

Heartland WARRIOR

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2nd Quarter 2017



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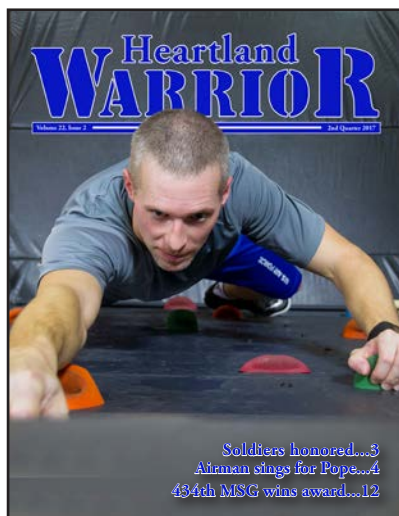
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U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Harrison Withrow

On the cover...

Cory Walters, 434th Civil Engineer Squadron biological scientist, climbs the new rock climbing wall at Grissom's fitness center Jan. 25. The gym offers a variety of workout equipment aimed at providing fun and engaging workout activities for Airmen and anyone who has access to the base.

New Blended Retirement: Think now, plan for future

By Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

The old adage, a penny saved is a penny earned will have a whole new meaning as a new blended retirement system becomes implemented January 2018.

The system impacts every service member of the Department of Defense, and members are encouraged to prepare for an alternative retirement plan and research which system works best for them.

To help navigate, Katina Dimitro, 434th Force Support Squadron Airman and Family Readiness Center personal financial counselor, is readily available for service members of the Hoosier Wing, to provide personal financial assistance for Grissom Airmen.

All service members who join after Jan. 1, 2018, will automatically be placed into the blended retirement program, but Airmen who have less than 4,320 Reserve points or active-duty Airmen with less than 12 years time-in-service by Dec. 30, 2017, will have the option to opt into the

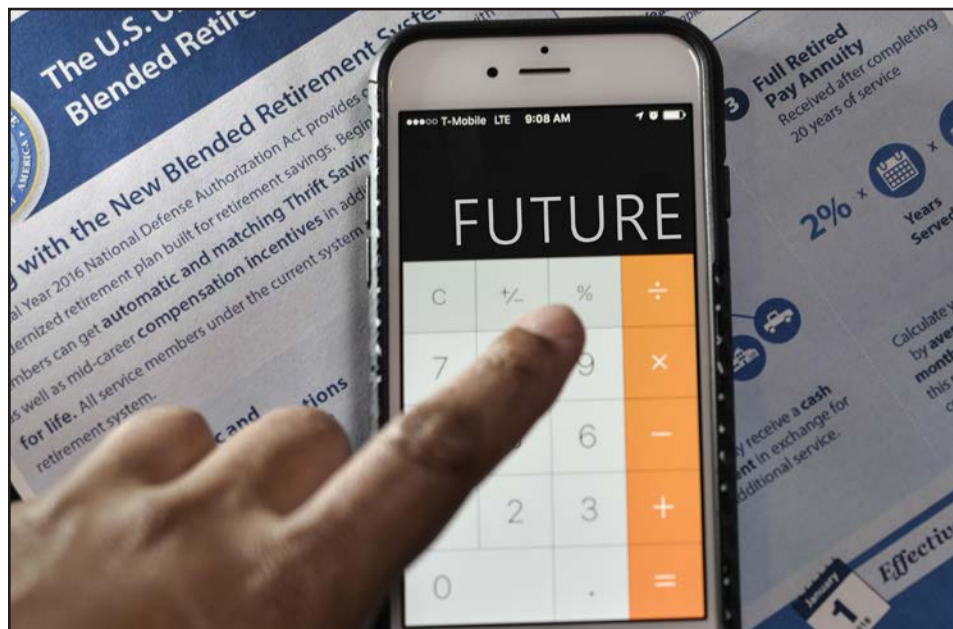
system until Dec. 30, 2018. Once opting into the BRS, the choice is irrevocable.

Prior active-duty reservists can calculate their retirement points at the rate of one point for each day on active duty. Traditional reservists, on average, will earn approximately 75 points per year for attending monthly unit training assemblies and approximately two weeks of annual tour. The total retirement points are then used to calculate a reservists' monthly retirement plan.

According to Dimitro, prior service Airmen who rejoin after Jan. 1, 2018, will have 30 days to decide to opt for the traditional legacy retirement system, or opt for the BRS. However, prior service Airmen with more than 4,320 retirement points are not eligible for the BRS.

Under the traditional legacy system, only Airmen who served 20 "good years" are eligible to receive and/or collect a DoD retirement after the age of 60. The new blended retirement program, however, offers

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U.S. Air Force graphic by Staff Sgt. Alexandre Montes

The new blended retirement system scheduled to be implemented Jan. 1, 2018 combines servicemember's current retirement pension with distributions from the Thrift Savings Plan, creating a portable retirement option.

316th PSYOP Company changes command

**By Staff Sgt.
Dakota Bergl**
Public Affairs staff

Deeply rooted in military tradition, change of command ceremonies give troops the chance to witness first-hand the passing of the guidon as they go from one leader to another.

In that tradition, Maj. Glenn Laws took command of the 316th Psychological Operations Company during a change of command ceremony Jan. 21 at Grissom Air Reserve Base, Ind.

Laws, who has been a member of the 316th PSYOP Co. since 2001, previously served as the unit's commander from August 2013 to July 2015.

"I'm fortunate to have been selected to command the 316th again," said Laws. "It's good to be back."

Lt. Col. Christopher Ambrosio, 16th Psychological Operations Battalion commander, expressed his support of the 316th during the ceremony.

"This unit is number four in the battalion and that really says something about the dedication of the soldiers here," said Ambrosio. "You have the same readiness requirements as active duty but you manage to meet those requirements despite only having one tenth of the time that an active duty unit has. This unit does outstanding work and I'm sure Major Laws will continue to uphold those standards."

Laws echoed Ambrosio's sentiments while addressing his troops. "You all do a great job here and I want to en-

courage all of my soldiers to continue to strive for excellence," said Laws. The 316th PSYOP Co. provides world-wide

military information support operations to conventional and special operations units, both in peace and war.



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

Lt. Col. Christopher Ambrosio, 16th Psychological Operations Battalion commander, transfers the 316th Psychological Operations Company guidon to Maj. Glenn Laws, 316th PSYOP Co. commander, during a change of command ceremony Jan. 21.

49th APF: Moving Airmen around world



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

Members from the 49th Aerial Port Flight secure a pallet of items to be shipped to Haiti as part of a humanitarian relief.

by Staff Sgt. Katrina Heikkinen
Public Affairs staff

Filling the skies of Germany from 1948-1949, when the U.S. Armed Forces partook in one of the greatest aerial resupply operations in history delivering means of survival to an entire population.

Two decades later on Aug. 19, 1969, when the path of Hurricane Camille hit Mississippi, the U.S. Air Force responded by conducting one of the greatest humanitarian airlift operations in history – airlifting over 5,000 tons of cargo.

Just as the U.S. exercised its contingency and humanitarian capabilities during the Berlin Airlift and Hurricane Camille, the 49th Aerial Port Flight at Grissom Air Reserve

Base continues to provide world class support to local and global missions; sustaining, enabling and protecting service members and Air Force capabilities dating back to 1973.

“Our mission at the 49th and aerial ports around the world is to move cargo, personnel, ammo, and vehicles from home station to and from overseas and other stateside locations,” said Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Thorman, 49th APF air transportation craftsman.

Although the 49th APF dates its lineage to 1973, it was originally constituted as the 49th Aerial Port Squadron, but was deactivated in 1992. A decade later, it was redesignated as the 49th Aerial Port Flight and was activated in the

reserve in October 2002.

Senior Master Sgt. Laurie Latchaw, 49th APF deputy superintendent, a career logistics Airman with over three decades of her life wearing the Air Force uniform in both the active duty and Reserve capacity, is witness to the growth of the 49th APF since its inception.

“The growth of this unit is one of my proudest accomplishments,” Latchaw said. “We originally stood up [49th APF] with five people. Now, we have around 70 personnel and will soon be transitioning to a squadron with more than 100 personnel.”

After joining the 49th APF in 2015, Thorman, a seasoned air

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transportation craftsman with over 12 years of active-duty experience, says working in the expanding 49th APF offers a unique perspective for its personnel.

“Aerial port is the best job in the Air Force,” he said. “The personnel in the 49th bring different talents and perspectives coming into this job; many are new to the Air Force and are students; others are civilian cops; others work in IT, and some served on active duty.”

“During a recent UTA it was rewarding to see Airmen who don’t work in the 49th every day, come together and have the opportunity to be involved in handling and preparing humanitarian relief for Haiti,” he continued. “It’s a rewarding job to be a part of providing aid to individuals that need it.”

According to Senior Master Sgt. Bradley Frank, 49th APF training manager, the basis of accomplishing any deployment relies on aerial porters. Additionally, aside from their main function as aerial porters – to process cargo and personnel – APF is also responsible for loading and unloading aircraft, performing joint inspections of cargo and equipment for air transportation and executing engine running on-loads/off-loads.

“Every aircraft has different dimensions, and we have to ensure our cargo meets the height and/or weight restrictions,” Thorman said. “Working with KC-135R Stratotankers at Grissom is unique in that they have a smaller cabin.”

“The cargo we put on a pallet could go down range or go to Haiti for a humanitarian mission,” Thorman said. “We are affecting the outcome of whoever is at the location we ship cargo off to, so to be able to see the full circle of Air Force equipment and personnel is very rewarding.”

For one veteran, Senior Airman Anthony Valezquez, 49th APF air transportation apprentice, he



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

Senior Airman Monti McNall, 49th Aerial Port Flight air transportation journeyman, measures the distance of a hitch to center balance cargo as part of cargo deployment function training at Grissom.

recently rejoined the Air Force after a 20-year break in service.

“When I was on active duty, my AFSC was intelligence,” Valezquez said. “Today, my civilian job when I’m not an aerial porter is in IT. When I rejoined the Reserve last April, I knew I wanted something different, something more hands-on. I let the recruiter pick my AFSC and I

feel extremely lucky to be working in air transportation because I get to see the end product from start to finish.”

“Every AFSC in the Air Force is important, but being an aerial porter means sending out cargo and passengers all over the world to make sure every mission is accomplished,” Thorman echoed. “Logistics moves the world.”

Chaplain receives prestigious award

By Tech. Sgt. Benjamin Mota
Public Affairs staff

The Air Force Chaplain Corps is renowned for providing religious, emotional, and physical support to Airmen and their families, and while one Grissom Chaplain does just that he also went above and beyond recently earning him the highest distinction in Indiana.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Obadiah Smith, Jr., 434th Air Refueling Wing chaplain, was awarded The Sagamore of the Wabash Award, on behalf of then Indiana Gov. Mike Pence during a Commander's Call here Jan. 7.

"I was extremely humbled when I found out I had received the award," said Smith. "It's proof that if you continue to serve and live by our core values God will elevate you in his own due time."

After being notified he

would receive the award, Smith said he was astonished after he had done some research and discovered its significance.

The state of Indiana describes the award as a personal tribute given to those who have rendered a distinguished service to Indiana or the governor. Among those who have received the award have been astronauts, presidents, ambassadors, artists, musicians, politicians, and ordinary citizens who have contributed greatly to the Hoosier heritage.

Following in the footsteps of prior recipients, Smith was highly regarded for his distinguished service to the state of Indiana. That service was exemplified during his appointment to the Indiana Veteran Affairs Commission between 2013 through 2017.

"I can't say enough good things about

[Smith]," said Richard Jewell, IVAC chairman, who presented Smith the award on behalf of the former governor. "He always brought a unique perspective to issues regarding veteran affairs that pushed the commission to consider multiple objectives before making decisions."

The IVAC mission is to advise the Indiana governor and legislation on all matters pertaining military and veteran issues. Another important role is its duty to administer the Military Family Relief Fund, a \$9 million fund used to assist veterans.

"[Smith] has been the go-to guy, helping set up guidelines for the administration of the relief fund for the state of Indiana," added Jewell. "He was a valuable asset to the organization and we could always depend on him."

The award's name, "Sagamore," was a term

used by Native American tribes of Indiana to describe a lesser chief or a great man among the tribe whom the chief consulted for wisdom and summed up Smith's role during his tenure with IVAC.

"[Smith] brought with him a unique perspective from both the civilian side and the military side of issues that were presented to us," said Jewell. "His all-around knowledge of the military and issues [military members] dealt with greatly shaped the direction our organization went when it came to making decisions."

In addition to his contributions to IVAC, Smith also provided religious services and counseling to over 2000 military and Department of Defense civilian employees stationed at the Hoosier wing from 2007 to 2017.

"I've known Chaplain Smith for a long time; he's always gone above and beyond to take care of military members and their families," said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. "His receipt of this award is just, and deserved."

Despite the recognition for his selfless service to the state of Indiana, Smith credits his dedication to helping others as a calling.

"Service before self; I lead by example and hope my family and others I've helped through my service to them will do the same," said Smith. "I hope they will take what I've given them and understand that if they to serve their community and others God will elevate them in due time."



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jami Lancette

Richard Jewell, Indiana Veteran Affairs Commission chairman, presents Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Obadiah Smith, 434th Air Refueling Wing chaplain, The Sagamore of the Wabash, on behalf of former Indiana Gov. Mike Pence during a Commander's Call at Grissom, Jan. 7.

TCTO sends Airmen into KC-135R “hell-hole”



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

Tech Sgt. Trevor Gray and Master Sgt. Jared Richmond, both 434th Maintenance Group repair and reclamation technicians, reinstall a stabilizer trim actuator in the tail of a KC-135R Stratotanker at Grissom, Jan. 8.

By Staff Sgt. Dakota Bergl
Public Affairs staff

No maintainer enjoys being required to climb into the small compartment, often called the “hell-hole,” in the tail of a KC-135R Stratotanker, even if it just for a short time.

However, due to a new time compliance technical order, several Airmen have been tasked with removing and replacing the stabilizer trim actuator in four of Grissom’s aircraft, a job requiring several days of work in the small tail compartment.

“This project is a lot of work,” said Tech. Sgt. Nathan Maiuri, 434th Maintenance Group repair and reclamation technician. “It is going to take us two or three days for each aircraft affected by the TO change. We have to pull the old actuator out, inspect and install the new actuator then run a flight con-

trol system test to ensure the new actuator is installed and working properly.”

Maiuri said working in the tail compartment is difficult due to the cramped nature of the space, less than 10 feet in any direction with entry gained by removing a panel and climbing up through the small hole behind the panel. Luckily for Maiuri the aircraft he was working on was pulled into Dock 6, the only hangar Grissom has capable of fitting a KC-135R from nose to tail.

“I’m just glad that we aren’t out on the flightline doing this,” said Maiuri. “We have to climb up here more than you’d think and it’s hard enough being crammed in here without having to deal with being out in the cold.”

The recent TCTO required that actuators with certain serial numbers be inspected due to a possible defect.

“The TCTO came down after they found out the coating used on the jack screws on some of the actuators could start peeling off,” said Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Lecroy, 434th MXG noncommissioned officer in charge of repair and reclamation. “If any of the actuators on our aircraft matched the serial numbers in the TCTO we had to inspect them for any chipping or flaking.”

The stabilizer trim actuator controls the horizontal stabilizer which, along with the elevator the pilots, use to adjust the pitch, or up and down movement, of the aircraft’s nose. It can be operated either electrically or manually to adjust the stabilizer. During normal operation the pilots use electrical input by pressing small switch on their control column. Manual input is used for minor adjustments or in the case of an electrical failure.

Marines participate in group exercise

**By Staff Sgt.
Dakota Bergl**
Public Affairs staff

Grissom turned into a landing zone for a group of Marines earlier this month and the communications started flowing.

During the exercise Marines from Detachment 1, Communications Company, 4th Marine Logistics Group set up a command post inside the Marine Corps Reserve Center and a forward operating base outside to practice installing and using their mobile communication tools.

Their primary mission is to establish communications for the other units in a deployed environment said Capt. Reynaldo Hinojosa, Detachment 1 commander.

"We set up the backbone communication services that other units need," said Hinojosa. "That means we can set up email, radio and web access so that other units can communicate effectively. Our MOS [military occupational specialty] is constantly evolving over time as new technology becomes available."

Also, during the exercise, several Marines participated in simulated patrols during which they made their way around Grissom stopping at various checkpoints before setting up a mobile communications system. The patrols are good practice for what they might be required to do while on a deployment, said Hinojosa.

"This gives me a good

opportunity to see how my Marines would handle a patrol, making sure they are covering their fire zones and keeping good communication with each other," he said.

The Marines are expected to be able to think on their feet and improvise in order to set up their communications systems. This can range from finding the best place to set up a mobile satellite receiver to building a radio transmitter using cables, sticks and a plastic spoon.

"Anyone with any radio transmission background could probably improvise some kind of transmitter," added Hinojosa. "They made this one using whatever we had sitting around, if you look you can see they used the spoon from an

MRE to act as an insulator. They need to be able to set up communications no matter what their situation is and they know a lot of ways to go about it."

Lance Cpl. Kyle Fisher, Detachment 1 cyber network operator, said he thought the training would aid the Marines in the future.

"The practice we got during this exercise will be very beneficial during future exercises and deployments," said Fisher. "We got to work with some new gear and implement our training."

Lance Cpl. Nick Swintz, Detachment 1 cyber network operator, agreed with his fellow Marine and was proud of the work they accomplished during the training.

"This was good train-

ing for our new gear," said Swintz. "We had the chance to show our higher command that we could take new equipment and run with it. With just 12 Marines we did what other units who participated couldn't do with more."

Sgt. Daniel Dilego, Detachment 1 field wireman, said it was hard work with only a handful of Marines but the unit did very well.

"We pulled long days and long nights but we kept our services running," said Dilego. "Our joint unit had 40 Marines, and I think we out-shone them. We performed very well."

Opened in 2003, the Marine Corps Reserve Center at Grissom is the home station for 80 Marines.



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

Lance Cpl. Matt Moats, Detachment 1, Communications Company, 4th Marine Logistics Group field wireman, provides security during a simulated patrol at Grissom, March 9.

Family Readiness selected for command award



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

Colonel Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander, right, and Colonel Scott Russell, 434th Mission Support Group commander, present Jill Marconi-Pcyclik with a certificate of recognition at Grissom Jan. 17.

**By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow**
Public Affairs staff

Grissom's Airman & Family Readiness Center was recently awarded the 2016 Reserve Family Readiness Award.

The RFRA is a Department of Defense program established in 2000 to recognize top units in each reserve component that demonstrated outstanding family readiness.

"Strong family readiness programs contribute to mission readiness and greatly enhance the ability to deploy Guard and Reserve units," said Matthew Dubois, DOD deputy assistant secretary of defense for reserve integration.

"Our unit is one of many outstanding reserve Airman and Family Readiness offices AFRC has," said Jill Marconi-Pcyclik, director of Airman & Family Readiness. "We all

give so much of ourselves in these positions to ensure that we can do all we can to assist those who walk through our door."

The biggest factor that contributed to receiving the award was a dedicated staff that cared about the mission, said Marconi-Pcyclik.

"The reservists who work in this office are outstanding, caring and loyal to the 434th members," she said. "They bring so much to this office, that I believe it is their time to stand out and be recognized for their work." Recognizing units which are outstanding in family readiness is important for the Air Force because the health of individual Airmen and the wing as a whole is greatly affected by support they receive, said Marconi-Pcyclik.

"There needs to be a place that members, families and retirees can always feel connected to. A place that's welcoming, helpful and safe

to come to for their entire Air Force career," she said. "We strive to be the place families can connect with."

"Airman and Family Readiness was established years ago as a way to take care of our folks," said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. "Jill and her staff do an incredible job and this award is proof positive of that. Their recognition is richly deserved."

The award came not as a result of any one individual's work, but through the combined effort of everyone at Family Readiness, said Marconi-Pcyclik.

"This office has continued to give 100 percent of each of us, over many years," she said. "We are one fantastic team, military, civilians and Key Spouse Program. If there is something to be done, we all do it. If someone needs us, we go. Everyone in here is all in, no matter what. We believe we are one team, one fight."

Grissom aviator epitomizes flying diversity

**By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow**
Public Affairs staff

From loading to flying, from fixed wing to rotary wing, and propeller to turbine, one Grissom aviator has done it all.

Capt. Johnathon McCashland, 434th Air Refueling Wing deputy director of inspections, knew early on in life he wanted to be an Air Force pilot. The path to achieving that goal, however, was not your typical path.

"Sometimes in life, you don't always have the path you want, but if you persevere, you can take a different route and still get where you want to go," said McCashland.

In 1998 McCashland enlisted in the Air Force as a loadmaster, and advanced quickly as he made senior airman below-the-zone followed by staff sergeant on

his first attempt.

"Along the way I had an officer come grab me and say, 'hey, I think you'd be a good candidate for the Air Force Academy,'" said McCashland. "From there I went to the academy prep school."

While in prep school, he joined the intercollegiate football team as a wide receiver, but during the second to last game of the season he severely injured his shoulder.

"At that point I was too old to delay going into the academy, so I had to make a decision," he said. "I could either try to go to officer training school with a bum shoulder, or I could go back enlisted and have surgery to get it fixed.

"That was when I really started to take a look at my life," he said. "I thought, I've always wanted to be an Air Force pilot since I was a little kid. How am I

going to do that?"

Despite previous setbacks, he was still determined to make that dream a reality.

McCashland became a C-130 loadmaster with the 71st Rescue Squadron at Moody AFB, Georgia, a unit which deployed very frequently, he said. Those deployments offered McCashland an opportunity to work on his education.

During that time, McCashland finished school and earned a private pilot's license, while volunteering as a firefighter.

"The people I met in the rescue community and the impression I made on my commander got me a job interview to fly HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters with the California Air National Guard Combat Search and Rescue," he said. "I never thought in a million years I'd be flying helicopters. The Air Force

is supposed to fly jets!

"After seeing the impact those folks had, I knew it was a good fit for me," he added.

McCashland's dreams of flying would once again be set back when an electrocardiogram test indicated that he had a hole in his heart.

"It was terrible," he said. "I was finally going to be a pilot, and in an instant it all came crashing down."

Determined to exhaust every possible option, McCashland received a second opinion that revealed his heart was in good condition.

"They cleared me to fly, and suddenly I was right back on track," he said. "I wouldn't take 'no' for an answer, and it worked out for me."

In 2011, McCashland signed on with a manufacturing company as a process engineer. Rather than fly to California several times a month, he began looking for a reserve position in the local area.

He first interviewed at McConnell AFB, Kansas and was offered a job there. However, he did not immediately accept.

"I don't know what made me do this, but I told them I wanted to think it over for a few days and make sure this was the right decision for me," he said. "As I was walking out the door, I got a call from Grissom."

McCashland had grown up in Indiana, and was familiar with the base as a child, he said.

"Every year, when I was a kid, my family would drive up U.S. 31 to South



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Harrison Withrow

Capt. Johnathon McCashland, 434th Air Refueling Wing deputy director of inspections, poses with a photograph in front of a KC-135 Stratotanker at Grissom Feb. 21.

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Defenders down weary maintainers to claim hardwood

**By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow**
Public Affairs staff

The 434th Security Forces Squadron handcuffed the 434th Maintenance Squadron, 50-47 in the annual base basketball championship March 4 at the Fitness Center.

The defensive minded Defenders sought to put the clamps on an outnumbered Maintainer team.

The scrappy Maintainers only brought five members to the base's version of the big dance, but high flyers like DeAngeleo Winston help slow the SFS attack.

"This was our third game of the night," Winston said. "We were trying to push through."

The SFS beat the Maintainers in the first game of the night sending them to the loser's bracket.

The Maintainers won their next game against the 434th Logistics Readiness Squadron to earn another shot at the cops.

"We knew that this was their third game, and they only had five players," said William Berry, SFS guard. "Our goal was to run them up and down the court and not let them get any rest."

In the end the tactic paid off as the



Antonio Cruz, 434th Security Forces Squadron player, goes in for an uncontested layup during the annual base basketball championship at Grissom March 4.

Maintainers' energy began to drain faster than buckets they were scoring.

"What a great game and what a great testament to the competitive spirit we have here at Grissom," said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th Air Refueling Wing commander. "I was sure Maintenance would run out of gas because

their earlier game went to overtime, but they hung with them running up and down the court and were actually within two points in the last minute."

Shaw and Chief Master Sgt. Wes Marion, 434th ARW command chief, presented awards to both teams for their effort.

Retirement, from page 2

a chance for Airmen who serve less than 20 years to still earn a retirement. The BRS, however, adjusts the years of service multiplier from 2.5 percent to 2.0 percent to calculate monthly retired pay.

Moreover, because the BRS system also includes the Thrift Savings Plan, which includes an automatic 1 percent and up to 4 percent matching contributions to a service member's TSP account, Airmen must be actively aware of their contributions and the status of their finances.

To assist Airmen and their dependents on all

matters regarding finances, Dimitro is readily available to provide free, private and confidential financial counseling.

"The role of the financial counselor is to provide financial literacy for service members to make sure they have the best possible information to the determine which retirement plan they want to opt for," Dimitro said. "My job is to sit down, one on one with every service member and their family and explain the blended retirement system, educate them on what the difference are, then take a look at their current

financial state."

The decision to either opt or not opt for the BRS is very individualized as there is no set criteria for determining the better choice except for a careful examination of personal finances and retirement goals, she said.

Additional counseling is available that covers a wide range of financial aspects including budgeting, financial planning, investment options, debt solutions, increasing credit scores and more.

"I highly encourage all Airmen to meet with me so that they can under-

stand their options and see what's going to being their best interest," Dimitro said. "You don't have to make the decision today, but the sooner Airmen start looking at it and have retirement discussions with their family and the people that retirement is going to impact, is crucial to making the best informed decision."

Airmen interested in learning more about their reserve points/history can do so by going to the virtual MPF on My.af.mil, then select Self-Service Actions > Personnel Data > PCARS.

Grissom CP shares knowledge with 914th ALW

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then one Air Force base is looking to pay Grissom a huge compliment.

The 914th Airlift Wing, located in Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York, recently sent two command post controllers to train at Grissom as part of their ongoing conversion to the KC-135R Stratotanker mission.

"We first found out about Grissom from one of our officers who came here as part of an inspector general team," said Senior Airman Alexis O'Connell, 914th AW command post reports manager. "She went back and told our commander, 'Wow, you seriously have to see this place!'"

After being a C-130 Hercules wing for over 40 years, the 914th AW is currently in the process of becoming an air refueling wing, and has been sending personnel from various fields to learn from their counterparts at Grissom.

"They've come here to learn how a KC-135 command post operates, which is surprisingly very different from a C-130 command post," said Senior Airman Jesse Crow, 434th ARW emergency actions controller. "For example, they mostly rely on automated software at each base to tell them where their aircraft have landed and when they arrived.

"At Grissom, we have



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Harrison Withrow

Tech. Sgt. Derwin Wilson, 434th Air Refueling Wing command post controller, reviews flight following procedures with Senior Airman Alexis O'Connell, 914th Air Lift Wing CP reports manager, and Tech Sgt. Kristina Burke, 914th ALW CP training manager at Grissom March 2.

to track exactly where our aircraft are at all times," he explained.

Tech. Sgt. Derwin Wilson, 434th ARW command post controller, was also heavily involved in training the Niagara Falls Airmen during their visit of the base.

"Flight following is the biggest difference between our two command posts," said Wilson. "When we have a sortie going out, it's typically not the aircrews that are coordinating with each other. We call the receiver that we're refueling, and we're periodically checking with them to make sure the mission is still on track. If anything changes, we can let our aircrew know and adjust for that.

"They're used to a

more passive operation, where ours is very much active," he added.

O'Connell was accompanied to Grissom by Tech Sgt. Kristina Burke, 914th AW command post training manager, who met with Tech. Sgt. Milita Hopkins, the 434th ARW command post training manager.

"Hopkins' training program is amazing," said Burke. "Nobody in our command post really has much experience in running one at the speed of Grissom's, so being able to come witness it firsthand has been invaluable."

Though there are some key differences between Grissom and Niagara Falls, ultimately the biggest change for the 914th AW is the operational tempo, said

Burke.

"We do a lot of the same things," she said.

"We just do them at a smaller scale," O'Connell added.

Cooperation between the 914th AW and the 434th ARW isn't going to be limited to this one exchange, said Burke. Additional coordination is planned leading up to and following the beginning of the refueling mission at Niagara Falls, including sending Grissom mechanics to Niagara to help them prepare for their new aircraft.

"We're developing a very strong working relationship with Grissom, and it's one that will last for years to come," said Burke. "It's been a great experience and everyone is very pleased to have a strong partner to rely on in this transition."

Aircraft structural repair keep aircraft looking new

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

When a part breaks on a 60-year-old aircraft, replacing it isn't always as simple as buying one.

Though production of the KC-135 Stratotanker ended in 1965, Grissom still has to keep its aging fleet in top shape and accomplishing this mission requires an on-site fabrication team to recreate parts no longer available.

"The older an aircraft gets, the more the parts start to wear out, and these

planes are all 50 or 60 years old," said Master Sgt. Corey Fields, 434th Maintenance Squadron aircraft structural repair supervisor. "You can't just order new parts for them, so we build a lot of it ourselves."

The reasons for breakdowns are varied, but there are a few frequent offenders, said Staff Sgt. Shane Wilcox, 434th MXS aircraft structural technician.

"A lot of damage is often caused by stress," said Wilcox. "You've got aircraft constantly going from high altitudes to low altitudes, and that just wears the

metal down over time."

Among other common issues, birds are a constant menace, he said.

"Hitting birds can cause a lot of issues," said Wilcox. "It's not extremely common, but it happens more than you'd think."

"We typically see damage from a bird strike about once a month," he added.

There are instances where existing parts can be mended, but some damage is so severe that an entirely new piece must be created from scratch.

"We've got repair criteria that tells us how to go forward in any given job," said Wilcox. "For example, we have a chart for various lengths of cracks in different areas."

"For some areas, it might be up to three-fourths of an inch long and we'll patch that together," he added. "If it's any bigger than that, we'll make a new one."

Almost all of the parts created in the fabrication shop are made with aluminum, even when the original part wasn't, said Master Sgt. Brent Mosier, 434th MXS aircraft struc-

tural technician.

"Some parts come in that are made of magnesium," said Mosier. "When that happens, we'll replace it with aluminum."

The magnesium parts were once common in aircraft, but are no longer used due to faster corrosion, said Mosier. Aluminum is more resistant to the elements, and the parts last longer.

In many cases, creating a part on-site can be preferable to purchasing a part even when the option is available, he said.

"If we have the tools and materials available to make a part, that usually ends up being easier than buying it and having it sent here," said Mosier.

Even though the jobs can often be done by a single technician, the structural repair shop tries to work as a team whenever possible, said Wilcox.

"For a lot of parts, one person can make it alone, but we take those opportunities to get our less experienced people some hands-on training," he said. "We try to make it a team effort."



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Harrison Withrow

Staff Sergeant Shane Wilcox, 434th Maintenance Squadron structural repair technician, cuts a sheet of aluminum using a band-saw at Grissom Feb. 22.

Aviator, from page 10

Bend to visit my mom's family," said McCashland. "When we'd drive by Grissom she'd wake me up and say, 'hey look, there's Grissom, there's the runway!'"

After interviewing at Grissom, McCashland was offered a position.

"I never thought I'd end up flying here," he said. "It was so surreal"

"I think no matter where you go, your heart always takes you home," he added. "That's what happened with me. I'm home."

Since coming to Grissom, McCashland has been asked frequently to speak to the Development and

Training Flight, a program for new recruits that helps them prepare for basic military training.

"I chose him because he really cares about the enlisted folks," said Senior Master Sgt. Linda Mason-Wilson, former director of the Grissom DNTF program. "He makes himself available to mentor them, because he remembers the people who did it for him."

"I relied on him to show the recruits there is a future in the Air Force," she added. "If they want to pursue their education, maybe even become an officer someday, those

opportunities are there for them."

"I tell them my story, not because I want them to go 'wow, look at you,' but I want them to realize that they can do it too," said McCashland.

"I'm not anything special, really. I just grew up with a dream. If they work hard and do the right things, they can achieve their dreams, too."

In June he will mark 19 years of service.

"I've learned so much, and met so many incredible people," he said. "I don't know where my journey is going to take me next, but it's been a heck of a ride."

Flight simulator changes aircrew training

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

Standing alone in a 50' foot tower resembling something from a movie set sits a machine that has changed the way pilot's train.

Grissom's KC-135R Stratotanker flight deck simulator is a full-range simulator with interactive displays designed to provide pilot training and save money.

Gary Beebe, Grissom's site focal pilot who manages the KC-135 simulator, is a retired Air Force colonel who flew the KC-135 for 33 years.

"When I was a young guy, the simulator was pretty much just a tool used to familiarize us with running checklists," he said. "Now with the visual systems that we have today, and the full range of motion simulators, it's really very close to the real aircraft."

The technology used in the simulator has become so advanced that it's completely changed the way tanker crews train for emergencies, said Beebe.

"We used to practice emergency procedures in the aircraft, but now we're turning to the simulator for that," he said. "Instead of just telling them what to do, you can actually show people what it will really be like."

Because the simulator has become so versatile, it can train crews for events that might very rarely happen in an aircraft, said Beebe.

"We can simulate bad weather and all sorts of things the aircrew might see in a live environment," he said. "We can walk the crew through it and ask, 'what's really the best way to approach this and recover the aircraft?'"

The ability to realistically simulate emergencies is one of the greatest advantages of the simulator, said Capt. Robert Faurot, 434th Operations Support Squadron director of training.

"The biggest thing we evaluate in 'the box' is emergency procedures," said Faurot. "We throw anything



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Harrison Withrow

Captain Brandon Giles, 74th Air Refueling Squadron pilot, performs pre-flight procedures in the KC-135R flight deck simulator at Grissom Feb. 1.

from an engine fire to just a plain engine flameout at the crews to see how they handle it."

The ability to practice any scenario at any time in the simulator has been greatly effective at improving aircrew readiness, he said.

"Emergency situations in the simulator can be stressful, but that's a good thing," said Faurot. "When you're in the simulator and get the warning lights and tones associated with an actual emergency, you have to think, 'okay, what am I going to do?' You go through the checklist and figure out how to proceed as if you were in the actual aircraft."

Alongside the pilots training inside the simulator are instructors who control scenarios and coach the crew.

"The instructors have enormous amounts of experience," said Faurot. "We may miss things and they will point them out. Without having the flight simulators to practice such emergencies it could make having an actual emergency in the aircraft that much more stressful. Having the knowledge on such a wide range of scenarios is extremely helpful to each aircrew member involved."

The simulator also holds a financial advantage over practicing in a live aircraft, said Beebe. The KC-135

cost almost \$22,000 for each flight-hour, while the simulator only costs a few hundred.

Because of these benefits, the Air Force has fully embraced simulators as a method for keeping aircrew current on their annual training.

"Pilots can accomplish 100 percent of their annual training requirements in the simulator, along with regaining and maintaining currency," he said.

Each simulator flight is approximately 4 hours long, and involves two pilots who are training, said Faurot. Each pilot spends half the flight practicing flying skills, and the other half acting as a monitoring pilot.

Despite all of the benefits and advantages the simulator brings, ultimately it will never fully replace training in a real aircraft, said Faurot.

"Even with all the visual improvements and full-motion upgrades to our current flight simulator here at Grissom, it can never fully simulate flying the actual aircraft," he said. "It's great to learn the systems and practice emergency procedures, however, no matter how realistic you make it seem, we as aircrew members always know in the back of our minds that it's only a sim and we always get to walk away at the end of the day."

434th AMDS keeps wing fit to fight, mission-ready

**By Staff Sgt.
Jami Lancette**
Public Affairs staff

Putting the bite in the fight, Grissom's medical team ensures that the 434th Air Refueling Wing is ready for action.

The 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron's mission is to continually ensure the medical readiness of the 434th Air Refueling Wing and their vision is to be the Air Force Reserve Command's benchmark medical squadron by ensuring a fully mission capable force.

To fulfill their mission objectives Airmen juggle an intense unit training assembly every month by not only completing more than 100 preventative health assessments on Airmen around the wing, but also various profiles and other tasks that may come their way.

"We've got roughly 1,200 Airmen here and everyone requires a PHA to be fully mission capable," said Maj. John Kutcka, 434th AMDS senior medical administrator. "Not to mention the Airmen that are unwell and require profiles and write-ups, which is very time consuming and difficult."

To keep up with the demands of the wing and Air Force, AMDS is comprised of over 90 members, each of whom play their own role within the unit including physicians, nurses, medics, dentists, dental technicians, laboratory technicians, optometry, public health, bioenvironmental, administration, medical supply, repair and pharmacy.

In order to remain

ahead of evolving medical advancements and to test their knowledge, Grissom medics are required to be certified yearly as any medic would be required.

"Everyone that runs the physical exams are required to be certified as emergency medical technicians, they must keep up with [mandatory Air Force training] as well as keep their medical training current," said Kutcka.

In addition to yearly PHA's, any injuries or medical issues sustained by Airmen are required to be reported to AMDS.

"Your physician should provide you a copy of your visit; at that point get it and bring a copy in your next UTA," said Lt. Col. Carl Pafford, 74th Air Refueling Squadron general flight surgeon. "It should have a list of medicines, your treatment and diagnosis; that way if something's going on that would affect deployment we can look at it and make

a note of it.

"Also medications that would come up in a drug screen, we would have a record of it," Pafford added.

AMDS will see on average 150 patients every Saturday UTA and typically have a PHA turn around in under 70 minutes to get Airmen back to the mission.

"Our job here is to take the traditional reservist and bridge between civilian health care and military medicine," said Pafford. "We review records if you are deployable or not.

"We look to see if you have health issues and how are we able to get you better by guiding you in the right direction so you can deploy," Pafford added.

One common misconception Pafford wanted Airmen to know is that even though it's a medicine squadron they are unable to treat members like an active duty base would.

"It's Air Force Reserve

Command's policy that we don't provide clinical treatment on a UTA," said Pafford. "UTA is here for training and readiness; AFRC has set that up in order to make sure that you receive the proper care from someone you would see on a regular basis.

"However when we become true active duty members when we go down-range it's just like an active duty clinic; you go to get seen, we treat and we provide medicine to do that," said Pafford. "Now if something bad were to happen and we have to send you home we coordinate all of that," Pafford added.

Most Airmen visit AMDS during UTA weekends, however there are staff available during the week if the need arises.

"Our air reserve technician's are excellent and very knowledgeable if you had any questions," said Pafford.



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Jami Lancette

Tech. Sgt. Anthony Hall and Staff Sgt. Lauren Hagen both 434th Aerospace Medicine Squadron dental assistants, test x-ray equipment at Grissom Oct. 29, 2016.

Maintainers give tankers facelift

By Senior Airman
Harrison Withrow
Public Affairs staff

With engines gutted, panels stripped, and wings torn apart, hangar 3 looks more like a bone-yard than an inspection shop.

In reality, Grissom's hangar 3 is the location of the isochronal inspection, a process that gives renewed life to aircraft worn down by time. During the inspection, Grissom's highly skilled team of maintainers check every gear, valve and line to ensure that the tankers are at peak performance and remain mission-ready.

"When we pull a jet into the hangar, we're looking to make sure everything runs perfectly," said Tech Sgt. Lloyd Pilkin, 434th Maintenance Squadron jet engine mechanic. "It has to be ready to go at the drop of a hat, because that's what the mission requires, and that's what we're here to do."

An ISO inspection is so thorough and detailed that several dozen mechanics will spend three weeks on a single tanker, said Pilkin. Roughly eight ISOs are performed each year, with one every two years per each of Grissom's 16 tankers.

"We'll have 50 or 60 guys working a single aircraft," he said. "We've got teams of jet mechanics, hydraulics specialists, crew chiefs, structural repair technicians, electrical and environmental specialists, guidance and control mechanics, and communication and navigation specialists."

"Everyone's got their own piece of the pie," he added.

One such specialist is Tech Sgt. John Lambert, 434th MXS hydraulics mechanic. Lambert's role in the ISO is to remove and inspect the refueling boom, along with the related fluid systems.

"We drop the boom and take it into our shop," said Lambert. "There we do a full inspection,



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Harrison Withrow

Airman 1st Class Noah Stancik, 434th Maintenance Squadron aircraft mechanic, removes panels from the wing of a KC-135R Stratotanker at Grissom March 1.

and we try to get as many people looking at it as possible.

"The more eyes, the better," he added.

During the inspection, hydraulics mechanics look for issues such as missing hardware, broken or worn-out bearings, damaged fuel tubes and leaking nozzles.

"Preventative maintenance is very important on a boom," said Lambert. "A whole lot can go wrong if you're not keeping up with it."

Preventative maintenance was a high priority across the board, as every part of the aircraft plays a critical role, said Tech Sgt. Brian Baumfalk, 434th MXS crew chief.

Baumfalk serves as an inspector for the aircraft, following a set of guidelines known as inspection cards to systematically check every aspect of the aircraft.

"There are over 100 cards in the inspection," said Baumfalk. "We divvy those cards up among the team so there's a clear designation of who is responsible for what."

Each card corresponds with

a specific component, usually those that are known to develop cracks and wear out from use. The cards detail procedures for inspecting that particular component.

"For the most part, we all work independently on our cards," he said. "Everyone manages their own area, and we work on the entire aircraft at once."

"For some jobs, though, we need everyone working together," he added. "When the plane needs to be lifted up on jacks, or anything big like that, that's when we get a lot of hands involved."

Despite all of the time and work that goes into an ISO inspection, the main purpose is to prevent more serious issues from occurring down the road.

"The end goal of an ISO inspection is to get the tanker back in the same shape it was the day it was built," said Baumfalk. "We run a paperless system so documentation is easy, and the whole process is very efficient."

"It's a heck of a lot better than waiting for something major to break down the road," he added.