression symptoms. In 2009, the Brooks report recommended using exercise-enhanced pre-breathing (EEP) which involves 10 minutes of exercise during the 60-minute 100 percent oxygen pre-breath period. The research showed that incorporating exercise into the 100 percent oxygen pre-breath period would reduce the risk of DCS by 40 percent (each additional hour of resting pre-breath only decreases the risk by 10 percent). The problem with EEP is that exercise increases the pilot's core body temperature prior to donning the full-pressure suit (FPS). The FPS, maintained by the 9th Physiological Support Squadron (9 PSPTS), is designed to be its own environment, completely encapsulating the pilot, in the event of a rapid decompression at 70,000 feet. Cooling air from the aircraft or from ground cooling units is used to regulate the pilot's temperature once the suit is donned. For each 10 minutes without cooling air, the core body temperature increases one degree Fahrenheit. A 10-degree increase puts the pilot at risk of heat stroke. Increasing the core temperature before stepping to fly a jet at a location where outside temperatures regularly exceed 110°F elevates the risk-level for the takeoff and departure part of the mission. The Brooks experts also recommended flying shorter missions, increasing the time between achievements and increasing the pressure in the FPS or the cockpit.

From the inception of the U-2 to August 2012, there were no official reports of mishaps, deaths, or serious DCS symptoms at any of the deployed operating locations, 12 occurred between 2002 to 2009. Of the 16 confirmed incidents, 12 occurred at one deployed operating location, four of which were life-threatening. This coincided with changes in U-2 operations related to Global War on Terrorism and contingency operations support. The main changes were that pilots were flying longer missions (average sortie duration increased from 8.2 to 9.3 hours), were flying more frequently (pilot pool decreased from 49 to 37 pilots and increased average annual sorties from 42 to 92), and pilots were moving around more in the cramped cockpit (Troops-In-Contact support, aircraft mission changes, and class cockpit upgrade). Research has shown that DCS symptoms become more pronounced with increased physical activity. Between 2002 and 2011, 15 pilots were no longer combat mission-ready due to DCS, representing a $35 million loss in combat-ready U-2 aircrews. Eighty percent of all pilots who experienced neuro-hits will never return to U-2 high flight again.

Between 1999 and 2009, there were 9 reported and confirmed neuro DCS cases, the noted increase in DCS cases, the 9th Reconnaissance Wing (9 RW) enlisted the help of experts from Brooks City Base (now located at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio) to find out why there was an increase and what steps could be implemented to reduce decompression symptoms. In 2009, the Brooks report recommended using exercise-enhanced pre-breathing (EEP) which involves 10 minutes of exercise during the 60-minute 100 percent oxygen pre-breath period. The research showed that incorporating exercise into the 100 percent oxygen pre-breath period would reduce the risk of DCS by 40 percent (each additional hour of resting pre-breath only decreases the risk by 10 percent). The problem with EEP is that exercise increases the pilot's core body temperature prior to donning the full-pressure suit (FPS). The FPS, maintained by the 9th Physiological Support Squadron (9 PSPTS), is designed to be its own environment, completely encapsulating the pilot, in the event of a rapid decompression at 70,000 feet. Cooling air from the aircraft or from ground cooling units is used to regulate the pilot's temperature once the suit is donned. For each 10 minutes without cooling air, the core body temperature increases one degree Fahrenheit. A 10-degree increase puts the pilot at risk of heat stroke. Increasing the core temperature before stepping to fly a jet at a location where outside temperatures regularly exceed 110°F elevates the risk-level for the takeoff and departure part of the mission. The Brooks experts also recommended flying shorter missions, increasing the time between achievements and increasing the pressure in the FPS or the cockpit.

Two of the pilots retired in 2009, the Air Force wanted to shorten the sortie duration, especially since the U-2 fleet was frequently supporting troops on the ground in combat. Increasing the time between missions required more pilots which would be difficult at a time of constrained manning and resources. Increasing the pressure in the cockpit would be the only viable long-term solution to the DCS problem, but this would require a lot of work by the entire U-2 community, as well as support from Air Force leadership.

When the U-2 was designed in the 1950s, each component of the aircraft was tested independently for stress tolerance and failure mode. A “safety factor” of 20 percent was added to each measured stress tolerance. As the aircraft was pieced together, all of these component safety factors combined additively to result in an airframe that was outperformed for the overall planned safety factor. Using modern computer-aided design software, Lockheed was able to integrate all the pieces together with a single safety factor and finite element analysis showed that a cabin altitude of 15,000 feet was achievable by modifying the cockpit structure, replacing valves, changing the bleed air system logic, and altering the cockpit controls.

In the interim, the 9 RW deployed more pilots to increase the interval between flights and ACC increased U-2 pilot production to support the increased deployment rates. The 9th Operations Group established firmer rules regarding minimum ground time between flights and implemented exercise enhanced pre-breathing before each U-2 mission. Once the CARE modification program began, four aircraft at a time received CARE modifications which minimized the number of available aircraft for real-world missions. In order to modify all 22 single-seat U-2s, continue supporting the COCOMs, and keep global phase maintenance on track, Lockheed Martin maintenance crews worked 10-hour shifts, six days a week, for 10 months. After the high-profile Kevin Martin retirement has been pushed back to June 2013, 14 months ahead of schedule, saving $22 million.

So what happened to me? As I descended, the pressure in the cockpit increased and slowly pushed the nitrogen back into my body and the pain decreased, but I was still hurting an hour later when I finally landed. (And remember, I was flying a jet with full rudder with the bad knee, of course). After the life support folks pulled me out of the cockpit they kept me on 100 percent oxygen and transported me to a nearby dive chamber where I went through a complete six-hour dive profile. I was lucky; there had been no permanent damage to my knee and I was back flying the Deuce in a couple of weeks. I also had the distinct honor of flying the last non-CARE modified jet back from overseas without incident (a flight well over 10 hours in case you're interested in applying). In the end it took a lot of concerned people, working long hours, across several disciplines, to get the U-2 where it is today and it's paid off. The U-2 retirement has been pushed back until at least 2023 and my incident in August 2012 was the last reported U-2 DCS case. Hopefully, it will stay that way.

When my dad was teaching me how to ride a motorcycle, he would say, “each time you pull that bike out of the garage you have to believe that every driver out there is trying to kill you.” There are two premises here; one is unstated: (1) The rider has to see the traffic, and (2) the rider has to expect the driver to make an unsafe decision. Put in military terms, the rider has to have high situational awareness (SA), and always prepare for the enemy’s most dangerous course of action.

Recently, I instructed an MQ-1B Predator close air support (CAS) training sortie. As the instructor pilot (IP), I was in command of that mission. The upgrading pilot briefed the sortie to me and his enlisted sensor operator (SO). That day we had contracted joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) support. Those individuals did an excellent job replicating real-world scenarios and inducing fog and friction in a training environment. I had flown multiple sorties with the crew that week, and they were doing well. As such, I briefed the lead JTAC that he should not hold anything back. He didn’t.

What followed was a fairly robust CAS scenario. It involved multiple friendly locations as well as an enemy that was intentionally difficult to find. There were simulated casualties that required immediate helicopter med evac. This apparent full-scale engagement was presented to the crew by a handful of JTACs on the ground with VHF radios and pyrotechnics. The realism they produced, however, was evident in the sensor operator’s comment that he “almost expected to see actual HH-60s rolling into the helicopter landing zone.”
During a brief lull in intensity, the crew observed a person in traditional indigenous clothing laying a wire across a dirt road. The JTAC, viewing the video feed via remote operations video enhanced receiver, positively identified the individual as hostile and provided a 9-line attack briefing to the crew. The pilot, rather than saying "simulate laser on," gave the SO a "laser on" call. On an operational mission, this laser rangefinder designator (LRD) would direct the laser-guided Hellfire missile to the target. The SO complied, responding with "lasing." The three of us realized what had happened at about the same time. I opened my mouth to speak as the SO ceased lasing. The SO turned to me and said, "I screwed up." I terminated the scenario and called the JTACs on the ground to make sure no one was injured.

We fired an invisible, combat, non-eye safe laser at support personnel on the ground. We violated the range training rules and our own MDS-specific Vol. 3. There were three of us on that sortie, and each of us had been in a position to break the chain of events, and prevent the hazard. No one was injured, and no damage was done, but an honest assessment of what went wrong may prevent situations like this one in the future. Below I will address what I believe to be the roles of each of the three crew members, and present a determination as to what each could have done differently to prevent the mishap.

**The sensor operator.** An MQ-1B sensor operator is an aircrew member and, by position and by heritage, a career enlisted aviator. We put a lot of responsibility on this position. For the sake of this discussion, the SO's job description can be simplified to three distinct tasks:

1. Put the thing on the thing: The SO needs to put the laser: The pilot has no method of controlling the laser systems. While the pilot is responsible for when and where the laser is fired, only the SO can actually activate it. Whether the LRD (the one inadvertently fired in the narrative above), or the IR pointer, the SO must be master of the laser systems on board the aircraft. The SO is, first and foremost, a technician. While he may not have a high school degree, he is a technician, at a minimum, as far as his camera and laser systems.

The SO on my CAS training sortie could have saved the day. He could have recognized the illegitimate command given by the pilot, and responded "confirm simulate laser on," or something to that effect. But if we are asking the SO to save the situation, then the pilot and I have already failed.

2. The pilot: The pilot's job is to lead the crew to accomplish the mission. The pilot is more than a technician. He is more than a system operator. While he will actuate switches and operate equipment, he is also commanding the crew. His SA needs to reach outside of his crew position to envelop the aircraft, the SO, and the JATC and the tactical situation on the ground. He must not only issue directives to the SO, but he must observe whether those directives are being honored, and with what degree of proficiency. The pilot may have to change his methods, the manner in which he issues directives, or even the directives themselves, depending on the performance of the crew.

In this case the pilot's SA was low. He was unaware that he failed to preface his laser calls with "simulate." He was unaware that the SO was taking his directives literally, and he was unaware that by so doing, he was violating squadron communication standards.

While the SO could have saved the situation, the pilot is the one who caused the dangerous situation to develop in the first place.

3. The IP: Now it is my turn. If the SO must have SA on his system, and the upgrading pilot must have SA on the crew and the mission, what is required of the IP? The standard for the instructor pilot is high, and rightfully so. The IP needs to have all the SA of the pilot and more. If the pilot needs to recognize that he's passing improper directives to the crew, the IP should sense the pilot's task saturation prior to that point and expect communication and crew resource management errors. If the upgrading pilot needs to be aware of the SO's laser actions, the IP needs to be able to sense where the SO is mentally, and whether he is lagging behind the jet before such errors occur. While the pilot requires situational awareness, the instructor pilot needs predictive awareness. The IP needs to be able to see a dangerous situation developing before the hazard is fully grown.

If the SO could have saved the hazard, and the pilot caused the hazard, the IP should have prevented the hazard; and not necessarily in the moment the error occurred. If the IP waits to begin evaluating the performance and proficiency of the crew until the CAS event begins, he has waited too long.

What if I had applied my dad's motorcycle advice that day? With no live missile on the rail the most dangerous piece of equipment on the airplane that day was the LRD. What if I had walked into the briefing room telling myself, like the safe motorcycle rider that "someone is going to do something stupid and try to hurt someone today"? What if I had paid attention to the pilot's brief, not as a member, but as the IP, waiting for news of impending slip-ups. Had I had the SO's methods, the manner in which he issues directives, or even the directives themselves, depending on the performance of the crew.

These observations are not intended to show that the pilot doomed us all to failure. They instead intend to show that if I had eaten my instructor When a person is learning to do something new, they might have recognized a trend developing. The pilot didn't respect the laser as a danger. The SO needs to know the situation, and by failing to notice that fact, I didn't
The Lieutenant

Anatomy of a Sexual Assault

Editor’s note: The following is the first of several fictional accounts based on actual events involving reported sexual assaults in the Air Force. The Pentagon released a recent sexual assault report estimating that 26,000 service members experienced unwanted sexual contact in 2012, up from 19,000 in 2010. These stories are designed to dispel some myths about sex offenders, their personality characteristics, demographics, and their victims.

BY MASTER SGT. AMAANI LYLE
HAF Sexual Assault Prevention Office Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

1st Lt. Jeff C.

Being an Air Force pilot was always my dream. So when I graduated from the Air Force Academy a couple of years ago and joined a flying squadron overseas, I was psyched that I was getting to do all that I’d imagined and more, in Europe at that! Everything seemed to be happening so fast. I got engaged, learned I’d soon be promoted and finally got a chance to prove I wasn’t some clueless LT with an ego.

I found in my boss, Maj. R, a great mentor and friend. He and his wife would have us over for dinner and poker nights and he just knew so much about the Air Force and the military in general. He taught me how to cut through the politics, earn the loyalty of my troops and advance in my career without stepping on toes.

So when it was time for my promotion party and he offered to host it at his large home, who was I to turn it down? I love a great party, but I don’t drink so I never expected I’d find myself vulnerable to what happened next.
Fact: The Pentagon reports that of the 26,000 cases of unwanted sexual contact, 53 percent involved attacks on men, mostly by other men. However, of the reported cases, women are predominantly the majority of those who report. 

Myth: Sexual Assault only happens to females.
AIRCREW SAFETY

MAJ. KIRK O’CONNOR, 1ST LT LAUREN TWITTY, 1ST LT GODY PERRY. STAFF SGT. CHAD GULLEDE, 968 EACS, AL DHAFARA AB, UAE. The crew of Whidbey 51 displayed outstanding airmanship while flying an E-3 AWACS during a combat sortie. Dealing with multiple malfunctions, the crew safely recovered the aircraft with 20 personnel on board. (Awarded Sep. 2013)

CREW OF TIGER 43, 37 BS, ELLSWORTH AFB SD. The crew of Tiger 43, a B-1B on a night training mission, masterfully handled a complex electrical malfunction and safely recovered the aircraft due to superior systems knowledge and exemplary airmanship. (Awarded Sep. 2013)

CAPT. ROBERT A. WALLER, MAJ. MICHAEL P. DEROSE, 333 FS, SEYMOUR JOHNSON AFB NC. The crew of Boot 31 experienced a unsafe gear indication after takeoff for a night training sortie. The crew’s actions and judgment during the complex emergency allowed the safe recovery of their F-15E. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

PILOT SAFETY

CAPT. JUSTIN A. ANKENBRUCK, 421 FS, HILL AFB UT. Capt. Ankenbruck distinguished himself by safely recovering an F-16 with a dangerous compound emergency. While dealing with an emergency not addressed in the aircraft checklist, he reacted in a manner consistent with the highest flying standards. (Awarded Aug. 2013)

CAPT. JOSHUA M. HANNON, 480 EFS, KANDAHAR AB, AFGHANISTAN. During a combat sortie, Capt. Miranda correctly recognized and handled a major electrical malfunction in ILMC conditions. Despite a high gross weight due to the aircraft’s combat configuration, he safely recovered his F-16. (Awarded Sep. 2013)

MAJ. MICHAEL D. SCHANEY, 149 FS, JB LANGLEY-EUSTIS VA. Maj. Schaney safely recovered his F-22 during a training sortie after experiencing a substantial hydraulic leak. His actions exhibited exceptional emergency procedures execution and aircraft control during the complicated emergency. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

FLIGHT LINE SAFETY

SRA CHRISTOPHER M. O’HARA, 455 EAMXS, BAGRAM AF, AFGHANISTAN. Sra O’Hara swiftly responded to and extinguished a brush fire behind the Air Force Special Operations fuel cell hangar where an EC-130 had two open fuel tanks. His decisive efforts prevented the loss of a multi-million dollar hangar facility and an entire Compass Call aircraft, valued at over $165 million. (Awarded Aug. 2013)

STAFF SGT. JAMIRA CENTENO, A1C BRANDED A. BROWN, A1C BROOKE A. DE LA CUADRA, 4 OS, SEYMOUR JOHNSON AFB NC. As two KC-10s taxied down the primary parallel taxiway leading to the EOR, the increased engine thrust caused rocks and debris from the shoulders of the taxiway to spray across the active taxiway. Sgt. Centeno, and Airmen Brown and De La Cuadra augmented the efforts of the FOD control team and managed to prevent a separation of the tow vehicle from the aircraft. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

SRA TRISTAN SOTO, SRA ZACHARY OSIUS, A1C JOSEPH MCNAIR, 552 MXS, TINKER AFB OK. Airmen Sotto and Osius, and A1C McNair noticed the equipment being cooled by the forward forced air system was extremely warm. Their immediate reactions prevented the potential for a catastrophic failure of numerous aircraft systems, an increased risk of catastrophic failure of the LAU-131 rocket pod, the potential loss of aircraft and the aircrew. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

CREW CHIEF SAFETY

TECH. STG. JOSHUA M. KREAGER, 380 EAMXS, AL DHAFARA AB, UAE. During launch operations just after engine start, Sgt. Kreager noticed the E-bay was leaking air past the hatch. His quick actions saved the on-time departure of the ISR mission and thwarted a high altitude cockpit depressurization, ensuring pilot safety. (Awarded Aug. 2013)

SRA MARQUELL J. SIMPSON, 1 AMXS, JB LANGLEY-EUSTIS VA. While performing a routine EOR inspection for a four-ship of F-22s preparing to takeoff from Langley, Sra Simpson observed a hub cap on one of the F-22’s main landing gear to appear not properly seated in accordance to the tech order guidance. His attention to detail, aircraft knowledge and quick actions ensured safe and judicious actions were taken, preventing the potential of a catastrophic event and preserved a $143M national asset. (Awarded Sep. 2013)

GROUND SAFETY

STAFF SGT. JONATHAN D. BEAU, 379 EAMXS, AL UDEID AB, QATAR. Just as the B-7 stand for the crew to deplane the aircraft was placed and secured into position, Sgt. Beau looked towards the landing gear and noticed a one-foot flame coming from the number three brake assembly. His quick thinking and reaction thwarted the loss of a high-demand-low-density aircraft valued at $178M and prevented injuries to 19 flight crew members and six maintainers. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

WEAPONS SAFETY

STAFF SGT. KELLEY E. HAGERMAN, 49 MXS, HOLLOMAN AFB N.M. Sgt. Hagerman identified live 5.56 MM and .50 caliber blanks rounds mixed in with expended cartridge casings in the unit’s munitions residue bins. His sharp observations directly contributed to the safety and success of the unit’s personnel and mission by preventing any potential explosives mishaps. (Awarded Aug. 2013)

MASTER SGT. TROY C. GRAVATT, 1 MXS, JB LANGLEY-EUSTIS VA. While performing a spot inspection on Langley’s munitions storage structures, Sgt. Gravatt discovered several lighting protection system air terminals missing on three earth-covered igloos. His decisive actions helped ensure the safety of critical assets and munitions flight personnel during the most active time of year for electrical storms in the Hampton-Roads area. (Awarded Sep. 2013)

SRA MATTHEW S. WALTHER, 455 EAMXS, BAGRAM AF, AFGHANISTAN. Ann Waltcher was troubleshooting a windshield anti-ice malfunction on an A-10C when he noticed something awry with the wiring going into the left-hand circuit breaker panel. Her keen eye prevented the inevitable failure of numerous aircraft systems, an increased risk of catastrophic failure of the LAU-131 rocket pod, the potential loss of aircraft and the aircrew. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

UNIT SAFETY

354TH FIGHTER SQ, 33RD DEPARTMENT OF STATE AFB AZ. While being stood down due to sequestration and flying limited sorties with D-0’s other A-10 squadrons, the 354th ensured a core group of squadrons were ready and able to regenerate the squadron to full combat mission-ready status when ordered to do so. Their unwavering commitment to compliance, discipline, and a culture of risk management led to the Building’s outstanding safety record during a time of unprecedented challenges. (Awarded Aug 2013)

430TH EXPEDITIONARY ELECTRONIC COMBAT SQ, KANDAHAR AB, AFGHANISTAN. The 430th EECs executed more than 891 combat sorties, and contributed to the safety and success of the unit’s personnel and mission by preventing any potential explosives mishaps. (Awarded Sep. 2013)

7TH EXPEDITIONARY AIR COMMAND CONTROL SQ, AL UDEID AB, QATAR. The 7 EACCS displayed an enduring commitment to ground and flight safety through the proficient handling of five smokeflumes incidents, an engine shutdown, a HATE, two pressurization incidents, leadership safety emphasis, and a robust safety education program. Their efforts resulted in the prevention of hazardous incidents, as well as the safe recovery of five $366M E-8C aircraft and their aircrew from potentially catastrophic events. (Awarded Oct. 2013)

AWARDS OF DISTINCTION

Flight Safety

MAJ. PATRICK H. SMILEY, 358 FS, DAVIS-MONTHAN AFB AZ. Maj. Smiley distinguished himself through sustained superior performance in flight safety across a variety of roles. During the second quarter of 2013, Maj. Smiley identified the need for increased training and developed a comprehensive program to address it. He also initiated a monthly safety huddle to foster open communication and a culture of safety. This approach resulted in a 20 percent decrease in reported mishap events compared to the previous quarter. Additionally, Maj. Smiley worked closely with the Air Combat Command (ACC) to ensure that safety protocols and procedures were being followed consistently throughout the squadron.

Ground Safety

TECH. SGT. NOLAND NOBLE, 55 SFS, OFFUTT AFB NE. Tech. Sgt. Noble is a dedicated and focused individual who has made significant contributions to improving safety at Offutt Air Force Base (AFB). He has been instrumental in developing a comprehensive ground safety program that targets both the air and ground operations of the base. One of his key achievements is the implementation of a new ground safety checklist that has helped to reduce the number of near-miss incidents by 30 percent. Sgt. Noble also led a successful effort to improve traffic safety on the base, resulting in a 20 percent reduction in vehicle accidents.

Weapons Safety

STAFF SGT. DANIEL N. MORRIS, 823 MXS, NELLIS AFB NV. Staff Sgt. Morris is a highly skilled and knowledgeable member of the weapons safety team at Nellis AFB. His dedication to ensuring the safe and effective operation of weapons systems is evident in his work. During the second quarter of 2013, Staff Sgt. Morris took the lead in developing new procedures for the safe handling of live ordnance. These procedures were implemented in all weapons units, leading to a significant reduction in mishap incidents. Staff Sgt. Morris also played a pivotal role in a recent Air Combat Command (ACC) safety inspection, where his knowledge and expertise helped to improve the overall safety posture of the squadron.
Stay Safe and Drive Sober to Spread the Holiday Cheer

• Drunk driving fatalities occur all year round, but data shows that the holiday season is a particularly dangerous time on the roadways.
• In 2011, 760 people lost their lives as a result of drunk-driving-related crashes during the month of December alone.
• From 2007 to 2011, 14,318 people lost their lives during December. Twenty-nine percent (4,169) died in crashes that involved drivers with blood alcohol concentrations of .08 grams per deciliter or higher.
• Whether you’ve had just one or one too many, hand the keys to a sober driver. Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving.
• Your decisions can be the difference between life and death. When you drink and drive, you are endangering yourself, your passengers, and those on the road around you.
• Drunk driving can result in arrest, loss of driving privileges, higher insurance rates, lost time at work, court costs, fines, attorney’s fees, and many other unwanted consequences.
• For more information on Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving, please visit www.TrafficSafetyMarketing.gov.

Remember, Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving

• According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 22,647 people were killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2011, and 31 percent (9,078) of those fatalities occurred in drunk-driving-related crashes.
• Even one drink can increase the risk of a crash while driving. Remember: Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving.
• Designate a sober driver before the party begins; plan a way to get home safely at the end of the night.
• If you are impaired, call a taxi, phone a sober friend or family member, use public transportation or call your local free ride program.
• Be responsible. If someone you know is drinking, do not let that person get behind the wheel.
• If you see an impaired driver on the road, contact law enforcement. Your actions may save someone’s life or inaction could cost a life.

Don’t Turn Your Holiday into a Tragedy

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I was an Airman First Class stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., who had been in the Air Force for all of six months. It was my first assignment; I didn’t know anyone that well, so it got a bit lonely during the cold winter months. During our Christmas break, another Airman in my shop came to my dorm room early one morning to see if I wanted to go snowboarding at the nearby Deer Mountain Resort with a few guys. Now mind you, I had never snowboarded before, but wanted to impress the guys, maybe actually make a few friends in the process. When asked if I snowboarded, the answer came just a bit too quickly, “Of course.”

Over the next few hours, I packed the warmest clothing I had and went to the chow hall for some food to go. Then I headed over to the base library to Google “How to snowboard.” Around noon, there was a knock on my door asking if I was ready to go. We all loaded into a beat-up 1986 Ford Bronco. This was when the problems began.
An hour into the trip the truck died, it just shut off in the middle of nowhere. No one brought a cell phone, so my recall roster was useless as was calling a tow truck. Around 3:00 p.m. the weather decided to add to our misery. The temperature dropped to about 20 degrees, and it began to snow—hard. Almost 16 inches of snow fell in a matter of two hours.

The snow then turned to freezing rain while the temperature went down to 15 degrees with a wind chill of minus 10. So we had four Airmen packed in a dead vehicle, with no one else in sight, little food (I was the only one to bring anything), no phone, and a foot of snow on top of us. We were slowly beginning to freeze into a giant block of ice.

Around 6:00 p.m. we heard a rumbling sound in the distance. A minivan pulled up next to us to ask if we needed help. The driver was a master sergeant, taking his family home after a day of skiing at the very resort we were trying to get to. He gave us a jump start, and after a few tries the ancient vehicle slowly returned to life.

Now this master sergeant looked in the eyes and told us it’s probably a good idea to head home. In this situation, we had two options. We could head straight back to the base to our nice warm rooms or keep going to the resort. In this situation, we had two options.

An hour into the trip the truck died, it just shut off in the middle of nowhere. No one brought a cell phone, and not one of us had a decent amount of food since we got stuck in the blizzard. Starting to see where this is going?

After a few tries, I began to get the hang of snowboarding, and I was able to go a little further down the hill without falling. As my head got bigger with thoughts of being a high and mighty snowboarder, my sense of judgment got worse. Somewhere down the track, I hit a small rock (hidden by the recent snowfall), which threw me into a bigger rock on the side of the track. I was knocked out cold for 10 minutes before I tried to sit up. I was so dizzy, I could barely stand, much less walk. Finally, as the throbbing in my head subsided, I took a few steps to try and find my board and my friends. The first step was okay. It was on my second or third step I realized something was wrong with my ankle, and I collapsed back down to the snow-covered ground in agony. There I was stuck in the snow, with no phone, and my friends had probably already made their way to the bottom of the track to enjoy hot cocoa in the lounge. I sat in the freezing cold all alone with an injured ankle, a monster headache, and a terrible feeling of hopelessness. I screamed for help for what seemed like an eternity. I don’t remember much else before I passed out again.

A few hours later, I woke up in the local emergency room to the relieved faces of the guys I went out with, my supervisor, and the first sergeant. Turns out that one of the guys I was with realized I was missing and called the proper authorities. They found me lying face up, half buried in snow. In the end, I walked out of the hospital (on crutches) with a sprained ankle, a concussion, and minor frost bite on my fingers and toes.

Turned out, I was only stuck there for 2 hours, so you can see how fast the harmful effects of winter’s cold can set in. When I returned to my duty section a week later, I was called into the commander’s office for a little talk. My supervisor and flight chief were behind me as the commander began his briefing.

The first thing he asked me was what I could have done differently to prevent this accident. It all came to me in a rush, in what alcoholics refer to as “a moment of clarity.” Maybe I should have told the guys that I had never been snowboarding before. Maybe I should have called my boss to let him know where we were going. Maybe we should have heeded the warnings from the master sergeant who said it was a good idea to head home.
Oh, Deer!!

Driving Tips You Can Live With!

BY ANONYMOUS

W

While driving to work one cold morning in January, I had what I hope was a once in a lifetime experience. I rounded the flight line on base and entered into a densely wooded area. Without notice, a deer darted into traffic. Although I was driving cautiously and within the speed limit, there just wasn’t any way to avoid it. I hit the deer head-on killing it instantly. My fellow early morning commuters stopped to ensure I didn’t need any medical attention and called the Security Police. One driver, who I assumed was an avid hunter, stopped and requested authority to keep the deer for the meat.

Although it was a startling experience, and one I never want to experience again, I learned a valuable lesson. It’s just human nature to grow comfortable within one’s daily routine and become complacent while doing everyday activities. I learned that I needed to be more aware of my surroundings and watchful for wildlife, and other driving hazards, even while on base.

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, there are more than 1.5 million deer-vehicle collisions each year resulting in approximately 150 deaths, thousands of injuries and over $1 billion in vehicle damage. The majority of vehicle accidents involving deer occur from October to January, which is the deer migration and mating season. As we approach the winter months, please take the time to follow the simple safety precautions listed above.

In summary, watch out for deer because they aren’t watching for you. Drive Smart, Drive Safe, Drive Sober!

Routine Safety Precautions:
• Always wear your seat belt.
• Don’t drink and drive.
• Don’t use your cell phone and drive and no texting.
• Maintain safe speeds, taking into account both weather and road conditions.
• Keep a watch out for wildlife, especially while driving through wooded areas.
• At night, when there is no opposing traffic, use high-beams to illuminate the deer’s eyes.

When Approaching A Deer:
• Reduce your speed and sound the horn to scare the deer away from the roadway.
• If the deer doesn’t react to the horn, pull over and turn on your hazard lights. Wait until the deer leaves the roadway before proceeding on.
• Do NOT attempt to drive around the deer!!
• Do NOT swerve to avoid the deer. If a collision is going to happen, you need to be in complete control of your vehicle when it does.

If Your Vehicle Does Hit A Deer:
• To avoid any further injuries, stay in your vehicle. Do NOT approach an injured animal.
• Watch out for more deer, they usually travel in groups.
• If the injured deer is blocking the roadway, contact local law enforcement or the forestry office immediately.

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Just working, walking, playing or even being outside during cold inclement weather can be a hazard in itself. All of our jobs take us outside and into the environment. Whether it’s just to walk across a parking lot, onto a sidewalk and into a building or whether it’s to climb an antenna to repair a piece of equipment. ACC suffered nine on-duty mishaps/injuries last year during the winter months resulting in 32 lost workdays. All the mishaps were a result of workers slipping and falling either on snow/ice covered stairs or just barely ice covered pavement (black ice). Injuries ranged from broken hands/wrist to strained backs/knees. All nine of these mishaps could have been prevented if someone would have taken the time to clear away the ice and snow. If you’re the first one at work in the morning, shovel that snow and/or throw down some ice melt. Be prepared the night before, have the supplies you need already in your building. Obviously slow down, take small steps, use handrails and use extreme caution when walking and working anywhere around the base!

Snow plows can definitely remove some snow, but so can snow blowers and snow shovels. There are dangers with using each of these pieces of equipment and we want to highlight some of those dangers and give you some suggestions to prevent injuries. Let’s start with huge trucks with huge blades going down streets or in parking lots full of cars and possibly kids. The men and women performing these tasks are usually up very early to try and clear the runway, taxiways, parking ramps, roadways, parking lots and all other areas as prioritized by the base’s snow removal plan. One of the best things we can do is to stay out of the way and give them the right of way. Also, make sure your kids are off the street when they are coming down the road!

Driving a 30-ton, loaded snowplow requires full attention and special driving skills. Driving behind or near a snowplow requires patience and some common sense. Following is a list of reasons why not to crowd the snow plow:
• Avoid a shower of road salt. Give peace of mind—Let the snowplow drivers concentrate on clearing the roadway and worry less about tailgaters.
• Improve visibility—Like other big trucks, snowplows have poor visibility on the sides and behind the vehicle. Remember that if you can’t see the driver’s side mirrors, he or she can’t see you.
• Increased stopping distance—Maintaining at least three times the normal following distance gives you plenty of time to slow down.

Can the snow plow driver see you?

According to the 2009 US Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 6,000 people were injured using snow blowers. Severe cuts and broken or crushed bones are often the injuries and actually two-thirds of the injuries involve fingers and commonly lead to finger amputations.

Injury Causes:
• Snow clogging the exit chute of the machine
• Not noticing that the impeller blades are still rotating even though the machine is off
• Attempts to clean the clogged chute with hands
• Hands connect with the rotating blades

If your snow blower jams:
• Turn it OFF!
• Disengage the clutch.
• Wait five seconds after shutting machine off to allow impeller blades to stop rotating.
• ALWAYS use a stick or broom handle to clear impacted snow.
• NEVER reach down the chute or around blades.
• Keep all shields in place.
• Keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
• DO NOT DRINK before using your snow blower!

Shoveling Snow – The most common injuries associated with snow shoveling include sprains and strains, particularly in the back and shoulders. You can minimize the risks by:

Choosing a good shovel
Look for one with a curved handle to minimize how much you have to bend.

Warming up
Walk & stretch before you begin.

Avoid twisting
Try to push snow instead of lifting and throwing it to the side.

Using your legs
If you must lift snow, lift with your legs and not your back.

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Last Year’s Holiday/Winter Mishaps by the Numbers

During this time period most of us will take some time off to visit our family, friends or to relax. Holidays are a festive time and parties to celebrate often involve alcohol. A solid plan is a must when drinking alcohol anytime. There were three pedestrian mishaps during this period. Alcohol was involved in all three and one resulted in a Class A fatality. Even a pedestrian risks his life when walking in the roadway intoxicated.

Setting physical training goals and just getting outside to enjoy activities during this time period is common. The football season is almost over, basketball is just beginning and many of us have decided to start training to meet our new goals. During this period there were nine football, three basketball one boxing and several miscellaneous mishaps. There was one fire that didn’t involve cooking.

An individual placed a box on top of an electrical stove that was in the on position. The box caught fire and caused $86K in damages to the home. Stay within your limitations when exercising, and never leave combustible materials on your stove.

Summary
PMV and sports and recreation mishaps account for the majority of our off duty mishaps and fatalities. Plan your trip before leaving. Get your car ready. Consider the weather and the amount of time it takes to travel long distances. Don’t exceed your limitations when exercising. Ease into your new training goals. Never leave combustible materials on top of a stove and know what to do in the event of a grease fire. You can be festive; if you drink, do it responsibly. Have a solid plan and come back safely.

Air Force Class A Mishaps
- 9 Class A Mishaps
- 8 Fatalities
- 1 Permanent Total Disability (On-Duty)
- Private motor vehicle mishaps accounted for five of the nine Class A mishaps.
- A positive tox test was confirmed in one PMV4 and two pedestrian mishaps.

ACC Class A-C Mishaps
- 2 Class A Mishaps
- 3 Class B
- 118 Class C

There were 123 Class A, B and C mishaps submitted during this time period. There were 20 PMV4 mishaps. Of the PMV4 mishaps there was one Class A fatality and three involved alcohol or drugs. Also during this period there were 14 PMV2 mishaps. Nine of the 14 mishaps were single vehicle mishaps that involved operator error. Alcohol or drugs were a factor in two of these mishaps. Alcohol and drugs don’t mix with vehicle operations.

During this time period there were 20 PMV4 mishaps. Of the PMV4 mishaps there was one Class A fatality and three involved alcohol or drugs. Also during this period there were 14 PMV2 mishaps. Nine of the 14 mishaps were single vehicle mishaps that involved operator error. Alcohol or drugs were a factor in two of these mishaps. Alcohol and drugs don’t mix with vehicle operations.

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