

Aircrew Safety Award of Distinction

On the afternoon of June 9, the crew of Sentry 05 plus one observer had an uneventful takeoff from Cold Lake Canadian Forces Base (CFB). Sentry 05 was cleared to the tactical frequency by a student engineer and directed to the orbit. The mission crew began to power up aircraft mission systems, but were unable to because of a computer malfunction. Sentry 05 continued to a maintenance orbit to attempt troubleshooting and burn down fuel for an eventual return to base. Approximately 45 minutes into the flight, while established in the orbit at 240 knots indicated air speed, the flight crew heard a loud pop in the pilot's overhead panel and noticed severe electrical arcing, smoke, flames and burning debris falling from the panel. The aircraft commander immediately made a public address announcement direct-

ing the crew to get on 100 percent oxygen and called for the FIRE, SMOKE, or FUMES, AIRCRAFT INTERIOR checklist. Due to the location of the fire, the instructor flight engineer was in the best position to combat the fire and prepared the fire extinguisher for use if needed. The student flight engineer continued with the checklist while the mission crew reported all personnel on oxygen. The designated mission crew fire fighters were ready to assist if the fire continued, while the passenger monitor directed the passenger to get on oxygen and strap in. The copilot called the tactical agency to declare an emergency as the navigator computed a direct course to Cold Lake CFB for an emergency recovery. The fire continued to burn for approximately 7 seconds prior to the circuit protection devices removing power. After the appropriate checklist was completed and the flight crew verified that the fire was out, the fuel dump checklist was accomplished. By the time the fuel dump checklist was complete, Sentry 05 was passing 15,000 feet mean sea level, approximately 50 nautical miles from the airfield. With the gear down and all safe indications, Sentry 05 continued the approach with normal configurations to an uneventful full stop. The immediate and correct actions of the entire crew resulted in the safe recovery of a valuable, limited density, high demand asset and 29 crew members.

Maj John Schatz, Maj Joel LaPlante, 1Lt Eric Steele, 1Lt Chris Bray, SSgt Christian Williams, TSgt Bob Davis, Maj Samantha Helwig, Capt Michael Boynton, Capt Canyon Knop, 1Lt Jeffrey Dale, 1Lt Curtis Knighten, 1Lt Shaun Lloyd, Capt Kirk Hansen, 1Lt Michael Sward, TSgt Kelly Clark, Capt Timothy Wilcox, Capt Jennifer Kyseth, Capt John Chambers, Capt Sean Bruce, SSgt Vincent Wittig, SrA David Ebert, SSgt Kristin Odekirk, SrA Edgardo Montoya, SrA Peter Cox, TSgt Philip Barton, SSgt Michael Randazzo, SrA S. P. Quinn, SrA Adam Satnes, SrA Carlos Hernandez, 960th Airborne Air Control Sqdn., 552nd Air Control Wing, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma

Flight Line Safety Award of Distinction

SrA Joseph Schmitz was dispatched to phase section to perform a routine F-15 landing gear operational check. During the check, all cockpit indications were normal and the landing gear was operating perfectly. Airman Schmitz continued his inspection of the landing gear and noticed the left main landing gear, lower drag brace was not fully seated on the stop block. Upon further investigation, he discovered a 3/8-inch bolt lodged behind the lower drag brace

beryllium stop block. The bolt was preventing the left main landing gear from fully extending to the down and locked position. He removed the bolt and coordinated to have the beryllium inspected by a qualified machinist. He then had an electrician verify correct adjustment of the landing gear down limit switches. Both specialists determined there was no damage and the switches were correctly rigged. SrA Schmitz's attention to detail and impeccable maintenance practices resulted in the correction of a condition that could have caused a catastrophic landing gear failure and possible loss of a \$36 million aircraft or worse, human life.



**SrA Joseph M. Schmitz,
33rd Maint. Sqdn., 33rd Fighter Wing, Eglin AFB, Florida**

Pilot Safety Award of Distinction

Capt Robert Mitchell was number three of a four-ship on an F-15C continuity training sortie. In an over water training area, Capt Mitchell noticed a master caution light accompanied by a PC1-A hydraulic light, indicating one of his hydraulic systems had failed. He immediately made the decision to return to base and directed his wingman to perform a battle damage check. His wingman noticed a significant amount of hydraulic fluid leaking from the left side of the aircraft. Capt Mitchell declared an in-flight emergency with air traffic control and informed the supervisor of flying. After expeditiously returning to the traffic pattern, the emergency escalated dramatically when the F-15's PC1-B and UTL-A hydraulic systems failed. With these failures, Capt Mitchell was forced to fly his F-15 with a "dead" left wing (no left aileron or left flap) and performed an emergency landing gear extension due to the loss of UTL-A hydraulics. Additionally, Capt Mitchell

determined he would need to make an approach end cable arrestment to stop the aircraft, as the UTL-A failure also results in loss of brakes. He correctly evaluated that the severe hydraulic leak might potentially lead to total hydraulic failure, which could ultimately force him to eject. Capt Mitchell masterfully flew a straight-in approach with the "dead wing" and a no-flap configuration (since only the right flap was operational), properly accepting higher than normal airspeed to account for the lack of flaps. He lowered the aircraft's arresting hook, ensured a good landing gear configuration check with his wingman, and prepared for the approach end arrestment. On 3-mile final, the continuing hydraulic leak led to yet another system failure of the UTL-B. In the face of multiple emergencies, Capt Mitchell flew the aircraft to a flawless landing and textbook cable engagement. Only moments after the aircraft came to rest, the F-15's remaining hydraulic pressure fell to zero as the utility system was fully depleted. Capt Mitchell's quick thinking, composure under intense pressure, impeccable airmanship and detailed systems knowledge prevented the loss of a \$38 million Air Force combat asset and potential loss of life.



**Capt Robert K. Mitchell,
60th Fighter Sqdn., 33rd Fighter Wing, Eglin AFB, Florida**