



# News Release

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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### **CHARLESTON AFB MAINTAINERS KEEP AIRCRAFT MOVING OVERSEAS**

**CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C.--** In a lot of ways, the flightline at Rhein- Main AB, Germany, looks like the flightline at Charleston AFB.

The concrete appears similar: there are yellow lines and barriers, C-17s are constantly taxiing in and out, and most strikingly, every C-17 maintainer at Rhein-Main AB is TDY from CAFB.

"We have more than 90 maintainers here," said 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Wade Cornelius, 437<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Barracuda Flight commander and deployed 726<sup>th</sup> Air Mobility Squadron Maintenance OIC. "Counting arrivals and departures, we're turning out, on average, more than 300 sorties each month. Until November 2001, this base was handling about 30 aircraft each month. You can see the difference in the numbers, and there's no doubt it's CAFB people getting it done."

Cornelius said he works close with Chief Master Sgt. Richard Terry, 437 AMXS Gator Flight superintendent and deployed 726 AMS maintenance superintendent, to "make it happen, together."

"There's no 'I' here," said Cornelius. "It's always 'we.' I'm lucky to have (Terry) here. He brings a wealth of information, knowledge and experience with him."

Even though their "we" concept works for Cornelius and Terry, Cornelius said he'll be the first one to say it's the front-line maintainers who are really "getting it done."

"I tell them all the time, and I mean it, I'm jealous of what they do," said Cornelius. "A broken jet can come in, and they work it hard and as a team to have it ready to go out in as little time as possible. I truly admire each and every airman and NCO who ensures the next mission is successful."

"Since the day I got here, I've seen young NCOs training the airmen on what they need to know," continued Cornelius. "I've seen airmen stepping forward and getting things done by leaning forward to ensure training requirements for the newer airmen are met. I'm truly envious of the job they do."

One of the NCOs who makes it happen, Staff Sgt. Paul Bright, 437 AMXS jet mechanic and deployed member of the 726 AMS, said he volunteered for this trip to face the challenges of a high operations tempo environment and help his comrades in Afghanistan with whatever they need.

"It's been a year since I've been TDY, and I really felt it was my turn," said Bright. "People from the unit took my spot last time so I could be with my wife when she had our second baby. I miss her and my kids, but it's my turn to support the people downrange."

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Bright's primary work involves engines only. However, due to some of the challenges he and the maintainers face at Rhein-Main AB, he said he's had to pitch in and help with all maintenance requirements and find ways around unique problems that arise.

"Depending on the (engine run) type I have to do, I need a minimum of 500 feet behind the aircraft," said Bright. "The angle of the parking on the runway here and the amount of aircraft out here have created some problems for us.

"We find ways to work around it and get the tests done," he continued.

Working around minor difficulties is important to Bright because he said if he didn't find a way to take care of problems, others would feel the consequences.

"If an engine doesn't work, the plane isn't going anywhere," Bright said. "If we don't get the engines running, we can't get people and equipment to Afghanistan.

"The things they need are important, and I'm going to give it everything I have to meet those needs," Bright added.

The people back at CAFB also feel that pride, and it shows according to Cornelius.

He credits the spouses, friends and CAFB team members as the people behind the scenes making sure morale stays high for deployed members of the 726 AMS.

"Spouses and friends are always sending care packages with cookies and brownies and things," said Cornelius. "My wife, Jennifer, taped all the (television) premieres and mailed them out so the folks here wouldn't miss out.

"Lots of people back home are playing a big role to make sure we have an easier time of things," he added.

Mission-related morale is staying high also, said Cornelius. Anytime his maintainers need a part or piece of equipment, CAFB takes care of it.

"(CAFB personnel) have done everything possible to ensure our requirements are met," said Cornelius. "I can't say enough about how thankful I am that they're doing such a great job to take care of us."

Besides the people at home making a huge difference for the maintainers, Cornelius also credits the operations crew with being big players in the team concept.

"The mission here is definitely a team effort," said Cornelius. "Sometimes it seems as if operations is working against maintenance, but that's not the case at all here.

"Lt. Col. (Don) Shaffer, Maj. (Tom) Griffin, and Capt. (Charlie) Velino (all deployed from CAFB with the 817<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Squadron) have done everything to ensure the maintenance requirements are met," Cornelius continued.

The idea of confusing Rhein-Main AB with CAFB may not be as far-fetched as it seems, according to Bright. Both places have true professionals working through difficulties to get the mission done in true Team Charleston style.

Cornelius echoed Bright's sentiments.

"Team Charleston can be very proud of the men and women representing them in this war," said Cornelius. "Everyone is enthusiastic, motivated and dedicated to ensure success."

**(Story by Staff Sgt. Jason Smith. This story is public domain. You may use any part of it for your publication or newscast. Interviews are available with key base personnel on this project. For more information, please call Capt. Krista Carlos at (843) 963-5589 or Staff Sgt. Jason Smith at 963-5537.)**