

The Two-Headed Foe



Mr. Murphy & Ms. Complacency
 TSgt Raymundo Morales, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

Photo by SMSgt Edward E. Snyder

Supporting Operation IRAQI FREEDOM was an all-out effort that paid off in an early victory. Despite the fact Baghdad has fallen, it's important to remind ourselves the war is not quite over, not in Iraq and certainly not at many deployed locations. Saddam's regime was one enemy, but there are other enemies close by that can sneak up on us without warning. The first enemy is the mother of all accidents. Her name is **Complacency**, and when she drops in, you can rest assured that her best friend, **Mr. Murphy**, is lurking around the corner. This was true for me when I first arrived in the desert.

There I was at a bare base somewhere in the Middle East. When I arrived, personnel and equipment were already in place, but as I looked around it appeared

as if everyone and everything had just fallen out of the sky, landed, and never been moved. As I examined the locations of personnel, equipment, and munitions, I discovered numerous weapons safety violations. Munitions were too close to the tent city, too close to unrelated facilities, too close to personnel, and too close to the aircraft. As I looked at all the violations I asked, why did I get picked to come to this place? Especially when I knew there are so many other places with fewer corrections to be made. I had to ask myself, was I ready for this? Did I have the experience to handle such an enormous job? All my questions would soon be answered.

Shortly after I got off the DC-10 and picked out a little corner of the 12-man tent to call

home for an undetermined amount of time, the safety team hit the ground running. We showed up to our new office, but there was no one there who could tell us what was going on. After calling CENTAF, we finally had somewhat of a starting point. The first thing we were told was that all jobs are critical to the mission. However, with the pace of the mission being rush here, and rush there, no one had the faintest idea of how many safety dangers were lurking at every corner. Complacency and Mr. Murphy had moved in and now

called the place home. And so it began.

One of the first things we looked for was the ASHS II program. It was missing in action and nowhere to be found. We also realized that none of the facilities had explosive site plans completed on them. We discovered that the people did not consider them important because this temporary base would only exist for the duration of the war. Despite that, we knew we had a lot of work to do to keep Complacency and Mr. Murphy at bay.

Walking through dirt and fighting the wind and dust every step of the way, we pushed our old faithful friend the measuring wheel to develop a site plan. Time after time we discovered we were short — things that went BOOM and things that didn't were just too close ...

How could this be? We did not meet the distance between our holding yard and non-related facilities, worse than that we did not meet the distance to related facilities either. How do we tell the wing commander

flight line was that there were too many munitions. You could see GBU-12s, JDAMS, and missiles absolutely everywhere. I must admit, I worried every day that something catastrophic would happen on my watch. After an ORM assessment, we were able to convince the leadership that we were putting too many personnel at risk. There was just too much Net Explosive Weight (NEW) in one place. The leadership agreed. Loaded munitions trailers began making their way back to the bomb dump. A safety win!

When Baghdad fell, and victory was in sight, the anticipation of going home was definitely building. Complacency and Mr. Murphy were again knocking at our door. Despite the excitement, we had to remind ourselves there was still a job to be done. This job required 100 percent effort from everyone in order to accomplish the mission safely. It would serve no purpose to win the war, but send people home in a

We had to take care of each other. Supervisors took a look at their people and work areas for ways to improve the safety of all. We also kept an eye on our folks ensuring they didn't take any unnecessary risks. If risks were involved, we used ORM to determine the right path to take. Time was on our side and rushing a job was no longer an excuse. Everyone was tired, and Complacency was eager to set in.

Now we had to ensure that we beat Complacency and Mr. Murphy the same way we beat Saddam himself. We ensured all tech data was adhered to. We made sure all explosives on trailers were properly secured. With safety in mind we continued to work professionally knowing so much was waiting for us at home, our families and our friends. None of us wanted to explain to families back home that their loved one was not coming home alive, because they had decided to befriend the enemy, Complacency and



Photo by SSGT Jessica Kochman



Photo by SSGT Cherie A. Thurlby



Photo by SrA Joann S. Makinano

that he is sitting on top of one of the biggest safety violations known to man?

Another violation we noticed when we drove around the

metal box, instead of an aircraft seat, because we had become complacent. So with this in mind, we continued to put forth a great effort to be safe.

Mr. Murphy. So I ask you all to remember, in a war, there is always more than one enemy and they all can kill you. Be aware and be safe! ▶