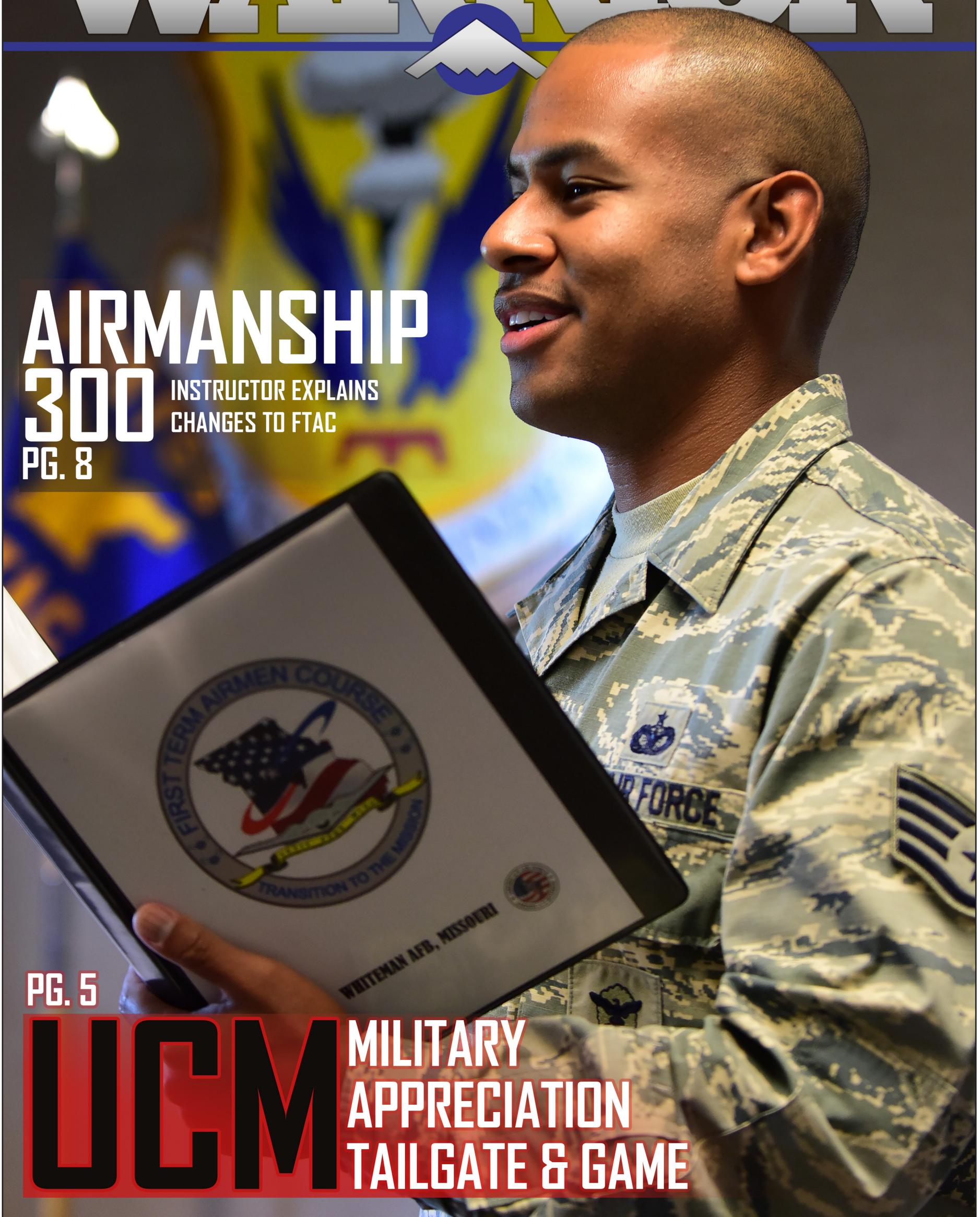


WARRIOR



AIRMANSHIP
300 INSTRUCTOR EXPLAINS
CHANGES TO FTAC
PG. 8



PG. 5

UCM MILITARY
APPRECIATION
TAILGATE & GAME

Evolution of airpower

By Lt. Col. Louis Pine
20th Attack Squadron commander

“We have just won a war with a lot of heroes flying around in planes. The next war may be fought by airplanes with no men in them at all ... Take everything you’ve learned about aviation in war, throw it out the window, and let’s go to work on tomorrow’s aviation. It will be different from anything the world has ever seen.”
Gen. Henry “Hap” Arnold, 1945

Throughout the Air Force’s 70-year history, the evolution of airpower has been nothing short of remarkable. Here at Whiteman Air Force Base (AFB), a microcosm of benchmarks is on display every day. The capabilities of the A-10 Thunderbolt II, B-2 Spirit, and MQ-9 Reaper have proven their effectiveness in combat and have already shaped the future of airpower. In particular, the demand for remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) like the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 has been insatiable. Over the past decade, as Creech AFB, Nevada, experienced exponential growth, it became clear the Air Force needed to expand the RPA mission to other bases – enter Whiteman AFB.

The history of the 20th Attack Squadron (ATKS) can be traced back

to the World War II era, then called the 20th Transport Squadron. From 1940 to 1949, the 20th was responsible for hauling cargo and troops around the Panama Canal Zone. Sixteen years later, the unit was reactivated as the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, performing combat missions in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Utilizing O-1 Bird Dog, O-2 Skymaster, and OV-10 Bronco aircraft, the 20th served as Forward Air Controllers, flying interdiction missions along the Ho Chi Minh trail. In 1973, the squadron was deactivated, but their work in Vietnam would lay the foundation for the future of the 20th. The squadron was reactivated at Whiteman AFB as the 20th Reconnaissance Squadron in 2011. Its mission: supporting coalition forces overseas, conducting persistent attack and reconnaissance operations. However, as global engagement increased and missions evolved, the year 2016 saw another squadron re-designation, becoming the 20th ATKS, and eventually transitioning to the bigger, more capable MQ-9 in 2017.

It requires a team of dedicated professionals to ensure the 20th mission achieves success – day in, day out. From the aircrew flying the lines, the intelligence analysts in the mission planning and execution cell,

the expert maintainers, and to our support personnel – all playing vital roles to ensure the 20 ATKS can support any tasking from combatant commanders around the globe. This is no easy feat in a 24/7 year-round construct. In 2016 alone, the squadron flew over 1,200 sorties, logged more than 16,000 hours, and employed 187 Hellfire missiles. Additionally, crews conducted over 80 buddy-lases (providing terminal weapons guidance for other aircraft). With pronounced and aggregated synergy, the unit was responsible for eliminating more than 250 enemy combatants from the battlefield.

It wasn’t long ago that this instrumental concept was inconceivable to generations of warriors before us; however, visionaries, like Gen. Hap Arnold had limitless beliefs. The concept of remotely launching an aircraft from the other side of the world via satellite, coupled with the ability to deliver precision effects has taken the Air Force to new heights. Technology aside, the success of our mission still requires efforts of countless Airmen around the world to continue the tradition of excellence and to recognize that we all play a vital role in ensuring our Nation’s security in the ever growing threats of today ... and tomorrow.

THE WARRIOR

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On the cover

U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Danielle Quilla
U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Bryan Robinson, the First Term Airmen Course (FTAC) NCO in charge, prepares for the next class at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 17, 2017. FTAC is designed to help develop Air Force personnel with a mission mindset, character and core values.

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WEATHER

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Lo 60	Lo 61
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Hi 81	Hi 79
Lo 64	Lo 63

USAF awards contracts for new nuclear missile to Lockheed, Raytheon

By Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center Public Affairs

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. (AFNS) -- The Air Force is on track to replace the aging AGM-86B Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) with modernized weapon capabilities designed for its nuclear bomber fleet, to include the B-21.

The Air Force awarded contracts to Lockheed Martin Corporation and Raytheon Company to mature design concepts and prove developmental technologies for the new Long Range Standoff (LRSO) weapon.

"This weapon will modernize the air-based leg of the nuclear triad," said Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson. "Deterrence works if our adversaries know that we can hold at risk things they value. This weapon will enhance our ability to do so, and we must modernize it cost-effectively."

Each company was awarded a contract of approximately \$900 million, with an approximate 54-month period of performance. Upon successful completion of the

contracts, the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center (AFNWC) will choose a single contractor for the Engineering and Manufacturing Development and Production and Deployment phases of the program.

The current ALCM was first fielded in the early 1980s with a 10-year design life, and Lockheed and Raytheon are charged with developing the technologies and demonstrating reliability and maintainability of a replacement weapon. The aging ALCM will continue to face increasingly significant operational challenges against emerging threats and reliability challenges until replaced. The Air Force plans to start fielding LRSO in the late 2020s.

"Secretary Wilson and I are responsible for organizing, training, equipping, and presenting ready nuclear forces to the Strategic Command commander," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein. "The Long Range Standoff is a critical capability required to support Gen. John Hyten's war plans."

"The LRSO will be a reliable, long-ranging and survivable weapon system and an absolutely essential element of the nuclear triad," Gen. Robin Rand, com-

mander of Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC), told the House Armed Services Committee's Strategic Forces Subcommittee in May. "The LRSO missile will ensure the bomber force continues to hold high-value targets at risk in an evolving threat environment, including targets deep within an area-denied environment."

"These contract awards mark another important step in replacing our aging Air Launched Cruise Missiles," said Maj. Gen. Scott Jansson, commander of the AFNWC and Air Force program executive officer for strategic systems. "Continued competition will help ensure the bomber leg of the nuclear triad is cost-effectively modernized with a survivable, reliable, and credible standoff capability."

The LRSO program office, located at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, is part of the AFNWC Air Delivered Capabilities directorate. Headquartered at Kirtland AFB, AFNWC is responsible for synchronizing all aspects of nuclear materiel management on behalf of Air Force Materiel Command, in direct support of AFGSC. The center has more than 1,100 personnel assigned to 17 locations worldwide.

Whiteman Top III Award



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jovan Banks
U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Joshua Peloquin, a network administrator supervisor assigned to the 509th Communications Squadron, is presented with the Top III MVP Award at Whiteman Air Force Base (AFB), Mo., Aug. 18, 2017. Peloquin used his superior technical knowledge to assist the 20th Attack Squadron in researching, troubleshooting, and configuring two new SIPRnet servers. This allowed for the removal of antiquated equipment that provided critical system vulnerabilities that would have a negative impact on Whiteman AFB's Command Cyber Readiness Inspection.

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Atomic Blonde (E)

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The Kevin Hines Story

Whiteman Air Force Base will host Kevin Hines, a renowned motivational speaker. Please join Team Whiteman today in Hangar 52 at 7 a.m. and again at 3 p.m.

ABOUT KEVIN HINES

Kevin is one of 36 to survive the fall from the Golden Gate Bridge and he is the only jump survivor who is actively spreading the message of living mentally healthy around the globe.

In 2016, Mental Health America awarded Kevin their highest honor, The Clifford W. Beers Award, for his efforts to improve the lives of and attitudes toward people with mental illnesses. Previously, he was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award by the National Council of Behavioral Health in partnership with Eli Lilly. Kevin has also been awarded as a Voice Awards Fellow and Award Winner, an Achievement Winner by the US Veterans Affairs and received over 30 U.S. military excellence medals as a civilian.

Kevin sits on the boards of the International Bipolar Foundation (IBPF), the Bridge Rail Foundation (BRF) and the Mental Health Association of San Francisco (MHASF) and on the Survivors Committee of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Previously, he was a board member of the Northern California Chapter of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and was a two-term member of San Francisco's Mental Health Board. He has spoken in congressional hearings alongside Patrick Kennedy in support of The Mental Health Parity Bill. He continues his policy work as an Ambassador to the National Council for Behavioral Health.

In the summer of 2013, Kevin released his bestselling memoir titled "Cracked Not Broken, Surviving and Thriving After A Suicide Attempt." He is currently producing a documentary entitled Suicide: The Ripple Effect.

Kevin's will to live and stay mentally well has inspired people worldwide. His compelling story has touched diverse, global audiences within colleges and universities, high schools, corporations, clergy, military, clinicians, health and medical communities, law enforcement organizations, and various industries. Thousands have communicated to Hines that his story helped save their lives. He has reached millions with his story.

Kevin believes in the power of the human spirit and in the fact that you can find the ability to live mentally well. His mantra: "Life is a gift, that is why they call it the present. Cherish it always."

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WAFB softball champions



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Danielle Quilla

The 509th Security Forces Squadron (SFS) A Team wins the 2017 intramural softball championship at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 15, 2017. The SFS A Team defeated the 131st Maintenance Squadron 20-8.

FTAC: Airmanship 300 bridging the Air Force core values to the mission

By Staff Sgt. Danielle Quilla
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

With all the military jargon that is thrown around, FTAC, or First Term Airmen Course, is somewhere in the mix. For many, this course is just another box to check on the in-processing checklist; however, recently it has developed into a vital part of the Profession of Arms.

“We need to focus on developing the next generation of enlisted leaders,” said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright. “This starts in basic training, but has to be deliberate and continuous throughout an Airman’s career. These courses are the next step in the evolution of professional development for our enlisted force.”

On July 10, 2017, the first set of students entered the doorways of the revamped FTAC class at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. Since then, four classes, with a total of 98 Airmen, have graduated from the course.

“The major change to FTAC was the implementation of Airmanship 300,” said Staff Sgt. Bryan Robinson, the FTAC NCO in charge. “While our first-term Airmen still receive briefings during the course, 13 hours have been arranged for Airmanship 300 to be incorporated.”

This implementation is just the third part in a new series of professional development. As soon as Airmen graduate from Basic Military Training (BMT) they go through Airmanship 100, more commonly known as Airmen’s Week. Following this, Airmen complete Airmanship 200, which is taught during technical training.

These courses are designed to transition Airmen from the BMT environment to a professional setting, where they are allowed to think critically and differentiate between knowing the right thing to do and actually doing the right thing.

“Developing Air Force personnel with a professional mindset, character and core values is required to succeed today and well in the future,” said Robinson. “By providing 13 hours of professionalism training in FTAC, we are putting first-term Airmen into the mission mindset and creating a positive environment to further develop their warrior ethos. We do this by reinforcing lessons they learned from BMT and technical training.”

These 13 hours are split up into two topics: four hours are dedicated to the “Enhancing Human Capital” lessons and nine hours are set aside for “What Now, Airman.” Each lesson presents ethical dilemma scenarios that allow the students to discuss what they would do in the situation.

For instance, during the “Enhancing Human Capital” session, Airmen discuss topics like the negative effects of entrenched thinking and miscommunication.

“Truthfully, I hope all first-term Airmen walk away from the FTAC with a solid understanding of how professionalism is the best way to bridge our core values of integrity, service and excellence into the Air Force mission of Fly, Fight and Win,” said Robinson.

Editor’s note: This is the first of a three-part series on FTAC. Part one introduced the changes to the courses. Next week, part two will focus on the instructor’s perspective of the course.



U.S. Air Force photos by Staff Sgt. Danielle Quilla
U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Bryan Robinson, the First Term Airmen Course (FTAC) NCO in charge, leads the revamped FTAC class at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. The new FTAC is a five-day class that consists of briefs from different base agencies, 13 hours of professionalism training and tours of a B-2 Spirit and the Oscar-1 Minuteman Missile Alert Facility. Airmen begin the class with a full service dress blues uniform inspection before starting the “Enhancing Human Capital” part of the professionalism training. On the fourth day, David Grisdale, the director of historical property assigned to the 509th Bomb Wing, tour the Airmen through Oscar-1 to help them understand Whiteman’s history and involvement during the Cold War. After this, the Airmen receive a tour of a B-2 and learned about its capability to fly anywhere around the world from home station and deliver a wide range of precision-guided munitions. Each part of FTAC helps Airmen understand their role in the mission and continue to develop their warrior ethos.

Whiteman Geobase: On the map

By Airman Michaela R. Slanchik
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

While playing around as a child and looking for places to start your next adventure, you may have come across the bright yellow signs planted in the ground telling you not to dig in the immediate vicinity without calling "811" to get clearance, due to the presence of gas lines or other utilities. When you grew older and started learning to drive you may have had a few moments of gratitude for the maps that helped you reach your final location. What you may not have thought about is who contributed to the surveillance and behind-the-scenes work, which helped you safely reach your destinations.

At Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, this function falls to the members of the 509th Civil Engineer Squadron's (CES) Geobase shop. The Geobase shop is responsible for more than 4,500 acres of land, which encompasses 1,500 facilities and the safety of over 14,000 Team Whiteman members. The team provides nine standard mapping areas, including layout and vicinity maps, airfield operation planning, utility systems mapping and contingency planning.

"Our maps help during exercises for location purposes that range from buffers, to incident location, and more," said Staff Sgt. Halee Young, a 509th CES Geobase journeyman.

"They are vital for everyday use such as location and territory, mowing areas and restricted location areas," Young added.

Overseas, these Airmen play a vital role in standing up new facilities and doing it the right way. The Geobase shop lays out foundations, levels out the areas for construction and updates the maps after the facility's construction is completed.

Geobase troops survey the land across the installation to gather coordinates and elevation levels. After they gather this data, they act as an "811" excavator to those looking to begin construction projects on base.

"If a project is starting, they have to fill out a dig permit and bring it to us for a signature," said Young. "We provide them with data concerning the utilities within the area they are proposing to dig. This way they don't hit any utility lines, making more work and costing more for the Air Force."

Not only could hitting a utility line be costly, it could create a dangerous environment from a natural gas leak, a water leak, or interrupted phone and internet connections. This is why it is crucial for Geobase troops to constantly build the most up-to-date layouts.

"We dedicate ourselves daily to enabling safe construction, accurate warfighting, and the operational readiness needed to provide combat support anytime, anywhere," said Young.

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Senior Airman Jovan Banks
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

Have you ever tried driving your car at night without any headlights? It is pretty hard to do. Honestly, everything is hard to do in the dark.

Now imagine your car being a multi-billion dollar aircraft flying at 50,000 feet in the air. This is what the B-2 Spirit pilots would be faced with if not for the Airmen of the 509th Maintenance Squadron (MXS) Electrical and Environmental (E&E) Shop.

Airmen like U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christian Anthony, an E&E systems technician assigned to the 509th MXS, work with electrical panels that control all the interior and exterior lighting of each B-2 at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri.

“My shop works on a list of electrical components for the B-2,” said Anthony. “We maintain electrical panels, lighting control units, strobe lights, as well as a variety of less specific but still very important components of the B-2.”

With each job comes different challenges, whether it be time, manning or severity of the problem at hand.

“One of the challenges we face is limited personnel,” said Tech. Sgt. Thomas Corona, the electrical and environmental section chief. “We are a small section and our daily workload can change at a moment’s notice, but long days, heavy workloads, deadlines and busted knuckles never stop us from moving forward to get the job done.”

With only 10 Airmen assigned to the shop split between different shifts all Airmen must be able to make repairs in a timely manner. But repair times as well as toolsets can

vary depending on the component. “Some may take a few minutes, some can take hours,” said Anthony. “For example a full test on an Ice Detector Unit takes about 10 minutes to complete, but some specific lighting control units take an upward range of an hour if it flows smoothly.”

Without E&E ensuring all electrical components are serviceable, night missions similar to the strikes on multiple ISIS camps in Libya, would be nearly impossible. This collaborative effort is a characteristic of how the Whiteman mission is accomplished with no part being greater than another.

“Our phase inspections and repair work save the B-2 from excessive maintenance downtime,” said Corona. “Our section, as well as all of the 509th MXS community are committed to the stewardship and longevity of this fleet and the mission of the 509th Bomb Wing.”



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Taylor Phifer

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christian Anthony, an electrical and environmental specialist assigned to the 509th Maintenance Squadron, grabs a breakout box to test an overhead lighting control panel at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 3, 2017. The overhead lighting control panel controls the interior and exterior lights of the B-2 Spirit.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jovan Banks

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christian Anthony, an electrical and environmental specialist assigned to the 509th Maintenance Squadron, connects an overhead lighting control unit onto a breakout box at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 3, 2017. The panel is connected to the breakout box to signal a working electrical current inside the tested component.



U.S. Air Force photo by Airman Taylor Phifer

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Christian Anthony, an electrical and environmental specialist assigned to the 509th Maintenance Squadron, reads the next step of a technical order (TO) before moving forward at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 3, 2017. The TOs are the step-by-step process of a task to ensure work is done properly.

Inspection to perfection

By Airman Taylor Phifer
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

At any given moment a pilot may need to eject from an aircraft. The Airmen of the 509th Operations Support Squadron (OSS) inspect and pack parachutes that could save a pilot's life. These Airmen have an important job requiring them to look at every piece of the parachute before it is packed and ready to go.

"A lot of people wonder why it might take so long to pack a chute in the military compared to a civilian who could probably pack a chute in around half an hour," said U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Thomas Cadwell, an aircrew flight equipment technician assigned to the 509th OSS. "Packing this equipment has to do with two things, having high standards in the shop and the sophisticated components of the chutes."

The Airmen of the 509th OSS are responsible for four different types of parachutes for the aircraft at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. They spend many man hours extensively inspecting and packing the parachutes to ensure they are operational.

"We pack two types of recovery parachutes, the Advanced Concept Ejection Seat (ACES) II and the Back-style Automatic (BA)-22," said Cadwell. "Both of these systems operate automatically once the ejection handle is pulled. The B-2 Spirit uses the ACES II ejection system, while the T-38 uses a unique ejection system that utilizes the BA-22 parachute."

Along with the two recovery parachutes, the technicians also pack two types of drogue parachutes. The drogue parachutes are smaller than the recovery parachutes, but the two work together.

"The purpose of a drogue chute is to slow down and stabilize the ejection seat in the event of a very high-speed egress, and allow the recovery chute to operate correctly," said Cadwell.

When each parachute is packed, the Airmen must inspect every aspect of the parachute which includes the stitching, suspension lines, canopy gores, connector links, risers and many more components.

"About 100 things could go wrong if we don't do our job correctly," said Airman 1st Class Jeremy Becker, an aircrew flight equipment technician assigned to the 509th OSS.

This job requires the technicians to have attention to detail and make no mistakes when they are repairing the parachutes.

"If we find anything short of perfection with a parachute then it must be repaired or replaced," said Cadwell. "It can take anywhere from one to three days to pack a parachute, depending on how many repairs and replacement parts are necessary."

Most problems the Airmen might find with a parachute can be repaired by the technicians in the shop. Although, if a component cannot be repaired in the shop or its service life expires it will need to be replaced.

"These parachutes have numerous components that all require rigorous inspection and testing," said Cadwell. "Just to name a few, the BA-22 parachute has an emergency oxygen bottle, minimal survival kit and a sidewinder flashlight. The ACES II is unique because it uses the Universal Water Activated Release System, which automatically releases the canopy if the pilot lands in water."

With so many parts to these parachutes it's important the Airman working with them have high standards and do their job correctly the first time, every time.

"Excellence in all we do is the name of the game in the parachute shop," said Cadwell. "When the ejection handles are pulled and our chutes need to be used, everything needs to work perfectly. Saving lives is our job and in that endeavor we will not fail!"



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Thomas Cadwell, an aircrew flight equipment technician assigned to the 509th Operations Support Squadron, inspects a four-line release at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 21, 2017. The four-line release is used after the pilot has ejected and needs to steer the parachute to keep it from landing in an unsafe area.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Thomas Cadwell, an aircrew flight equipment technician assigned to the 509th Operations Support Squadron, inspects the oxygen bottle attached to a parachute at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 21, 2017. If a pilot ejects at a high altitude with less oxygen, he will need to pull the oxygen bottle cord which will release oxygen through a tube connected to his helmet.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Steven Honkala, an assistant NCO in charge of the aircrew flight equipment survival shop assigned to the 509th Operation Support Squadron (OSS), inspects the emergency beacon of a parachute at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 21, 2017. The parachutes the Airmen of the 509th OSS inspect and pack could save a pilot's life if the pilot needs to eject from an aircraft.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Thomas Cadwell, an aircrew flight equipment technician assigned to the 509th Operations Support Squadron, inspects a four-line release at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 21, 2017. The four-line release is used after the pilot has ejected and needs to steer the parachute to keep it from landing in an unsafe area.



Airmen of the 509th Operations Support Squadron set out tools used to inspect the parachutes at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Aug. 21, 2017. The technicians use pliers and screwdrivers to disassemble, inspect and reassemble parts of the parachutes to ensure they function correctly.

U.S. Air Force photos by Airman Taylor Phifer

Guardsmen reach out to Missouri foster youth through Operation BRACE



Courtesy photo

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Colton Elliot, a photojournalist with the 131st Bomb Wing (BW), speaks to foster youth about his experiences growing up in the foster system and how he managed to turn his life around after joining the Air National Guard during an Operation BRACE event at the University of Central Missouri, Mo., July 31, 2017. With Operation BRACE, the 131st BW is partnering with various organizations throughout the state to enrich the lives of foster children throughout Missouri.

By Master Sgt. Traci Howells
131st Bomb Wing Public Affairs

In the state of Missouri there are nearly 13,000 kids who have been taken away from their families and placed within the foster care system. Each year about 400 kids age out of the system, and more than half will end up homeless or incarcerated.

The Missouri Air National Guard's 131st Bomb Wing (BW) has started an initiative designed to enrich the lives of foster children throughout Missouri.

Operation BRACE, which derived its name from the founder of the foster care program, Charles Loring Brace, stands for Building a Road to Achievement through Community Engagement. The hope is to reach out to all Missouri foster children and provide them with opportunities to create a successful future.

"This initiative came out of local efforts to offer a few children in foster care opportunities to enlist in the Air Force," said Col. Ken Eaves, the 131st BW commander. "When we saw that 400 or more Missouri children age out of the program every year, we knew we had an opportunity and responsibility to provide the foster youth with options for something bigger to help them in adulthood."

The 131st BW is partnering with various organizations throughout the state. The Central Missouri Foster Care and Adoption Agency (CMFCAA), Missouri Girls Town and Show Me Christian Youth Home have all been involved in the efforts from the beginning. Just last month, the CMFCAA held its annual transitions event to provide life skills training and mentoring classes to teens aging out of the program. Typically, the program would have been open to 10 foster youth. However, through partnerships with local businesses and 131st BW contacts, doors were open to more than 45 foster children across the central Missouri region.

Recently, Eaves and his team met at the University of Central Missouri for a full day of discussion on how to implement a plan to engage, equip and enlist the state's foster youth.

Operation BRACE will be instituted through a five-phase plan that spans through 2021. The first phase, beginning in October, will be a trial within the central Missouri region. The first step in the process is to educate those within the foster care system on the opportunities the Missouri Air Guard has to offer.

Next year, the 131st plans on hosting a summer

camp similar to the CMFCAA's transitions event to teach foster kids valuable life skills that many fail to learn due to the inconsistencies within their lives.

The summer camp will help educate young adults on basic life skills to guide them in becoming a beneficial member of society. The life skills will vary from self-care and respect, cooking, employment, finances, housing, credit and debt, driving and transportation, physical health, and further education.

Operation BRACE is designed to identify high school-aged foster children as early as their freshman year, who could potentially serve in the Missouri Air National Guard. The Air Guard will provide these children with mentors to help prepare them for adulthood and give them the opportunity to join the military family.

"The majority of these youth have been dealt a bad hand at life," Eaves said. "Some of them faced abuse or neglect from their families. After conversations with one of our own Airmen, we've seen that we can provide these teens the opportunity to be a part of our family. That's what the Guard is ... family."

In the process of establishing the program, Eaves and his team visited Jefferson City July 11, where they spoke with 240 foster youth and another 40 on July 28, at the University of Central Missouri.

"Knowing your self-worth is extremely important," said Staff Sgt. Colton Elliott, a photojournalist with the 131 BW. "In the Air National Guard, you're surrounding yourself with individuals who are looking to get out in the community and give back. You're surrounding yourself with people who are pursuing college degrees; with individuals who have overcome obstacles and understand the challenges of life. You're going to create friendships. Essentially, you're building your Guard family and then giving back to those new recruits to help them succeed as well."

Elliott had the opportunity to share his story of how he bounced around the foster system for many years, but managed to turn his life around after joining the Air National Guard.

"These kids will never have a normal childhood," said Elliott. "They've had everything taken away from them without them ever doing anything wrong. I shared my story with them to show them there are opportunities available to create a better life for themselves, whether that be with the help of the military or not. We all want to see these kids succeed."