

FEATURE

Even on a holiday, the mission goes on

By Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe
437 AW Public Affairs

While many on base enjoyed a barbecue or a day at the beach for Memorial Day, it was business as usual for some units.

From maintenance shops to life support to the dining hall, many Charleston airmen were on the job for the holiday. This was also the case for the Command Post and emergency response units on base.

With only several local missions being flown on Memorial Day, things were slower than usual at the Command Post. However, according to Master Sgt. William Chalifoux, NCOIC of the Command Post, several transient aircraft were coming in, and a C-141 unexpectedly diverted to Charleston AFB. The Command Post also coordinated with the Tanker Airlift Command Center at Scott AFB, Ill., for two maintenance recovery teams sent to repair a C-130 and F-18 on the base ramp.

The Command Post crew handled a steady stream of phone calls and radio transmissions, and threw out some good-natured ribbing among themselves when things slowed down. Despite having to spend the holiday at work, they took it in stride.

"We're all professionals here," Chalifoux said. "Sure, they'd like to spend time with their families, but they understand that this is what we have to do. The mission has to go on, flights still happen and the clock still ticks."

The true meaning of the day was not lost. At 3 p.m., Chalifoux put out a radio call to the flightline calling for a minute of silence in honor of those Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom.

Members of the 437th Security Forces Squadron were on patrol for Memorial Day, including Tech Sgt. Richard Thomas, who explained why police are especially vigilant on holidays.

"You have more children on the street, running



Photos by Staff Sgt. Michael Duhe

Staff Sgt. Tracee Fletcher of the 437th Medical Group checks the wet bulb globe indicator.

around," he said. "People are having barbecues and we want to make sure that if they're drinking, they're not driving. We also look out for fire hazards. We just want to make sure people are having a safe holiday."

Thomas said squadron members on duty for Memorial Day are "dedicated professionals. They've gotten used to (working on holidays). They know that they're needed out here doing their job."

The base fire department was also prepared to deal with any situation on Memorial Day. The department provides fire protection and response for the flightline, base work centers and facilities, and base housing. Senior Airman Jason Nance, a base firefighter, was one of the airmen manning the Fire Alarm Communications Center. "Things have been pretty quiet here today," he said. "But we're always ready in case something does happen."

Airman 1st Class Chris Reed, a firefighter, was also on duty for Memorial Day. He spent part of the day inspecting equipment, including the jaws of life. "We check the equipment every day to make sure it's in working order," he explained.

Staff Sgt. Tracee Fletcher and Airman 1st Class Brianne Sarb were two 437th Medical Group medical technicians on duty Monday. Fletcher checked the wet bulb globe indicator every two hours to determine the heat index. The reading is passed on to flightline units, who determine a work/rest cycle based on the heat index.

Fletcher and Sarb took a number of calls from patients while on duty in the ambulance services office. They contacted physicians to answer patients' questions.

Airmant 1st Class Chris Reed inspects the jaws of life at the base fire department.



Staff Sgt. Matthew Podunajec, a maintenance controller, inputs information on an outbound mission sheet in the Command Post.

"Mainly, it's just been a lot of phone calls," Sarb said. "We haven't had any (ambulance) runs yet, so thankfully no one's gotten hurt on base."

Although the clinic was not available to provide medical treatment Monday, one man came in with a bandaged finger he had sliced earlier while putting a playground together. He was referred to the after-hours clinic at the Naval Weapons Station.

Sarb said it was surprisingly quiet for a holiday, and Fletcher added that Fourth of July is one of their busiest days. Some of the injuries they encounter include ankle sprains and burns from firecrackers and sparklers.

"We might get more calls later because people are getting in from vacation, or maybe they're feeling sick," Sarb said during a brief lull in the phone calls.

Whatever holiday is being celebrated on base, the mission and those who support it press on.