



# 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group



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## A snap “Shot” of 309 AMARG’s flight test (fighter) pilot

Joining the 309 AMARG team last Fall, Major Michael Leach, call sign “Shot,” is Chief of Flight Test and sole pilot for the 576th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Squadron’s F-4 Full-Scale Aerial Target (FSAT) or drone regeneration program.

And...he’s a perfect fit. Who better to fly and push the rugged, newly regenerated F-4 Phantoms back to their maximum performance limits than a qualified F-16 instructor pilot intimately familiar with the capabilities of the newer, faster more modernized weapons systems. Major Leach knows what the F-4 is up against once accepted as a QF-4 or drone.

A combat veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, “Shot” is now an Air Force reservist assigned to the 413th Flight Test Group, an Air Force Reserve Command unit at Robins Air Force Base, Ga., who finds himself airborne over the skies of Tucson, instead of patrolling the no-fly zones over Baghdad.

“As far as basic flying goes, the F-4 is the most challenging aircraft I’ve flown,” said Leach. With over 1,850 flying hours in the F-16, he admits it was different going back to the “old school stick & rudder.”

He began his Phantom training more than two years ago at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. and has already reached a total of 200 hours of F-4 flight time. In between the functional check and delivery flights on AMARG’s regenerated F-4s, Major Leach is also required to fly the QF-4s (drones) every 90-days while they remain in transition status.

“Every flight is different and some more than others may have an additional element of excitement,” said Major Leach. He understands these aircraft have been in storage for 18-20 years and praises the expert maintenance work mechanics apply to the aircraft; however, minor discrepancies are inevitable on 50-year old aircraft.

Major Leach does not normally fly alone and relies on Mr. Rick Nelson, or his guy in back (GIB) (what a combat pilot would refer to as his weapons systems officer or WSO), to help resolve any in-flight malfunctions. Mr. Nelson, or “Oz,” a retired Air Force major turned civilian, has flown in the backseat of AMARG’s F-4s for 11 years and has nearly 2,000 hours of flight time in the F-4.

“It’s a matter of mutual trust between the pilot and his GIB,” said Leach, “He has to trust me not to do something stupid and I have to trust him for his judgment and recommendations to prevent me from doing something stupid.”

According to Major Leach, he has the best job in the Air Force.

“It’s very rewarding to feel these older aircraft perform after being in storage for so long,” he said. “I consider myself fortunate to fly an old “warbird” whose final duty is to provide our Combat Air Forces with high performance drones with realistic electronic threat attack features to validate training, tactics, and weapons performance. We want our Air Force pilots out there closest to the mission to succeed!

A graduate of Indiana State University with a degree in Political Science, Major Leach resides here in Tucson with his family.

309 AMARG supports Air Combat Command’s Full-Scale Aerial Target (FSAT) or drone program and regenerates approximately 18 F-4s per fiscal year for delivery to the 82nd Aerial Target Squadron at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. and Holloman Air Force Base, N.M. This is a valuable program to the Air Force as only these FSATs offer the flight characteristics (complete performance packages to include sub- and supersonic altitudes up to and above 50,000 feet), and damage resistance of an actual aircraft.



Left, Major Michael Leach, call sign “Shot” and former instructor for the F-16, is Chief of 309 AMARG’s Flight Test and pilot for the F-4 Phantom aircraft. Major Leach is assigned to the 413th Flight Test Group, an Air Force Reserve Command unit at Robins Air Force Base, Ga.



Aircraft worker, Mr. Gary Snipes (l) and Major Leach or “Shot” discuss a main landing gear strut during a pre-flight inspection on a QF-4 (drone) aircraft.

## 309th Support Squadron gets a new Director

The men and women of the 309th Support Squadron (309 SPTS) were assigned a new leader during an assumption of command ceremony held May 15, 2009 at the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group.

Ms. Caroline Chartrand assumed command of the Squadron, becoming the second 309 SPTS Director since the Group aligned under the 309th Maintenance Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, slightly more than two years ago.

“Thank you all for affording me the opportunity to lead such an important element of the 309 AMARG organization,” Ms. Chartrand said after her appointment. “However, we must remember we are all a part of a greater team working together to build a successful organization,” she added.

Nearing the end of her address to the audience, Ms. Chartrand, an avid sports fan, kiddingly flashed her proposed choices for a new Squadron cap (two hats sporting the San Francisco 49ers logo), asking her employees which one they preferred.

And as a postscript before departing the stage,



*Ms. Caroline Chartrand, new Director of the 309th Support Squadron.*

Ms. Chartrand stated “We are all accountable and must work each and every day to make 309 AMARG and the Air Force better--by our efforts, our actions and our attitudes!”

**D i r e c t o r** Chartrand will now oversee a majority of support activities in the 309th Maintenance Group to include the supply functions of packaging, shipping and receiving aircraft and components both to and from military organizations throughout the world.

Her Squadron is also responsible for the maintenance of thousands of pieces of aircraft tooling, motor pool support for all AMARG vehicles, woodmill support to packaging and shipping; information technology support to include AMARG business operations systems, small computers and local area network; facilities management for over 80

structures; and, managing the aircraft technical order library and aircraft records section.



*Colonel Thomas Schneider, 309 AMARG Commander, passes the 309th Support Squadron guidon to Ms. Caroline Chartrand, incoming Director, during an assumption of command ceremony on May 15, 2009.*

Ceremony officiator, Ms. Linda Fields, 309 AMARG Deputy Director, offered a warm welcome to invited guests and Group employees who gathered to witness the occasion and mentioned that without the strong support of family, career advancement to this level is difficult to achieve.

Special guests included Ms. Chartrand’s husband, Harvey, a first responder with the Green Valley Fire Department; her son, Danny Sturm; and daughter, Ms. Stephanie Sturm.

Ms. Chartrand, leaves her current position as AMARG’s Expeditionary Combat Support System (ECSS) program manager and subject matter expert where she lead the Air Force’s effort to replace legacy information technologies to improve logistical combat support capability.

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## Hollywood's *Salvation* fuselage will reemerge as Museum's Spring display



The cockpit of an Air Force A-10 aircraft used during last year's film production of the newly-released Hollywood production *Terminator Salvation* departed AMARG on May 28 for Tucson's local Pima Air & Space Museum.

According to Mr. Scott Marchand, the Museum's Director of Collections, the cockpit was acquired through the National Museum of the United States Air Force's long-term loan program.

After refurbishing, Mr. Marchand's plans are to securely place the cockpit on public display in the Museum's new hangar next Spring.

In July of 2008, the 5,600 pound fuselage was sent to a Hollywood film set in Albuquerque, New Mexico and placed on a specially-designed "high-tech" gimbal allowing an operator to move the fuselage through three dimensions to recreate the appearance of actual flight.

Complete with an inert ejection seat and flight controls, a movie starlet occupied the almost complete cockpit as the A-10 "pitched and yawed" in front of a green screen. Computer generated special effects created the ultimate air combat sequences without ever leaving the ground.

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