

Charleston aircrew gets kudos from the top

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

Sometimes it's the little things we do that make a big difference. That's one lesson an aircrew from the 14th Airlift Squadron learned when they spent a few minutes with a family who showed up near the end of an airshow recently at Ellington Field in Houston, Texas.

The aircrew, composed of Majors Michael Major and Robert Howe, Capt. Norman Czubaj, 1st Lieutenants Eric Wittendorfer and Patrick Winstead, Senior Airmen James Lewis and Tommy Palmer, and Airman Adam Koerner were in the process of closing up their C-17 when the Anderson family met them on the flightline.

The crew spent time with the family and opened up the aircraft for a quick tour. They gave the family members squadron patches and stickers that impressed Danny Anderson, a key congressional staffer, so much he sent an email directly to the Secretary of Defense and President complimenting the crew for their hospitality. The base learned of the correspondence from the Air Force Congress-

sional Liaison Office in the Pentagon.

"It was the end of a long day, we had done a capabilities demonstration and had extra crew members along to provide continuous coverage at the aircraft," said Major. "When these folks arrived at the plane, the police were telling us to get everyone away from the plane. We reopened the plane for them anyway."

Anderson's email said, "The pilots and crew were closing the aircraft at the end of the show when we got to their location. Security was asking everyone to leave and we could tell that it had been a long weekend for the crews, yet they took a few moments to speak with our three children. At seeing the disappointment on their faces at not being allowed into the aircraft, they gave the kids patches and invited us back next year to visit with them."

Anderson wrote, "I cannot convey through this electric medium the impact that it had on the children, my wife and myself, so I ask that they hear a 'Thank You!' from us, through their superiors. We try to participate in the air shows each year and it is my hope that my children go into the US Air Force, become

pilots, and continue to pass along the memories that these fine soldiers have given them."

He signed the email Charlie, Neal, Zachary, Sara, and Danny Anderson. When Anderson sent his email to the Secretary of Defense, he also sent a copy to the President with a note asking that the crew be thanked.

Despite the high operations tempo, the 437th Operations Support Squadron schedules 20 aircraft a year for airshows and open houses.

"We normally schedule our participation as off-station trainers," said Jim Cheesborough, an airlift planner in current operations. "For overseas open houses, we usually marry up the requirement with a channel mission due to the longer distances," Cheesborough said. "All requests for the C-17 also require headquarters Air Mobility Command review and approval first before it can be put on our schedule."

The 1999 Wings Over Houston Airshow was held Oct. 15-17 in the fourth largest metropolitan area in the country with estimated crowds of more than 200,000.

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commander and AMC Director of Mobility Forces.

Carol Mauchline, legislative liaison specialist for Air Mobility Command at Scott Air Force, Ill., says the visit will help to educate congressional chiefs of staff about the far reach of the command and how busy we are.

"A lot of times, we find that many congressional chiefs of staffs don't have any idea of what we are about and how extensive our mission really is. This is a unique opportunity to educate them so that when an issue makes it to the floor of Congress, they'll be that much better informed when it comes to the Air Force."

The visit marks the first time that the Office of the Secretary of Defense has invited only congressional chiefs of staffs, who often play a key role behind the scenes in what Congress eventually considers on the floor, Mauchline added. The Office of the Secretary of Defense invited the congressional staffers to visit the command in November.

Force protection

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the shark's dinner!" We're making CAFB the far faster swimmer."

The new barriers are the first of several major improvements planned for the base force protection program. In January, work is expected to begin on replacing the antiquated barbed wire around the base perimeter with permanent chain link fencing, and additional alarm system upgrades are in store also.

"The chain link fence will be our first line of defense," Dunlap said.

The second line of defense will be the fortification of the controlled area. That's the area surrounding the flightline and the hangars.

The third layer of defense are

the concrete barriers around the restricted area.

The last and most important layer of defense is the well-trained maintainers and security forces, Dunlap said. "We could do without the fencing and barriers (though it would be ugly), however, we couldn't do without the additional eyes and ears of our maintainers."

Dunlap said force protection isn't only a job for security forces, but the entire base population plays a key role in keeping resources safe.

"Awareness is the key to it all," Dunlap said. "We want people to keep an eye out for suspicious activity because if we don't detect it, we can't neutralize it! An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!"

Maj. Matt Eatman, 437 SFS commander said he depends on

everyone for help and credits the 437th Logistics Group for its vigilance.

"Our logistics folks are among the best I've ever seen when it comes to detecting and reporting suspicious activity," he said. "Roughly two-thirds of reported Helping Hand calls come from the maintainers. That's teamwork in action. I've never seen a flightline as vigilant as we are at Charleston."

Dunlap said the maintainers are the eyes and ears on the flightline, and other members of Team Charleston have also taken on the challenge of force protection.

The 437th Medical Group took stronger internal security measures. "They have started to do random identification checks at the entry points to their building, Dunlap said. They weren't instructed to do it, they just took the

initiative and did it.

The logistics group has come up with great force protection ideas, Dunlap said, and the 437th Aerial Port Squadron is also stepping. They've also offered strategies and have provided the resources to make some of these improvements possible.

"They've self-implemented some great initiatives such as prohibiting POV parking in the Controlled Area, devising a strategy to prevent access to the flightline from their parking areas, and other great ideas," said Dunlap. "They've also supplied us with the hardware like forklifts to emplace the barriers. Their support is awesome."

The Logistics Group has also found some answers to the puzzle of securing a lot of the base's open access points. "Sometimes I think they're cops," Dunlap added.

The 437th Contracting Squadron played a big part in acquiring a lot of the necessary force protection items, like alarm systems, fencing and barriers. "They are the 'behind the scene' warriors. They ensure the items are properly appropriated and delivered to specs," Dunlap said.

"Getting the equipment is one thing, setting it up is another and that's where the 437th Civil Engineer Squadron comes in because nothing could happen without them," he added.

CE is being credited as the workhorse for implementing the necessary structures and obstacles for force protection. "They emplace bollards (cement filled pipes) at areas where we want to deny vehicular access such as the Lamb's School entrance, the Main



Tech. Sgt. William Dunlap check the concrete barrier to ensure it's connected to the cable so it can be lifted onto the flatbed truck to be hauled to the flightline.

Gate, and anywhere else needed," Dunlap said. "They also ensure we've got designated power sources at facilities where we have ADT alarms installed. I can't name all of the things CE does in the force protection arena."

The 437th Communications Squadron came to the rescue whenever there were problems with the alarms, he added.

Dunlap said force protection is something that can be taught and enforced from the biggest units to the smallest houses on base. "Force protection is everyone's responsibility."

The 437 SFS offers a Security Education Motivation Program, aimed at teaching people what to look for in terms of security violations and force protection.

"Our goal is to increase everyone's knowledge and level of education," said Dunlap. "The more we teach, the more aware our people will become."



photos by Staff Sgt. Andrew Rodier

Tech. Sgt. William Dunlap, 437th Security Forces Squadron prepares to back away from a newly placed concrete barrier as Senior Airman Karly Derosena removes the cable.