

Aircrew Safety

Award of Distinction

Lt Col Vanderburgh and Capt Wickering distinguished themselves in their handling of a serious in-flight emergency while flying a B-2 aircraft on a combat sortie. Minutes prior to entering the Area of Responsibility (AOR), the crew noticed a vibration indication on the #4 engine. Capt Wickering brought the throttle to idle and the indications went away. Knowing the dangers of entering a combat zone with a possible engine malfunction, the crew slowly brought the throttle towards full power. As the throttle approached midrange, crunching and rumbling sounds were heard. The vibration indication increased and the oil level and pressure indications rapidly decayed. In accordance with the checklist, the crew shut down the engine and coordinated with AWACS to hold outside of the AOR. Analyzing their options, Lt Col Vanderburgh determined the aircraft

could safely be recovered to Whiteman AFB. After re-joining their formation, the crew began their near 20-hour trek homeward encountering more obstacles along the way. Working as a team, the crew endured three air refuelings on the return trip, two of which required tanker disconnect override procedures. Additionally, due to the loss of power and a full load of retained weapons, the crew was required to perform a toboggan maneuver during two of the air refuelings and fight the yaw inputs caused by loss of an engine during power changes. After more than 35 hours airborne, the crew reached Whiteman AFB and then coordinated for an emergency landing. Capt Wickering performed a flawless engine-out approach and landing. The superior knowledge, skill, airmanship, and timely actions demonstrated by Lt Col Vanderburgh and Capt Wickering resulted in the safe recovery of two irreplaceable crew members and a valuable national asset.

Capt Bryan Wickering and Lt Col Richard Vanderburgh, 394th Combat Training Sqn., 509th Bomb Wing, Whiteman AFB, Missouri



Pilot Safety

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Capt Yost was tactically maneuvering his A-10 at low altitude when his right throttle suddenly became very difficult to move. He quickly called a Knock-it-Off, requested the lead, and sent his flight lead to chase. With the right throttle stuck at 81 percent rpm, Capt Yost elected not to adjust it any further, fearing that it might become stuck at a higher power setting. After consulting the checklist, it was decided that the aircraft was controllable in its current configuration and the #2 engine was not shut down. With excellent coordination and assistance from the Supervisor of Flying, a Conference Hotel was initiated to determine the possibility of a post-shutdown fire after landing. SPO experts at Hill AFB concluded that although the possibility did exist, it was not likely. Capt Yost elected to burn down gas to shorten his landing roll and diverted to Seymour Johnson AFB, with its 12,000' runway. Capt Yost rolled out on a 10-mile final to runway 26. Configured for a simulated single-engine approach with gear, no flaps, and no

Capt Jeff Yost, 74th Fighter Sqn., 23rd Fighter Group, Pope AFB, North Carolina



Flightline Safety

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The flight line swing shift was scheduled to hot refuel six aircraft returning from their first sortie. Two hot pit spots and two cursory spots were set up to accomplish the hot refueling. TSgt Vazquez was assigned as the expeditor that evening and was observing the hot pit procedures. The mishap aircraft had already landed and passed through de-arm and the cursory check-point. As aircraft 1284 was taxiing out of the cursory check and into the hot pits, TSgt Vazquez noticed an irregularity with the augmentor section. The hot pit "A-man" proceeded to marshal the aircraft into the spot while TSgt Vazquez moved his vehicle

TSgt Hector M. Vazquez, 177th Fighter Wing, Atlantic City IAP ANGB, New Jersey

closer to get a better look at the tail section. He observed a definite oval shape to the engine exhaust nozzle and a gap between the divergent segment and the divergent seal at the 2 o'clock position. TSgt Vazquez then radioed the Maintenance Operations Control Center and directed the pit crew to cease hot pit procedures and marshal the aircraft to a parking spot for shutdown. That evening, when the augmentor section was removed and inspected, maintenance found the primary actuator transmission in pieces and the synchronizing ring broken in two places along with a multiple number of damaged seals and flex shafts. If not for the keen observation and eye for detail shown by TSgt Vazquez, aircraft 1284 may have attempted the second take-off with the possibility of further damage



Ground Safety

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TSgt Wright's efforts were instrumental in the unit receiving no write-ups and one of the best ratings at Tinker AFB during the Base Environmental Compliance, Assessment, and Management Program (ECAMP) inspection. In addition to the ECAMP inspection, he also excelled during the base Bio-Environmental inspection of the squadron. This inspection was geared toward the safety of unit personnel. TSgt Wright, in preparation for this inspection, reviewed the unit's AF Forms 55 for proper documentation and ensured unit personnel had access to personal protective gear in order to conduct their daily duties in a safe manner. The results of TSgt Wright's performance can be measured by the extremely low mishap rates the 34 CCS sustains. He continually disseminates relative

TSgt Walter H. Wright, 34th Combat Communications Sqn., 3rd Combat Communications Group, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma

and pertinent mishap prevention information, and posts safety briefings in every area of the unit to keep the safety message in the face of all personnel. He has been known to place safety briefings in the latrine; there is nowhere that his safety arm does not reach. He presented a timely and comprehensive briefing on the 101 Critical Days of Summer to the entire unit during a Commander's Call. Above all, TSgt Wright brings his safety message to the 34 CCS both on and off duty. He volunteered for a week at Stillwater, Oklahoma, to support the annual Oklahoma Special Olympics. His attention to detail and unselfish attitude resulted in the safe convoy of 30 vehicles and 75 personnel. The results: flawless transportation of personnel and equipment, setup and teardown of six tents and 45 packages of camouflage, and zero mishaps during the entire week. TSgt Wright's accomplishments are why the 34 CCS enjoyed one of the safest months EVER.

