

*Weapons School students get first look at upgraded B-1s, Pg. 3/Deployed Postal Airmen delivering the goods overseas, Pg. 5*

# WART



**AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL: THE EYES ON THE SKY**

# Oh, to “eat, drink and be happy”... is that really how it works for everyone?

By 2nd Lt. Angela Fahey  
Chaplain Candidate

Eating is a joy in life. Ecclesiastes 8:15 tells us “there is nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink and be happy.” However, eating does not equal happiness.

It can be highly anxiety-provoking, even for those within the military. According to The Alliance for Eating Disorders Awareness, 25 million Americans suffer from eating disorders, 25 percent of whom are male.

Within the military, 865 Service members were diagnosed and treated for an eating disorder between 2007 and 2012.

Additionally, a 2001 Military Science research study found 68 percent of women in four of our military branches met the criteria for having an Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified and 1.1 percent were diagnosed with Anorexia Nervosa.

Eating disorders are pervasive and affect all areas of a person’s life, impacting his or her mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual health.

According to Dr. Irina Webster, many feel “a loss of self-identity, an inability to maintain healthy relationships with people and a loss of coping strategies.”

Eating disorders can be deadly. In the last 30 years, American society has witnessed the passing of such well-known figures as Karen Carpenter, Christy Henrich, Heidi Guenther, and many others we never had the privilege to know, directly due to eating disorders. The earlier the intervention, the better the chances are for survival.

### What does this mean for Air Force Wingmen?

Eating disorders are more prevalent than you think! They are also very secretive. Watch for the warning signs and don’t be afraid to confront your fellow Airman if you have concerns.

It is better to ask an uncomfortable question now than to wish you had intervened after it’s too late to do so.

Don’t be afraid to guide your wingman to needed support.

### If you think you may be struggling with an eating disorder:

• **Seek help!** The earlier an eating disorder is treated, the better the recovery rate.

• **Draw on your spiritual strength.** My Christian tradition speaks to overcoming internal struggles. The Apostle Paul encouraged the faithful to recognize they are being “transformed by the renewing of [their] minds.” Other faith groups may find equal encouragement in similar texts in their own tradition.

Psychologists often treat eating disorders with intense men-

tal interventions and highly personalized treatments. Meditations, prayer and connecting with a higher power can help you understand what treatment strategies are best for you.

• **Eat five times a day (i.e. three meals and two snacks).** Doing this will regulate your metabolism and will help your body to stay balanced, making eating seem less harmful.

• **Eat with somebody.** Most symptom use happens out of the sight of others. Keep people around who can encourage you if you’re struggling.

• **Build a good support system.** Emotional responses to difficult situations can affect how you will eat. Temptations to over- or under-eat are typically strongest when an individual is alone.

Having supportive friends around who will listen to and encourage you when you’re struggling can help lessen negative emotional influences.

• **Have a plan for handling difficult situations.** Everyone encounters challenges. Creating strategies in advance may prepare you to deal with difficulties when they arise.

• **Engage in artistic endeavors.** Perfectionism is a key struggle for those who struggle with eating disorders, which is usually a left-brain function. Engaging in artistic activities can help shift brain-functioning to allow for more creative, objective responses which may better aid individuals in their recovery.

• **Be a wingman, get a wingman!** Eating disorder symptoms thrive in self-isolation. If you struggle with an eating disorder, don’t be afraid to confide in a trusted wingman.

Take that wingman with you if you know you’ll be placed in a situation that will be difficult for you.

Wingmen, look for the warning signs of eating disorders in your fellow warriors (i.e. skipping meals, frequent bathroom trips, self-isolating, picky eating, etc...). It is better to care too much than too little when it comes to eating disorder behaviors.

A final note to those who may be suffering from an eating disorder: Seeing a psychologist or chaplain about an eating disorder may seem intimidating, but it doesn’t have to be.

Knowing where you can find resources to combat your challenge can make treating it less daunting. Take care of yourself ... who knows, the life you save may be your own.

For more information and resources, please contact the chapel.

# Striving for Excellence

By Maj. Jason Kalin  
509th Logistics Readiness Squadron

We all know the importance the Air Force places on excellence. When an organization deals with the sort of multi-billion dollar, nuclear-capable weapons system like ours, there is no other feasible alternative to consistent and sustained excellence. AFI 1-1 says, “Excellence directs us to develop a sustained passion for the continuous improvement and innovation that will propel the Air Force into a long term, upward vector of accomplishment and performance.” In short, we must continually strive for continuous improvement in everything we do. This should also be true in our roles outside of the Air Force, such as being a spouse, parent, child, neighbor, friend...

best, absolute perfection is not always possible. A person who always expects perfection is bound to be perfectly disappointed. I know that, at times, I have failed to meet the mark of excellence I set for myself in my role as a young Airman, noncommissioned officer, and even now, as an officer. But despite all my past failures, I maintained my commitment to learning from those mistakes and improving going forward. I still wear a uniform today because I once looked in the mirror and told myself I would take responsibility for my mistakes and would do my best to not repeat an error. I made the commitment to excellence in all I do.

Excellence is not achieved alone, however. The successes of our organizations are the results of TEAM efforts. As leaders we have to be disciplined enough to learn our jobs and seek ways

to improve our performance while operating under the firm belief that our most important resources are our PEOPLE and their families. We must make sure our Airmen know how they uniquely contribute to mission accomplishment, and we must empower them to achieve success in those specific roles; if we don’t, performance will suffer. To stimulate excellence in our organizations, we must always endeavor to foster environments in which everyone is inspired to work together and do what is necessary to ensure our Airmen are ready to accomplish their mission to the best of their abilities. With your commitment to developing a sustained passion for continuous improvement should also come an understanding that the road to excellence is continuous. No matter what obstacles or challenges come your way, your commitment must persevere.

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## On the cover

U.S. Air Force photo illustration/  
Airman 1st Class Keenan Berry

**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Batman, 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic controller, operates a light gun at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., July 10, 2014. The light gun is used to communicate safety and movement signals to individuals on the flightline.**

## NEWS BRIEFS

## Did you know???

What the qualifying and disqualifying factors are to apply for Palace Chase. To be eligible for this opportunity, you must: Be a U.S. citizen, complete at least 2/3 of the initial Active Duty Service Commitment for officers and 24 months of a 4-year contract or 36 months of a 6-year contract for enlisted members, be medically qualified worldwide, meet fitness standards.

If you have any questions regarding this program, you can contact your unit First Sergeant or Master Sgt. Stephen Thomas, the AFRC In-service Recruiter, at 687-1868.

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## Telephone news line set up for retirees

A toll-free telephone news line has been set up for retirees and surviving spouses who do not have computer access.

By calling 1-800-558-1404, retirees and spouses can stay informed using this new easy-to-use menu-driven service. Callers can select from several different topics that are compiled from various electronic news sources.

Topics include pay and annuity matters, medical and health care, and other benefits and entitlements.

## CCAF GEM Program

Military members avoiding taking classes because of work shifts, deployments or other time constraints have a new program to assist them. Community College of the Air Force degree requirements can be met through distance learning using the CCAF General Education Mobile (GEM), a partnership between CCAF and other schools. For more information call (660) 687-2420.

## Weapons School students get first look at upgraded B-1s



U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Richard Ebensberger

The first newly upgraded operational B1-B Lancer lands Jan. 21, 2014, at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. The B-1B Lancer was recently upgraded with a new Integrated Battle Station. The new system includes a combination of three different upgrades. One major upgrade incorporates a modern datalink communication network that allows real-time communication with other aircraft, ground stations, and allied forces. The data link also enhances crew awareness of the battle space, and allows for quicker targeting.

By Airman 1st Class  
Alexander Guerrero

7th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

**DYESS AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFNS)** -- For the first time students from the U.S. Air Force Weapons School got to fly with the newly upgraded Sustainment Block-16 B-1B Lancer during the student's Integration Phase (IT) at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

Airmen from the 337th Test and Evaluation Squadron here brought the B-1B to Nellis AFB, allowing weapons school students hands-on time with the new technology. The three-week exercise is the final phase of the weapons school curriculum and allows students to put all their learned skills to practice in a training environment that is as close to actual combat as possible.

"The IT is the capstone exercise to the U.S. Air Force Weapons Instructor

Course," said Maj. Andrew Maguire, who is assigned to the 77th Weapons Squadron. "Students from different Air Force assets, like space and cyber, integrated to solve some of the most challenging real-world problems that the Air Force can provide short of actual combat. In some cases, the training problems were more difficult than real-world problems."

The 337th TES part in the exercise was to test the new SB-16 and 15 B-1B Lancers performance, while allowing the weapons students to familiarize themselves with the upgraded systems.

"With the 337th TES coming along during the IT, our students had the unique opportunity to be the first B-1 aviators to integrate the new hardware and software in a training environment this realistic," Maguire said.

The weapons school instructors were pleased with the performance of both the

students and the capabilities the SB-16 provided for the B-1 airframe.

"The students and aircraft performed well," Maguire said. "One of the instructors even said the new system provided him so much situational awareness that, 'it was almost like cheating.'"

The knowledge that the 337th TES' instructors gave the undergraduates provided them with the basic know-how on the revamped B-1s and gave them a unique training experience. They also flew several sorties on the SB-16 B-1 to gain some familiarity with the upgraded airframe.

"I wish I could give every B-1 aviator the opportunity to attend the phenomenal training provided by the weapons school," said Lt. Col. Jonathan Creer, the 77th Weapons Squadron commander. "I also feel that it was such a good opportunity for the 337th that we'd like to have them out there again."

## Answering the Call

By 2nd Lt. Gerald M. Stout  
Chaplain Candidate

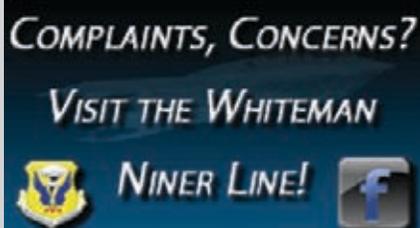
At some point in our lives we were all inspired to answer the call. Whether it is as a medic, communications specialist, pilot, security forces troop, medic or chaplain, I believe we all have an inner calling that beckons us to take action.

A few years ago my calling came at a pivotal moment. Have you ever heard the cliché, "Jack of all trades; master of none?" That could have been my motto. I was very involved, but not very committed. And that was a hard pill to swallow. I was wrapping up my seminary degree, working at the local church, but also still holding on to my career as an engineer. Things were going well. I was busy wearing a lot of hats and enjoying every minute of it. However, in the midst of my success, I was not satisfied. I knew there was something else waiting for me – my calling.

So as a man of faith, I took the step of obedience, along with my wife

and two boys, to pursue full-time ministry. But where? And doing what? As I entered into one of my final seminary classes, one of our older classmates came in with a somber look on his face. He was notified that his son had been killed in Iraq. Following the emotions, the tears and a lot of intense listening, I found clarity amongst the chaos. I wanted to be present in the lives of our great warriors. I wanted to serve those who fight for our freedoms. I wanted to be a military chaplain.

Thus I started the process of commissioning as a chaplain candidate in 2012. Following commissioned officer training, chaplain candidate school and 10 weeks of active duty tours, I now come to the end of the road as a candidate here at Whiteman. I've tasted what it's like to serve in uniform, both as an officer and a chaplain. And with the end of this chapter on the horizon, I hope to re-commission and continue serving the greatest men and women in the world. My encouragement to our Whiteman Warriors is this: discover your calling and go all in. Many blessings and God Speed.



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SESSION 2 (SEPTEMBER 30th- OCTOBER 20th) 5pm- 9:20pm

Speech M-W

Composition 2 M-W

American History T-Th

Human Resource Management T-Th

SESSION 3A (OCTOBER 21st- NOVEMBER 10th) 5pm- 9:20pm

Humanities T-Th

SESSION 3B (OCTOBER 21st- NOVEMBER 24th) 5pm- 9:20pm

College Algebra M-W

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# You've got mail: Postal Airmen deliver a little piece of home



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Evelyn Chavez  
**Senior Airmen Lorenza Kates and Victoria Hill, 455th Expeditionary Communications Squadron mail clerks, deliver mail at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, June 26, 2014. Kates and Hill are responsible for handling mail for Airmen in the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. They handle thousands of packages and letters per month. Kates is deployed from Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., and a native of Dublin, Ga. Hill is deployed from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., and a native of Blanchard, La.**

**By Staff Sgt. Evelyn Chavez**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing

**BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan** -- Care packages, online orders and letters are the little things Airmen at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan look forward to while deployed. The 455th Expeditionary Communications Squadron mail clerks work daily

to boost morale by delivering little pieces of happiness for Airmen throughout the wing.

"My favorite part of the job is seeing people's faces light up when they get mail," said Senior Airman Victoria Hill, 455 ECS mail clerk deployed from Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri and a native of Blanchard, Louisiana.

Hill is one of two Airmen, responsible for delivering mail to all Airmen from the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. Although some of their normal duties at home station entail base records and data management, here they ensure timely mail delivery every day.

At 6 a.m., Senior Airmen Lorenza Kates and Victoria Hill start their day by coordinating transportation to pick up the mail tri-walls -pallet sized-boxes- from a centralized mail location.

"I report to work by 6 a.m. then pick up our forklift to lift tri-wall boxes," said Kates who is deployed from Davis Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona and a native of Dublin, Georgia. "Then we make calls to figure out how many pallets we received for the day before we make our way to pick the mail up."

After picking up mail and escorting it back to their office, Kates and Hill unload the pallets to sort it according to units. While one of mail clerks moves the pallets with a forklift, the other arranges them neatly into rows to make the sorting easier. They average 77 pallets of mail a week that amount to approximately 38,500 pounds.

"The most difficult part of the job is constantly being on the go," said Hill. "It is heavy physical labor, we run around loading and unloading, but I really enjoy it."

Once the packages are sorted, which takes about three hours depending on the number of tri-walls on that given day, Kates and Hill load their truck for mail delivery to mission essential organizations.

Mission essential units are those unable to leave their work area during the day to pick up mail, Hill said. Some of the units include special tactics, aeromedical evacuation, airfield operations and transient management.

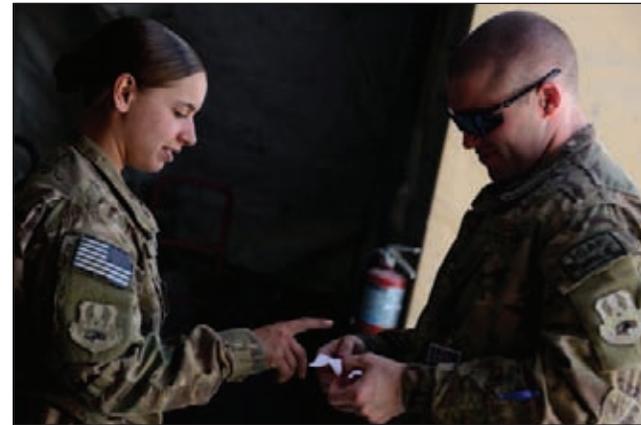
After they spend time helping the other section and the morning routine is complete, the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing postal center opens for customer service hours. During this time, mail

representatives from every squadron in the wing are able to pick up their unit's mail.

"During customer service hours we check 285s, which are cards that certify appointed individuals to pick up mail for their squadron," said Kates. "We have to monitor who picks up the mail. We have to ensure we are keeping up with mail center standards. Every hand that the mail touches should be recorded until it is received by the person it belongs to."

Kates and Hill make certain every piece of mail reaches its destination. Whether it is a mission essential piece of equipment or a letter from a loved one, the mail clerks here deliver a piece of home to Airmen everyday.

"We get the mission done here whether by keeping morale up or ensuring people can do their job by delivering what they need," said Hill. "It's pretty cool to say we are the only ones that deliver mail to all the Airmen from the wing."



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Evelyn Chavez  
**Senior Airman Victoria Hill, 455th Expeditionary Communications Squadron mail clerk, verifies a customer is allowed to pick up mail at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, June 25, 2014. Hill is responsible for handling mail for Airmen assigned to the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing. She handles thousands of packages and letters per month. Hill is deployed from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., and a native of Blanchard, La.**

Contributed by the 509th Bomb Wing Safety Office

## Chapter 9: The River Wild

Air Force Summer Swimming Losses: (Jun-Sep) 2009-2013

- 7 fatalities
- 66 injuries
- Total cost, injuries: \$620,768
- Civilian population risk d
  - From 2005-2009 an average of 3,553 unintentional drowning's annually.
  - Drowning results in approximately 10 deaths per day.
  - Males make up nearly 80% of all drowning's.

The Airman's Creed reminds all Airmen that they are wingmen, leaders, and warriors. Your responsibility as a wingman extends to leisure activities too. Swimming is a summer sport that requires you to look out for your wingman.

Are you looking forward to swimming this summer? Are you ready to swim? Preparation is important for all sports activities, some take longer than others; and some involve a variety of equipment and expense. Swimming is not one of those – equipment costs are minimal (unless you're building a pool in your backyard!). What can be an expense is learning to swim, either for yourself or your children. But it's also a lifesaving investment.

According to NSC Injury Facts, 3,858 people died in 2008 due to drowning, including swimming and water transport accidents. More than one in five drowning victims are children 14-years-old and younger, and for every child who dies from drowning, another four receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Most drowning and near-drowning incidents happen when a child falls into a pool or is left alone in the bathtub. The estimated number of injuries in 2012 as shown in the Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Electronic Injury Surveillance System chart was 190,347. Here is the story of three Airmen who went snorkeling in the ocean. They had all the proper personal protective



equipment. The mistake they made was underestimating the ocean's current. It was much stronger than they thought and were all pulled out farther than anticipated. They ended up clinging to a coral reef yelling for help. It took almost 14 hours before their cries were heard and they were rescued. These Airmen were lucky. The ending could have been very different.

The National Park Service reminds swimmers that the most important thing to remember if you're caught in a rip current is: **DON'T SWIM AGAINST THE CURRENT!** Instead, swim across the current, parallel to the shore, slowly working your way back to the beach at an angle. Above all, remain calm. Signal for help if you need it.

### Some additional tips for ocean swimming from the NPS:

- Underwater sandbars often develop offshore forming a trough of water between the bar and the beach. Rip currents form when the sand bar breaks and the trapped water funnels out to the sea through the break, sometimes sweeping swimmers with it.
- Non-swimmers should use Coast Guard-approved flotation vests, even while wading.
- Do not swim in the ocean alone – take a buddy with you.
- Stay Sober – don't swim while intoxicated. Alcohol

can affect your judgment and your body temperature – impairing your ability to swim.

- Don't swim during rough seas. Broken necks and paralysis have resulted from swimmers being thrown into the ocean bottom headfirst.
- The force of big waves crashing at the shore's edge can pick you up and throw you into the sand. This may result in a dislocated shoulder or knee.
- Due to dangerous currents, never swim in the inlets.
- Do not swim at night or near fishing piers.
- Children should swim only with adult supervision.
- Know the various types of ocean currents and how to get out of them.
- Watch the weather. Storms and squalls come up quickly.
- Don't swim during thunderstorms; lightning is extremely dangerous and does strike the beach.
- Don't wear shiny objects when swimming - these objects may attract sharks and other fish.
- Watch for jellyfish. If stung, seek first aid if needed. Don't rub sand on the stings. Spraying or pouring vinegar on the sting site often reduces the pain. If you don't have vinegar, try ammonia or denatured alcohol.
- Do not swim near surfers – surfboard fins can cut you.

An organization dedicated to preventing sports injury, Sports Trauma and Overuse Prevention or STOP Sports Injuries, was initiated by the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine in early 2007. Included here are their risk management tips for swimmers (<http://www.stopsportsinjuries.org/>).

- Additional resources include:
- <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/water-safety>
  - <http://www.nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/ocean-swimming-safety.htm>
  - <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/family/travel/swimming-pool-safety-tips#slide-6>
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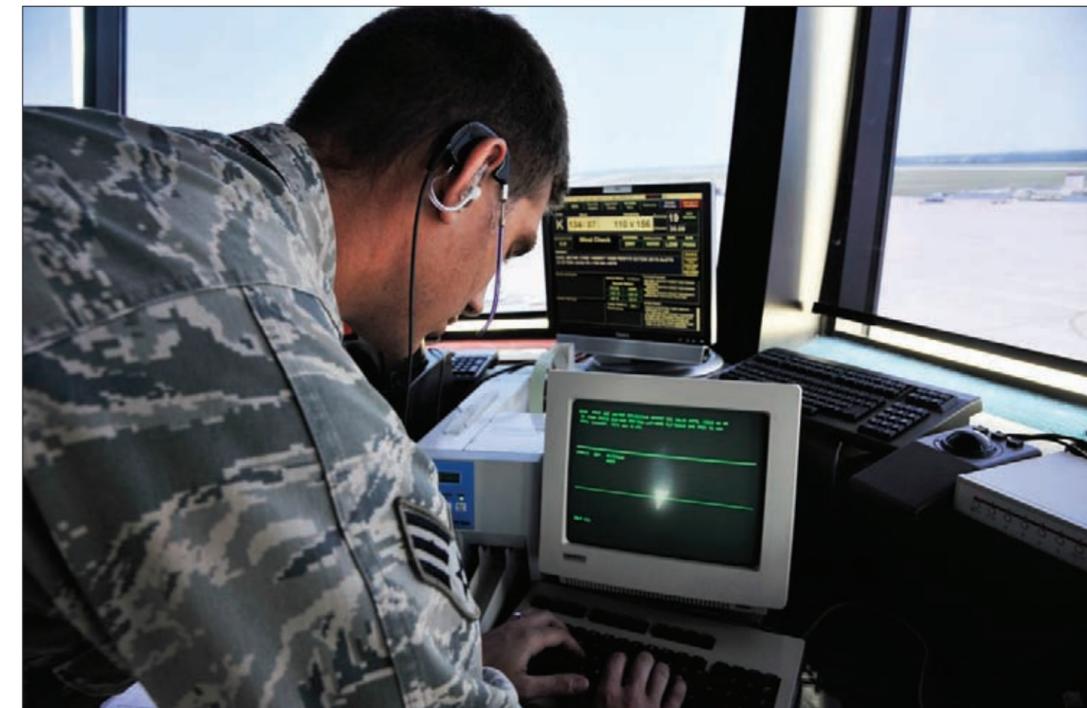


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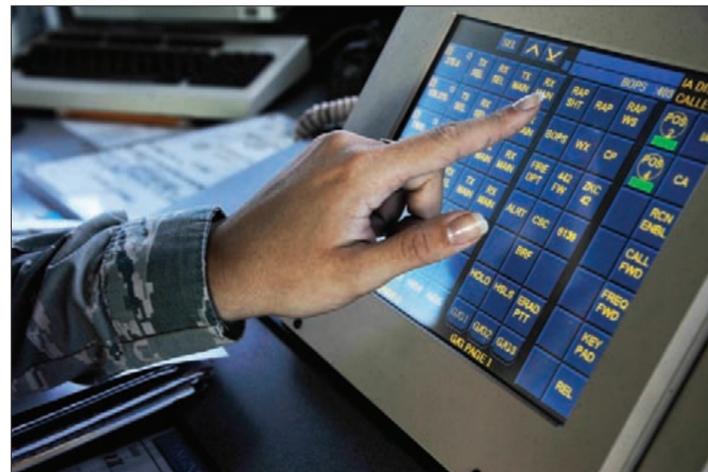
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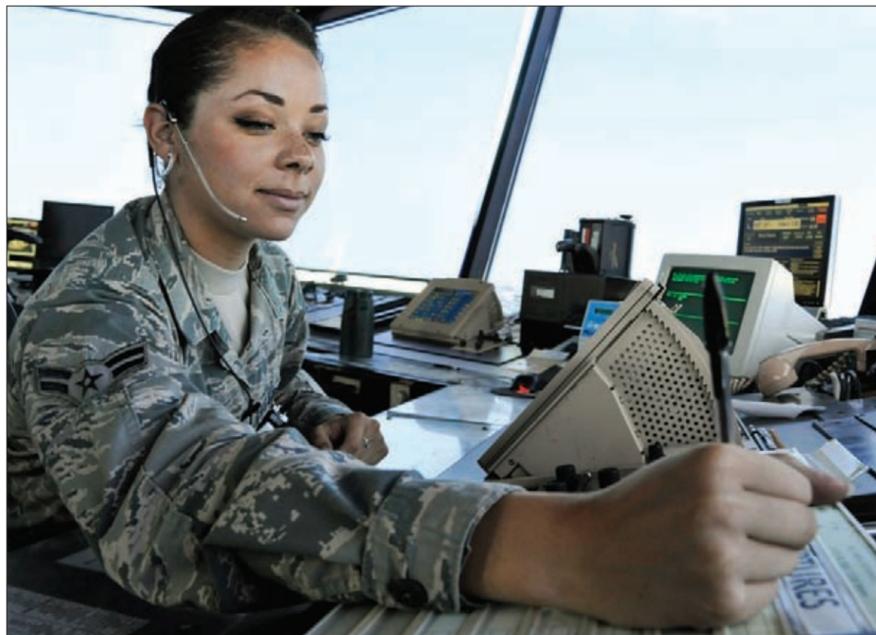
U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Craig Gephardt, 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic controller, operates the flight data systems in the tower at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., July 10, 2014. The flight data systems contain flight plans for every aircraft operating within the Kansas City Center airspace.

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Chanel Johnson, 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic control apprentice, operates an enhanced terminal voice switch at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., July 10, 2014. The enhanced terminal voice switch communicates with facilities such as base operations, and the radar, approach and control unit.



U.S. Air Force photos/  
Airman 1st Class Keenan Berry

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Chanel Johnson, 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic control apprentice, writes on a flight progress strip at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., July 10, 2014. Flight progress strips are used to keep track of aircraft missions, and contain the aircraft name, type, departure time and instructions for landing.



# Whiteman Tower: Eyes on the skies



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Batman, 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic controller, scans the airfield for birds and wildlife hazards at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., July 10, 2014. Air traffic controllers are responsible for keeping pilots safe by ensuring they have a clear picture of what is flying around them.

By Airman 1st Class Keenan Berry  
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

When you are flying an aircraft, there are many things you must remain aware of, and even Team Whiteman's pilots need help navigating all the hurdles within the airspace.

Helping pilots navigate these hurdles are the Airmen from the 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic control tower. The Airmen watch and examine the airspace, mitigating any possible threats and ensuring pilot safety.

The air traffic control tower operates 24/7, remaining vigilant and communicating with aircraft to ensure they take off and land safely.

Furthermore, air traffic controllers work with other base agencies to maintain an expeditious flow of air traffic. These agencies include radar, approach and control, airfield management, Kansas City Center, com-

mand post, the firefighting team, security forces and base weather.

Training for air traffic controllers to earn their 3-level, or apprentice, can last anywhere from six months to a year. However, because every airfield at every location is different when air traffic controllers PCS, they will start from block 1 of a position to re-qualify at their new duty station.

This requires them to learn new airframes, airspace and base policies. Air traffic controllers must progress through the blocks before becoming a fully-qualified controller. Once an air traffic controller progresses through all blocks, they become fully-rated and able to train, and supervise, other air traffic controllers.

"My job as a trainer is to train individuals to the standards," said Senior Airman Craig Gephardt, 509th Operations Support Squadron air traffic controller. "I can train anyone that is new to this base regardless of rank. We have regulations regarding what we can and cannot

do; we must abide by them at all times."

With the use of state-of-the-art communication equipment and radars systems, controllers communicate with pilots and other personnel to ensure pilots and aircraft reach their destination safely.

"Our headset allows us to communicate with pilots using designated air traffic control frequencies," said Staff Sgt. Christina Baeza, 509th OSS air traffic controller. "We have separate frequencies for ground control and local control to prevent any confusion in communication with aircraft. We click a button on our headsets to become live, making it possible for the pilots to hear us. Once we let go of the button, we can hear them talk to us. This concept is to prevent miscommunication."

Since pilots must remain in contact with the controller of the respective airspace they are in, controllers in the tower have direct communication with them while the aircraft is in Whiteman's airspace. This ensures they have situational awareness of everyone within the air-

space.

Once the aircraft is out of Whiteman's airspace, air traffic controllers change the frequencies over to RAP-CON personnel.

Information received from tower radars and RAP-CON, helps air traffic controllers detect what is in Whiteman's airspace. The information shown consists of the aircraft's call sign, speed, location and altitude.

Once they receive this information, controllers can give traffic calls to nearby aircraft and help prevent mid-air collisions.

Attention to detail when performing tasks is crucial for air traffic controllers.

"We must be on top of our 'A' game to prevent any mishaps from happening," Gephardt said. "Lives are in our hands and it's our job to stay vigilant and alert at all times. In a career field that is highly relied on, we must keep each other on our toes at all times. Slacking and laziness is not an option."



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# First all-Guard B-2 maintenance team supports Weapons School ops



A U.S. Air Force B-2 Spirit assigned the 509th Bomb Wing lands June 23 at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The B-2 is a long-range stealth bomber capable of penetrating enemy defenses, can carry more than 40,000 pounds of both conventional and nuclear weapons, and fly approximately 6,000 nautical miles without refueling.



**LEFT:** B-2 Spirit aircrew members from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. depart for their aircraft June 23, 2014, at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The pilots are participating in total force integration which is designed to help active-duty, Guard, and Reserve units work effectively and efficiently with each other. **RIGHT:** Staff Sgt. Scott Schroer (left), and Tech. Sgt. Ronda Bollinger, crew chiefs assigned to the 131st Bomb Wing marshal a B-2 Spirit June 23 at Nellis AFB, Nevada. The 131st Bomb Wing is part of the Missouri Air National Guard.



*U.S. Air Force photos/Airman 1st Class Thomas Spangler*

**By Capt. Jeffrey M. Bishop**  
131st Bomb Wing Public Affairs

In a year marked with a number of milestones and firsts for the 131st Bomb Wing, a team from the 131st Maintenance Group recently added another by becoming the first all-Air National Guard B-2 maintenance team to support deployed operations for the jet.

Twenty B-2 aircraft maintenance Airmen deployed to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, in June to support B-2 operations as part of the final integration phase of the five-month U.S. Air Force Weapons School program.

“We were essentially operating at three locations. If the Guard hadn’t been there, we wouldn’t have been able to do this,” said Lt. Col. Michael Walters, 325th Weapons Squadron commander.

Taskings to support B-2 operations at Whiteman and at Nellis, along with a deployment of two B-2s to Royal Air Force Fairford, England, had put maintenance crews to the test.

Long-standing total force integration paved the way for success, said Capt. Chad Larson, 131st Maintenance Squadron commander and maintenance team lead for the deployment.

“About 20 percent of the (B-2 maintainer)

lines are filled with Guardsmen. It’s always been about Team Whiteman whenever we deploy,” he said. “It was a first, but there was never any doubt that we could, because we’ve always done it hand-in-hand with our active-duty counterparts.”

Excellent communications between the active-duty and Guard components is a key strength of the relationship that is essential for success, especially when drill-status Guardsmen must be provided orders so that their employers can release them to deploy. This was the case for a quarter of the 20 maintainers deployed to Nellis, Larson said.

“Working as a team with the 509th, they understand that we can do almost anything with enough notice, and they do an outstanding job of communicating requirements with us so that we can effectively use our resources to support the B-2 total force mission,” he said. “It’s all about Team Whiteman.”

The level of experience and expertise of the 131st BW’s maintainers gave leadership the confidence to task them, said Walters.

“You don’t build a quality maintainer overnight,” Walters said. “The Guard has the unique ability to build deep quality and quantity of 5- and 7-levels, both production maintainers and supervisors. Through our use of the total force initiative concept at Whiteman,

we’ve established that level of expertise, the experience level, the skill set to do this.”

In addition to the support provided by the maintainers, pilots from the 110th Bomb Squadron, Majors Luke Jayne, Timothy Sullivan and Jeremy Simmons, were equally instrumental to deployment’s success, said Maj. Tim Rezac, squadron director of operations.

“They flew key sorties that helped produce the next generation of critically needed weapons officers,” he said, adding Guardsmen also provided continuity, mission planning, experience and supervision to the two-week exercise.

“There have been a number of important steps that the Guard has taken along the way that led up to this deployment, starting with establishing initial operational capability all the way up to full operational capability,” said Maj. Michael Belardo, a full-time Guardsman and B-2 instructor pilot detailed to the 325th. “This was just another step along the way to show that not only can the Air National Guard do it, but that it can do it well.”

Whiteman’s 325th is a geographically separated unit of the USAFWS, and is responsible for all B-2 training operations in support of the graduate-level program.

Typically, each of the two USAFWS classes held annually includes only two or three

B-2 pilots. The curriculum generates a small pool of highly qualified tacticians who bring their new expertise back to the other pilots in their squadrons here after graduation.

Whiteman graduates of USAFWS class 14A were Captains Marcus Antonini, 393rd Bomb Squadron and Justin Meyer, 13th Bomb Squadron.

The all-Guard maintainers also helped the 325th reach a new milestone for B-2 availability during the integration phase of the USAFWS program.

“This is the first time in the 10-plus years of our squadron that we haven’t lost a student line due to maintenance,” Walters said.

While Guard maintainers successfully supported B-2 operations in three locations, they also deployed to a fourth: the group sent more than 100 maintainers to Air National Guard Camp Clark in Nevada, Missouri, to train for state emergency duty during the wing’s annual training week, which coincided with the deployments.

“It was a dynamic time, but it reflected a potential reality we might face one day: to support home station and deployed B-2 operations, while also helping our friends and family respond to a natural disaster in Missouri,” said Col. Kimbra Sterr, 131st MXG commander. “This is exactly what we train for.”

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