



how effective is your

MACA

program?

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Photo by SSGT James A. Williams

when it comes to MACA? The fact is every wing has "high threat" areas requiring specific attention when managing a MACA program.

AFI 91-202 discusses the entire MACA program in less than one page. It essentially covers everything with comments like, "Evaluate the midair collision potential with civil airlines and work with operators of nearby airfields to reduce risk and minimize the hazards," and, "Tailor the MACA program to meet local needs." These comments are great in the sense that every wing now has the freedom to make their program take a variety of forms. What isn't covered is, "How do wings evaluate midair collision potential with civil airlines?"

Depending upon your situation, there may be a lot of issues not addressed by AFI 91-202 requiring a great deal of attention to make a MACA program fully effective. One of these is the concept of the MACA Working Group. AFI 91-202 does not define or specify the need for a MACA Working



Photo by TSgt Jack Braden



Photo by Ms. Lisa Carroll



I've been Chief of Flight Safety at two very different Air Force bases. One, Moody AFB, located in southern Georgia, is surrounded by tall pines and dense swamps. The other, Luke AFB, located in south-central Arizona, is surrounded by desert landscapes and expanding urban development. At the time, Moody AFB had a modest flying schedule and housed five flying squadrons with four completely different airframes. Luke AFB housed nine flying squadrons with only one airframe but had an incredibly robust schedule. Civil traffic around the Moody

area was extremely light; however, civil traffic around the Luke area was some of the busiest in the country.

Comparing the two areas, one might conclude that Moody would require a smaller Midair Collision Avoidance (MACA) program, whereas Luke would require much more. This may very well be true, but Moody experienced a mid-air shortly after I left my year-long tenure at wing safety, and Luke has not had a midair in over a decade. Does that mean Moody actually has a more dangerous flying area

Group. It does state, "The Flight Safety Officer (FSO) works closely with ... other interested parties such as the Chief Air Traffic Control Operations Officer (CATCO), the Airfield Operations Flight Commander (AOF/CC), the airspace manager, and the local Flight Standards District Officer (FSDO), to establish a comprehensive MACA program." My first thought when reading this was that if all these agencies got together to talk about MACA we would have a MACA Working Group. But it isn't that simple.

When I took over the flight safety office, I thought about setting up a group with various individuals to discuss MACA issues. I used the concept of the BASH Steering Group or Bird Hazard Working Group as my idea for developing the group. I invited the same "players" with the thought that everyone with an interest in trying to keep aircraft from flying into birds would also be interested in trying to keep aircraft from flying into other aircraft. The group gathered to discuss Operational Risk Management midair collision avoidance and decide how to best deal with various situations on base.

After a couple of these meetings I realized that Standardization/Evaluation Review Boards, Airfield Operations Boards, and Supervisor of Flying meetings all covered aspects dealing with MACA. But all of these groups, including the MACA Working Group I had formed separately, only covered small pieces of the puzzle. It was great for addressing various concerns with respect to inter-flight

est airport for takeoffs and landings. Deer Valley Airport, located on the north side of Phoenix, is the nation's 3rd busiest general aviation airport and 46th busiest overall—busier than Chicago-Midway. These are the busiest airfields in Phoenix, but there are five other airports and a glider port area surrounding Phoenix. Two of the airports are within 10 miles of Luke AFB and the glider port is less than 20 miles away.

In addition, the main route civil aircraft take departing Phoenix to the west is through Luke's VFR straight-in pattern, not just close to it, but right through the middle. All these factors make for a very challenging MACA program. It did not take long for me to understand that the on-base working groups acting alone were not going to solve these challenges.

I discovered the best place to start was with the FSDO. The FSDO is very involved with various aspects of the Phoenix aviation picture. As a result of a de-

group (AFTW) to discuss various flying challenges in the Phoenix area to include Fixed Base Operator operations, airspace issues, and controller challenges. This is another great working group providing a conduit for communication between Luke AFB military operations and the civil sector.

During these and other meetings, Luke safety personnel developed an awareness of various airspace issues that could not be answered by members of the AFTW who dealt with airspace. We soon learned there was yet another work group called the Phoenix Airspace User's Work group. This group provided a forum for airspace discussions—exactly one of the things we were looking for.

The lesson learned from this entire process was that fulfilling a requirement to have a working group may not even touch the issues. Our MACA program involves four formal

working groups, several informal working groups, an average of five meetings/briefings with civilian organizations each month, and even then is-

deconfliction and deconfliction between various military flights arriving and departing Luke AFB. Of more concern to me was how to deal with the large number of complaints I was getting concerning near midairs with civil aircraft.

Luke AFB sits on the west side of Phoenix, the sixth largest city in the United States. Due to the large population and extremely good weather year round, airspace is saturated with aircraft. Sky Harbor, the main commercial airport in Phoenix, is the nation's fifth busi-

est to gather information with, as well as, give information to the civilian aviation population, we were invited to be members of the Arizona Aviation Safety Advisory Group. This group meets once a month with representatives from several aviation associations to discuss flying safety trends among other issues.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) office then sponsored another group called the Arizona Flight Training Work

issues exist that can't be resolved in those forums.

The key is to get out there and get involved with local airports, pilot organizations, flight schools, FAA offices, and civilian aviation safety programs. You won't solve all your MACA challenges with your on-base MACA Working Group and a few phone calls and e-mails to the local FAA office. You have to get involved in your community. It takes a little effort, but isn't saving a human life worth it? ▶