

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

# FLYING

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M A G A Z I N E

# *Safety*



# Safety Texas Style



USAF Photos  
Photo illustration by Dan Harman

## **LT COL MIKE FOLKERTS** HQ AFSC/SEFF

On 2 May 2003, the 136th Airlift Wing NAS Fort Worth JRB, Carswell Field, Texas, reached a safety milestone that few other units have achieved. 150,000 flying hours without a Class A mishap! Their last Class A was on June 5, 1965. (See side bar, page 8.) Since that accident, they have changed from KC-97s to C-130Bs to their current C-130H2 aircraft. They have gone through a move from Hensley Field to Carswell Field and 10 wing commanders. How does a unit that has changed aircraft three times, location once and 10 wing commanders go 38 years without a Class A aircraft mishap? We hope in the next few pages to give you some insight on how the 136 AW created a wing safety culture.

### **The "Guard Family"**

"This unit is like a family" was the consistent and most common remark heard from 136 AW members. Although families have their share of squabbles, and the Texas Flying Family is no different, treating each other as family has produced a dynamic and positive safety culture within the 136 AW.

This positive unit culture recognizes that people are its first priority. While members of active-duty and many ARC units measure their length of stay

in years, most 136 AW members remain in the unit for decades. This dynamic results in an extremely strong incentive to think and plan long-term. Fortunately, the 136 AW is in the enviable position of being able to handpick quality members for the long term.

### **Free-Flowing Communication**

The first benefit that flows from being a "Guard Family" involves effective communication. Up and down the chain, unit members are willing and able to speak freely. All ranks are willing to "call a spade a spade," and discussion of proposed actions is robust and maybe even a little lively. Full bird colonels are easier to approach than in typical active-duty units. Readily apparent is the 136 AW leadership habit of keeping their listening skills sharp, as well as fully communicating their intended plans with all ranks.

A hallmark of a strong safety culture is openly discussing incidents and mistakes. Leadership seeks to ensure that honest mistakes are learned from, rather than punished. Unit members are often "requested" to discuss an incident and the lessons they took away from it at the next squadron safety meeting.

### **Leadership Support For Safety**

Leadership at the 136 AW shows an active support for its safety program. Placing high-quality



personnel in full-time flight safety positions has been its long-term habit pattern. The current airlift squadron CC is a prior flight safety officer. Also, rather than settle for quarterly flight safety meetings, the 136 AW typically has a monthly meeting.

Looking back through its history, 136 AW leadership has proven a willingness to address reckless and/or inappropriate attitudes. By dealing appropriately with these individuals, regardless of their rank, the 136 AW has been able to protect its members and keep them out of harm's way. The Fairchild B-52 mishap is the unfortunate result when poor attitudes are either not recognized or dealt with inappropriately by senior leadership.

The wing believes that to succeed they must create a culture where the lowest guy doesn't fear retribution for an honest mistake. When people know they won't be "killed" for an honest mistake they are more likely to own up to the problem, instead of trying to hide it. The 136 AW says they can fix what they find, but finding the root causes is the hardest part of the equation. They strive to fix the problem, not the symptom. The balance is to create an atmosphere of non-retribution, but still have discipline.

#### **Airline Influence**

Saying that the 136 AW has an airline influence would be an understatement. Southwest, American and Delta Airlines each have a hub in DFW, which contributes to 70 percent of the 136 AW pilots being current or former airline pilots. This airline influence results in extraordinary experience levels, as the average pilot has racked up over 3000 total flight hours. Perhaps more important is the

airline influence on the wing's safety culture. By melding together CRM lessons and operating practices from several different airlines, the 136 AW is able to pick out the best parts of each airline's high-quality aviation safety programs.

#### **Training "The Best of Texas"**

The 136 AW recognizes high-quality safety, training, and standardization/evaluation programs are joined at the hip. Its impressive training programs go "above and beyond" the minimums, to include a three-day instrument refresher course. With its enviable experience levels, the 136 AW is able to demand a high level of performance of its members, who make an extra effort to deliver.

As missions have morphed during its four-decade history, the 136 AW has taken the initiative and trained its members to adapt. This initiative was never more evident than the unit's efforts to achieve an NVG airland capability prior to deploying for Operation Iraqi Freedom in February 2003. Maintainers and crews alike worked tirelessly through the 2002 Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays to arrive in the AOR fully qualified. Their efforts set the standard, as the 136 AW was one of only two ARC units to arrive in the AOR with a full-up NVG airland capability.

Hats off to the Texas crews and maintainers for stepping up to the challenge. Congratulations are in order for an impressive history of accomplishments, safely made with a Lone Star attitude! □

*Editors Note: If you want more information about the safety programs at the 136th Airlift Wing, please contact the Wing Safety Officer, Maj Scott Morris at: [scott.morris@txcars.ang.af.mil](mailto:scott.morris@txcars.ang.af.mil).*



# Maintenance Texas Style



USAF Photos  
Photo Illustration by Dan Harman

## **CMSGT JEFF MOENING** HQ AFSC/SEMM

No flying unit can reach 150,000 flight hours and 38 years without a Class A mishap without the hard work of the men and women on the ground—the Maintainers! As I talked to the people who make it happen, leaders and young troops, certain themes came out that I believe other units can use to improve their operations.

*There is no place for micromanagement in the Air Force.*

### **Attitude**

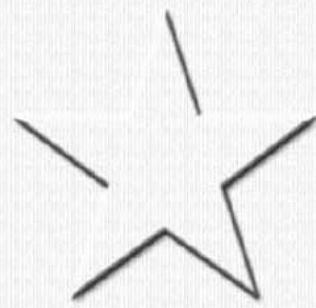
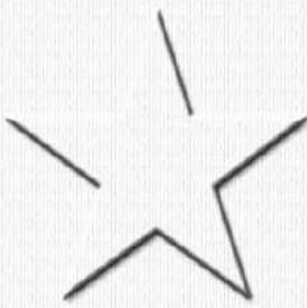
First and foremost is attitude, and I am not talking about a “high and mighty” attitude. I’m talking about an attitude of thinking about what you do, leadership involvement and making safety a priority at all times while meeting the mission. Maj Scott Morris, 136 AW/SE stated, “Mission accomplishment is paramount, and safety is a tool to its achievement.” How does maintenance make this tool work for them?

### **Leadership**

When talking to senior leadership and the flight chiefs one key comment I found was, “If a leader is to be suc-

cessful they have to get away from the desk, and get out to the flightline or backshop.” Nothing new here. If you are doing all your managing from the desk, then you don’t really know what your troops are doing. According to CMSGt Roy Simmons, Maintenance Superintendent, “We rely on the people, for to us there is no place for micromanagement in the Air Force. It takes everyone working together.” Plus, leadership on the flightline provides a chance for feedback at the first level of supervision, who can then send problems up the chain of command for action. You must pay attention to your people, and if you know what they need/want you can enhance safety and the mission.

I didn’t just talk to the old heads in leadership, many of whom have been with the 136 AW for over 20 years. I talked to the younger troops as well. You have to give credit where credit is due, and leadership has worked hard to indoctrinate the new troops. One individual commented, “The older troops made me feel part of the group even though I can’t do the task as fast as they can.” A common theme was that there is an “adult type of learning environment.”



"They (leadership/trainers) don't treat us like we don't know what we are doing." "They give us time to expand our knowledge level and ensure we do it right." A comment I related to was that on active duty you are always nervous. It's a medium-to-high threat if mistakes are made. At the 136 AW, it's a low threat. Yes, you get called to the boss to explain what happened, but they aren't on a "witch hunt" to find someone to blame.

In addition, don't beat a dead horse; otherwise you will be ignored. Give your people the information and treat them like adults. Don't withhold information about accident or injury causes. People want to know! Otherwise, it will just be rumors, you won't learn from the mistake, and someone will unfortunately repeat the same mistake. The 136 AW actually practices "leadership by example."

### Experience/Training

The Guard has an advantage that many units don't have, an average experience level of over 10 years. Many of the crew chiefs have worked the same aircraft since it came off the factory line. The benefit of this carries over into how they treat the aircraft and train their people. Troops have a pride of ownership in the aircraft and the facilities. From day one, everyone knows they can say no and stop a task if it's unsafe. People want to know about the aircraft, so they encourage them to take more interest in what is going on and how the systems work. Col Daniel Henderson, MXG/CC, stated, "You must make time for training and invest in educating your people." This helps to prevent mistakes. But a key factor is responsibility and accountability. The 136 AW fosters an attitude where you can learn from mistakes.

Even though they have a high experience level, they are now getting more three-levels, which has changed their focus. The continuity of the unit helps in training the new troops as well as the civilian skill crossover of the people they gain. This knowledge gap is something they haven't had before, so they had to adjust their training program to fit the people. The recent unit activation helped train their troops, as they had people available full-time for training, instead of the traditional weekends and two weeks. The deployment actually increased safety by people being able to work with everyone. As they worked with all the different specialties, they learned the danger areas and risks to avoid. One of the largest success factors was their attitude of helping each other and "no union cards." There were no inhibitions about helping anyone with another task. It is a team effort to ensure safety and the mission.

### Complacency

If you look at most maintenance or maintenance-related mishaps, you will find complacency at the forefront of the problem. At the 136 AW, they try to ensure complacency doesn't exist. They aren't always successful, but leadership and workers have made it an issue they are constantly aware of and looking to correct. Continual requalification and a mentorship program for the young troops are part of their efforts. These efforts include the "young people" ensuring the "old guys" aren't letting their guard down. This goes back to the creating of an atmosphere of cooperation between all wing members, and a non-retribution safety culture.



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### **Ops and Maintenance**

As with all flying units, the ops and maintenance relationship is part of the wing's strength or weakness. The 136 AW has created a collaborative effort between ops and maintenance with a positive feedback loop. They *talk* to each other on a routine basis, and there are times when they conflict. Ops wants to fly, and maintenance wants to repair. Communication and compromise is the key. Both sides talk to each other to work out the highest priority, and how they can compromise to ensure mission accomplishment. Safety isn't a special event; it's an everyday concern.

### **ORM**

ORM is a tool to enhance safety, and the 136 AW works hard to ensure it's part of their operation. They use ORM to minimize and identify risks. They take required corrective action to eliminate or reduce the risk. Sometimes you don't want to accept the risk, but the mission

must be accomplished. Then you must mitigate the risk to the lowest level possible. Slow down if you have to, and stop if necessary, to ensure safety. If you want ORM to be effective, you must keep constant reminders in front of the people to ensure they never let their guard down. ORM is an important tool for the 136 AW and the Air Force, but you must use it to be effective.

### **Corrective Action**

The 136 AW is not a perfect organization and they have their problems, but the key is how they deal with these problems. Once a troop left a jumper wire on an aircraft. They found the problem and instead of looking for a head to cut off, leadership sat everyone down and discussed how it happened and how they, leadership and workers, could prevent it from happening again. They designed a critique process to prevent mistakes and Quality Assurance (QA) is part of that process.

### **136th Airlift Wing's Last Class A**

On 5 June 1965, KC-97G, Serial Number 53-289, Call Sign Coed 03, was scheduled for a formation-refueling mission with eleven crewmembers on board. All preflight checks and inspections were accomplished with no defects noted. The aircraft took off at 0915 CST. The refueling portion of the mission was completed as briefed and without incident. They then proceeded en route for return to USNAS Dallas, Texas. Coed 03 and Coed 04 changed positions and Coed 03 assumed the call sign Coed 04.

Immediately after they changed call signs and positions, Coed 04 experienced backfiring in the number four engine. Power was reduced, however, backfiring continued at power settings in excess of 25 inches manifold pressure. The engine was left operating at 25 inches manifold pressure for the return to home station and landing.

The flight cancelled their IFR plan and proceeded VFR to home station. Upon arrival at USNAS Dallas, Texas the flight was advised that the field was closed due to an emergency on the active runway. The aircraft then held in the local area for approximately one hour before being cleared to land. Coed 04 was number three in the pattern behind two other KC-97s. A normal pattern was flown, and all checklists accomplished. Winds were 130 degrees at 16 knots with gusts to 25, with runway condition described as damp. The aircraft touched down between 1500 and 1800 feet from the approach end of the runway. Touchdown was normal and the aircraft was in a level attitude. The pilot initiated reversing action shortly after touchdown of all three gears. The copilot was holding full left aileron. With initial reversing action, the aircraft started a yaw to the left. The pilot attempted to correct left yaw by increasing reverse thrust on number three engine and applied full right rudder. The copilot assisted in holding right rudder. Yaw to the left increased. The pilot and copilot applied brakes, the aircraft continued left and departed the runway 1975 feet from the touchdown point and made contact with a mobile arresting unit and a truck. The aircraft caught fire and was completely destroyed. All crewmembers evacuated without incident.

Leadership uses QA results and self-imposed flight level Quality Verification Inspection (QVI) requirements to ensure they identify negative trends before they lead to a mishap. Maintenance has created an open concept of talking about mistakes to prevent mistakes. They put the person who made a mistake or failed a QVI in front of the people to talk about what happened. It's not a personal attack, but a critique of what happened, so everyone can learn and prevent recurrence. Everyone must lead by example in following tech data, and everyone watches everyone else. If mistakes or shortcuts are taken, they all work to stop the problem. From day one they work to instill good judgment in their people through communication and trust.

### Summary

To sum up the 136 AW maintenance, I would say it is a unit that has created a family atmosphere that works together to ensure mission success, and the safety of their people and aircraft. CMSgt Terry Mitchell, QA Superintendent, "sums up the wing" very well; "It is a culture of tradition and heritage where people feel a responsibility to uphold what those who went before have accomplished." Leadership is leading by example and proving it on a daily basis. When you have brand new troops and 20-year veterans saying the same thing, you know they are working together. I was extremely impressed by what they do and what the rest of the Air Force can learn from them. 🖐️

***Leadership is leading by example and proving it on a daily basis.***



### What Others Can Learn From The Men And Women Of The 136 AW.

- Encourage your people to think safety at all times.
- There is no magic bullet to create a safe work environment; it takes hard work and effort.
- Leadership must adopt an obvious cultural safety attitude or the people won't.
- Learn from your mistakes.
- Invest in safety with time, people and leadership.
- You can't accept complacency in anything you do.
- Take pride in your work and your workplace.
- Realize we (the Air Force) are held to a higher standard.
- Have fun and enjoy your work, not work hard/play hard, but enjoy your work and being part of your unit.
- People who like to be here will do better work.
- Take responsibility for what you do and accept the consequences.
- Lead by example at all times and all levels.
- Leaders, supervisors and workers must be mentors to other troops.
- You can't quit, you must keep reinforcing safety and good work habits.