

Air Education and Training Command's

TORCH

May/June 2011

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.....*What is the cause of most aviation accidents?*

"Usually it is because someone does too much too soon, followed very quickly by too little too late."

— Steve Wilson
National Transportation Safety Board investigator, 1996



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Col. CREIG A. RICE
AETC director of safety

WALK THE WALK

With the Critical Days of Summer upon us, it's not only time to talk the talk; it's time to walk the walk.

Many people think risk management is something they just do at work — when they are out on the flight line around multi-million dollar aircraft or turning dirt with a bulldozer. I would offer that risk management should transcend everything we do.

For example, the Air Education and Training Command safety office recently did an offsite teambuilding exercise at the base trap and skeet range. You might recall seeing an article in Torch a while back about shotgun safety and an example of an experienced shooter taking part of his foot off at the skeet range. Needless to say, before we started shooting, we took the time to ensure everyone was trained on the task at hand, had the proper protective gear and understood the inherent risk involved in the activity as well as the mitigation efforts. ... This is the type of risk management that has to be part of how we do business.

Since AETC is the "First Command" for our Airmen, instilling a culture of risk management, both on and off duty, with our young Airmen is our job ... the buck stops with us. Statistics tell us that males, age 18 to 25, are the ones most likely to abandon sound risk management practices and be injured or killed in a risky activity. As leaders, instructors, trainers and educators, the example we set in this command helps shape our young Airmen and, in turn, our Air Force ... many times in ways we don't even imagine.

As leaders, instructors, trainers and educators, the example we set in this command helps shape our young Airmen and in turn, our Air Force ... many times in ways we don't even imagine."

A civilian employee in the command recently relayed a story to us that illustrated this point well. She told us that she had gotten into the bad habit of tailgating while driving. She always seemed to be in a hurry and knew she followed people too closely. But because she had at least 20 years of driving experience, her reaction time and instincts — and maybe a little luck — had thus far helped her to avoid an accident.

What she didn't account for, though, is how well her young son was picking up on her bad habits. As he rode with her year after year, he was gaining a sense of what a "safe" driving distance was. When he finally reached driving age, he fell right into his mom's risky patterns. However, he did so without the benefit of her years of driving experience and instincts.

The result wasn't tough to predict. Her son had four fender benders over the next 18 months. Luckily, none of them led to any injuries or fatalities, but it did hurt the pocketbook in terms of body shop fees and rising insurance premiums.

When it comes to risk management, just as anything in life, you never know who will be watching — and learning — from you.

'BEGGING THEM TO DO MORE...'

I read your article about the Britt family and the impact on them because of the actions of a drunk driver ("Orphaned," March/April 2011 issue, page 8). I've been associated with Mothers Against Drunk Driving in the past and have contacted local officials about the issue begging them to do more to reduce drunk driving in Bexar County, Texas. Very poignant, sad article ... nice job.

Tom Gates
Randolph Air Force Base, Texas



UNIMAGINABLE

While reading the article "Orphaned" in the March/April 2011 Torch (cover story), I couldn't get the tears to stop flowing and nearly went through a box of Kleenex. I have a beautiful 4-year-old son who depends on his dad and me for everything. As much as he brings smiles to our faces each and every day, we do the same for him. So I can't imagine how terrified and lost he would feel if we suddenly one day simply never came

home, much like what happened to little Nathaniel Britt when his parents were taken from him by such a careless act. If a story like this doesn't touch people and make them think twice about drinking and driving, then nothing will. I am happy that Nathaniel has his grandma and grandpa and other extended family members to comfort and care for him, but how sad and tragic that he will never get to hold his parents again.

Emma Moore
Via e-mail

LETTERS TO TORCH

Have a comment or complaint? Letters to Torch may be sent via e-mail to:

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DISTRACTED DRIVER EQUALS TRAIN WRECK

In the story "Train Cuts Car in Half" in the March/April 2011 Torch ("Tales of the Strange," page 6), Adam Brimmer, defending himself for driving his car in front of a moving train, said he was lighting a cigarette while driving and no warning lights flashed on the track until the last instant. Hmmm ... can anyone say distracted driver?

Senior Airman T.J. Williamson
Air National Guard

A 'ROCK STAR'

I am adding the January/February 2011 Torch article "Emergency in the Talon!" to our Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps detachment Web site (www.det825.org).

Maj. Ogre Christoffer is a University of Texas and detachment alum. I'll add the PDF version of the article because it has a picture of Ogre. ... He is a "rock star" around here.

Col. Christopher Bowman
Austin, Texas



by Tech. Sgt. Samuel Bender

A DAUGHTER'S BITTER-SWEET MEMORIES

Below are excerpts from a letter sent by Dania Britt, 19-year-old daughter of Tech. Maurice Britt, who was killed, along with his wife, Tech. Sgt. Audra Britt, when a drunk driver struck them nearly two years ago. The letter is in response to an article we printed as the cover story of our March/April 2011 issue of Torch titled "Orphaned." To see the full letter, visit our Web site at www.torch.aetc.af.mil and click on the Torch Talk section.

I live in Kentucky where my grandparents, Dantine and Joyce Britt, and the rest of my family reside. I attend Jefferson Community and Technical College in downtown Louisville, studying to be a phlebotomist. None of my teachers or classmates would ever guess that I've had a ball of disaster roll through my life.

My daddy's name is Tech. Sgt. Maurice Britt, though most people knew him simply as "Reese" or "Cheeks." He was killed by a drunk driver April 5, 2009, in Austin, Texas.

My relationship with my daddy was weird as he was always in another country or another state because of his occupation in the Air Force. I didn't get to see him more than a couple times a year. However, when he was around we had a lot of fun. We would make sure we went to an amusement park, go swimming or do some kind of daddy-daughter time while he was home, which was very special to me. He would make me learn how to work things on my computer while I made him new CDs to blast in his car.

I remember when my daddy and I were riding in his car singing a song together and we sounded so good — in perfect harmony. Also, we would run around the house hiding behind things to pop out and scare each other. His hands were so big, he could dry my face after coming out of the pool with one hand. The last time he came home, which was in January 2009, Audra (my stepmother) and Nathaniel (my half brother) came with him.

When I heard about my daddy's passing, it was around 9 a.m. while I was getting ready for my second day at work. My grandfather told my grandmother and me that Audra and my daddy were in a bad

accident. He then went on to tell us that Audra was in critical condition, and my daddy didn't make it. As soon as I heard that, I told my granddaddy to "stop playing" because I didn't think that was funny. But when I saw him cry, I knew it was real.

I ran down the steps screaming, "Bring my daddy home!"

I didn't know what to do; I was so lost. I had just talked to him the day before and then he was gone that fast. Then I had to tell my daddy's sister (Sheila Webster) and niece (Akeisha Belcher), and that was the hardest news to bear. I heard Aunt Sheila screaming while I stood outside of her house as her daughter quietly cried.

I asked Audra's father (Ronald Lee) what happened, and he said a drunk driver hit them. By the time he said that, I felt as if I couldn't cry anymore because I didn't have any tears left. I told my family what happened, and everyone was so shocked because that was the last thing to come to our minds.

My grandparents were so hurt when my daddy was killed because he was their only son. My grandmamma was so sad, and she always cries when she thinks about him. On his birthday this year, April 12, she told me she just looked at his picture and sobbed. When it comes to my granddaddy, I've never ever in my whole life saw any man that hurt. He and my daddy were best friends. When my daddy was killed, my granddaddy couldn't hold a complete conversation with anyone. That hurt me so bad to see that because Granddaddy is my "superman" and to see him cry was like the world coming to an end.

At the funeral, when the family was walking in, I put my black and yellow graduation tassel in my daddy's hand so he would have his official invitation. As the choir sang "God

Is," my granddaddy stood up with my little brother, Nathaniel, in his arms. Nate asked granddaddy if he was sad. When he said, "Yes," Nate responded, "Me too." I think that really touched my grandfather's heart because Nate is so young (now 6, but 4 at the time).

My daddy has missed and will miss some of the most important events in my life because of his death, such as my senior prom, my graduation, my marriage and the birth of my children. ...

One thing I want people to learn from this sad event is that tomorrow is not promised, and you should never take life for granted. Make peace with whoever it may be in your life that you need to, and please don't drink and drive because you never know who you will affect. Nathaniel and I no longer have a daddy, and we no longer have a mother/stepmother because of this tragedy. In the end we only have each other and God.

*Dania Britt
Louisville, Ky.*



Courtesy of the Britt family

Tech. Sgt. Maurice Britt spends time with his daughter Dania before he was killed by a drunk driver, April 5, 2009.

PREVENTION AND RESILIENCY

By Gen. **EDWARD A. RICE JR.**

The summer of 2010 will go down as one of the best ever in regard to safety and mishap prevention in Air Education and Training Command. It's the first summer in our history that not a single active-duty military member lost his or her life because of a preventable mishap, whether on or off duty. This is truly an outstanding accomplishment, and I applaud each of you for coming together to reach such a lofty goal.

But I also want to caution you that despite this record, AETC did not finish the summer unscathed, as two of our Airmen took their own lives. Each was a tragic event and represents an alarming trend of suicides in our military. To repeat our successes of last year and continue to address suicide prevention, we will again use our Critical Days of Summer campaign to highlight safety and risk management to prevent mishaps and continue our focus on resiliency.

Proper planning and decision making is key to mishap prevention. Each of us should use risk management tools to proactively plan operations, sorties, trips and vacations. As the saying goes — “when you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” However, when individual safety is at risk, the failure to plan is not a viable option.

As supervisors and leaders, we can look at trend data to help focus on risk areas and avoid common or frequent mishaps.

What does the data tell us?

Statistics show that our younger and less experienced Airmen are most likely to be the victim of safety-related mishaps. Furthermore, alcohol will be involved, the accident will occur at night, excessive speeds will be evident, and the victim will not be wearing personal protective equipment, such as a seat belt or helmet.

Our life experiences serve as great instructions that help inform our decision making, but experience comes with age. Our younger generation must rely on training and in some instances, peer experiences.

To make our training effective, I challenge supervisors and leaders to develop safety training that reaches our Airmen, resonates and leaves a “mark” on our Airmen's decision process. While we cannot eliminate bad judgment in every instance, last summer's success demonstrated that a concerted effort and a robust wingman culture can keep mishaps at a minimum.

That said, risk factors such as motorcycle use, alcohol, personal protective gear and fatigue need to be high on our list of important topics to discuss as these critical days of summer approach.

Gen. Philip Breedlove, the Air Force's vice chief of staff, has decreed that 2011 is the “Year of Motorcycle Safety.” Why? There has been a 150-percent increase in motorcycle accidents since January. Five Airmen have lost their lives, and one Airman suffered permanent total disability. Each loss was one too many.

In addition to safety measures, we must continue to focus on our resiliency. Resiliency is a key to help mitigate daily stressors and the ever-changing demands in our lives. Each of us have demonstrated resiliency during our careers. For our military, the ability to complete our various accession and training programs required resiliency. These programs include heavy stressors to ensure members joining our Air Force are able to cope with future challenges. Our civilians, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with us, also experience stress entering the Air Force. And more importantly, they experience many of the same life events and daily stressors that our military members encounter.

When these demands, coupled with those in one's personal life, become too much, Airmen need to reach out to the various resources available to them. It is clear that some are reluctant to do so. As wingmen, we must be looking for the signs of trouble and engage our fellow Airmen early. Our wingman culture requires us to be on the lookout for signs that our fellow Airmen are having trouble coping. There is nothing we do in this command that can't be put aside so we can assist our fellow Airmen.

Individually we must also take steps to increase our resiliency. The ability to recover and grow in the face of the stressors associated with serving our great nation is vital. Each of us copes with our personal stressors differently. In dealing with stress, some turn to spiritual avenues, others hit the gym, and others might bury their problems.

I ask you to examine how you deal with stress and problems. Is it healthy and effective? If the answer is no, take time to speak with a chaplain, mentor, supervisor and/or health professional.

While we kick off the Critical Days of Summer safety campaign, don't forget to enjoy the many opportunities summer offers. Attend your family reunions, take that family vacation, or take some personal time to recharge your batteries. We all need time away from our stressors and the opportunity to reexamine our priorities. But, as you plan your trips, as well as your daily activities, remember that safety should always be a consideration.



“There has been a 150-percent increase in motorcycle accidents since January. Five Airmen have lost their lives, and one Airman suffered permanent total disability. Each loss was one too many.”

— Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr.
AETC commander

General Rice is the commander of Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

A NEW **BATTLE** PLAN FOR SOME SPECIAL OPS AIRMEN



by Alan Beedler

Air Force basic military trainees participate in a swim training session at the Skylark Pool, Lackland AFB, Texas. Swim training is part of the new **Battlefield Airman Technical Training Liaison Element** designed to improve success rates of battlefield Airmen career fields.

LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AETCNS) — Trainees in two Air Force Basic Military Training squadrons have a new “BATTLE” plan in place.

Battlefield Airmen Technical Training Liaison Element, or BATTLE, was recently incorporated for trainees in the 320th and 331st Training Squadrons in the tactical air control party, combat controller and pararescuemen career fields. Pre-screened recruits for these special operations career fields will receive additional training during basic military training to better prepare them for their new jobs.

BATTLE is an additional measure to improve success rates through the TACP, CCT and PJ training pipelines. The extra supervised tutoring also makes the training safer for those who choose this career path.

Following BMT graduation, the journey continues at the 342nd TRS, home to Air Force battlefield Airmen entry-level training. Curriculum includes pararescue indoctrination, TACP and PJ development, and combat control selection courses.

“BATTLE’s purpose is to set those trainees up for success

when they come to the 342nd,” said Master Sgt. Kenneth Huhman, the squadron’s combat training flight superintendent, who is also a combat controller and two-time Bronze Star recipient. “Our job is to prepare those initially qualified trainees. They will be more educated and ready for what is going to happen.

“BATTLE bridges the gap so they know what’s going to be required for the training pipeline,” he said. “The ultimate goal is to make those career fields healthy.”

Huhman said the added instruction starts in the second week of basic military training and continues through week seven. It includes mentoring sessions on Tuesday nights with respective career field instructors or guest speakers. PJ and CCT trainees also have swim training for one hour on Saturday mornings.

“The first two weeks of BMT are intense and a big transition from civilian to military life, so we want the trainees to get acclimated,” he said. “After the first two weeks, they’ll receive this additional training as they are available on Tuesdays and Saturdays.”

In the mentoring groups, instructors from TACP, CCT and PJ meet with their career field trainees for open forums, discussions and one-on-one sessions. Recent career field graduates and experienced Airmen provide additional support to the mentoring program.

Areas addressed during the sessions include mental preparation, physical training requirements throughout the various stages, expectations for team or operational squadron assignments and health maintenance.

“The sessions are concluded with a real world story from an instructor or guest speaker in relation to that specific career field,” Huhman said. “In some sessions, we’ll have recent graduates talk about how to be successful in a course.”

For the PJ and CCT trainees in swim training, an instructor and coach are available at the hourly sessions to tutor and improve technique. This additional training should improve graduation rates and provide an extra measure of risk management.

“Some (who didn’t know how to swim) were able to pass the course requirements by gutting it out,” Huhman said. “This training teaches the proper swimming techniques so they’ll be prepared for our swim course.”

The training superintendent said BATTLE serves as a motivational tool, familiarizes military training instructors about battlefield Airmen career fields, provides more career field information, speeds up immersion into 342nd courses, and theoretically decreases attrition.

He said the hope for BATTLE was to decrease training elimination rates while increasing risk management measures. Current training elimination rates average 50 to 80 percent in the three career fields.

“My assumption is it should reduce attrition,” Huhman said. “Trainees will know the proper testing requirements from day 1. We don’t have to assume they have the knowledge.

“We’ll trim the edges and build a foundation for those that fit the initial mold so they’ll be ready to accept the challenges in the selection courses. If we help to better prepare one Airman, the program will be a success.”

— Mike Joseph
502nd Air Base Wing OL-A Public Affairs

CAR STRIKES AIRMAN DOING PUSHUPS



by Tech. Sgt. Samuel Bender

When a car ran over an Airman doing pushups in a parking garage, the Airman suffered a severe right ankle sprain, contusions and lacerations to his right leg and left arm, and was placed on seven days quarters.

A car ran over an Airman from Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., while the Airman was doing pushups in an off-base parking garage.

The Airman suffered a severe right ankle sprain, contusions and lacerations to his right leg and left arm, and was placed on seven days quarters. But according to Air Education and Training Command occupational safety manager Robbie Bogard, the Airman was lucky.

"A parking garage is no place to be conducting PT (physical training)," Bogard said. "The driver of the vehicle didn't see the Airman, so he was very fortunate he wasn't killed or permanently injured."

The Airman and three coworkers had jogged from an off-base recreational facility

to a casino a mile away. Upon reaching the casino, the four individuals decided to sprint up the six-story casino parking garage, stopping at the top of the ramp at each level to do calisthenics. At the top level of the parking garage, where the ramp leading to the upper level meets the parking surface, the Airman and his coworkers stopped and began doing pushups in the driving lane.

As the Airman attempted his pushups, a driver turned right into the driving lane to descend and exit the parking garage. The vehicle struck and rolled over the Airman's right leg with the front passenger side tire, briefly dragging him. The driver stopped his car with the Airman trapped between the front and rear tires. The Airman's coworkers

cleared him from underneath the vehicle. They then called the Airman's supervisor, who arrived within eight minutes and transported him to the on-base hospital. However, the friends should have actually called 911 to ensure the victim received immediate medical attention, Bogard said.

The Airman stated he had never before conducted any physical training activity at a parking garage and had not considered the inherent dangers.

"The Airman set out to improve his health, but it was a poor risk management decision to conduct PT in a parking garage," Bogard said. "On the bright side, the Airman will live and learn from this incident ... and, hopefully, others will as well."

IMPALED BY GUARDRAIL

A Suburban was impaled by a guardrail when its driver, a 22-year-old man, fell asleep at the wheel while driving on I-90 in Washington state.

When the driver dozed off, his vehicle drifted off the shoulder of the road, hitting the end section of guardrail. The rail came through the right headlight, engine compartment, firewall, glove box, passenger seat, rear seat and exited out the driver's side rear window. Some 120 feet of metal guardrail threaded through the Suburban.

The driver must have had a lucky rabbit's foot for a keychain. He was not injured, and there were no passengers in the vehicle.

Narrowly missing the driver, nearly 120-feet of metal guardrail smashed through this sport utility vehicle when its driver fell asleep at the wheel.



Courtesy photo

TEST YOUR SURVIVOR INSTINCTS

MILITARY TAKES AIM AT OFF-DUTY MISHAPS

FORT MONROE, Va. — Senior Army leaders are using interactive simulations in their battle against off-duty accidents and fatalities, and are now offering the technology to members of every military service.

While significantly cutting the number of on-duty accidents in recent years, the percentage of service members suffering avoidable accidents while off duty continues to be a major concern. This prompted officials to search for innovative tools to capture service member interest in preventing mishaps.

As a way of promoting the fight against off-duty accidents, the Army Training and Doctrine Command, based in Fort Monroe, Va., worked with Maryland-based contractor WILL Interactive to produce a virtual experience immersive learning simulation entitled “Off Duty, On Guard.”

“Off Duty, On Guard,” which is computer-based, runs users through safety scenarios featuring real actors and allows users to play the parts of the various characters, make decisions and see the consequences of their choices. The vignettes are entertaining and are based on actual accident experiences. The storylines and characters are believable, easy to identify with, and convey a message of “how to do it right” when prudent, reasonable choices are made.

Other simulations using this technology tackle subjects such as leadership, suicide prevention, ethics and additional topics important to military life and are already in use across the Department of Defense and the services.

According to Dave Prentice, TRADOC safety director, the video was “designed to appeal to young gamers who are used to gaming technology and are also major victims of off-duty mishaps. In addition to soldiers, this video is appropriate for members of other services as well as the civilian population at large. It has been well received and endorsed by educators and safety professionals as an innovative approach to altering dangerous behaviors.”

The video is split into two stories, “Full Throttle” and “On the Waterfront.”

“Full Throttle” features three main characters (Mags, Vans and Twitchy) with three different storylines, each deals with vehicle safety issues. Mags’ story deals primarily with privately owned vehicle safety. Vans’ segment covers all-terrain vehicles and off-road safety. And Twitchy’s video covers motorcycle safety.

“On the Waterfront” is a story about six service members spending a Saturday on the lake, and the focus is on boating and water safety. There are also three main characters (Frickman, Diaz and Grimes) who play major roles in this vignette. Unlike “Full Throttle,” there is only one storyline and choosing the different characters allows the user to experience how each action (or inaction) affects outcomes.

Viewers choose characters and get to “spend a day in their shoes” while navigating through a series of activities and decisions. Along the way, users are given behavior choices. Some choices result in happy endings; some do not. This

allows users to play it out before they live it out with potentially fatal consequences. The simulation allows players to direct the course of the script throughout the video by their choice at each decision point.

The simulation is applicable across all services because the characters and the plot lines are not innately Army-oriented. With the story playing out while the characters are off duty, their appearance and behavior allows any service member or civilian to identify with them.

“Off Duty, On Guard” addresses the major causes of automobile, motorcycle, all-terrain vehicle and boating accidents in an entertaining medium that teaches rather than preaches. Simulation users get to virtually experience potentially tragic events, learn their lessons without harm and live to play another day.

The engaging simulation comes with a 60-second promotional presentation and facilitators’ guide embedded in it. It’s extremely user friendly and can be presented in a variety of ways (individual, small groups, classroom). It’s available now for summer off-duty safety campaigns at www.tradoc.army.mil/offdutyonguard/.

Remember, this tool is not a magic solution to solve all off-duty safety challenges. It is only the beginning of many potentially productive conversations; how productive they are depends on how effectively the tool is used by leaders across the services.

— Chuck Betoney and Sharon Sloane



“Off Duty, On Guard” is available for summer safety at www.tradoc.army.mil/offdutyonguard/.

Mr. Betoney is the deputy director, Safety and Occupational Health, Army Training and Doctrine Command. Ms. Sloane is the chief executive officer of WILL Interactive.



Cruising down the highway,
Staff Sgt. Kevin Barton rides his 2006
Buell Firebolt XB 12R on the rural
roads of Jessup, Ga., using a
prosthesis on his left leg.



PEDAL TO THE **METAL**

Airman still rides motorcycle after losing leg in crash

By **TIM BARELA**
Photos by Tech. Sgt. **SAMUEL BENDET**

Lying there in the road with the cold bite of winter making him shiver, Staff Sgt. Kevin Barton couldn't understand why this lady didn't want him to get up. He knew he'd been in an accident, but he wanted to stand and do a quick inventory of his "baby" ... a custom 2004 Harley-Davidson Sportster 1200.

But the stranger kept insisting he stay lying down. Confused, the 20-year-old Airman obeyed — not from the lady's persistence but more because he started feeling an intense pain in his left leg. What was happening? His leg felt like it was on fire. And as more people arrived and started working on him, it felt as though someone had put his leg in a vice and kept twisting it, while at the same time beating it with a sledgehammer.

Suddenly, Barton felt tired and all he wanted to do was go to sleep. But this lady ... she wouldn't quit talking to him. "What's your mother's name? Where does she live? Tell me about her?" ... Why wouldn't she shut up? He just wanted her to go away so he could sleep ... and make the pain disappear.

While making a left-hand turn, an inattentive driver smashed her Lincoln Continental Town Car into Barton and his Harley Nov. 2, 2007, in Jessup, Ga. A Georgia Air National Guardsman, Barton had been on his way to work at about 7:30 in the morning and was traveling 40 mph through an intersection when the luxury vehicle struck him. The impact tossed his 5-foot-7 frame in the air like a ragdoll, and he landed about 80 feet from the collision ... flying part of the way and bouncing and skidding the rest.

What he didn't know at the time was that he was also 80 feet from his left leg.

"As soon as the car hit me, it severed my leg below the knee and exploded 6 inches of femur out of my thigh," Barton said. "As I lay there on the ground, I had no idea my leg was missing because I could still feel it."

And what he felt was an agonizing pain from his upper thigh to his toes.

An emergency helicopter arrived, and sometime during the flight he lost consciousness. The pain finally stopped. But as he later found out, so did his heart and breathing.

"Basically, I died on the helicopter, and the emergency medical folks had to bring me back during the flight," he said. "I had lost a lot of blood, so it was a miracle that I survived."

Barton didn't find out he'd lost his leg until he woke up in the hospital in Savannah, Ga., five days later.

"My mom and dad were there, and I just remember thinking, 'This sucks,'" he said.

At the time of the accident, Barton was a tactical air combat party member getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan. TACPs are the Airmen on the ground who "hang out" with combat Army patrols to call in airstrikes against enemy targets. It's a tough, dangerous, physically demanding job that Barton loved. But it's a job he'd never get to do again ... not after his injury.

For a while, the Airman worried about all he might not be able to do. He was an outdoorsman who loved fishing, hunting, camping, running and backpacking. He also played a variety of sports to include volleyball, softball, bowling and soccer. He was nowhere near ready to give those things up.

But before he could even consider going back to those types of activities, he had to get out of the hospital.

"You have to come to accept that, hey, you've lost a leg, and you have to move on with your life," he said. "You can't sit there and drown in it for the rest of your life or you're not going to get anywhere; it's going to be a miserable life. So you need to lean on God and family. The only way you can make it is to wake up every morning and find a reason to smile."

Easier said than done at times.

He spent a month in the hospital and had only one surgery that left him with his leg amputated at the middle of his knee. But over the next two years, infections and poor bone health at the injury site led to nearly a dozen more surgeries. And it seemed with each operation, his leg got shorter and shorter.

"I had my last surgery in May 2009, and it left me with only about 4 inches of my leg bone," said Barton, who is now 24.

He said he was "bummed" when he got that news, because the longer the leg is, the easier it is to use a prosthetic. It stirred the emotions of going through the original amputation all over again. Another big blow was learning he could no longer be a TACP.

But the Airman proved to be resilient.

During his recovery, he ran into a girl he knew from high school. They began dating, fell head over heels in love and married a year later (Feb. 13, 2010).

"Meagan has been a big source of my strength," Barton said. "She's a beautiful person."

Then this past November, he cross-trained into cyber transport after completing six months of training at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. He is now assigned to the 165th Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center and works at the Townsend Bombing Range in Townsend, Ga.

"Kevin doesn't go for being homebound," his new bride said. "He has to be out and about. After his last surgery, he recovered very fast. I like to think I served as a little bit of therapy for him ... another reason to get up and moving."

As a matter of fact, Barton has been so determined, he's hardly slowed down at all.

"I'm not going to try to say I'm the same as I was before, but I am able to do most of the same activities ... just not in the same way," said Barton, who claims he still sometimes feels phantom pain where his left leg used to be that he describes as cramping in his calf or toes.

Regardless, he's done everything from hiking to volleyball.

"As I lay there on the ground, I had no idea my leg was missing because I could still feel it."



Barton needed more than a leg to stand on to get through grueling rehab; he needed a strong support system, which he got in the form of family members like his mom, Wanda (left) and wife, Meagan.



“You have to keep a sense of humor,” says Barton as he rotates his prosthetic leg 180 degrees to use as an armrest.

Perhaps surprisingly, another activity he has returned to is riding motorcycles.

“I just love to ride,” said Barton, who now straddles a 2006 Buell Firebolt XB 12R. “It’s fun. It’s exciting. It’s fast. It’s only me, the road and the wind.”

Well, that’s not entirely accurate. There are those *other* drivers who share the road.

“Yes, you do have to worry about the other guy,” Barton said. “I wore bright neon orange and had my lights on, but the person who hit me still didn’t see me.”

So what advice does he give to other motorcyclists to survive the road?

“Don’t ride,” he said with a chuckle.

Then he added, “First, wear your protective equipment. I probably wouldn’t have survived at all if I hadn’t been wear-

ing my helmet and other protective gear. And secondly, watch out for the other guy. There are so many other drivers on the roads nowadays, and they all seem to be distracted with texting or talking on the phone, eating, reading or putting makeup on. They are in their own little world. But you just have to be extra careful, and you should be OK.”

Just don’t try to convince his mother of that.

“I don’t like that he still rides,” said Wanda Barton, who claimed her son looked as if he’d been bombed in a warzone after the crash. “There simply is not enough protection on a motorcycle, and people don’t look out for you. It’s amazing what kind of damage a vehicle can inflict.”

Kevin doesn’t want to worry his mom, but the lure of the mechanical “horse” is too much for him.

He added, “I don’t see myself quitting anytime soon.”✈

HOW TO AVOID HITTING A **MOTORCYCLIST**

“There simply is not enough protection on a motorcycle, and people don’t look out for you. It’s amazing what kind of damage a vehicle can inflict.”



On screen, Barton shares some photos from one of nearly a dozen surgeries performed on his leg. He points out how the rods and screws were beginning to puncture his skin.



Working the tower at Townsend Bombing Range, Ga., Barton had to cross-train from tactical air control party to cyber transporter after the motorcycle mishap severed his leg.

1 Be alert for them. Motorcycles aren’t as easy to see as bigger vehicles so you have to keep an eye out for them. Plus, for many, they are seasonal vehicles, so they appear in larger numbers during warmer weather. You need to be aware of this fact and remain even more diligent as the weather warms. People don’t see motorcycles near as much during the winter months, so when they suddenly appear in droves again, many drivers aren’t as attuned to them. So watch and listen for them ... and use your side mirrors.

2 Always use your turn signals. This gives the cyclist and other drivers time to react to your intentions.

3 Avoid distractions while driving. Don’t text or talk on your cell phone. Don’t fiddle with your global positioning system or radio. And certainly don’t apply your makeup while driving. Anything that takes your eyes off the road even for an instant is like playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette.

4 Never tailgate a motorcycle. A fender bender with another four-wheeled vehicle might do little more than scratch or dent a bumper. But the same small contact with a motorcycle could be deadly. So give yourself plenty of stopping distance.

5 Be careful coming out of intersections or crossroads. Look left; then look right. Don’t get into too much of a hurry. An error in judgment here can be a life and death decision.

— Air Education and Training
Command Ground Safety Division

Arkansas Twister!

Herculean effort lifts base after EF-2 tornado



Airmen and family members work to clear debris from base housing after a tornado struck April 25 at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark. Several families were relocated from damaged homes to base billeting.

Photos by Airman 1st Class **ELLORA STEWART**

Dark clouds swirled overhead as sirens wailed into the night signaling the impending arrival of a tornado.

Base housing residents had enough advance warning to gather their loved ones into a safe place before the tornado struck Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., April 25, as forecasters from the 19th Operations Support Squadron's weather flight tracked and monitored the menacing twister. Homes were damaged and a few suffered minor injuries, but no lives were lost that night thanks to the early warning sirens.

The National Weather Service has assessed the twister that hit the base as an EF-2 tornado on the Enhanced Fujita Scale (111-135 mph) with a 5-mile path that was 1,000 feet wide. The tornado's path extended from three-quarters of a mile east of Gravel Ridge to 6 miles southwest of Cabot.

The tornado damaged more than 100 on-base housing units and three C-130 Hercules aircraft. It also tore roofs off and damaged many buildings in the base's flight line area. But base Airmen dusted off, picked each other up and immediately launched



A damaged C-130 Hercules aircraft sits on the flight line April 26 at Little Rock AFB hours after a tornado struck. The tornado damaged three C-130 aircraft. In addition to aircraft damage, several buildings along the flight line also were damaged.

Airmen work together in an effort to clear debris April 26 at Little Rock AFB after a tornado struck the base at approximately 8 p.m. April 25. Little Rock sustained significant damage to base housing, as well as the base exchange and fire department.



Tornado Sheltering

- In homes and buildings, stay where you're at when a tornado warning is announced. Immediately go to the center part of the lowest level in the smallest room, such as a closet or inner hallway.
- Close all windows, blinds and curtains, and then stay away from the windows. If possible, get under a sturdy piece of furniture, mattress or blanket to cover yourself from the flying debris.
- If in a mobile home or recreational vehicle, get out and get to a solid building.
- If caught outdoors or in a vehicle, park your car and go to a substantial structure, if time permits. If not, get to the nearest low-lying area, ditch or ravine, and lie flat with your hands covering your head.
- Places to avoid taking cover during a tornado include mobile homes, overpasses, upper levels of multi-floored buildings, large free span buildings and low-lying areas that are susceptible to flooding.

— *Courtesy of Emergency Management, Little Rock AFB, Ark.*

recovery efforts to take care of the families who were impacted by the storm.

Only three days after the tornado ravaged parts of Little Rock, power had been restored to approximately 80 percent of the base. And the base's mission rolled on with the early April 28 deployment of Airmen and aircraft from the 50th Airlift Squadron — the first of nearly 20 C-130 Hercules aircraft and 1,000 Airmen slated to leave for operations in Afghanistan and Southwest Asia.

"Our people have done a phenomenal job in taking care

of each other and picking up the pieces after this devastating storm," said Col. Mike Minihan, 19th Airlift Wing commander. "I couldn't be more proud of their efforts to pick each other up, dust off and get ready for another round of severe storms. Our Airmen and their families are truly resilient. It's been a Herculean effort by all."

The base is now focused on providing base families whose lives were turned upside down by the storm with the resources and services needed to get back on their feet. ✪

An aerial photograph of a tropical coastline. The foreground shows a clear, turquoise ocean with a white sandy beach curving along the edge of a lush, green forested hillside. The background features rolling green hills under a slightly overcast sky. The title 'Messin' with Paradise' is overlaid on the top half of the image in a large, elegant script font. 'Messin'' is in white, 'with' is in a smaller, dark green font, and 'Paradise' is in a larger, light green font.

Messin' with Paradise

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. **SAMUEL BENDET**

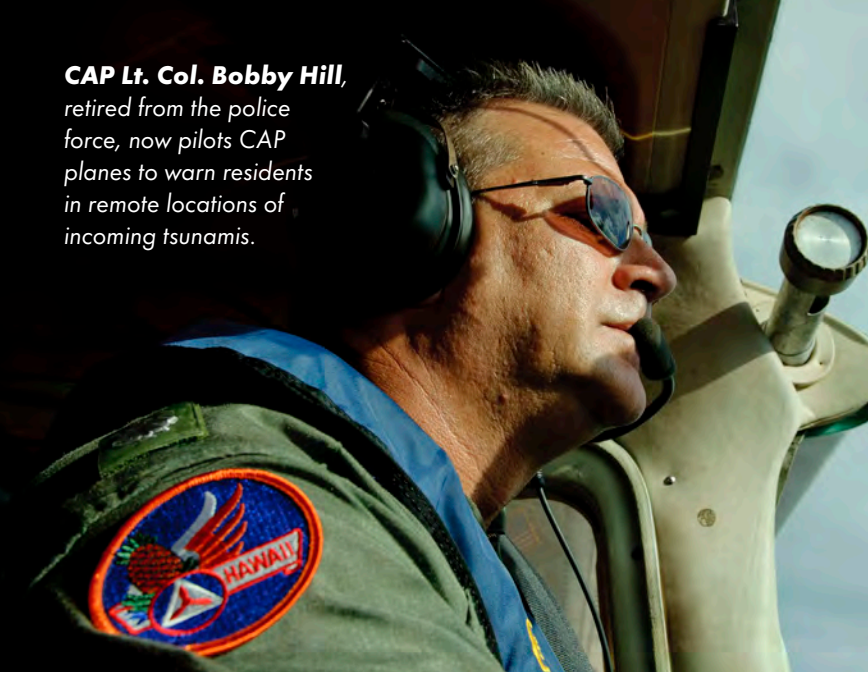
Civil Air Patrol warns residents
and tourists of incoming threats



While Hawaii escaped the kind of devastation suffered by Japan in the March 11 tsunami, it still endured an estimated \$30.6 million in damages. But thanks in part to the Civil Air Patrol's early warning system, there were no fatalities.

CAP Lt. Col. Bobby Hill,

retired from the police force, now pilots CAP planes to warn residents in remote locations of incoming tsunamis.



In February 2010, Hawaii dodged a bullet when an 8.8-magnitude earthquake rocked Chile. Forecasters said that quake should have generated a tsunami that would pummel the Hawaiian Islands.

Instead, it wasn't more than a ripple.

Then, just over a year later on March 11, a 9.0-magnitude quake caused a tsunami that devastated north-east Japan. Again, Hawaii's shores were mostly spared.

But that certainly hasn't always been the case.

Fifty years earlier, when a 9.5-magnitude quake hit Chile, the resulting tsunami "bent Hawaiian parking meters like paperclips," said Josh Clark in his Discovery News article "Are Tsunamis Predictable."

With 85 percent of all tsunamis occurring within the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii leans on the Civil Air Patrol as one of its vital early warning systems.

How important is this mission? The Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 struck land and killed about a quarter of a million people because the area lacked an early warning system.

The Tsunami mission is unique for the CAP in providing critical service to the state of Hawaii.

"Eighty-five percent of the shoreline in Hawaii does not have a fixed base siren," said Hawaii CAP Wing Commander Col. Roger

Caires. "CAP aircraft are the only resource for issuing tsunami warnings where there are no warning sirens or where sirens are inoperative."

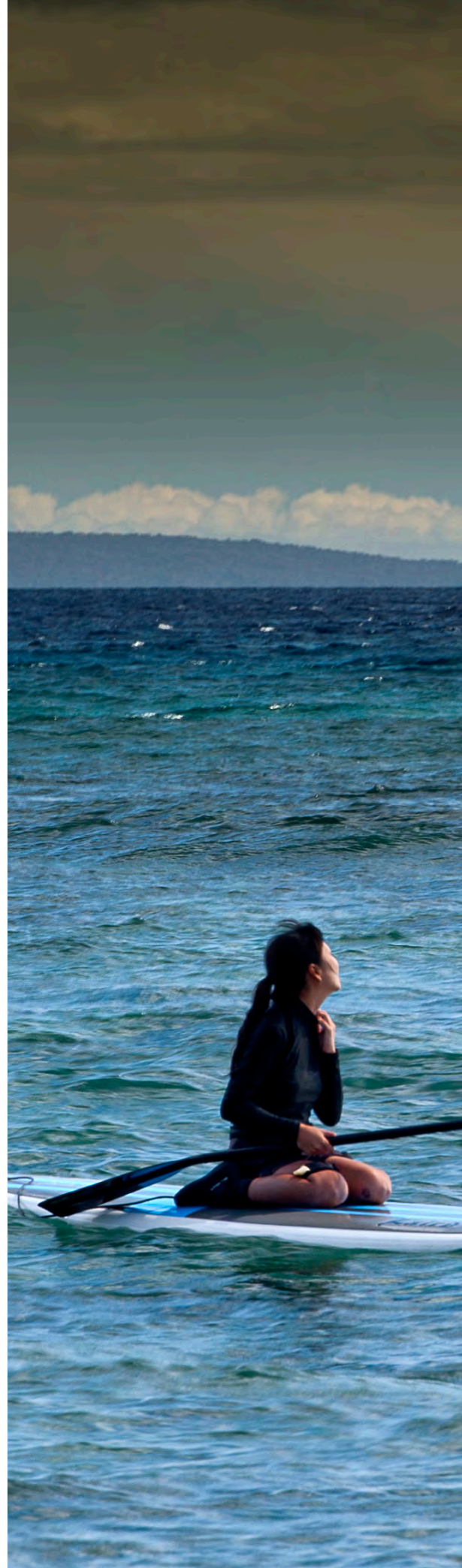
Their efforts helped ensure there were no casualties during the most recent tsunami scare March 11. While that tsunami had nowhere near the impact in Hawaii that it did in Japan, it still caused millions in property damage and produced waves big enough to sweep people out to sea if they hadn't heard and obeyed the warning signals.

"When some folks think of the Hawaiian Islands, they think of Gilligan's Island with a few coconut trees," said Randall Leval, from the CAP's Maui Composite Squadron. "But as you can see, it's quite a large place."

Civil air patrols fly predetermined warning routes around the island to look for anyone on or near low-lying shorelines, Leval said. They sound the tsunami warning siren and, as necessary, broadcast a voice warning via speaker system on the outside portion of each plane's fuselage.

Additionally, the islands have remote areas that have no land-based siren coverage, Leval said.

"So the CAP fills in at those remote areas and also provides warnings for areas where there are reported siren outages," he added. "Because in the real world, you know, equipment doesn't work sometimes." ❁





**Waiting for
the next big wave?**
*This paddle surfer may be.
But she wants no part
of the monster waves
tsunamis produce.*

CIVIL AIR PATROL EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Conducts 90 percent of federal inland search and rescue in the Continental United States, as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and supports Joint Rescue Coordination Centers in Hawaii, Alaska and Puerto Rico.
- Coordinates Air Force-assigned missions through the CAP National Operations Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.
- Performs aerial reconnaissance for counterdrug and homeland security.
- Saves an average of 80 lives per year.
- Provides disaster-relief support to local, state and national disaster relief organizations.
- Transports time-sensitive medical materials, blood products and body tissues.
- Provides aerial and ground damage assessment, light transport, communications support and low-altitude route surveys for the Air Force, Department of Defense, other federal agencies, and state and local partners.
- Assists federal agencies in the war on drugs.

A VITAL LINK

Efforts during tsunami show how cyberspace makes world a safer place

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii — From a windowless vault deep within the Pacific Air Forces Headquarters building, Detachment 1, 561st Network Operations Squadron, Airmen provided the critical network support required to allow more than 770 sorties to deliver aid workers and supplies to earthquake and tsunami torn Japan, starting March 12.

"I'm excited to be part of bringing cyber capabilities to the organizations helping Japan," said Senior Airman Zane Williams, a Detachment 1 directory and authentication services technician. "It's through missions like this relief effort that I'm reminded of the importance of what we do in the Air Force."

The 561st NOS Detachment 1, a sub-organization to the 67th Network Warfare Wing, is one of only five Enterprise Service Units in the Air Force and an extension of the 561st NOS located at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. The detachment delivers core network services and support to create integrated cyberspace effects primarily for the Pacific Air Forces area

of responsibility. By operating 24/7 in support of more than 67,000 customers at 10 bases, Detachment 1 assures command and control and information dominance for Air Force Network Operations and U.S. Cyber Command.

The 9.0-magnitude quake and subsequent tsunami on March 11 temporarily severed computer communications between the continental United States and air bases in Japan, Korea and Guam. As part of what is now called Operation Tomodachi (Japanese for friendship), the assistance operation to support Japan in disaster relief following the Tohoku earthquake and resulting tsunami, Detachment 1 Airmen promptly coordinated repairs between the affected bases and the Defense Information Services Agency. They were able to restore network connectivity in less than five hours.

"The critical focus was to ensure that all equipment providing network core services throughout the Pacific Air Forces theater were online and operational," said Capt. Eric Rudolph, Detachment 1 director of operations. "The cyber capabilities



by Staff Sgt. Semual W. Ouse

Acting as a Japanese translator, Tech. Sgt. Eugene Scott from Misawa Air Base, Japan, coordinates cargo movement with members of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force at Sendai Airport, Japan, March 20. Sendai Airport has become a main hub for bringing humanitarian aid to those affected by the earthquake and tsunami from March 11.



by Osekiabe Yasuo

Deployed from Yokota AB, Japan, Senior Airman Nicholas Abbott (center), 730th Air Mobility Squadron, pushes a pallet of water bottles onto a C-17 Globemaster III March 20. The pallet was part of the first humanitarian relief supplies being delivered to Sendai.

we provide are the heartbeat to recovery operations, and I'm very proud of our cyber professionals who worked together with cyber units across half the globe to identify, repair and stabilize the network."

Detachment 1 immediately applied a USCYBERCOM order to limit the number of network service interruptions that could disrupt Pacific Air Forces' ability to move people and supplies through the region. These interruptions, normally scheduled for system upgrades and maintenance, were minimized to provide effective precision engagement to the relief effort.

The 561st NOS Detachment 1, which is responsible for operating PACAF's portion of the Air Force network, increased vigilance and monitoring of network services to allow units participating in the relief effort to operate their systems without the threat of data loss or cyber attack during this high operations period. Network services provided by Detachment 1 directly enabled several C-17 sorties flying out of Hickam Field and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

Through their quick network posturing they also permitted Yokota Air Base, Japan, to recover civilian airline traffic in the hours immediately following the earthquake, and helped turn Misawa AB, Japan, into a primary hub for relief airlift operations. As a result, by April 6, about 20,000 U.S. troops and 140 aircraft were involved in relief operations that brought more than 486 tons of relief supplies to the disaster-stricken areas of Japan.

"Through the network services and capabilities provided by Detachment 1 Airmen, Pacific Air Forces is able to successfully generate missions that are saving lives daily. Cyberspace operations are at the heart of Operation Tomodachi," said Lt. Col. Evan Watkins, Detachment 1 commander.

This is the detachment's first involvement in a large-scale humanitarian effort since its activation in 2007.

— Senior Master Sgt. Alexander Hall
Detachment 1, 561st Network Operations Squadron

An aerial view of Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force personnel and disaster relief crews searching Sukuiso, Japan, for victims of a 9.0-magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami.

COLLISION COURSE



Renowned American aviator Charles Lindbergh was barely 8 years old when the first recorded midair collision took place in Milan, Italy, in 1910. Since then, midair collision hazards have steadily risen and continue to plague the aviation world.

So when members of the 12th Flying Training Wing at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, hosted a civil fly-in March 5, and then in turn, attended a “Safer Skies” safety briefing hosted by the San Antonio Helicopter Unit police department at Stinson Airfield, San Antonio, April 7, it would have made Lindbergh proud. The military members and civilians came together to educate each other on the potential hazards within their local environment.

During the exchange, Maj. David Garcia, 12th FTW flight safety officer, introduced the Air Force’s Midair Collision Avoidance program, better known as MACA. MACA’s objective is to prevent airspace conflicts through improvements of airspace coordination procedures. This includes examples of the operating areas and the capabilities of the aircraft that are flown in these areas, to include the altitudes at which they fly.

“Above all else, it just opens up the flow of communication between those guys and us so when we’re sharing the same airspace, we do it as safe as we can,” Garcia said.

There are seven airports in the San Antonio area. Pilots from the military, air medical, law enforcement, news media, Civil Air Patrol, firefighters, commercial airliners, and the recreational aviation community all must share airspace.

“The ultimate goal is to educate all the players involved on the potential hazards while operating in San Antonio’s congested airspace,” said Lt. Col. Sean McGlynn, Air Education and Training Command chief of flight safety at Randolph.

MIDAIR COLLISION FACTS

- Most midair collisions occur during the weekend in daylight with visibility greater than 3 miles.
- Pilots of all experience levels are involved in midair collisions, from pilots on their first solo flight to 20,000 flight-hour veterans.
- Flight instructors were on board the aircraft during 37 percent of the accidents.
- A majority of aircraft involved in collisions were engaged in recreational flying and not on any type of flight plan.
- The vast majority of accidents occur at or near uncontrolled airports and at altitudes below 1,000 feet.

— National Transportation Safety Board

The diverse flying environment in San Antonio creates unique situations, which if not mitigated could lead to disaster, McGlynn said.

Ironically, most midair collisions occur during daylight hours, in visual flight rules conditions with visibility of at least three miles, according to the National Transportation Safety Board (see, “Midair Collision Facts”). Military pilots and aircraft have not been immune to these hazards (see “Midair Crashes”).

“That’s why it is imperative that all Air Force bases with flying operations establish close working relationships with their civilian counterparts ... to identify and mitigate the potential hazards in the local flying environment,” McGlynn said. “The 12th Flying Training Wing’s community outreach and proactive initiatives have established a MACA program for others to emulate.”

CIVILIAN, MILITARY PILOTS UNITE TO AVOID MIDAIRS

By Tech. Sgt. **SAMUEL BENDET** / Photo by Master Sgt. **JEFF ALLEN** / composite by **DAVID STACK**



by David Terry

Briefing his civilian counterparts at Stinson Field, Texas, Maj. David Garcia from Randolph AFB, Texas, introduced them to the Air Force's Midair Collision Avoidance Program.



by David Lindsay

Civilian pilots parked their planes at Randolph AFB, Texas, March 5 for a civil fly-in.



by David Terry

United, not collided, is the basic theme of pilots who share the same airspace getting together both at military installations and civilian airports to prevent midair collisions. Here, a T-6 sits on the Stinson Field ramp, which it shared with police helicopters.

MIDAIR CRASHES

The following are three examples of midair crashes involving military aircraft.

F-16 FIGHTING FALCON VS. C-130E HERCULES: An F-16 collided with a C-130E at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., March 23, 1994. The mishap killed 24 members of the Army's 82nd Airborne Division, making it the worst peacetime loss of life suffered by the Division since the end of World War II. It also injured more than 80 people. The mishap destroyed the F-16, as well as a C-141 Starlifter that was parked on the ramp. An investigation placed most of the blame on military and civilian air traffic controllers; however, pilot error by the F-16 pilots also contributed to the mishap, a later report said.

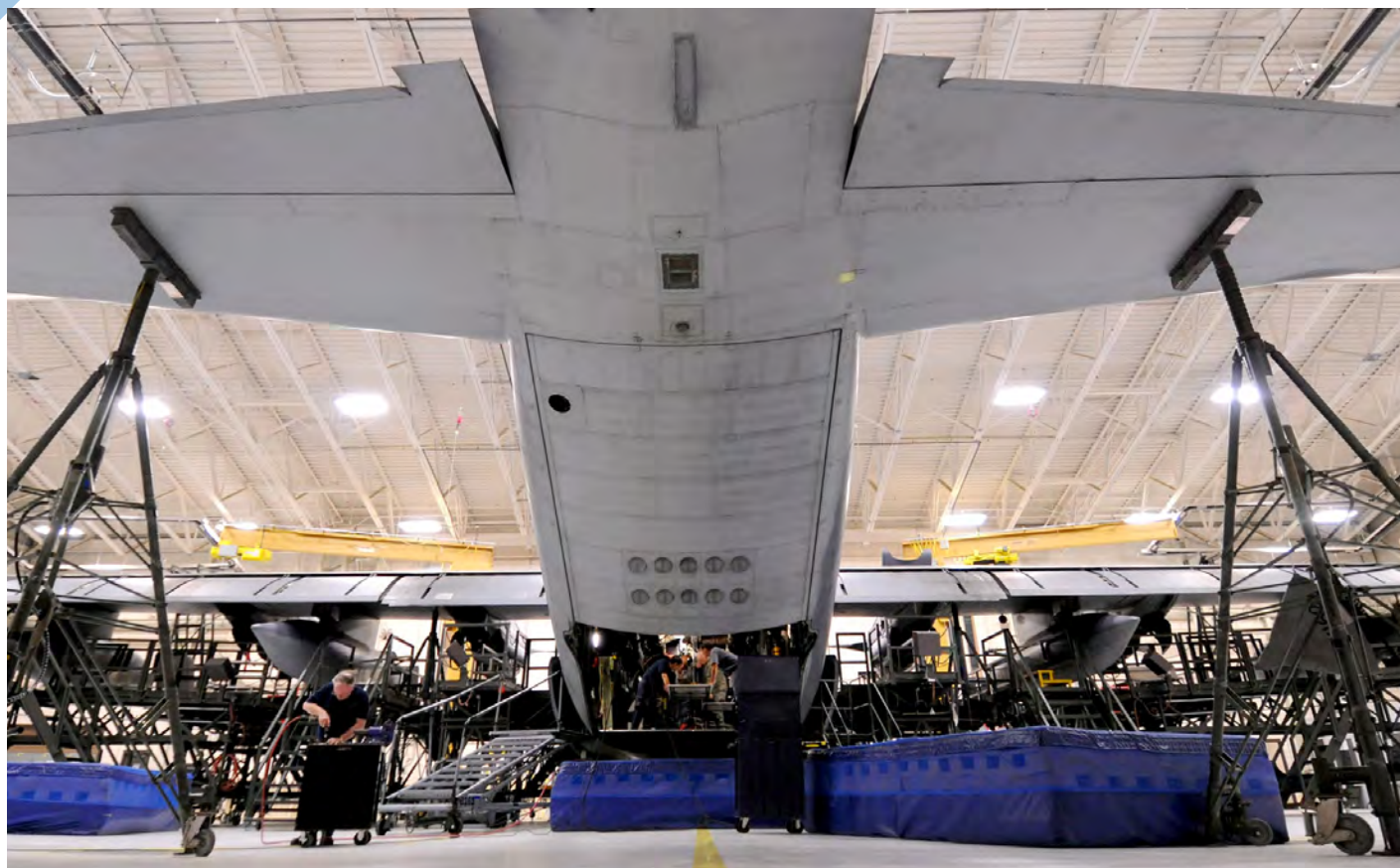
F16 FIGHTING FALCON VS. CESSNA 172: An F-16 from Moody Air Force Base, Ga., collided with a civilian Cessna Nov. 16, 2000, near Bradenton, Fla. The Cessna pilot was killed in the mishap; the F-16 pilot ejected and survived with only minor injuries. Both aircraft were destroyed. Investigators identified two causes of the mishap. First, the pilots failed to "see and avoid" each other in sufficient time to prevent the mishap. Second, Tampa air traffic controllers failed to transmit a safety alert to the Cessna pilot when their radar system generated "Conflict Alert" warnings, indicating that two aircraft were in danger of a collision.

T-37B TWEET VS. AIR TRACTOR AT-502B CROP DUSTER: A T-37B crew out of Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, collided with a civilian AT-502B four miles east of Hollister, Texas, Jan. 18, 2005. The crop duster pilot sustained fatal injuries; the Air Force instructor and student pilots ejected safely with only minor injuries. Both aircraft were destroyed. Investigators found two causes for the mishap. First, both aircrews failed to "see and avoid" each other. Second, the civilian pilot departed under visual flight rules in the air tractor on a ferry flight through a military transit corridor, but he did not adequately assess the risks of doing so without a transponder and without making calls on his handheld radio.

— Air Education and Training Command Flight Safety Division

CRASHWORTHY

NEW SEATS OFFER BETTER PROTECTION FOR LOADMASTERS



By Airman 1st Class Benjamin Wiseman

An HC-130P Combat King sits on aircraft jacks as engineers and technicians develop the Air Combat Command's first loadmaster crashworthy seat at Moody AFB, Ga., April 7. Once the seat is tested and approved, it will be placed into the rest of the HC-130P aircraft fleet.

MOODY AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. (AFNS) — In an effort to provide loadmasters with a safer and more structurally sound seat in cargo aircraft, engineers here recently installed a prototype of a new loadmaster crashworthy seat in an HC-130P Combat King.

"The goal is to provide loadmasters with a more secure seat," said Senior Master Sgt. Patrick Melady, Air Combat Command's HC-130 weapon systems team superintendent.

Civilian and military engineers installed the new seat in one of the Combat Kings here currently docked for routine maintenance.

"What they're doing now is a trial install," said Tim Martin, 23rd Maintenance Group Air Force Engineer Technical Services. "Once the design has been perfected and we determine whether it functions the way we want, we plan to install the seat in the rest of the HC-130P fleet."

Even though the C-130 Hercules has been in service since 1965, Air Force officials said the loadmaster crashworthy seat is long overdue.

"Loadmasters have been asking for it for years, and now we are finally able to give it to them," Melady said. "This will be a huge

WHAT'S IN A CHAIR?

- Safer for loadmasters
- More structurally sound
- Built-in harness support system
- Maintenance friendly

improvement for them and will increase the safety of their job."

The seat in service now is a sturdy foam pad attached to two metal bars that are connected near the hatch of the plane.

"The new crashworthy seat has a built-in harness support system and is structurally attached to the frame of the plane," Martin said. "This new design will offer a safer, more secure seat for loadmasters to scan for threats and observe aerial refueling."

When designing this seat, the loadmaster and crew weren't the only people in mind, Martin said.

"We also wanted to make the seat maintenance-friendly," he said. "When designing something like this, engineers usually just find out what is needed and how to install it in the aircraft. With this project, we wanted to design a seat that can be maintained efficiently."

Moody Air Force Base was selected to be the test base because of its C-130 fleet and its proximity to the contractors and engineers.

— Airman 1st Class Jarrod Grammel
23rd Wing Public Affairs

C-130s FIGHT WILDFIRES

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. — As the nation's second most populous state and second largest in square miles, Texas continues to battle wildfires in all its 254 counties, many of the fires considered major.

In a letter to the president on April 16, Texas Gov. Rick Perry requested federal assistance to help contain the fires, and Air Forces Northern, U.S. Northern Command's air component, immediately answered the governor's call.

"We have a unique capability with our Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System aboard C-130 aircraft," said Lt. Col. Dave Condit, 302nd Air Expeditionary Group deputy commander. "The MAFFS are able to drop 3,000 gallons of retardant from their tanks in under five seconds, cover an area one-quarter mile long, and refill in less than 12 minutes. For these operations in Texas, our objective is to supplement existing large air tanker support from the USDA Forest Service."

As of April 25, MAFFS had made 32 airdrops of more than 90,000 gallons of retardant.

Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve MAFFS units from across the United States are staged at Laughlin Air Force Base in Del Rio, Texas, and Dyess AFB in Abilene, Texas, where they are coordinating their flying operations with the National Interagency Fire Center, the nation's support center for wildland firefighting in Boise, Idaho.

For an immediate response effort like this, an air expeditionary group is formed. Members of the 302nd Airlift Wing at Peterson AFB, Colo., received the call to respond to this one. The MAFFS crews and select leadership formed the 302nd AEG, temporarily operating out of Laughlin AFB, with other representatives working at NIFC headquarters in Boise.

"This is a massive operation that has to be well-coordinated to be done safely," said Lt. Col. Chris Lachance, 85th Flying Training Squadron operations officer at Laughlin AFB. "Laughlin, for instance, already has a robust flying training mission, and now C-130s are staging out of here to fight these fires in Texas and Mexico. It takes careful planning and risk management to pull something like this off."

In addition to NIFC and the Department of Defense, several other agencies have responded to Texas' call for assistance — the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross, the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and the Salvation Army, just to name a few.

Col. Jack Pittman, 302nd AEG commander, said, "We realize that time is important to people who are facing very difficult and challenging times due to the fires, and we're committed to responding as efficiently and quickly as possible. It's remarkable how all the agencies involved are able to work together in such a dynamic situation to provide timely and effective containment actions, and we're proud to support those agencies."

The MAFFS is owned by the USDA Forest Service, one of several federal and state government agency and organization partners at NIFC. The Department of Defense is flying at the request of NIFC.

AFNORTH is the air component for U.S. Northern Command and when tasked, provides support to local, state, tribal, regional and federal emergency service agencies.

— Lt. Col. Susan A. Romano
AFNORTH Public Affairs



by Staff Sgt. Eric Harris

As a firefighting aircraft taxis into the pits at Dyess AFB, Texas, April 19, Staff Sgt. Anthony Hayes, 145th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, North Carolina Air National Guard, prepares to refill the C-130H Hercules.



by Staff Sgt. Daryl McKenney

C-130 Hercules aircraft, operated by the 302nd Air Expeditionary Group and equipped with modular airborne fire fighting systems similar to the one pictured here, have dropped 90,000 gallons of retardant over Texas as of April 25, to help control the 993,000 acres of burning wildfires.