

Heartland WARRIOR

Volume 21, Issue 4

4th Quarter 2016

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Vol. 21, No. 4
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The editorial content is edited, and prepared by the Public Affairs Office of the 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom ARB, IN, 46971-5000.

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

On the cover...

Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, poses for his official photo days after becoming commander of the largest KC-135R Stratotanker unit in the Air Force Reserve Command. He is a senior pilot with over 5,700 flying hours and returned to Grissom after serving as the 927th Group commander at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

Col. Shaw takes command

By Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

The Hoosier Wing welcomed home a familiar face during a change of command ceremony here July 9.

Col. Larry Shaw took command of the 434th Air Refueling Wing from (Ret.) Col. Doug Schwartz with Maj. Gen. John Flournoy, 4th Air Force commander, officiating.

“Welcome back Larry Shaw and his family to the Grissom team,” Flournoy said, addressing Shaw, his family and Team Grissom. “Thank you for being here and taking this on as a team – because this is a team sport. And thank you for preparing for what is probably going to be one of the most challenging jobs of [your] professional life. I can’t thank you enough for what you’re doing today and what you’re going to do in the future for the men and women of the 434th ARW. You’ve come back home.”

Shaw, expressed his enthusiasm for his return assignment at Grissom and his first wing command position.

“Thank you for the opportunity to command the best wing in the Air Force,” Shaw said. “Kris and I are very excited to be back in in Big 10 country and especially Hoosier

country. I am overwhelmed by all of the love and support.”

Long before taking the reins of the Hoosier Wing, Shaw began his [operational] Air Force career as a KC-135R navigator in the 920th Air Refueling Squadron at Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan, after earning a direct commission into the [active-duty] Air Force from the University of Nebraska in 1988.

After serving on active-duty for eight years, Shaw first joined the Hoosier Wing nearly 20 years ago as a young captain, where he went on to serve as an instructor/evaluator navigator and assistant chief navigator before changing seats in the cockpit and becoming a pilot.

While at Grissom, the Gothenburg, Nebraska, native found himself assigned to various positions as he moved up the ranks, eventually becoming the 434th Operations Support Squadron commander.

His career path changed in 2013 when he became the 927th Operations Group commander at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Following a short stint there, he became the Deputy Director of Air, Space and Information Operations at Robins Air

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U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, addresses the Airmen he now commands shortly after taking command of the unit at Grissom, July 9.

Marion becomes Grissom's new Command Chief

By Staff Sgt.
Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

During the week he works unassumingly, donning civilian attire working behind the scenes as a labor relations officer in civilian personnel. But during the weekend of unit training assemblies, he sits in a different seat, donning the tenth enlisted rank in the U.S. Air Force – complete with a star in between eight chevrons.

Chief Master Sgt. Wes Marion was recently named 434th Air Refueling Wing command chief, after being selected by Col. Larry Shaw, 434th ARW commander.

"I'm thrilled, excited and extremely humbled that Colonel Shaw picked me to be his command chief," Marion said. "I have a lot invested here – I care about the people, I care about the mission. This place has been a huge part of my life for a very long time and I never would have dreamed that I would be sitting in this seat."

A native of Buffalo, Indiana, Marion's Air Force career began nearly 30 years ago when he enlisted in the regular Air Force as a supply [logistics] Airman.

Since then, his time-in-service has spanned across three Air Force specialties, including civil engineering and paralegal, civil service, Active Guard Reserve and inactive ready Reserve.

"This really is a homecoming for me," Marion said. "Grissom is where I came as a newcomer, straight out of active-duty. With the exception of about five years, I've been in the 434th ARW for 24 years. To walk in the shoes of the great command chiefs we've had here is a great privilege."

Prior to Marion's return to Grissom, he served at Air Force Reserve Command, Robins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, as the command paralegal manager from 2013 to 2016. Preceding that, he served as the 434th ARW law office superintendent from 2006 to 2013.

Soon after separating from active-duty, he received a bachelor's degree in history/political science from Purdue University in 1995. He went on to receive a juris doctorate from Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington, Indiana, all whilst continuing to serve as a traditional Reservist.

"Military service has always been a very important part of my life," he said. "My grandfather was a military police officer at Schofield Barracks [Hawaii] on Dec. 7, 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor."

Marion said that, although he has had varying leadership roles before, as the new command chief he looks forward to new challenges and priorities.

"A big priority for me is to ensure people are aware – enlisted in



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

Chief Master Sgt. Wes Marion

particular – of the many educational and career developmental opportunities," Marion said. "To make sure that Airmen are aware of the opportunities to get to where they want to go while also continuing to serve in the Air Force and meet the mission of this wing – is key."

"Another one of my top priorities is enforcing standards and maintaining good communication throughout the wing," he added.

As command chief of the 434th ARW, Marion is the primary advisor to the commander on all enlisted issues including the health, welfare, morale, mission effective-

ness and proper utilization of more than 1,400 men and women.

"With his diverse background and unique skill set, Chief Marion will be a tremendous asset to Grissom," Shaw said. "His love of the base and the people who serve here resonates whenever he talks about Grissom."

"Ten years from now, no one will remember that I was here [as the command chief]," Marion said. "But anytime I can help if even one Airman along the way through mentorship, no matter how small, then I can leave this position knowing I did my job right."

Grissom remembers victims of 9/11

By Tech. Sgt.
Benjamin Mota
Public Affairs staff

While most people can't remember where they were at any given time in their lives, 15 years later most can remember where they were during the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

To help ensure those memories were not forgotten, more than 500 Grissom Airmen, firefighters and civilians joined Americans around the world Sept. 11, to pay their respects to the victims.

Kicking off the cer-

emony, Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, shared his thoughts and thanked participants for joining.

"Like most of you, I can remember exactly where I was and what I was doing the morning I heard about the attacks, but most importantly I can still remember how I felt that day," said Shaw. "I hope that feeling never fades for me, and I hope it never fades for you."

"Thank you for joining me this morning to help remember those who lost their lives, and

to remind us why we're here on this [unit training assembly] doing our jobs to support the mission," he added.

Following Shaw's message to Airmen, Chap. (Lt. Col.) Obadiah Smith Jr., 434th ARW chaplain, provided words of encouragement followed by a moment of silence in remembrance of 9/11.

"We are gathered in remembrance of those who lost their lives during 9/11, but also we stand with a determination that we are a people of resolve to do what is good, right

and just," said Smith. "Let us not lose hope or become dismay - we are a blessed nation and blessed people; and may we have a better understanding that in the midst of this great tragedy came hope; we have freedoms that abound every day."

Ending a moment of silence was the somber sound of Taps played by Senior Airman Stephanie Briones, Grissom base honor guard manager, as a final tribute to the fallen heroes before the base personnel went back quietly to their work area.



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

Senior Airman Stephanie Briones, Grissom base honor guard manager, and Senior Airman Ryan Ware, Grissom Base honor guard member, perform a flag folding ceremony during a 9/11 remembrance ceremony at Grissom Sept. 11.

Grissom responds as tornadoes descend



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

A funnel cloud passes over a cornfield in Miami County, Indiana Aug. 24. The same storm cell also produced an EF3 tornado and several others in Kokomo, Indiana that resulted in hundreds of damaged homes.

By Douglas Hays
Public Affairs staff

While most people in the area were hunkered down seeking shelter from a series of tornadoes August 24, one Grissom member was hunkered down plotting, coordinating and assisting even as the devastation was twirling around him.

Dan DeAngulo, 434th Air Refueling Wing base emergency manager, was asked to support the Howard County emergency management agency as storm threats grew in the area. He left Grissom to go to Kokomo to lend his expertise during the building crisis.

“At one point we had three tornadoes on the ground,” DeAngulo said. “Power was out around town and the radios weren’t working due to a lightning strike.”

Adapting and overcoming has long been a military motto, and that mentality was put into action in Kokomo as emergency planners

teamed together and used HAM radios to communicate storm, damage, and emergency information throughout the City of Firsts.

“I worked with the Howard County deputy emergency manager to relay storm spotter reports as well as backfill Grissom’s leadership on the storms because the base too was in the potential path,” he said.

“Grissom prides itself on being a good neighbor,” said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. “Dan is the perfect example of us providing assistance when the emergency call came in. Col. Scott Russell, 434th Mission Support Group commander, didn’t hesitate to approve Dan’s dispatch to help our friends and neighbors in Kokomo.”

When the skies cleared multiple tornadoes damaged more than 1,000 homes in Kokomo and Howard County leaving a swath of destruction clearly visible from the main roadways.

Grissom firefighters responded with Engine 8 and four fire fighters that evening to help Kokomo Fire with coverage of the city, said John Ireland, Grissom fire chief.

Grissom members continued to step forward and lend a helping hand in the recovery operations phases.

Vital to that was hazardous material crews responding to a multitude of transformers damaged as four super-cells formed over the city.

“Tactical 14, the truck that houses our HAZMAT equipment, and crews spent the day assisting the community,” Ireland said.

Base members also went down to help their neighbors clean up and are continuing those efforts.

“I’m so proud of how we responded,” Shaw said. “It’s important for our neighbors to know we care about them and share their spirit of recovery and regrowth. That message is clearly sent by our folks.”

Change of command, from page 2

Force Base, Georgia in 2015.

It was a who's who of 434th ARW history at the change of command as former wing commanders and key staff members turned out to welcome Shaw into his new position.

"It's because of [previous commanders'] dedication to this base and traditions that have been passed down to our Airmen why our wing continues to thrive," he added.

Manned by nearly 1,900 military, civilian and contractor personnel and two flying squadrons, Shaw said he is honored to take command of the largest KC-135R Stratotanker unit in the Air Force Reserve Command.

"When our nation called, the 434th [ARW] answers," he continued. "Today is the beginning of a new day, a new month and a new chapter in this distinguished history of the 434th ARW. You have my promise that I will do my very best to lead this wing so when our nation calls, we will not fail."



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

From left to right, Maj. Gen. John Flournoy, 4th Air Force commander, Col. Douglas Schwartz, former 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, Col. Larry Shaw, 434th ARW commander, and behind Chief Master Sgt. Robert Herman, 434th ARW command chief, stand during a change of command ceremony at Grissom, July 9.

Former command chief leaves Grissom, heads to Capitol

By Staff Sgt. Jami Lancette
Public Affairs staff

From firefighter to command chief, now Grissom's highest enlisted Airman is aiming higher and heading to the nation's Capitol.

Command Chief Master Sgt. Robert Herman, 434th Air Refueling Wing command chief, recently accepted a new position as the chief of senior enlisted management at the Pentagon in Washington D.C.

"It's going to be very valuable for him being at the Pentagon," said Col. Paul Gates, 434th Air Refueling Wing vice commander. "Going directly from a wing, he will be able to show up to the pentagon with direct recent knowledge

of the things that we're facing here in terms of accomplishing the mission and what our Airmen experience on a day-to-day basis."

As Grissom's command chief, Herman was the primary adviser to the wing commander on enlisted issues including the health, welfare, morale, mission effectiveness and proper utilization of 1,400 men and women.

And with that experience under his wings, Herman will play a bigger role as he helps cultivate future senior leaders for various leadership roles at the major command level and higher.

"Being a command chief has better prepared me for this next position that I will embark

on," said Herman. "It has renewed my appreciation for the sacrifices that traditional reservists make to serve their country.

"There are many obstacles that traditional reservists overcome on a monthly basis; many come from different states, so coming here for a busy weekend all the while balancing another job, school and family presents a challenge at times," added Herman. "I truly appreciate the selflessness and dedication that I see in our Airmen here."

As Herman's chapter here comes to a close, he reflected on Grissom's mission capabilities and the Airmen behind the scenes that made it to what it is today.

"Every time I stood



CMSgt. Robert Herman

before people I thanked them for their service and what they do, and I appreciate the selflessness and sense of service that our Grissom Airmen have here," said Herman. "Thank you for that, and thank you for defending our freedom and defending our nation."

Grissom KC-135s refuel Thunderbird

By Staff Sgt. Dakota Bergl
Public Affairs staff

Two Grissom KC-135R Stratotankers had the rare privilege of refueling an aircraft from the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron, also known as the Thunderbirds, Sept. 7.

The Thunderbird required a refuel on its way to an air show hosted by the 122nd Fighter Wing out of Fort Wayne, Indiana. The air show took place on Sept. 10-11, 2016.

“Refueling the Thunderbirds showcases Grissom’s diverse range of aerial refueling capabilities,” said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. “Whether it be at home or abroad, Grissom remains ready to proudly serve our nation’s mission, and this is a prime example of just that!”

Master Sgt. Nick Obusek, 74th Air Refueling Squadron boom operator, said he was excited that he got the chance to refuel such a famous aircraft.

“It was really cool,” said Obusek. “I’ve seen the Thunderbirds at air shows but flying next to them and being the person giving them fuel was an awesome experience.”

The Thunderbirds are based out of Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada and the squadron performs approximately 75 demonstrations per year. Each demonstration is a mix of formation and solo flying during which the pilots perform approximately 30 maneuvers showcasing the training of the pilots and the capabilities of the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

In addition to their responsibilities as the official U.S. Air Force aerial demonstration team, the Thunderbirds are part of our combat force. If required, the team’s personnel and aircraft can be rapidly integrated into a fighter unit at Nellis AFB. Since the aircraft are only slightly modified, they can be made combat-ready in less than 72 hours.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Andrew Crawford

A KC-135R Stratotanker from the 434th Air Refueling Wing at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, refuels an F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft from the U.S. Air Force Demonstration Squadron over the midwest United States, Sept. 7.

Anderson HS cadets tour Grissom



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

Steven Jacobs, left, and Matt Simpson, both Anderson High school Navy Junior ROTC cadets, complete a set of pushups during a tour of the Marine Corps Reserve Center at Grissom's Aug. 24.

By Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota
Public Affairs staff

School books can teach a lot about a subject, but it's often said that the best experience is hands-on experience. For one group of students that was the case.

Twenty eight Navy Junior ROTC cadets from Anderson High School, Anderson, Indiana, left their school books and classroom behind to tour Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, recently for a more personal look at how the military operates.

"We come to Grissom because of the quality of people there, and as always the tour was well planned and executed," said retired Lt. Cmdr. Albert Outcalt, Anderson High School Junior ROTC commander. "Touring Grissom gave cadets an opportunity to get military exposure outside of the classroom and exposed [cadets] to possible career fields that can help them decide which branch of service they want to join."

The visit kicked off at the Marine Corps Reserve Center that houses

a vehicle maintenance facility, communications electronics maintenance facility, motor transport lot, supply warehouse, administrative offices and other training areas.

"That was the coolest thing in the world," said Matthew Chandler, Anderson High School Junior ROTC cadet, after operating a hand-held radio from the front seat of a Humvee. "I've never been in a vehicle like that before."

Following the tour of the Marine Corps Reserve Center, cadets had an opportunity to tour a

static display of a KC-135R Stratotanker.

During the tour pilots, boom operators, and aircraft maintainers answered questions and spoke with students about their careers in the Air Force Reserve.

"This was really educational for me," said Matt Simpson, Anderson High School Junior ROTC cadet, who aspires to join the military in the future. "It's nice seeing the different career fields from different branches of service and also being able to talk to the people who perform the jobs."

Green Dot: Small choices make big changes

By Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

Consequences are the outcome of every small decision – regardless of how minor and seemingly irrelevant they may be. Making even the smallest of choices with little risk can have lifelong consequences – and that was the message Airmen took to heart recently.

Nearly 100 Airmen attended mandatory Green Dot training during a unit training assembly as part of five-year strategy to decrease interpersonal violence across the total Air Force Aug. 7-8 at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana.

“The purpose of Green Dot is to create culture change in the Air Force,” said Senior Airman Mary Costello, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron administration apprentice and Green Dot implementer. “Culture change is a big word and people often shut down when they hear it. But ‘Green Dots’ are simply small choices.”

The Green Dot approach to sexual and domestic violence prevention is twofold: while it seeks to educate intolerance of violence as a standard, it also offers strategies and methods to overcome barriers in the event of interven-

tion.

“[We teach] reactive choices you can make when you are up against a concerning behavior,” said Juanita Withrow, 434th Air Refueling Wing drug demand reduction specialist and Green Dot implementer/coordinator. “If you are hitting a barrier, we provide strategies to diffuse situations through directing, delegating and/or distracting.”

According to Costello, green dots represent methods of intervention in the act of interpersonal violence.

“I came into [green dot] not thinking it was going to be effective; thinking this was just another SAPR program,” Costello said. “But I left the initial training feeling revived. I’ve worked at a women’s shelter in Chicago, and I’ve worked for domestic violence court watching programs and I’ve been through multiple domestic violence workshops.

“But every time I’ve taken a workshop, I’ve left thinking ‘this is really unrealistic’ because they focus on zero tolerance and immediately doing something extremely direct,” she added. “What I like about green dot is we try to give you tools that work with you; we don’t need you to be a hero, we don’t need you to

change, and I think that’s the beauty of green dot.”

Green Dot differs from traditional [Air Force] bystander intervention training in that instead of only focusing on high-risk situations, it provides scenarios, tools and strategies to deploy in the perpetration of all forms of power-based interpersonal violence, to include sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, stalking, child abuse, elder abuse and bullying.

“I’ve had Green Dot training, and you are probably rolling your eyes at having to participate in another training program,” said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th ARW commander. “We live in a turbulent time today and we need good citizens, good Airmen. Please take Green Dot training seriously; Green Dot is simply taking care of your folks and good Wingmanship.”

Green Dot training is offered every unit training assembly, alternate training assemblies and periodically throughout the month.

All Grissom Airmen are required to complete initial Green Dot training no later than December 31. For more information or to sign up for the training, contact Withrow.



Airmen throw pieces of paper across the room after writing down potential barriers in a realistic scenario involving an act of interpersonal violence during Green Dot training at Grissom Aug. 6.

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen

Grissom hosts ESGR Bosslift 2016

By Tech. Sgt.
Benjamin Mota
Public Affairs staff

Indiana's Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard are always working together in support of the nation's defense, but recently they came together in support of the employers who support them.

Thirty-seven employers visited Grissom Aug. 18-19, 2016 for an employer orientation experience designed to show what reservists and guardsmen do when they are away from their civilian jobs.

Joining together with the 434th Air Refueling Wing on 'Team Indiana Bosslift' were the Indiana Air National Guard's 122nd Fighter Wing, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the 181st Intelligence Wing, Terre Haute, Indiana.

"Our Airmen [in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves] play a vital role to the nation's defense, and we couldn't perform our mission without the support of their employers," said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. "Our main goal was to educate employers about the reserve and let them see firsthand the important mission their reservists support when they are away from their civilian jobs."

While the 122nd FW was showing their folks around Baer Field, employers from the 434th ARW and the 181st

See 'Bosslift 2016' page 11



U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota

A group of employers pose for a photo in front of a KC-135R Stratotanker at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind., before taking off on a refueling mission Aug. 19.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen

Tech. Sgt. Courtney Storey, 72nd Air Refueling Squadron inflight refueling technician, watches from a KC-135R Stratotanker as an A-10 Warthog from the 122nd Fighter Wing, Fort Wayne, Ind., breaks away after inflight refueling over the Midwest United States Aug. 19.

Intelligence Wing kicked off the event with a tour of the Marine Corps Reserve to learn about their mission and receive a hands-on experience with the weapons and equipment used by the detachment.

"I was so impressed by everything we got to see today at Grissom," said Nancy Johns, an employer nominated by a Grissom Airmen. "Everyone is very organized and professional; they really showed us a good time."

In addition to learning more about the reserve force mission, another goal of the event was to educate employers about the rules and responsibilities both they and their reserve component employees have.

To do that the units

joined together for a special dinner and briefings at Grissom's dining facility.

"Educating employers is a proactive approach that helps foster positive relations and promotes a supportive work environment for the reservists," explained Leanne Munger, ESGR Boss Lift coordinator. "These events give us the opportunity to educate employers about applicable laws and also provides them recognition for the support they provide their service members."

Employers also received a certificate of support from the ESGR that could be displayed at their business.

To wrap up the event, employers took a flight onboard three KC-135R Stratotankers. The three-

ship formation headed to an air refueling track in the Midwest where employers were able to witness aerial refueling in action.

"It's overwhelming to see how [the refueling mission] actually works in person," said Timothy Walsh, an employer participating in the event. "It's really nice to see how [all reserve and guard services] work together and operate efficiently to protect everyone here in the states."

During the mission employers witnessed A-10 Thunderbolt IIs from the 122nd FW being refueled. One of the fighters was flown by Col. Patrick Renwick, 122nd FW commander, who also attended the dinner the night before.

"I want to thank each and every one of you for your support," Renwick told the employers. "Our Airmen make great employees. They are college educated, with on-the-job training, leadership skills and a positive attitude."

"Their efforts help support the state and nation's defense and you'll see during the tours and each service works together in order to accomplish this goal," he added.

Following the flights, employers were each presented honorary aircrew certificates.

"The entire event was very eye opening," said Walsh. "It was really nice to see reservists and guardsmen all work together to protect everyone here in the states."



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen

434th CES conduct bivouac, contingency exercise

By Staff Sgt.
Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

While most Airmen spent their Saturday night of the September unit training assembly enjoying the comforts of a comfortable bed, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron Airmen spent their night sleeping on a cot as part of a contingency beddown at the CES compound.

Spearheaded by Senior Master Sgt. Jon Raschke, 434th CES emergency management superintendent and Senior Master Sgt. Adam Loos, 434th CES engineering superintendent, the 434th CES conducted an all-encompassing joint bivouac and

contingency exercise at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, Sept. 10.

“The objective of this exercise was to demonstrate a whole squadron response to base recovery, sustainment and protection through a combination of civil engineering and emergency response capabilities,” said Lt. Col. James Ballas, 434th CES commander.

Temporary encampments with minimal facilities – bivouacs – are routinely used by U.S. Armed Forces members deployed down range.

According to Loos, bivouacs are typically erected by CE Airmen – to sustain them for forces who are deployed in combat opera-

tions worldwide.

For many Airmen with less than three years’ time-in-service, this was their first field exercise and contingency bivouac.

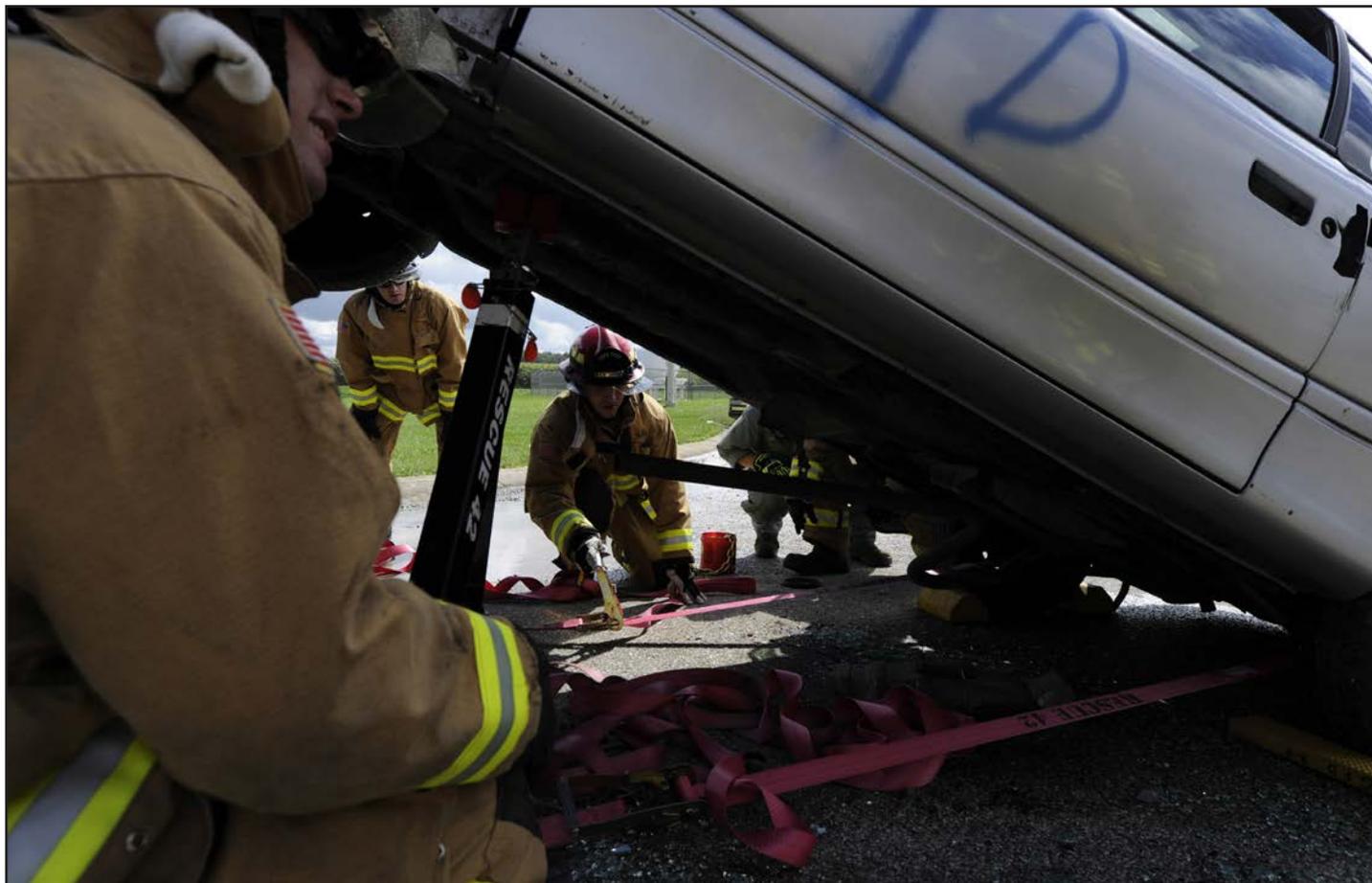
According to Raschke, the contingency aspect of the exercise – included injecting simulated unexploded ordnance – provided a unique training opportunity for CES Airmen in a variety of Air Force specialties, including electrical, utilities, heating, ventilation, air condition and refrigeration, heavy equipment, structures, power production, engineering, pest management, firefighters, emergency management and explosive ordnance disposal.

“We injected the [simu-

lated] UXO because we wanted to integrate potential wartime scenarios, as well as convoy operations and had the Airmen encounter small arms attacks,” Loos said.

While some Airmen lay in the prone position, gripping their M-16s, firefighters and first responders worked to extract a human dummy following a two-vehicle auto accident involving a simulated improvised explosive device.

“This is what we do – when we’re down range it is our job to not only be able to bed-down, sustain facilities but also provide security for our assets and augment security forces personnel when needed,” Loos said.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen

Staff Sgt. Nicholas Delaurentis, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter, adjusts struts with a hydraulic jack to stabilize a vehicle in a simulated auto accident during an exercise Sept. 10, at Grissom.

Ready, set, tow: Moving the KC-135 Stratotanker

By Staff Sgt.
Dakota Bergl
Public Affairs staff

Tow a trailer. Easy. Tow a boat. Easy. Tow a camper. Still easy. Tow a KC-135R Stratotanker with more than 50,000 pounds of fuel on board.....not so easy.

Towing aircraft is an integral part of every crew chief's day-to-day activities but it requires much more planning than just hitching up the plane and driving away.

With a grunt Tech. Sgt. Brian Huntsman, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, lifts one end of the almost 500 pound tow bar carefully lining it up with the pintle hitch on the back of the tow vehicle before signaling the vehicle's driver to slowly back up.

After the tow bar fastens into place, Huntsman puts in a latching pin to ensure that the hitch is locked. Once the aircraft is connected to the tow vehicle, or Uke, Huntsman communicates with the rest of his three-man team, shouting orders over the noise of the flightline, and carefully following his step-by-step technical data to avoid injuring anyone or damaging the aircraft.

Master Sgt. Eric Saddlemire, 434th AMXS crew chief, said he is involved with an average of two or three towing operations each week with more happening during the winter months.

"Towing is a big part of our daily operations," said Saddlemire. "It's especially important during the winter when we need to continually move aircraft so the ramp can be cleared of snow."

He said that the main concern is safety. Towing an aircraft can be a very dangerous job if proper precautions aren't followed.

"I tell people to follow the tech data and be aware of what's around you and nothing can go wrong," said Saddlemire. "Situational awareness is key any time you are out on the flightline."

Huntsman echoed Saddlemire's words about safety, saying that



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dakota Bergl

Tech. Sgt. Brian Huntsman, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, signals the driver of a tow vehicle to back up as he lines up the tow bar with the vehicle's pintle hitch on Grissom's flightline, July 18.

communication is key.

"Towing is pretty straight forward," said Huntsman. "It's a vanilla operation but you still want to be careful and communicate with your team."

Towing a KC-135 requires a minimum of three people.

One person has to stay in the cockpit during the entire operation, ready to apply the aircraft's brakes in the event of an emergency.

The second person operates the tow vehicle, driving the aircraft from one location to the next.

The final member is the tow supervisor, they are in charge of the operation from start to finish. The supervisor briefs their team and ensure everyone knows what to do, they also give orders during the operation so that everyone is doing what they are supposed to be doing.

In instances where the aircraft is going to be moved close to buildings the tow team will include two wing walkers and a tail walker

whose job is to walk near the aircraft and make sure the wings and tail don't hit anything.

Huntsman said that even though towing is a team effort the supervisor is the ultimate authority on the job.

"Everyone is important when you are towing," said Huntsman. "We all have a job to do and the operation can't go forward if someone isn't doing what they are supposed to, but at the end of the day the tow super has ultimate responsibility. We have to make sure everyone is following the technical orders and doing what they are supposed to."

Saddlemire said that although towing seems simple, especially to someone who has hooked a trailer to their car, moving an aircraft is very different.

"We need a whole team to make this operation work," said Saddlemire. "One person can't just hook the plane up and drive off like you would with a trailer. It's all about safety and following procedure."

Grissom's Marine unit changes command

By Senior Airman
Andrew Crawford
Public Affairs staff

The change of command ceremony is rooted in military history back to the 18th Century.

That tradition continues as Capt. Pierce Virag took the helm as Inspector-Instructor, Communication Company Detachment 1, Combat Logistics Regiment 45, Marine Forces Reserve here on July 1.

Virag, a native of Toledo, Ohio, enlisted in the Marine Corps in May, 2005 as a communication electronics repair technician.

After successful completion of recruit training at Parris Island, S.C., and Marine Combat Training at Camp Geiger, N.C., he went on to 29 Palms, California to complete his military occupational specialty training.

The journey to be a leader is not always the easiest road but Virag had an added push and incentive to become the best he could be.

"My son was ten days old when I

went to boot camp," he said. "I was 22 years old and felt like I needed a job that would provide a better life for him,"

"During my first combat tour to Fallujah, Iraq, I was attached to the Army Infantry," he said. "I deployed again to Fallujah in 2008 achieving the rank of sergeant."

Following his second tour, he was selected for the meritorious commissioning program and attended officer candidate school and The Basic School in Quantico, a six-month requirement for Marine officers.

Virag leveraged this experience during his next tour with Marine Corps Systems Command, Quantico, Virginia as the Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) project officer from June 2014 to June 2016. He was responsible for maintaining and sustaining more than 500 geographically dispersed wideband SATCOM terminals currently employed throughout the Marine Corps to support nearly every major mission or exercise around the globe.

Additionally, he coordinated with

industry leaders to assess emerging technologies and develop the future SATCOM equipment that will be used for many years to come.

"I went to Quantico to work in the program office where I managed all the satellite communications systems for the Marine Corps," said Virag. "I was in charge of the testing and development of new equipment and sustaining current satellite systems."

Training his Marines to be ready at a moment's notice continues to be one of his top goals going forward.

"Our primary mission is to train to fight regardless of where we go in the Marine Corps," said Virag. "I feel that we are ready for whatever comes our way and we will continue to improve every day."

"I want to maintain the support in the community and to be able to give back as much as we can," Virag said. "We support over 150 funeral details here annually with a small staff but, we feel that it's a very important role in both upholding Marine Corps traditions as well as honoring those who have served and fought before us."



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Andrew Crawford

U.S. Marine Capt. Pierce Virag, Detachment One, Communication Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 45, 4th Marine Logistics Group inspector instructor, addresses Marines during a formation held here, July 12.

Grissom's quality assurance section wins AFRC award

By Staff Sgt.
Dakota Bergl
Public Affairs staff

The Air Force Reserve Command awarded the 434th Maintenance Group Quality Assurance Section the 2015 Quality Assurance Section of the Year Award.

Grissom's QA section received the award for their outstanding adherence to procedure, contributions to cost reduction and overall performance during 2015.

Chief Master Sgt. Richard Scully, 434th MXG QA superintendent, said that he was proud of the work his office did during the year and they deserved to be

recognized.

"It was nice that the effort we put forth got recognized by the command," said Scully. "It was 100% the efforts of the men and women in this office that allowed us to win this award."

Senior Master Sgt. Michael Young, 434th MXG QA inspector, echoed Scully's words.

"It's always nice to be noticed," said Young. "A lot of times the maintainers look at us as the bad guys, the people who can get them in trouble, so having this positive recognition feels really good."

In 2015, the QA section reviewed and reported to AFRC on 302

programs within five days of receiving the request, hosted an F-108 engine wash which finished 12 hours ahead of schedule, developed an all-inclusive quality assurance training plan and many other accomplishments.

Despite the sheer volume of work demanded of the QA team Scully said he was never worried or felt overwhelmed. "We've got such a great staff. I had great faith that the work being done by our people was accurate and timely."

Young said the inspectors never have time to worry about the amount of work that is on their

plates.

"You just come in and get the work done, we don't have any other choice," said Young. "Even when we have a lot going on Chief Scully keeps us on course and we know he's got our backs."

Also during 2015 Grissom's QA team was able to assist the 911th Airlift Wing in preparing for a major command inspection. Scully felt that that experience allowed his team to grow and get better at their jobs.

"When we have the ability to help other organization we usually learn something, assisting other organizations makes us better," said Scully.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Dakota Bergl

Senior Master Sgt. Michael Young, 434th Maintenance Group quality assurance inspector, speaks with Senior Airman Jackie Hyman, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, while she replaces a damaged elevator snubber here, July 13.

Grissom Fire Department accredited by CFAI

By Staff Sgt. Dakota Bergl
Public Affairs staff

The Grissom Fire Department recently became one of only 26 departments in the Air Force to receive Accredited Agency status from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The accreditation was achieved after a five year process during which the fire department had to meet the highest international standards in 252 training and logistic indicators.

John Ireland, Grissom Fire Department fire chief, expressed his pride in his employees for making the accreditation possible through diligence and hard work.

"I'm proud of everyone for the hard work they put in to make this happen," said Ireland. "We had every aspect of our department evaluated and if we didn't have such a great team we wouldn't have gotten this accreditation."

The CFAI process is voluntary and provides an agency with an improvement model designed to assess their performance internally. After years of preparation the final step in the accreditation process is a peer assessment performed by a team from



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Dakota Bergl

Grissom firefighters pose with a plaque displaying their Accredited Agency status from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International here, Sept. 8.

departments around the country selected by CFAI to spend time onsite and make first person assessments of the fire department's performance and capabilities.

Christian Jacobs, Grissom Fire Department accreditation manager, said that although the amount of time and effort required for the accreditation process was daunting it is worth

it for the experience and insight it provided.

"We put in about 1,100 man hours to make this accreditation happen," said Jacobs. "It was worth the time to be recognized as one of the best fire departments in the Air Force and the country. It really makes us stand out and shows how dedicated our people are to being the best at their jobs."

Airman makes history, graduates from new ALS course

By Staff Sgt. Dakota Bergl
Public Affairs staff

Senior Airman Linda Stovall made history when she graduated from the first iteration of a new type of Airman Leadership School on August 26 at McGhee Tyson Air National Guard Base, Tenn.

The new blended learning course is a combination of both online and hands-on training. The first six weeks are distance learning via Blackboard and the last two weeks are in residence at McGhee Tyson.

Master Sgt. Deborah Wilson-Strong, 434th Force Support Squadron training technician, said the new course could be a good alternative for Airmen who might struggle with the tradition CDC based distance learning course but can't spend eight weeks away from home at the on-site class.

"The current distance learning course has a reputation for being very difficult," said Wilson-Strong. "I think this new course will bridge the gap between distance and hands-on learning and make ALS more acces-

sible to our Airmen."

Stovall, 434th FSS assistant NCOIC of career development, agreed with Wilson-Strong and said the course was an excellent alternative to either of the prior options.

"I tried to do the correspondence course and it did not work for me," said Stovall. "I asked my supervisor if I could do the in-residence but eight weeks was a little bit too much since I have a kid at home. That's when I heard about this course option which was perfect because I didn't have to be gone for so long."

Stovall said any Airmen who are ready to take the next step and become leaders should sign up for the blended course.

"If you want to learn about being an effective leader and are ready to handle more responsibility and lead subordinates I'd most definitely take this class," said Stovall. "It is a lot of work but the online portion gives you the flexibility to complete assignments whenever you have time."

Those wishing to attend should contact the base education office for more information.