

Can you SEE ME now?

By Maj Wendy Hamilton, Langley AFB, Va.
Photos by TSgt Ben Bloker, Langley AFB, Va.

This electro-luminescent technology called ELMO-lyte helps a driver see the security forces member before the person is in the car's headlights!



On November 17, 1999, TSgt Wesley Simmons III, a security police patrol supervisor at Nellis AFB, Nev., quickly sealed off and evacuated an area during a bomb threat. It was dusk when he began directing traffic, which was backing up at a nearby intersection. Tragically, an inattentive motorist

struck him, and TSgt Simmons died 2 days later. Had he been wearing the new traffic safety vest the 1st Security Forces Squadron at Langley AFB is testing, he might be alive today.

International Corp. working for HQ ACC Security Forces Systems Branch. In the case of the traffic vest, the power source is two AA batteries. The batteries operate the vest for 24 hours continuously, or more practically, three 8-hour shifts at the gate shack. The ELMO-lyte looks similar to a fiber optic cable and runs through seams on the vest outlining the front and back. Even though it looks like fiber optics, ELMO-lyte is much more durable. In fact, it can be bent, wadded up, tied in a knot, or even cut, and it will keep illuminating. Besides its improved durability, the light can be set on "steady" or "flash" for even better visibility.

This new technology is important because it could have prevented the 460 deaths nationwide in 2002 which were the result of a motorist not seeing someone in time to avoid them. The statistics are even more telling for police officers. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, Inc., being "struck by an automobile" is the third leading cause of law enforcement deaths annually, only behind shootings and automobile/motorcycle accidents.

Because of its added safety value, Colonel Mary Kay Hertog, Director of Security Forces, Headquarters ACC has been instrumental in actually getting this technology out to the field.

"If I remember right," she says, "I was walking by Steve's office and saw the vest hanging on the back of his chair. I thought it would be a simple enhancement which would greatly improve safety. It reminded me of those glowing rings you see at fairs. I asked some of our ACC security forces units to test the vest and so far we've gotten good reviews."

In addition to using ELMO-lyte, the traffic safety vest incorporates some basic creature comforts: a camel pack for water, a radio pocket, D-rings on the shoulder to keep firearms from slipping off the slick reflective material, and belt keepers to help take weight off the wearer's hips. All these ideas came from test wearers and helped enhance the vest's functionality and versatility.

"I'd love to see this vest used Air Force-wide," says Colonel Hertog. "We have so many different units who could benefit from the technology. I think about basic military trainees running with their 'Lackland lasers' [flashlights]. Not only would they have increased visibility but the vest would free up their hands as well. Maintainers and flyers on the flight line at night could also use the vest in a permissive environment."

Such a simple, inexpensive piece of equipment, the traffic vest with ELMO-lyte is an example of using today's technology to improve safety.

As Colonel Hertog said, "It amazes me we haven't thought to use it before. It's too simple not to, and I hope other units will consider adopting the technology as well. For so little, we can prevent any more cases like TSgt Simmons'." ▶



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The vest, a Headquarters ACC initiative, uses technology developed at the security forces battlelab in San Antonio, Texas. This electro-luminescent technology called ELMO-lyte helps a driver see the security forces member before the person is in the car's headlights.

"Current reflective technology requires that an exterior light source shine on the material in order to be seen. ELMO-lyte is self illuminating, provided it's connected to its power source," says Mr. Steve Kunich, a senior analyst with Science Applications In-

Mishap Statistics Scoreboard

FY04 Aircraft		
	Fatal	Aircraft Destroyed
8 AF		
9 AF		
12 AF		
AWFC		
ANG (ACC-gained)		
AFRC (ACC-gained)		

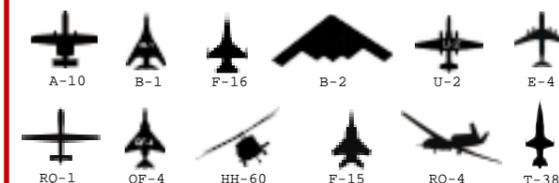
FY04 Ground			
	Fatal	Class A	Class B
8 AF		0	0
9 AF		0	0
12 AF	1	1	0
DRU's		0	0

FY04 Weapons		
	Class A	Class B
8 AF	0	0
9 AF	0	0
12 AF	0	0
AWFC	0	0

Legend

Class A - Permanent Total Disability; Property Damage \$1,000,000 or more
 Class B - Permanent Partial Disability; Property Damage between \$200,000 and \$1,000,000
 Class C - Lost Workday; Property Damage between \$20,000 and \$200,000
 * Non-rate Producing

Symbols for Mishap Aircraft



Aircraft Notes

And thus begins a new fiscal year. Warrior leaders, if it doesn't look right, smell right, or taste right, it probably ain't right — stop it. Warrior aviators, if it's not briefed, scheduled, or specifically authorized chances are it's dumb, different, or dangerous — AKA: a no-no. Keep the focus. Aviate — Navigate — Communicate. Point at suitable concrete, get the checklist done, develop a plan, get someone to QC your plan, and get the aircraft back on the ground. Also, think about contingencies like missed cables and ground egressing. The fire trucks will definitely see the fire, but maybe not the egresseses. Fly safe!

Ground Notes

There was one PMV4 Class A mishap in the first month of FY04. This is a much better start for the fiscal year. I know commanders, supervisors, and first sergeants are actively working to prevent mishaps. So let's keep the momentum going and continue to keep our Airmen safe from any additional loss of life.

Weapons Notes

Last year was a busy year for the AF and the weapons community. With the high ops tempo and all the deployments we supported, the number of mishaps were surprisingly low. We did, however, have one more mishap this past year than the year before. Please continue to educate and encourage good safety practices. Let's make this year the safest year to date in ACC.