BUSTED: If you plan to shoplift, plan to get caught

By Senior Airman Kristina King
437th Security Forces Squadron

Holly is a 10-year-old. Summer break just started and she is bored. She walks over to the Main Exchange to look around. Holly's mom hasn't given her allowance to her. Holly begins looking at the Pokeman cards and finds a series that she doesn't have. She looks around, making sure no one is behind her. She thinks no one is looking and places the cards in her pocket.

Briskly, she walks out of the store, thinking, "I did it." Suddenly she feels a hand gripping her shoulder. The next thing she knows, security forces members are on their way and her parents are called.

She thinks to herself, "Was this really worth it for a pack of cards that cost $2.89?" At the end of the day, she goes home without the cards and a record on file. She can't go into the Main Exchange anymore because she lost those privileges. Holly now wishes she had just asked for an advance on her allowance.

The above account is fictitious and is not based on any particluar case on base.

However, since Dec. 1, 65 shoplifting incidents have taken place on Charleston AFB. The average age of the shoplifters is 14 years old, which may explain the items that are commonly stolen: Pokeman trading cards, PlayStation games and makeup. To young people, without money or jobs, the appeal sometimes becomes too much and eventually, the need outweighs the risk.

Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe

Shoplifitng is not a thrill or a joke, it's a crime.

When someone shoplifts, it affects everyone, from your sponsor to the kid next door. Facilities and events brought to you by MWR are largely funded by donations from the Main Exchange. In 1999, the exchange donated $478,065 to MWR. When someone shoplifts, this number decreases. In 1999 alone, $20,540 worth of AAFES property was stolen. Of this amount, only $6,975 of the property was recovered. This brings the yearly donation down by almost $14,000, according to base officials.

When a juvenile commits an offense, such as shoplifting, on Charleston AFB, the juvenile and the juvenile's active duty parent, may be called before the Juvenile Support Board. This board is comprised of the deputy support group commander, the command chief master sergeant, the chief of the family member support flight, a chaplain, the NCOIC of investigations, a representative from the staff judge advocate's office, the chief of Family Advocacy, the director of the Family Support Center and the chief of Military Equal Opportunity (depending on offense). The JSB is responsible for imposing a form of accountability on the juvenile. Rehabilitative actions range from community service to removing a family from the installation. The goal of the board, according to Lt. Col. Connie Davis, 437th Support Group deputy commander, is to "determine if the family needs assistance from any of the base helping agencies and to deter inappropriate behavior by juveniles."

Still think it was worth it? Here is a little known fact about shoplifting. There is a program in place and administered by AAFES called the Civil Recovery Program. This program can force you to pay from $150 up to $500 for the item that was stolen. The amount you pay is determined by the price of the item that was stolen.

Remember this, too -- if you plan to shoplift, chances are good you'll be caught. The Charleston AFB base exchange has a high-tech video camera system in place which constantly monitors the store floor. If you steal, the camera will catch you in the act.

Base officials said that not only is it wrong to steal, but store detectives are always always watching and the end result is not worth it.

Total Force concept is alive and well at Charleston AFB

By Lt. Col. David Buck
172nd Airlift Wing

Forty seven members of Mississippi's 172nd Airlift Wing, Air National Guard, have been deployed to Charleston AFB to integrate with their active duty counterparts.

The Guardsmen arrived June 3 and will depart Saturday. They have worked primarily with maintenance, but also have representatives in logistics, finance, public affairs, security forces, communications, transportation, flight records and command post.

"Coming to Charleston is desirable because we are able to work with people who can give us some insight into our new weapon system," said Lt. Col. Bob Morgan, troop commander of the group.

The 172nd AW is the first and only Guard unit scheduled to receive the C-17 Globemaster III, with delivery in 2004.

The members of the 172nd have been especially helpful to Charleston's operations as well, Morgan said. As the C-141 prepares to leave the base at the end of August, fewer and fewer personnel are here and available to handle the workload involved with the C-141 fleet.

The role of the Air National Guard is to supplement the active duty force, as well as accomplish its mission for the Air Guard. Cutbacks in the active duty force have placed an increased reliance on the guard.

"Teamwork by the guard, reserve and active duty forces, along with being ready to serve when called upon, is the great concept that makes 'total force' a reality," Morgan said.

Courtesy photo

Tech. Sgt. Phillip Lake of the 172nd Airlift Wing (Mississippi Air National Guard) checks an aircraft wheel cover. The 172nd AW is the only Guard unit slated to begin flying the C-17. Delivery is scheduled for 2004.