

DISPATCH

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Taking Aim

photo by Tech. Sgt. Jim Varhegyi, 1 CTCS

Senior Airman Rob Russell, 1st Combat Camera, aims an INMARSAT antenna at the Mississippi National Guard's Gulfport Combat Readiness Training Center in Gulfport, Miss., during the 14th Air Expeditionary Wing IGX5A. IGX5A is an Operational Readiness exercise simulating the deployment of an Air Expeditionary Force to a forward operating location, and is designed to evaluate the readiness of U.S. Air Force personnel.

LMR training helps relations between base leaders, union

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

The relationship between supervisors, base leadership, shop stewards and union leaders has improved as a result of basewide Labor Management Relations classes conducted in August and October.

The training, provided by the civilian personnel office and the union, is a half-day course designed to familiarize supervisors of civilian employees with the "ins and outs" of the memorandum of agreement between Local 1869, American Federation of Government Employees, and supervisors.

The training also provided ideas on promoting a collaborative approach to working with the union, which represents most of the base's civilian employees. All supervisors of civilian employees, base leaders and union representatives should receive this training by the end of December.

"We needed to emphasize to our workforce that before changes to a civilian employees work conditions or job could be made, our supervisors first needed to consult with the union—it's the law," said Tony Owens, an employee relations specialist in the Civilian Personnel Office and a former AFGE Local 1869 shop steward. "Although the ultimate decision in the collaborative approach rests with management, we want to involve the union in those decisions that affect civilian employees. Union and management are committed to the same goals."

Col. Dennis Kaan, 437th Support Group commander, reminded class attendees that labor management relations were quite challenging. "We want to be able to resolve disputes at the lowest level," he said. "Supervisors need to be supervisors. We need to work together as a team in the true spirit that is Team Charleston."

Kaan mentioned efforts to establish an alternate dispute resolution process to resolve problems, and he asked attendees to put past issues behind them and look ahead.

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Medal of Honor recipient John L. Levitow dies

Sgt. John L. Levitow, one of only 16 airmen awarded the Medal of Honor for exceptional heroism during war-time, died Nov. 8 at his home in Connecticut after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 55.

Levitow, the lowest ranking airman to earn the medal, received the honor as a result of an incident Feb. 24, 1969. At that time, the airman first class served as loadmaster aboard a severely damaged AC-47 gunship flying a mission over Long Binh, South Vietnam.

Suffering from more than 40 shrapnel wounds in his back and legs caused by a mortar blast, he saw a smoking magnesium flare amid a

jumble of spilled ammunition canisters. Despite loss of blood and partial loss of feeling in his right leg, the 23-year-old threw himself on the flare, hugged it close, dragged himself toward an open cargo door and hurled the flare out. Almost simultaneously, the flare ignited outside the door and away from the munitions.

President Richard M. Nixon presented the Medal of Honor to Levitow on Armed Forces Day, May 14, 1970.

After Levitow left the Air Force, he worked in the field of veteran's affairs for more than 22 years. His most recent work was developing and designing veteran programs.

AMC named a Charleston-based

C-17 "The Spirit of John L. Levitow" in his honor, Jan. 23, 1998.

During the ceremony, former AMC Commander Gen. Walter Kross said, "We can easily call Sgt. John Levitow a hero, but he has continuously requested that he doesn't want to be known as a hero, that his life amounts to much more than those 10 heroic minutes. He has given so much to thousands of American men and women in the United States Air Force uniform, and even some who don't wear the uniform. He has shaped their lives."

Levitow will be buried Saturday, with full military honors, in Arlington National Cemetery. (AFPN)



Courtesy photo

John L. Levitow examines the cockpit of the C-17 named for him, the *Spirit of John L. Levitow*, Jan. 23, 1998, in Long Beach, Calif.