THE MOBILITY FORUM

THE MAGAZINE OF AIR MOBILITY COMMAND | SPRING 2026

Planning, Partnership, and Power Projection:

Inside MG25

2025

AIR MOBILITY COMMAND

Annual Safety Award Winners

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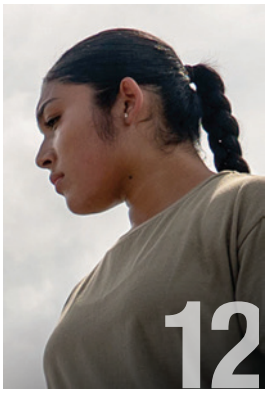
CONTENTS THE MOBILITY FORUM



ON THE COVER

A KC-46A Pegasus assigned to the 60th Air Mobility Wing sits on the flight line at Travis Air Force Base, CA, Oct. 2, 2025. With greater refueling, cargo and aeromedical evacuation capabilities compared to the KC-135 Stratotanker, the KC-46 can provide aerial refueling support to most fixed-wing, receiver-capable aircraft.

USAF photo by SrA Robert Nichols

Volume 35, No. 1
Spring 2026

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The Mobility Forum (TMF) is published four times a year by the Director of Safety, Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB, IL. The contents are informative and not regulatory or directive. Viewpoints expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of AMC, USAF, or any DoD agency.

Contributions: Please email articles and photos to info@schatzpublishing.com, fax to (580) 628–2011, or mail to Schatz Publishing, 11950 W. Highland Ave., Blackwell, OK 74631. If you have questions, call (580) 628–4607. *TMF* editors reserve the right to make editorial changes to manuscripts.

DE denotes digitally enhanced photo.

Subscriptions: GPO U.S. Government Publishing Office: 2026-758-094/20003. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office. Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov. Phone: toll free (866) 512–1800; D.C. area (202) 512–1800. Fax: (202) 512–2104. Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001.

AMC RP 91-2. Dist: X
ISBN 1559-159X

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DOes My DEviance LOOK NORMAL TO YOU?

BY COL JOHN B. KELLEY, DIRECTOR OF SAFETY, AIR MOBILITY COMMAND

In the early days of the internet, back in the late nineteen nineties, online personality quizzes were frequently sent as chain letters via email between friends and coworkers. These emails were welcome distractions as multiple days might elapse without receiving an email in your AOL Mail, Netscape, or Hotmail inbox. In those days, there were very few official Air Force email accounts—happier days indeed! One such quiz promised to calculate your "deviant" percentage—the higher your score, the more your personality deviates from the quintessentially normal, average, "Mark 1" person. While I am not about to trust an internet quiz to define my personality again, such a quiz makes one reflect on how much deviation is innovative and creative, and how much is risky or even dangerous.

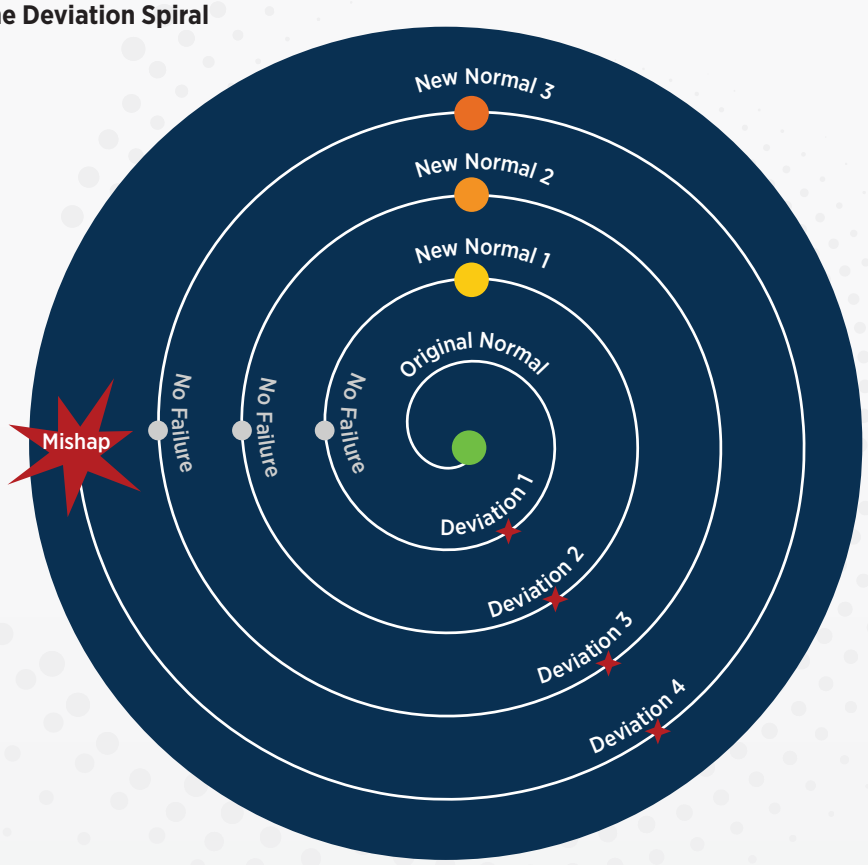
I was reminded of this now ancient quiz recently while discussing risk, readiness, training, and operational tempo with my fellow staff dwellers at the Air Mobility Command (AMC) mothership. You see, deviation from normal operations is the *topic du jour* given the rapid changes in operations, deployments, and organization. The demands of preparing for high-end conflict in the Pacific or European theaters have generated an incredible appetite for innovation and acceleration across the Air Force. In the search for viability, connectivity, and lethality, Airmen across AMC have answered the call with imagination, determination, and grit. To succeed in these new and challenging situations, airpower and its practitioners must deviate from normal, historical ways of doing business and respond to changes in the nature and speed of warfare. These changes could lead to advances in wartime capabilities. However, they also bring new risks and increasing pressure for Airmen on the line to accelerate, and on the commanders who lead them.

One of the most common human-centric risks that comes with high operations tempo and pressure to perform at speed is the temptation to take shortcuts in existing procedures, accept performance as "good enough," or use techniques in place of procedures.

One of the most common human-centric risks that comes with a high operations tempo and pressure to perform at speed is the temptation to take shortcuts in existing procedures, accept performance as "good enough," or substitute personal techniques in place of approved procedures. Over time, these modifications to processes or standards become habit; we forget the additional risks inherent with these changes. We tell ourselves, "It always worked in the past with no consequences, it should work now." This slow creep of performance away from the standard is infamous in the academic safety world. The phenomenon even has an ominously cool name: Normalization of Deviance.

While the actions and mishaps associated with Normalization of Deviance have surely existed as long as human endeavor, the term itself is relatively new; it was coined not by a safety professional, but by a passionate sociologist named Dr. Diane Vaughan. In the wake of the nineteen eighty-six Space Shuttle Challenger tragedy, she embarked on a quest to discover how an organization like the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

The Deviation Spiral



If an outside influence does not reset the situation to "normal," the cumulative risk eventually manifests as a mishap.

(NASA), known for its attention to detail and safety consciousness, could have succumbed to organizational pressures to launch. In her book, *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture, and Deviance at NASA*, Vaughan defines Normalization of Deviance as "the gradual process through which unacceptable practice or standards become acceptable. As the deviant behavior is repeated without catastrophic results it becomes the social norm." She also noted that the move from "not ok" to "ok" is insidious, disguising the true risks in a situation and leading to poor decisions. A year later, safety researcher Dr. Jens Rasmussen demonstrated how Normalization of Deviance is not, in fact, static; it shifts in response to resource, performance, and workload pressures. If an outside influence does not reset the situation to "normal," the cumulative risk eventually manifests as a mishap.

So, what is the intrepid safety Airman to do? How do we embrace the changes necessary to meet the challenges of twenty-first-century combat while keeping risk manageable? Initially, we must teach other Airmen and commanders our safety "Weirding Way;" show them how to recognize hazards and risk patterns like Normalization of Deviance. Once they know what to look for, they can guard against it and make smart decisions based on a holistic risk picture. Secondly, we, as safety professionals, must learn to stop worrying and love Standardization and Evaluation (Stan/Eval) and Quality Assurance. While Safety has a different mandate than Stan/Eval, their functions and evaluations are crucial to realigning performance with procedural processes and enforcing standards, both are essential to proactive safety. Finally, safety Airmen should be involved and engaged with the innovation process from the beginning. Safety is sometimes seen as the shop of "no;" we need to change that to the shop of "yes, and." This is how we ensure innovation and experimentation for twenty-first-century airpower has risk management and safety built in from the beginning—Aim High!

PLANNING, PARTNERSHIP, AND POWER PROJECTION:

INSIDE MG25

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

Mobility Guardian 2025 (MG25) is more than the Air Mobility Command's (AMC) flagship exercise—it showcases the global reach and scale required to project power in today's contested environments. As part of the U.S. Air Force's 2025 Department-Level Exercise (DLE) series, and as the fifth iteration of AMC's biennial exercise, MG25 unfolded for the second time in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's vast theater, demonstrating the Air Force's ability to project power at speed and scale. With more than four hundred joint and coalition aircraft and more than twelve thousand personnel spread across fifty locations and three thousand miles, the exercise's success rested on two pillars: the meticulous planning backbone provided by organizations like the 618th Air Operations Center (AOC) and the dedication of the Airmen executing missions on the ground, in the air, and across the command-and-control enterprise.[1]

THE PLANNING BACKBONE—THE ROLE OF 618 AOC

Brig Gen Charles "Dan" Cooley, Commander of the 36th Wing at Andersen Air Force Base (AFB), Guam, and former Deputy Commander of 618 AOC at Scott AFB, IL, affirmed the critical nature of 618 AOC in planning and executing hundreds of daily global mobility missions. He noted that the 618 AOC team played a central role in orchestrating rapid force flow and seamless integration with joint, allied, and partner forces during MG25.

Cooley explained that those planning efforts ensured that Agile Combat Employment (ACE), operational sustainment through the global logistics enterprise, and the simultaneous deployment of forces were executed effectively across the Indo-Pacific—efforts that came together as part of MG25 and Resolute Force Pacific, both nested under the U.S. Air Force's larger DLE series.

TESTING LIMITS AT SCALE

Cooley contributed to early planning while serving as Deputy Commander of 618 AOC, then assumed command of the 36th Wing at Andersen AFB shortly before the exercise began. This transition gave him a rare vantage point from both the planning and execution sides of MG25, which was built upon lessons from previous iterations and marked a significant leap in scope and complexity.

Cooley explained that the event, falling under the DLE series, demonstrated the Air Force's ability to enter theater environments, conduct ACE at scale, and sustain operations with regional allies and partners. Unlike traditional exercises,

Brig Gen Charles "Dan" Cooley, Commander, 36th Wing, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam

and control across an expansive area covering Guam, Australia, Japan, Hawaii, and international airspace. This exercise created challenges and opportunities, forcing teams to synchronize at higher levels and refine emerging concepts of operations in a truly realistic environment.

As the 36th Air Expeditionary Task Force (AETF) Commander during the exercise, Cooley was responsible for leading an Air Task Force and three Air Expeditionary Wings, each with diverse mission generation force elements, such as expeditionary fighter squadrons, to execute Theater Joint Force Air Component Commander priorities.

This exercise was the first large-scale execution of 36 AETF, modeled after a command headquarters' battle staff and designed to serve as the foundational echelon for employing ACE within a theater cluster.

"Exercising this construct across commands, theaters, and in partnership with allies and partners strengthened the connective tissue needed to respond to contingencies with speed, efficiency, and unity of effort," Cooley said.

[1] https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4247993/reforpac-2025-us-air-force-executes-unprecedented-surge-into-pacific-theater/

A KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft flies by the 81st Liberation Day Parade, leveraging a training sortie during the U.S. Air Force's 2025 Department-Level Exercise series in Guam, July 21, 2025.

USAF photo by SrA Jade M. Caldwell

KEY LESSONS AND INSIGHTS

MG25 reinforced several key insights that will shape future large-scale operations. First, it solidified the need for rapid agile force projection and sustainment across vast distances, with logistics that are "as flexible as they are reliable," Cooley explained. Second, seamless integration with joint, allied, and partner forces proved critical. Third, it demonstrated that command and control in a distributed, multidomain environment must remain adaptive, resilient, and capable of synchronizing real-time complex operations.

The scale of MG25 ensured Airmen understood how their individual roles fit into a larger integrated mission, and its lessons will guide future planning and training to sustain the Air Force's ability to operate at scale in any scenario. Cooley emphasized that this drive for optimization does not diminish AMC's current strength.

"Make no mistake, we have the capability and capacity to explode into theater at speed and scale today, if required," he said.

In a matter of days, the 36 AETF MG25 teams received, processed, and employed more than 3,400 personnel and more than ninety fighter, bomber, tanker, mobility, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance aircraft at Andersen AFB.

EVOLVING TRAINING PRIORITIES

The Air Force always aims higher, continually adapting its training to prepare Airmen for the challenges of tomorrow. Drawing on his observations from MG25, Cooley emphasized that training priorities for Airmen must continue evolving to meet the demands of complex, high-tempo operations. DLE offered more than just a rehearsal of tactics; it provided a proving ground where Airmen and assets could sharpen their ability to respond rapidly and effectively to dynamic challenges.

This training sharpened individual proficiency while reinforcing teamwork, interoperability, and mission readiness—qualities he sees as vital to maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

"Moving forward, we will continue to focus on developing adaptive, resilient Airmen capable of operating seamlessly across multiple domains with our allies and partners," he explained.

Exercises like MG25 are not endpoints but catalysts driving the Air Force toward greater readiness and resilience.

From World War II to Vietnam, and now, to Mobility Guardian 2025, Andersen AFB has consistently proven its value as a strategic hub in the Indo-Pacific. The lessons of MG25 reaffirmed the importance of this location and its enduring role in sustaining global reach and power projection. For Cooley, the exercise was not only a test of readiness but also a clear reminder that integration, agility, and strong partnerships are the cornerstones of success in today's contested environments. Just as 618 AOC provided the meticulous planning backbone to make MG25 possible, Andersen AFB provided the operational muscle to bring that planning to life.

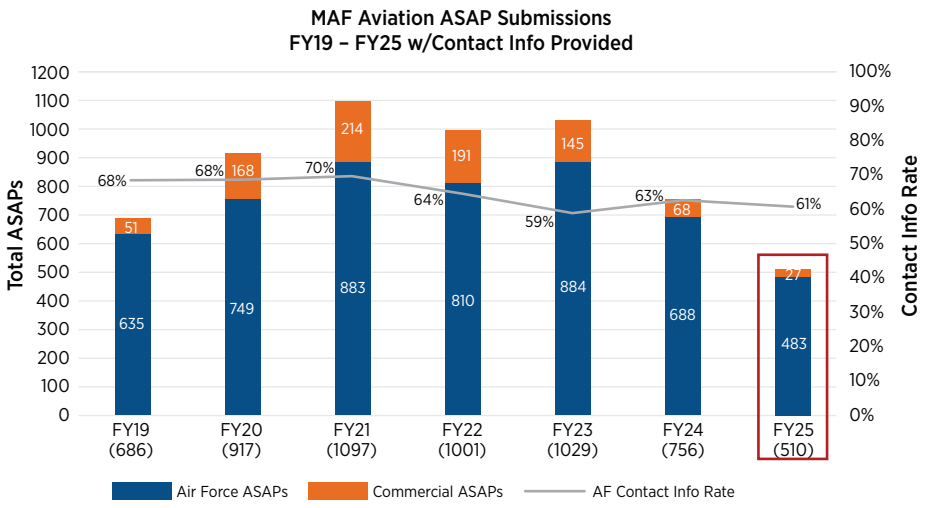
"The success of the DLE reflects more than just successful mission execution . . . it's a testament to the strategic value our Airmen deliver . . . the mission starts and ends with them. Their professionalism and commitment enabled seamless integration with the Joint Force, directly advancing our nation's security objectives while also ensuring the Air Force remains a credible force in an increasingly complex environment," reflected Cooley.

For Cooley, that professionalism and dedication—combined with the enduring legacy of Andersen AFB and the lessons learned from MG25—ensure that the 36th Wing remains capable, resilient, and ready to meet the demands of tomorrow with strength and unity.

Why Are Aviation Safety Action Program Submissions Declining? A Reminder of Why We Should Care

BY OPS RAMS BRANCH

During the August 2025 Operations Risk Assessment and Management System (Ops RAMS) Working Group, the chart shown on this page was presented, which visually depicted a significant decline in the number of Mobility Air Force Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) submissions. In fiscal year 2025, there have been only 483 ASAP reports submitted thus far. With ASAP submissions historically averaging approximately sixty per month and only one month remaining until the FY25 closeout on September 30, we are tracking toward 543 total ASAP reports for the year. This number is well below the fiscal year 2024 total of 688 ASAP reports. Unless there is a miraculous change in the next month, the outlook appears disappointing.



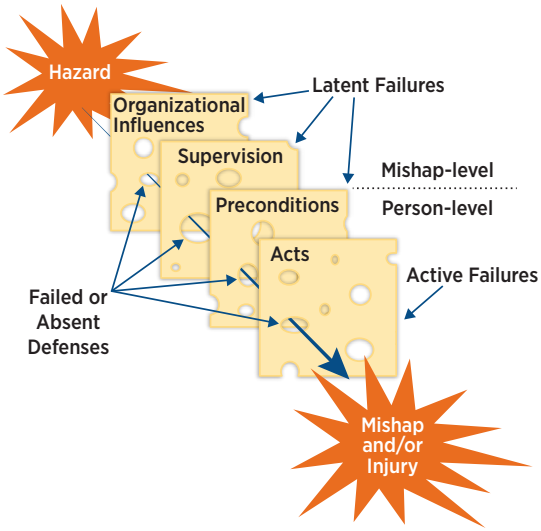
I will pose to you the same question we asked during the Ops RAMS Working Group meeting: *Why is the number of ASAP submissions declining?* There are a lot of good theories that potentially answer the question. Perhaps the number of flying hours has decreased; thus, the decrease in ASAPs is commensurate with the decrease in flying hours. Maybe aircrew do not understand the value of the ASAP program. Maybe aircrew are too burdened with post-flight paperwork and do not want to submit another report. Although these are plausible theories, we do not know the answer as to why the number of ASAP submissions has declined. As highlighted in the Terms section of DAFI 91-225, Aviation Safety Programs, ASAP is a "***voluntary**, identity-protected program designed to **encourage** the reporting of hazards and errors that increase risk to operations.*" Voluntary means the program is a human endeavor in which our Airmen "get a vote" in whether they participate in this vital safety program. The other word in the program description that we should ponder is "encourage." Who encourages our Airmen to participate in the program? How do we encourage our Airmen to participate in the program?

Rather than trying to answer the difficult question of why there is a decline in ASAP submissions, we should turn our focus back to the foundation of the ASAP program. The foundation of our proactive safety programs, which include ASAP, Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance (MFOQA), and Line Operations Safety Audit (LOSA), is Just Culture.

JAMES REASON, THE SWISS CHEESE MODEL, AND JUST CULTURE

You may not know the name, but you certainly know his work. James Reason was a British professor of psychology at the University of Manchester. His work focused on human error, aviation human factors, risk management, and accident causation. The Swiss cheese model is a concept developed by Reason, in which he visualized how holes in our layers of system defenses, when perfectly aligned, can lead to an accident. Reason transformed how we think about human error. He changed our approach to safety from focusing solely on the failings of an individual to a system approach in which an accident is the result of organizational failings that breach multiple layers of defense.

For organizations to uncover the holes (weaknesses) in the Swiss cheese, Reason asserted that organizations needed to transform their safety culture to provide incentives for



Swiss Cheese Model, adapted from Department of War Human Factors Analysis and Classification System (DoW HFACS) Version 7.0

employees to report honest mistakes while balancing accountability for actions. Through open error reporting, organizations would have better awareness and understanding of their errors and hazards, and the potential to mitigate hazards before an accident occurs. Reason's assertion is Just Culture. We see Reason's blueprint in our own Air Force definition of Just Culture. DAFI 91-225 defines Just Culture as follows.

> *"An **organizational** environment where individual Airmen and Guardians are not punished for actions, omissions or decisions taken by them that are commensurate with their experience and training, but where gross negligence, willful violations and destructive acts are not tolerated. Just culture focuses on improving system designs and employee procedures to include: better system operations; creating redundant safety systems to trap or mitigate errors; pre-identifying high-risk operations; and leadership actions designed to limit at-risk behaviors."*

Reason advocated for an *organizational* culture shift. Reason reasoned that expecting flawless performance by humans was unrealistic; thus, it was better to reveal honest errors and workplace hazards so that system defenses could be employed to prevent mishaps. Therefore, Just Culture is a benefit to the organization.

SAFETY IS EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

When we see the decline in ASAP reporting, the simple response is to zero in on our frontline Airmen who should be reporting, as the responsibility of reporting lies with them. However, as the ASAP program description highlights, we need to look beyond our frontline Airmen and look at our entire organization for the encouragement and investment necessary to demonstrate why Just Culture is the lifeblood of a beneficial, proactive safety program.

Although the phrase "safety is everybody's business" might be cliché, the mantra is a truism. A healthy safety culture requires participation from all levels of the organization. Let us go through the different organizational echelons and discuss what roles they play in building and solidifying a strong proactive safety culture.

Commanders: The bedrock of the organization is its leadership. Leaders, specifically commanders, play a pivotal role in the organizational culture and behavior. A commander's attitudes, beliefs, and policies shape and refine an organization. ***A Just Culture begins with a commander defining and communicating a Just Culture safety policy***. It cannot stop there. Commanders must define acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Definitive descriptions help Airmen understand the commander's expectations and how the commander will apply a Just Culture concept in the event of an incident. Clear, definitive policies, definitions, and expectations help build trust in a transparent process.

The bottom line is that commanders should give line aircrew assurances that a Just Culture accepts honest mistakes, thereby enabling voluntary participation in a trustworthy and transparent safety program and process. A strong Just Culture should empower a vibrant reporting culture.

Aircrew: Obviously, the primary role of aircrew in these proactive safety programs is voluntary participation. Consistent voluntary reporting by aircrew helps us to see the strengths and weaknesses in our flight operations. Being in a flying squadron, aircrew see what works well and what does not in our flight operations. Through the eyes of the aircrew, ASAP reporting gives the organization critical insights into the context of the event and the operational impact when our operations fail. The reporting allows us to methodically analyze situations, evaluate risk, and seek mitigation efforts without the cost of a mishap.

Finally, I would like to dispel a couple of aircrew misnomers about ASAP reports:

1. **What is "ASAP worthy?"** So many times, we hear from crews that their flight or event was not "ASAP worthy." We have this false perception that "ASAP worthy" events are these ginormous, task-saturating, on-the-brink-of-death flying scenarios that we somehow manage to live through and tell. Although there are harrowing events in flying, those events are rare. Like most FAA formal deviations, ASAP events are normally short in duration, usually involving two undetected errors and a deviation from the intended flight path, which can be vividly described in three or four sentences. Your everyday flying experiences are "ASAP worthy."

2. **All aircrew members can contribute.** Once again, there is a misconception among aircrew members that the aircraft commander decides and writes the

ASAP reports, which is false. All crew members are encouraged to contribute voluntarily to the ASAP program. Different perspectives and experiences are important in seeing the complete picture of flight operations. For example, the load-master is the primary crew position that interacts with the aerial port and the expert when it comes to cargo operations; therefore, it is important to examine what they observe and manage daily.

Functional Areas: Functional areas, such as standardization/evaluation, maintenance, training, command and control, aerial port, and air traffic control, play a major role in the life cycle of an ASAP. Most often, functional area experts provide critical analysis and trends from events highlighted in proactive safety data sets. Likewise, they should be an integral part of the process for deciding and implementing risk mitigation efforts in their area of expertise.

Functional areas are very much interested in events or data points delivered by the ASAP program. ASAP reports give functional areas keen insights into the performance of aircrew, systems (hardware/software), programs, and products, as well as standards, policies, and procedures for their functional area; however, ASAP reports are not a "one-way street." Providing feedback and acknowledgment to aircrew is vital in maintaining a robust voluntary reporting system.

Functional areas have a responsibility to provide a written response to an ASAP addressing hazards and deficiencies in procedures, hardware/software, equipment, and processes that are owned by their functional area. Functional areas cannot be selective as to which ASAPs they respond. Responses to ASAP submissions are a vital part of the program's success. Their analysis and response provide action, follow-ups, and closure to the crew members who provide voluntary safety inputs.

Changing a culture requires advocates to promote a change in thinking, which shifts organizational principles, beliefs, and policies.

Safety Professionals: As the functional area responsible for these safety programs, safety professionals are in a unique position to advocate for a Just Culture, act on ASAP submissions, and promote voluntary contributions by crew members. Through commander orientation/immersion briefings, chiefs of safety can encourage new commanders to embrace a Just Culture and incorporate it into their safety policies and briefings. Likewise, safety professionals play an active role after an ASAP report has been submitted. Safety officers will sometimes investigate an ASAP event to extract lessons learned and recommend a course of action to prevent similar mishaps. Finally, safety professionals should promote voluntary reporting by our aircrew. During safety briefings or "hangar fly" discussions, showcase ASAP submissions and how everyday reporting makes a difference in our mishap prevention efforts.

WE ALL PLAY A ROLE

Now, you should realize that ***we all play a role in the success or failure of our Just Culture and proactive safety programs***. These voluntary safety programs are only as good as the time, effort, and focus put forth by the organization. ***We are the organization. We all benefit from a strong Just Culture in which we own the mistakes that we make without the need for punishment***. Commanders create the organizational climate and set the example for a Just Culture. Functional areas appreciate ASAP submissions from line aircrew by examining the ASAPs for hazards and errors and identifying how preventative measures can be potentially implemented to mitigate the risk of a mishap. Functional areas provide meaningful responses back to the line aircrew, closing the loop by providing analysis, feedback, and actions taken. Safety professionals promote, advocate, and resource proactive safety programs. Line aircrew provide meaningful reporting. Simply put, everyone is a stakeholder in our safety culture.

WRAPPING IT UP—IT IS NOT THAT EASY!

In conclusion, looking at the ASAP submission chart, the simple, uninformed answer is that we need more ASAP production. The reality is that a meaningful proactive safety culture and program is not that easy. Reason advocated for a change in organizational safety culture. Changing the organizational culture is never an easy task, especially for a large Department of War organization that has been around for nearly eighty years. Changing a culture requires advocates to promote a change in thinking, which shifts organizational principles, beliefs, and policies. It requires education and training throughout the entire force structure to reinforce those principles, beliefs, and policies. It requires translating concepts and policies into practical application standards and resources needed to sustain the change. Ultimately, it requires continual reinforcement to ensure that the culture stays connected to the organization.

When we see those declining ASAP numbers, we should care. It should serve as a reminder that ASAP and our other proactive safety programs are voluntary and anchored in a Just Culture. It should serve as a reminder that we all play a role in our organizational safety culture, which in turn influences whether our Airmen participate in these programs. We should not take for granted what those safety programs deliver.

SrA Jonathan Contreras, 317th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Support Journeyman, verifies cargo weight and documentation during a Combat Readiness Inspection at Dyess Air Force Base, TX, July 1, 2025.

USAF photo by A1C Adrien Tran

Why Talk About Aviation Safety?

BY MS. PETRA OLIVER, 727AMS/SE, USAF

Aviation safety . . . I am sure you think that it is obvious what this safety is all about. Yes, it is obvious—on the surface. We do not want our people getting hurt or our equipment getting damaged, but there is so much more to a whole safety program. For example, the recent UPS crash in Louisville, KY, not only killed the crew and destroyed the airplane, but also fatally injured numerous civilians on the ground.[1] Such events serve as a reminder of the devastating potential of aviation accidents and the moral imperative to prevent them. We do not want this to ever happen, so we do our best to prevent it. But how?

This article is not about the answer, but how do we make aviation safety in the U.S. Air Force (USAF) a very important piece of going about our business, executing the mission. Military aircraft are incredibly expensive and technologically advanced assets. A single mishap can result in the loss of a multimillion-dollar aircraft and its highly specialized equipment.

A human life, though, is priceless. Most of us think that life is more important than a multimillion-dollar piece of equipment. We can replace equipment; we cannot replace a life that has been taken.

Many of us can agree that the goal of the Air Force's safety program is to enhance combat capability by preventing mishaps that would otherwise deplete personnel and aircraft. Therefore, the Air Force's commitment to safety is woven into every aspect of its aviation operations, from personnel training to aircraft maintenance and mishap investigation.

An effective flight safety program is not limited to the local safety office; in the aviation business, it includes a whole host of areas. To name a few:

[1] https://www.kbtx.com/2025/11/09/no-people-thought-unaccounted-ups-cargo-plane-crash-toll-stands-14-louisville-mayor-says/

The aviation industry is constantly evolving, and so are the safety challenges.

- Aircraft maintenance
- Air traffic control
- Airfield management, to include Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard specialists
- Weather forecasting
- Cybersecurity
- Physiologists who focus on human factors
- Full-time safety professionals at all levels

All roles are important in some form, and not only does a cohesive team save lives, but a high level of aviation safety directly translates to a more effective fighting force. The USAF trains its pilots for complex and dangerous scenarios, including air refueling to extend its reach, low-altitude flying to evade sophisticated enemy air defenses, and airdropping supplies and personnel into combat zones.

Realistic training for pilots and others is a high priority for the Air Force, and it is conducted in a manner that balances realism with safety. So, we train. And train. And train. This training is inherently risky, but it is essential for survival and success in actual combat. A strong safety culture ensures that training can be conducted as realistically as possible while minimizing unnecessary risks.

As mentioned earlier, the most crucial reason for emphasizing aviation safety in the Air Force is the protection of its most valuable asset: Airmen. As Gen John Lamontagne, Commander, Air Mobility Command (AMC), stated during a recent AMC Commanders call, what we do is something that "starts and ends with you." The demanding and dangerous nature of military aviation means that any mishap can have fatal consequences. Throughout my entire career as a military pilot and then a civilian employee in AMC Safety, I have been involved in numerous mishaps in some capacity and have seen so many lives lost that could have been prevented; this is why aviation safety is important.

As I think back to my early career, when I first began flying for the Air Force in the 1980s, we had no computers to speak of, certainly not at the level we have now in our most advanced aircraft. We did not have systems to keep us safer in the air, such as the Ground Proximity Warning System or Traffic Collision Avoidance System. It was mostly humans at work.

Over the last couple of decades in the safety career field, we have accomplished quite a bit. Historically, aviation safety was a reactive discipline. Safety efforts were largely focused on responding to incidents after they occurred. We do—and always have done—a great job investigating major and minor incidents and coming up with recommendations to prevent the next one, but we did little to prevent the next one before it happened. Other key elements of safety that still exist today include inspections, audits, studies, data analyses, information sharing in briefings, and so much more; however, we did not have structured, proactive safety programs.

Over the years, AMC Safety and AMC/A3 have teamed up to develop a much more proactive approach. It started with the risk management piece that we now call Aviation Operational Risk Management. It was a painful process with dedicated folks developing a product years ago that is still in use today. Then came Line Operations Safety Audits, Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance, the Aviation Safety Action Program and now Safety Reporting.

A proactive philosophy is not merely about avoiding accidents, but it is intrinsically linked to operational effectiveness. Proactive safety has reached up and down the levels of command, and I would say it has been the greatest accomplishment I have seen in preventing loss of life and equipment. We still have much more work to do in this area and all of safety, but I am encouraged today by our proactive approach to safety in the Air Force.

The aviation industry is constantly evolving, and so are the safety challenges. The integration of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) into the airspace and the growing threat of cyberattacks are only a couple of areas that require ongoing research and the development of new safety protocols.

The USAF's commitment to a proactive and multilayered safety program is a continuous effort. By embracing a Just Culture and leveraging the power of data and open reporting, the Air Force not only prevents accidents but also enhances its combat effectiveness. The journey from a reactive to a proactive safety mindset is a testament to the understanding that the preservation of its Airmen and assets is paramount to mission success.

In conclusion, aviation safety is not just a priority for the USAF; it is an indispensable element of its ability to execute its mission, protect its personnel, and responsibly manage its resources. Although the inherent risks of military aviation can never be entirely eliminated, the Air Force's comprehensive and proactive safety program is designed to manage those risks effectively and ensure the preservation of its combat power.

2025: A Year in Review

BY MR. BRETT A MANIS II, AMC INTERIM COMMAND HISTORIAN

Top left: Capt Ryan Stein, a pilot with the 7th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, McChord Air Force Base (AFB), WA, communicates with fellow aircrew while conducting training for Bamboo Eagle 25-1 at Travis AFB, CA, Feb. 8, 2025.

USAF photo by A1C Benjamin Riddle

Top right: Lt Gen John Healy, Chief of the Air Force Command and Commander of Air Force Reserve Command, poses with members of the 349th Air Mobility Wing at Travis Air Force Base, CA, Dec. 2, 2025, during the delivery of the 99th and 100th KC-46A Pegasus aircraft.

USAF photo by Dennis Santarinala

Bottom left: A KC-46 Pegasus aircraft takes off from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, July 30, 2025, during the U.S. Air Force's 2025 Department-Level Exercise series.

USAF photo by TSgt Joshua Smoot

Like so many years before, 2025 proved eventful in numerous ways for the men and women of Air Mobility Command (AMC). Coming off the 2024 election season and its critical BANNER EXPRESS missions, AMC entered the past year by preparing for a ramped-up exercise summer, highlighted by Mobility Guardian 2025 as part of a broader set of U.S. Air Force (USAF) and joint force exercises. Gen John Lamontagne, who was named AMC Commander in September 2024, continued to move the organization forward in line with his priorities of "Airmen – Mission – Commitment."

In February 2025, AMC units participated in the Air Force Warfare Center's Exercise BAMBOO EAGLE 25-1 with other Air Force units, sister services, and allied forces. This exercise enabled joint and allied interoperability training for AMC air refueling and airlift assets, with both the strategic C-17 Globemaster III and tactical C-130J Super Hercules participating. KC-46A Pegasus aircraft from the 344th Air Refueling Squadron at McConnell Air Force Base (AFB), KS, conducted the first-ever low-altitude refueling of a C-17 from the 7th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA.

During the summer of 2025, AMC surged to meet national requirements in the U.S. Central Command theater of operations. As the United States prepared to respond and defend U.S. forces in the region during the Israel-Iran conflict, AMC airlift and tanker aircraft provided critical support to USAF bombers, fighters, and sister services traveling to the theater. Most notably, AMC units enabled the successful completion of Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER by refueling Global Strike Command B-2 Spirit bombers during their thirteen-thousand-mile round-trip flight. When called upon, Mobility Airmen rose to the challenge and demonstrated the necessity of a responsive and agile mobility force.

Just as impressively, Mobility Airmen and forces pivoted to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command theater of operations in July for the 2025 Department-Level Exercise (DLE). Designed to showcase the Air Force's ability to move at speed and scale, this DLE included AMC's Mobility Guardian exercise. AMC and Total Force crews moved U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps units into and throughout the area of responsibility, once again demonstrating the mobility fleet's incredible versatility.

In September 2025, AMC reorganized by returning to a two-numbered air

Top left: A1C Westin Means, a Loadmaster with the 41st Airlift Squadron, Little Rock Air Force Base (AFB), AR, prepares a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft for cargo during the Air Force's 2025 Department-Level Exercise series at Andersen AFB, Guam, July 14, 2025.

USAF photos by SrA Zachary Foster

Top center: A1C Payton Cornell, a Loadmaster assigned to the 21st Airlift Squadron, Travis Air Force Base (AFB), CA, guides cargo to be loaded onto a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft during the U.S. Air Force's 2025 Department-Level Exercise series at Andersen AFB, Guam, July 25, 2025.

USAF photo by TSgt Levi Reynolds

Top right: A1C Lisett Sosa-Hernandez, 36th Logistics Readiness Squadron Transportation Management Office Specialist, tracks cargo in support of Exercise Bamboo Eagle 25-3 at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, July 30, 2025.

USAF photos by SrA Zachary Foster

Bottom left: U.S. Transportation Command, Air Mobility Command, and Scott Air Force Base leadership greet Air Force leadership visiting Scott to recognize mobility warriors' contributions to Operation Midnight Hammer.

USAF photo by SSgt Ethan Sherwood

force (NAF) structure. Since 2003, all AMC flying units have been assigned to the Eighteenth Air Force (18 AF) as the command's sole NAF. In 2012, AMC began using the USAF Expeditionary Center as a second, NAF-like unit, assigning nonflying units there to relieve some of the administrative burden on 18 AF. Addressing further limitations of this structure, AMC activated the Twenty-First Air Force (21 AF) at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ, on September 5 and divided its units geographically to ensure balanced missions between the two NAFs. The 21 AF was last active in 2012 as the 21st Expeditionary Mobility Task Force and returned as an NAF for the first time since 2003. Maj Gen Darren Cole, previously AMC's A3/10 and A4 Director, assumed command of 21 AF upon its revival in 2025.

Throughout the federal government's lapse in appropriations that began on October 1, 2025, AMC servicemembers and essential government employees continued to deliver global reach for the joint force.

Following the end of the lapse in appropriations on November 12, 2025, AMC continued to excel. In early December 2025, Gen Lamontagne delivered the one hundredth KC-46A Pegasus from the factory near Seattle, WA, to Travis AFB, CA. The same week, the 43d Air Mobility Operations Group (43 AMOG) at Pope Army Airfield, NC, activated Task Force Gryphon to support the Army's 82nd Airborne Division during Battalion Mass Tactical Week 26-01. The 43 AMOG worked with the 344th Air Refueling Squadron from McConnell AFB and the 41st Airlift Squadron from Little Rock AFB, AR, to certify Air Force teams for Air Force Force Generation deployment requirements, while providing training and support to Army partners.

As AMC heads into 2026, the men and women of the mobility fleet will continue to demonstrate their dedication and professionalism. Airmen will continue to respond to all of America's calls, large and small, to prepare and deliver America's lethal fighting force wherever needed. Just as critically, AMC will continue its legacy of being at the forefront of humanitarian aid and aeromedical evacuation, and move forward in training, readiness, and connecting the mobility fleet to its allies and partners, ensuring not only survivability in combat but also enabling battlespace management and mission success.

2025 AIR MOBILITY COMMAND
ANNUAL SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

★ ★ ★

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

AMC Outstanding Achievement Award, Category II
60th Air Mobility Wing Safety Office, Travis Air Force Base, CA

AMC Outstanding Achievement Award, Category III
437th Airlift Wing, Occupational Safety Office
Joint Base Charleston, SC

AMC Outstanding Achievement Award, Category IV
43rd Air Mobility Operations Group, Occupational Safety Office
Pope Army Airfield, NC

AMC Outstanding Achievement Award, Category V
721st Air Mobility Operations Group, Occupational Safety Office
Ramstein Air Base, Germany

AMC Safety Civilian Professional of the Year
Mr. Jhade Bugauisan
60th Air Mobility Wing, Travis Air Force Base, CA

AMC Safety Noncommissioned Officer of the Year
TSgt Nicholas Creighton
521st Air Mobility Operations Wing, Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany

AMC Safety Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year
MSgt Scott Donovan
317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX

AMC Safety Officer of the Year
Capt Denise Wasserstrom
437th Airlift Wing, Joint Base Charleston, SC

AVIATION SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

Koren Kolligian Jr. Trophy
A1C Kyle Hall
62d Airlift Wing, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA

AMC Aircrew of Distinction Award
CROME56
317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX

AMC Aviation Maintenance Safety Award (Individual)
MSgt Clifford Coleman Jr, 317th Airlift Wing

AMC Aviation Maintenance Safety Award (Team)
660th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Management Team
60th Air Mobility Wing, Travis Air Force Base, CA

Aero Club Safety Certificate
Dover Air Force Base Aero Club
436th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, DE

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

Occupational Safety Career Professional of the Year
TSgt Brandon Labak
515th Air Mobility Operations Wing, Yokota Air Base, Japan

Occupational Safety Civilian of the Year
Ms. Susan Turek
6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base, FL

Bill R. Parsons Occupational Safety "Top" Team Award
43d Air Mobility Squadron Unit Team
43d Air Mobility Operations Group, Pope Army Airfield, NC

WEAPONS SAFETY AWARD WINNERS

AMC Weapons Safety Award (Individual)
TSgt Daniel Santos
62d Airlift Wing, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA

AMC Weapons Safety Award (Team)
6th Air Refueling Wing Safety Office
MacDill Air Force Base, FL

HQ AMC AWARDS (MAJCOM–Only Awards)

AMC Safety Office of the Year (Best Overall Safety Program)
6th Air Refueling Wing
MacDill Air Force Base, FL

AMC RiderCoach of the Year Award
Mr. Brian Donley
92d Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base, WA

AMC Flight Safety Noncommissioned Officer of the Year
TSgt Adam Serydynski
6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base, FL

AMC Risk Management Achievement Award
19th Airlift Wing Safety Office
Little Rock Air Force Base, AR

AMC Safety Office of the Year

6th AIR REFUELING WING SAFETY OFFICE

MacDill Air Force Base, FL

★ ★ ★

THE 6TH AIR REFUELING WING SAFETY OFFICE (6 ARW) at MacDill Air Force Base, FL, has been honored as the Air Mobility Command (AMC) 2025 Safety Office of the Year. Under the leadership of Col Edward V. Szczepanik, 6 ARW set the standard for enterprise-level risk management and operational excellence through decisive leadership across high-risk, joint, and global operations.

During a Nuclear Operational Readiness Inspection, the Safety team played a critical role by validating risk mitigation strategies across twenty-nine injects. Their efforts enabled the safe generation of seven aircraft and ten alert responses without incident, clearly showcasing the Wing's nuclear deterrence mission to AMC and Inspector General evaluators.

Beyond inspections, the 6 ARW Safety Office led enterprise-wide hazard identification and mitigation efforts. Following a fatality, the team directed a one hundred percent inspection of unsupported masonry walls across the installation, identified hazards, and provided courses of action to protect Air Traffic Control tower personnel, shielding a critical mission capability. They also revitalized the Wing's Confined Space Program, correcting fire and bioenvironmental shortfalls and resulting in zero findings during the fiscal year 2025 Headquarters AMC Safety Program Evaluation.

Operationally, the Safety Office oversaw thousands of munitions movements, expanded inspection facility capacity by 345 percent, and enabled joint and coalition operations supporting the U.S. European Command, Central Command, and Ukrainian aid. Their leadership extended globally, including deployment to Exercise RESOLUTE FORCE PACIFIC 2025, where they safeguarded fifty-four hundred personnel and assets across seven locations while contributing key inputs to deployed safety doctrine.

Through proactive outreach, mishap reduction initiatives, and deliberate risk integration, the 6 ARW Safety Office reduced mishaps and hazards by forty-eight percent year over year. Their sustained excellence directly enhanced readiness, protected lives, and reinforced AMC's ability to execute its most demanding missions safely.

Photo above, left to right: Mr. Jason Jackson, SSgt Heather Harris, Mr. Dave O'Neil, TSgt Shanique Cameron, Ms. Susan Turek, Mr. Jason McLeod, MSgt Adam Serydynski, MSgt Madison Leonard, and MSgt Garrett Craig. Not pictured: Lt Col Paul Seal and Maj Grant Veve.

AMC Risk Management Achievement Award

★ ★ ★

19th AIR WING SAFETY OFFICE

Little Rock Air Force Base, AR

Left to right: Capt Christopher Gonzales, TSgt Daniel Reuter, Mr. Christopher Gill, Mr. Robbie Romines, MSgt Ashley Evans, MSgt Stephen McFate, TSgt Michael Kohrs, Lt Col Justin Pedone, MSgt Andrew Erwin, Mr. Deane Duerkop, and Mr. WB Burrell.

THE 19TH AIR WING SAFETY OFFICE, led by Maj Christian D. Torres, delivered exceptional results across every level of operation. The team built a base-wide training framework, qualifying ninety-nine facilitators and fifty deploying personnel. Their approach was adopted by four Major Commands and benchmarked by Air Mobility Command.

The team conducted formal risk assessments for more than 180 base processes, enabling zero mishaps across all risk-mitigated events. They also identified and mitigated explosive hazards for 275 Agile Combat Employment personnel during the 12th Air Task Force certification event Operation FLAMING TALON, and enabled six major exercises utilizing live explosives. Their risk assessments supported the base's first Major Accident Response Exercise involving multiple drones and ensured the safe execution of large-scale public events, including a fireworks display involving two thousand pounds of explosives for three thousand spectators. Through disciplined risk management and relentless focus, this team delivered measurable safety outcomes, leading to mission success.

AMC Aircrew of Distinction Award

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CROME56 AIRCREW

317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX

Capt Matthew Kelly, Aircraft Commander of CROME56

THE AIRCREW OF CROME56, 317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX, showed exceptional team coordination during an in-flight emergency on March 26, 2025, aboard a C-130J aircraft. While on a mission to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, the aircraft experienced a master alert for "Utility Suction Pump Pressure Low." The crew immediately executed the Hydraulic Low/Loss/Leak checklist and entered holding.

The checklist revealed a severe hydraulic leak with fluid covering both engine cowlings. The crew made the decisive call to divert the flight. During nose gear extension, there was a complete loss of auxiliary system pressure.

A failed check valve allowed auxiliary fluid to backflow into the utility system, rendering both systems inoperative. With only one remaining hydraulic system and a single emergency brake accumulator available, the crew repositioned passengers, conducted emergency briefings, and executed a flawless landing and evacuation—saving a $75.5 million aircraft and nine lives.

AMC Safety Outstanding Achievement Award, Category II

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60th AIR MOBILITY WING SAFETY OFFICE

Travis Air Force Base, CA

Left to right: Lt Col Andrew Baer, Capt Andrew Braegelmann, MSgt Mark Jenkins Jr., Capt Andrew Mortensen, MSgt Ryan Nonenmacher, SSgt Joi Gill, TSgt Ingrid Ramirez, TSgt Patrick McElroy, TSgt Deiadra Wallace, MSgt David Lowe, and TSgt Manuel Salinas.

THE 60th AIR MOBILITY WING SAFETY OFFICE at Travis Air Force Base (AFB), CA, led by Lt Col Andrew J. Baer, safeguarded the largest Air Mobility Command (AMC) wing by completing forty-one annual inspections of 414 facilities, protecting sixteen thousand personnel and fifty-five aircraft. They oversaw three explosive site plans and strengthened AMC's rapid deployment capabilities, allowing safe transport of forty-seven million pounds of cargo in support of fourteen high-priority operations.

The team also led an expeditionary mishap response team following a Travis AFB Aeroclub aircraft crash. During OPERATION NORTHERN STRIKE, they partnered with two wings to implement sixty-seven risk controls, supporting seven thousand joint forces and cementing the Air Force's first three-hundred-level certification event. The team was subsequently honored with the Air and Space Outstanding Unit Award.

AMC Safety Outstanding Achievement Award, Category III

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437th AIRLIFT WING

Joint Base Charleston, SC

Top row, left to right: TSgt Vincent P. Fontana, Mr. Adam L. Twigg, MSgt Adrian Rincones, Capt Matthew J. Kelly, Mr. Christopher M. Anderson, and TSgt Joseph D. Marsden. Bottom row, left to right: TSgt Kathryn H. Phillips, Mr. Jeffrey D. Lucas, Mr. Christopher S. McGraw, Mr. Arthur W. Chambers, and Mr. Philip B. Russell. Not pictured: Lt Col Christopher Martin and Capt Daniel C. Johnson.

THE 437th AIRLIFT WING, Joint Base Charleston, SC, led by Col Patrick K. McClintock, enabled more than twenty-one thousand C-17 flight hours with zero Class A and B mishaps and cut overall mishaps by one-half, supporting a $9 billion fleet of forty aircraft. The wing led Joint Base Charleston through the 2024 Air Mobility Command (AMC) Safety Program Evaluation with zero deficiencies.

The team embedded safety into every effort, including combat readiness inspections, Air Force Force Generation certification, and a six-month deployment, during which zero mishaps occurred. The team streamlined joint safety operations, reducing duplicated effort by seventy percent, securing a $1.3 million U.S. Department of Agriculture contract.

The team investigated seventy-seven mishaps, including two major aviation events, identified fleet-wide hazards, and maintained a mishap rate well below AMC norms. It also certified new storage magazines and moved five million pounds of explosives without incident.

AMC Safety Outstanding Achievement Award, Category IV

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43d AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS GROUP SAFETY OFFICE

Pope Army Airfield, NC

Left to right: Mr. Ethan Cavenaugh, Mr. Raymond Shupe, Mr. Richard Galley, Lt Col Shawn Tupta, TSgt Jacob Soukey, and MSgt Brandon Bowen.

THE 43d AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS GROUP SAFETY OFFICE, Pope Army Airfield, NC, led by Col Allen C. Morris, Jr., executed an extensive inspection program—thirty-three total inspections covering 616 items across fourteen safety programs and fifty-one buildings. They maintained flawless airfield discipline with zero controlled movement violations.

The office played a central role in Immediate Response Force readiness. They provided risk management for major joint airborne exercises, supporting training for over ten thousand soldiers and one thousand U.S. Air Force and North Atlantic Treaty Organization aircrew, and contributed to Exercise STORM FLAG 25-05, integrating 557 U.S. and coalition personnel.

The team strengthened wildlife hazard mitigation and advised U.S. Central Command airfields on wildlife issues. It advanced risk-management culture through campaigns, training, and scenario development.

The office supported high-level exercises like STORM FLAG and BAMBOO EAGLE and reestablished the airfield Crash, Damaged, or Disabled Aircraft Recovery program, protecting $352 million in assets.

AMC Safety Outstanding Achievement Award, Category V

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721st AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS GROUP SAFETY OFFICE

Ramstein Air Base, Germany

Left to right: MSgt Andrew Cramer, TSgt Nicholas Creighton, and Mr. Martin Trummer

THE 721st AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS GROUP SAFETY OFFICE, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, led by Col Jordan P. Norman, is the recipient of the Air Mobility Command (AMC) Outstanding Achievement Award for exceptional mission accomplishment and mishap prevention across the European theater. Serving as the Air Force's premier safety campus, the team was recognized by U.S. Air Forces Central (Ninth Air Force) safety leadership.

They partnered with the 86th Airlift Wing safety offices to resolve critical compliance issues, safeguarded 21,200 attendees during Ramstein's Freedom Fest, and managed the Confined Space Program across two bases.

During a 267 percent workload surge, the team mitigated seventy-two hazards and led forty-three mishap investigations valued at $19 million, sustaining AMC's largest overseas safety campus.

AMC Safety Civilian Professional of the Year

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MR. JHADE U. BUGAUISAN

60th Air Mobility Wing Safety Office,
Travis Air Force Base, CA

MR. JHADE U. BUGAUISAN, Safety and Occupational Health Specialist, 60th Air Mobility Wing Safety Office, Travis Air Force Base, CA, established the Wing's first safety blanket purchase agreement—a five-year, $5 million contract—that increased payment efficiency by 150 percent and recouped eighty-four man-hours monthly. As the Motorcycle Operator Training Program Manager, he also oversaw the education of more than five hundred riders.

He directed a full-scale Environmental Disaster Exercise, secured funding for bird-netting installations over base water basins, and executed the Wing's mishap investigation program, supporting 143 mishaps and providing expertise to peers and commanders. In addition, Bugauisan oversaw the training of 380 new supervisors on hazard recognition and risk management, enabling the safe movement of 31.3 million pounds of cargo with zero on-duty Class A and B mishaps, alongside many other efforts.

AMC Safety Officer of the Year

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CAPT DENISE L. WASSERSTROM

437th Airlift Wing, Joint Base Charleston, SC

CAPT DENISE L. WASSERSTROM, High Altitude Airdrop Mission Support Training Flight Commander, 437th Special Operations Squadron, Joint Base Charleston, SC, is the Air Mobility Command (AMC) Safety Officer of the Year.

Wasserstrom delivered briefs to thirty board members and peers on high-altitude risk, human performance, and equipment, earning her Graduate Safety Professional certification. She was handpicked to lead a twelve-member Air Force Special Operations Command Safety Assessment team, conducting 748 interviews that yielded 305 findings and recommendations, directly shaping Major Command policy rewrites affecting twelve thousand personnel.

She also led an Air Force Systems Command curriculum overhaul, modernizing twenty years of outdated safety content for sixty thousand joint aircrew, and pioneered a three-phase C-17A hands-on training program that slashed pipeline time by sixty percent, establishing AMC's first high-altitude support syllabus benchmark.

AMC Safety Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

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TSGT NICHOLAS G. CREIGHTON

521st Air Mobility Operations Wing,
Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany

TSGT NICHOLAS G. CREIGHTON, Occupational Safety Noncommissioned Officer In Charge, Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany, served as superintendent for seven months, led unprecedented safety operations, and absorbed a 267 percent workload surge across two squadrons and the headquarters of the U.S. Air Force Air Mobility Operations Wing. His leadership earned recognition for spearheading a major fatality investigation that drove command-wide safety improvements, resolved seventy-two risks, and directed forty-three mishap investigations valued at $19 million. His actions launched 1.9 million pounds of hot cargo supporting 2,862 missions.

Creighton won the Air Mobility Command Safety "Well-Done" Award for directly protecting $2.4 billion in air assets and preventing a $10 million mishap. Due to Creighton's oversight, $42 billion in Military Satellite Communications infrastructure was safeguarded, C-17 en-route capabilities were enhanced, illegal explosive movements were exposed, and deployment readiness was strengthened with a ninety-four percent training deficit.

AMC Safety Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

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MSGT SCOTT T. DONOVAN

317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX

MSGT SCOTT T. DONOVAN, Occupational Safety Manager, 317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX, directed fifty-seven personnel and certified the 621st Contingency Response Group in fifteen mission sets with zero mishaps while serving as the safety lead for the U.S. Transportation Command's Joint Port Opening Exercise TURBO DISTRIBUTION 25-1. Donovan led a 153-item self-assessment, closed twenty-seven overdue investigations, and enabled the Wing's integration into a first-ever joint airlift insertion while serving for nine months as Chief of Safety. Donovan guided commanders through an Air Mobility Command Safety Program, streamlined inspection processes by fifteen percent, and advanced risk-based readiness initiatives affecting twelve hundred personnel, earning a "Met and Effective" rating.

In addition, Donovan's leadership reduced mishaps by seventeen percent in critical safety training, supported rapid-response operations and major exercises, and facilitated facility modernization.

AMC Occupational Safety Career Professional of the Year

TSGT BRANDON J. LABAK

515th Air Mobility Operations Group,
Yokota Air Base, Japan

TSGT BRANDON J. LABAK, Occupational Safety Noncommissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of the 730th Air Mobility Squadron, Yokota Air Base, Japan, is the Air Mobility Command Occupational Safety Career Professional of the Year. As the Occupational Safety NCOIC, he earned nine Air Force Safety Career Professional of the Quarter awards while leading the development of the first-ever master entry plan for the 1st Expeditionary Theater Support Group Engineering and Installation at Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia. His efforts accelerated the installation of eighty-two thousand feet of fiber-optic cable across 132 confined spaces, safeguarding four thousand personnel and $45 billion in assets.

During deployment, he fused the 378th Air Expeditionary Wing safety program with the U.S. Army's 211th Regional Support Group, coaching sixteen joint Senior Noncommissioned Officers through inspection of thirty-five facilities and a munition cache, eliminating hazards endangering 578 soldiers and 3.2 million pounds of explosives.

AMC Occupational Safety Civilian of the Year

MS. SUSAN E. TUREK

6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base, FL

MS. SUSAN E. TUREK is the Occupational Safety Specialist for the 6th Air Refueling Wing at MacDill Air Force Base, FL, and the fiscal year 2025 Air Mobility Command (AMC) Occupational Safety Civilian of the Year nominee. During fiscal year 2025, she validated controls for twenty-nine injects during a Nuclear Operational Readiness Inspection, supporting seven launches and ten alert responses without incident. Turek led Phase 1 of the Integrating Risk and Readiness Campaign, producing a two-hour facilitator package adopted by five AMC wings. She reviewed life-safety plans for three KC-46 facilities valued at $117 million, preventing rework and protecting beddown timelines. After Hurricane Milton, she coordinated the evacuation of 21,000 personnel, assessed 113 facilities, and restored mission-essential status within ninety-six hours. Oversight across thirty-seven units and 413 facilities identified seventy-two discrepancies and accelerated corrective actions. Turek's Occupational Safety and Health Administration respiratory protection training improved fuel-cell entry compliance.

AMC Individual Aviation Maintenance Safety Award

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MR. CLIFFORD M. COLEMAN JR.

317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX

MR. CLIFFORD M. COLEMAN JR., 317th Airlift Wing, Dyess Air Force Base, TX, is the winner of the Air Mobility Command (AMC) Individual Aviation Maintenance Safety Award. He was recognized for successfully leading two units that provided round-the-clock maintenance support for twenty-eight aircraft. He managed manpower distribution, readiness training, and maintenance operations to ensure continuous global airlift capability. Coleman implemented best maintenance practices, leading 347 Airmen through more than 22,500 maintenance actions and 860 quality inspections, achieving the Maintenance Group's best quality assurance pass rate and supporting a ninety-six percent on-time departure rate. He drove AMC's first C-130J heavy maintenance review in thirty years, uncovering sixty-seven deficiencies, and initiated an Air Force–wide inquiry to correct a manufacturer defect. Also hand-picked as Accessories Flight Chief, Coleman's leadership delivered lasting, enterprise-level safety improvements.

AMC Team Aviation Maintenance Safety Award

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660th AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT TEAM

60th Air Mobility Wing,
Travis Air Force Base, CA

Top row, left to right: MSgt Robert Hollis, MSgt Joshua Radford, MSgt Patrick Forbes, TSgt Taw Browning, MSgt Karamjeet Singh, TSgt Lou Noriega, MSgt Johnny Waller, MSgt Alexander Top, MSgt Sudarien Smith, and TSgt Kristen Horwith. Front row, left to right: Maj Tracy Odom, TSgt Danny Cannan, MSgt Jose Acevedo, MSgt Jason Boeninghaus, MSgt Alexis Martinez, TSgt Alan Williams, and Maj Robert Bligh.

Not Pictured: Lt Monzell Wiggins, Lt Angelina Schilling, SMSgt Mitch Morelos, SMSgt Brad Justice, SMSgt Doug Thorndill, MSgt Jeremy Powers, MSgt Daniel Winders, MSgt Adam Johnson, MSgt Blake Edington, MSgt Zachary Dean, MSgt Adam Creapu Top, MSgt Andrew Fitzpatrick, MSgt Jeffrey Erm, TSgt Ryan Bijak, TSgt Max Pressing, TSgt Joshua Hammer, TSgt Brandon Henry, TSgt Kyle Pletsch, and TSgt Brandon Camber.

THE 660th AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT TEAM at Travis Air Force Base, CA, led by Major Robert J. Bligh, trained 545 Airmen to enable 665 sorties, garnering 2,100 flying hours, and offloading 5.1 million pounds of fuel, achieving a zero percent air abort rate. They organized a Safety Down Day, addressing twelve safety action items, netting zero aircraft incidents for four months. Using quality assurance for an outside maintenance process evaluation, they identified training gaps and improved maintenance processes. The team identified and corrected an equipment failure for an Edwards KC-46 emergency, resulting in a Code 1 landing. They were consistently called on to rescue broken aircraft across the Pacific Ocean, deploying thirty-two recovery teams that returned aircraft to safe flying condition within seventy-two hours on average. Their efforts strengthened readiness, safety, and sustainment across the KC-46 enterprise.

AMC Individual Weapons Safety Award

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TSGT DANIEL S. SANTOS

62d Airlift Wing, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA

TSGT DANIEL S. SANTOS of the 62d Airlift Wing Safety Office, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, was awarded this year's Air Mobility Command (AMC) Individual Weapons Safety Award.

Santos filled a critical Air Forces Central shortfall in Jordan, cleared a four-year explosive site plan backlog, and corrected 649 facility records. He trained experts from ten bases on AMC's new risk-based siting program and led a sixty-eight percent expansion of the weapons storage capacity at Dover Air Force Base, DE. He executed major program evaluations, developed 101 site plans at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, and authored waivers moving thirty-two thousand pounds of explosives into the Pacific Air Forces area of responsibility. He advised commanders across seventeen inspections, safeguarding $8.2 billion in assets, resolved critical routing challenges, and delivered risk analysis to eliminate a four-month waiver backlog.

AMC Team Weapons Safety Award

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6th AIR REFUELING WING WEAPONS SAFETY TEAM

MacDill Air Force Base, FL

MSgt Garrett Craig and Mr. Jason McLeod

THE 6TH AIR REFUELING WING WEAPONS SAFETY TEAM, MacDill Air Force Base, FL, led by Col Edward V. Szczepanik, demonstrated exceptional weapons safety leadership, enabling 608 munitions inspections and 3,800 movements totaling 20,400 pounds of net explosive weight, directly strengthening combat readiness across global missions. They increased inspection facility capability by 345 percent and ensured safe delivery of $59 million in munitions supporting U.S. European Command and U.S. Central Command operations.

Their experts evaluated 770 M18 handguns, reviewed sixty-four explosives site plans resulting in a forty percent waiver reduction, and delivered targeted explosives safety training to seventy Total Force defenders. They also executed 459 safety inspections, mitigated post-hurricane explosive hazards, and advanced joint training with U.S. Special Operations Command Central and Marine Corps F-35 and MV-22 units.

The team's comprehensive efforts were validated during the 2024 Headquarters Air Mobility Command Safety Program Evaluation, earning a "Highly Effective" rating and recognition for superior weapons safety performance.

AMC Flight Safety NCO of the Year

★ ★ ★

TSGT ADAM R. SERYDYNSKI

6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base, FL

TSGT ADAM R. SERYDYNSKI, Flight Safety Noncommissioned Officer (NCO), 6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill Air Force Base (AFB), FL, is the 2025 Air Mobility Command Flight Safety NCO of the Year. Among his many achievements, Serydynski served as a pivotal flight safety advisor during the Category 3 Hurricane Milton response efforts and directed proactive risk mitigation strategy for Andersen AFB, Guam, during an impending typhoon. He collaborated with four Major Commands to guide recovery, tie-down, evacuation, and shelter-in-place procedures for 134 aircraft.

Additionally, he corrected explosive siting discrepancies at six locations; implemented an aircraft mishap mitigation plan that garnered visibility from Pacific Air Forces; investigated twelve mishaps totaling $2.5 million; performed hazard controls for fourteen bird strikes; authored a risk assessment for the largest U.S. Indo-Pacific Command exercise; and determined root causes for fifteen incidents, resulting in a zero-percent increase the subsequent quarter.

Aero Club Safety Certificate

★ ★ ★

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE AERO CLUB

436th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, DE

Ms. Kelly Patch, Aero Club Clerk, and William "Mack" Boswell, Aero Club and Flight Training Center Manager.

THE DOVER AIR FORCE BASE (AFB) AERO CLUB, supported by Air Mobility Command and the 436th Airlift Wing (436 AW), received the Aero Club Safety Certificate.

Operating one Cessna T-41A and three Cessna 172 aircraft, the club logged seventeen hundred mishap-free hours in fiscal year 2025 and has had no Class A or B mishaps since 1989. A 436 AW ground safety inspection found zero issues, and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspections cleared the club's safety program. The club trains under an FAA Part 141 certificate, using an approved syllabus and close student monitoring. Membership includes 168 pilots, eight instructors, and eighty student pilots, with twelve new pilot certificates and four advanced ratings earned in fiscal year 2025. Chief Flight Instructor John Jilek also serves as an FAA Aviation Safety Counselor, supporting safety outreach beyond the club.

AMC RiderCoach of the Year

★ ★ ★

MR. BRIAN DONLEY

92d Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base, WA

MR. BRIAN DONLEY, Retired, 92d Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB), WA, has been named Air Mobility Command RiderCoach of the Year. Donley's leadership and dedication to motorcycle safety have had a measurable and lasting impact on Fairchild AFB and the broader Air Force community. Serving as the lead instructor for the installation's motorcycle safety program, Donley successfully organized and supervised a team of twelve Motorcycle Safety Foundation rider coaches, providing critical training to fifty-six riders. His efforts significantly expanded the command's top-performing Private Motor Vehicle–Two-Wheeled program while saving the Air Force more than twenty-seven thousand in reimbursement costs.

Donley also played a key role in strengthening Fairchild AFB's Total Force Integration program. By seamlessly integrating civilian and Air National Guard instructors at the joint motorcycle range, he enabled on-site training that eliminated the need for a 150-mile commute, removing a major barrier to rider participation and improving overall compliance.

AMC Koren Kolligian Jr. Trophy

★ ★ ★

A1C KYLE W. HALL

62d Airlift Wing, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA

A1C KYLE W. HALL, C-17A Globemaster III Loadmaster, 62d Airlift Wing, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, has earned the Koren Kolligian Jr. Trophy for a split-second save during a wet-wing defuel supporting fighter refueling. When two F-35 Lightning II (F-35) aircraft requested a hot refuel, he accompanied a petroleum, oils, and lubricants (POL) technician to observe the hookup. An F-35 pilot signaled the technician to stop as he moved toward the engine intake danger zone. Hall grabbed the technician and pulled him clear before the approach became a mishap. After the close call, he brought the maintenance and POL teams together, checked qualifications and equipment, ran a quick safety brief, and helped the team complete the hot refuel during an Agile Combat Employment scenario.

Bill R. Parsons Occupational Safety "Top" Team Award

★ ★ ★

43d AIR MOBILITY SQUADRON UNIT TEAM

43d Air Mobility Operations Group,
Pope Army Airfield, NC

Left to right: Mr. Ethan Cavenaugh, Mr. Raymond Shupe, Mr. Richard Galley, Lt Col Shawn (STALL) Tupta, TSgt Jacob Soukey, and MSgt Brandon Bowen.

THE 43d AIR MOBILITY SQUADRON at Pope Army Airfield (AAF), NC, led by Maj Casey L. Rains, won the Bill R. Parsons Occupational Safety "Top" Team Award.

The team investigated a C-130J taxi incident and coordinated with the home station to return the $73 million asset to Fully Mission Capable status. They implemented the first-ever risk management safety guidance for the upload of an experimental water vessel, executing a successful and unorthodox upload with zero safety mishaps, garnering fifteen coins. They also developed the Air Force's sole air delivery system for aircraft loading equipment, allowing a 360-degree loading platform rotation. They responded to an Aerospace Ground Equipment fire at U.S. Army installation Fort Bragg, NC, during a "Show of Force" for the U.S. President at the Army's 250th Birthday celebration.. They also achieved one hundred percent compliance across inspections and training, corrected critical hazards, and earned a zero-defect environmental compliance audit at Pope AAF.

A C-17 Globemaster III aircraft assigned to the 6th Airlift Squadron (6 AS), Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ, sits on the flight line at an undisclosed date and location. As the most heavily tasked C-17 squadron in the Air Force during the first quarter of 2025, 6 AS enabled strategic movements across every combatant command, showcasing the squadron's role in delivering Rapid Global Mobility at the speed of relevance.

USAF courtesy photo

Maintaining Physical Fitness While Deployed

BY MS. MICHELLE PIEHL, STAFF WRITER

The Air Force maintains physical fitness standards to ensure combat readiness for all Airmen. Part of this readiness includes maintaining these standards throughout a deployment. During deployment, resources for physical fitness may be available through a base gym, or equipment and facilities may be more sparse, depending on the location. Even in limited situations, physical fitness can still be a priority—Airmen just need to be a little more creative in their approach.

No weight-lifting equipment? Consider bodyweight movements or get creative with using everyday items as weights, such as water bottles, ammo cans filled with sand, or flak jacket plates. Functional movements incorporating combat fitness movements like lifting, pulling, and throwing can also be a form of exercise worth pursuing.

If classes are offered on base, consider attending one regularly. Whether you prefer yoga or high-intensity tactical training, classes can be a great way to participate in fitness in a more social setting. Such group activities encourage camaraderie and support. Classes are often taught on a routine basis, leading to healthy habits.

Not only do these activities maintain physical fitness standards, but working out can also be an effective and enjoyable means of stress relief.

If your location has access to the internet, consider using online exercise videos, routines, and plans to develop a repertoire of content. Plan ahead of a deployment without access to internet to ensure that you have physical copies of any exercise routines and plans.

Pickup sports are another great way to engage in physical activity while deployed. Basketball, soccer, kickball—many options exist for playing sports. Organized gameplay can also be a great way to engage the mind and body in functional movements to keep the body in top condition. Sports can also lead to a greater sense of camaraderie and cohesion; they are a great way to make friends, too.

Other organized activities might include physical training like running, hiking, or group exercise. Performing exercises together boosts unit morale and helps provide a sense of accountability to each other. These activities can expand on bodyweight exercises by using a similarly weighted partner as a form of weight for buddy carries, drags, and other functional movements.

Make a routine, no matter how you engage in physical fitness. Creating a schedule leads to greater accountability to oneself. Consider having a fitness accountability partner or gym buddy to hold one another mutually accountable to a routine.

Not only do these activities maintain physical fitness standards, but working out can also be an effective and enjoyable means of stress relief. While deployed, mental fitness is even more important than ever for maintaining a healthy state of being.

Before any activity on deployment, remember that situational awareness is paramount. If exercising in a high-temperature environment, limit the time spent outdoors and drink lots of water. Also, never work out in an area that could expose you to an enemy. Always tell someone where and when you will be working out if exercising alone.

Maintaining fitness while deployed is an important aspect of any mission. Staying mentally healthy, eating well, and exercising regularly maintain and support combat readiness.

Building the AMC of Tomorrow:

Turning Your AMC Opportunities into Experience—and Experience into Leadership

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

An assignment in Air Mobility Command (AMC) offers more than a job—it offers access. From global operations and joint exercises to enterprise-level training and leadership development, AMC provides Airmen with opportunities that extend far beyond their day-to-day roles.

The pace and complexity of the mobility mission demands adaptability, initiative, and sound judgment. Airmen who take ownership of their development—by seeking out training, engaging across career fields, and learning from each experience—build skills that translate well beyond a single tour or duty title. These experiences shape multicapable Airmen who understand not only how to execute the mission, but how to lead within it.

AMC's training ecosystem, professional networks, and safety culture are designed to support that growth. By actively engaging with the opportunities already in place, Airmen can turn everyday experiences into lasting professional development—strengthening both their own careers and the mobility force as a whole.

PURSUE MOBILITY-FOCUSED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center is the Air Force's hub for expeditionary and mobility education. Beyond well-known courses, the center offers contingency response training, joint logistics education, and advanced mobility planning exposure—ideal for Airmen who want to understand how the mobility mission operates in real-world environments.

https://www.expeditionarycenter.af.mil/

TREAT LEARNING AS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS

Formal training is only one piece of development. The **DAF Learning Services** platform offers self-paced courses in leadership, project management, data literacy, safety, and emerging technologies.

https://daflearning.af.mil/

Airmen assigned to the 87th Logistics Readiness Squadron collaborated with instructors from the 305th Aerial Port Squadron during the cargo operations portion of the inaugural Cross-Utilization Training course capstone at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ, July 28, 2023.

USAF photo by SrA Sergio Avalos

Additionally, **Air University** provides online electives and leadership content beyond traditional Professional Military Education pathways, supporting critical thinking and communication skills at every career stage.

https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/

Air University students collaborate on a group project at Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, March 9, 2026.

USAF photo by Mr. Billy Blankenship

BUILD LEADERSHIP THROUGH SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Safety training develops judgment, decision-making, and accountability—skills essential to leadership at every level. Through risk management, human factors, and mishap prevention education, the Air Force Safety Center supports safer decision-making across the force.

https://www.safety.af.mil/

Crew Resource Management principles—communication, teamwork, and error prevention—are also applicable well beyond the flightline, strengthening leadership effectiveness in any environment.

USE BASE-LEVEL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Most AMC installations offer **Professional Development Centers** or education offices that host mentorship programs, leadership workshops, résumé preparation, and career counseling. These local resources provide low-barrier access to professional growth and are often a gateway to broader opportunities.

VOLUNTEER FOR CROSS-FUNCTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Some of the most impactful learning happens outside formal classrooms. Participation in exercises, working groups, tiger teams, safety councils, or innovation cells exposes Airmen to cross-functional problem-solving and senior-leader engagement. These experiences develop adaptability, collaboration, and enterprise-level thinking.

Joint and multinational exercises—such as mobility, humanitarian assistance, or disaster response events—offer valuable exposure to coalition operations and real-time decision-making.

DEVELOP NETWORKING AND MENTORSHIP

SrA Oscar Munoz-Saenz, right, 86th Maintenance Group (MXG) Maintenance Scheduler, receives mentoring from SMSgt. Billy Diaz, 86th MXG superintendent, during a Wings of Wisdom event at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, Dec 3, 2025.

USAF photo by Amn Paden Henry

Professional growth is strengthened through connection. Formal and informal mentorship relationships help Airmen gain perspective, navigate career decisions, and learn from the experiences of others across the mobility enterprise.

Contributing to shared knowledge also plays a role in professional development. Writing articles, lessons learned, or insights for command publications such as *The Mobility Forum* builds communication skills while supporting a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

Airmen who invest in relationships across squadrons, wings, and career fields gain a broader understanding of how AMC operates—and how effective leadership takes shape within the mobility mission.

Many of the most valuable development opportunities at AMC are not assigned—they are pursued. By intentionally engaging with training, safety, education, and cross-functional experiences, Airmen can actively shape their AMC experience and emerge as multicapable leaders ready for the demands of the future fight.

Applying Operational Risk Management Principles to Every Ride

BY MR. JOSEPH FONTANAZZA, STAFF WRITER

Many people ride motorcycles because of the feeling of freedom they provide. The bike is a simplified version of a motor vehicle, and the air is open, so even a routine commute feels more relaxing. You feel the wind shift, the surface of the street through the handlebars, and become one with your surroundings instead of watching them pass by.

This same openness is also why riding can be unforgiving; there is less protection and, overall, less room for error. Minor issues that would be small inconveniences in a car can become substantial hazards for those traveling on two wheels.

Staying safe on a motorcycle typically requires a series of small, informed choices. Crashes are rarely caused by one obvious mistake, but result from a few minor problems that accumulate without correction: you feel a bit tired, the road is wet, visibility is reduced, and other motorists are impatient. On a motorcycle, such details can negatively affect an entire ride.

Operational risk management (ORM) involves identifying and mitigating hazards and is a well-suited solution to the risks encountered while motorcycling, as it keeps decisions ahead of the danger. ORM applies risk management principles to riding, helping reduce high-impact, low-probability hazards. ORM can be used to pinpoint what may injure you, weigh the likelihood and severity of a mishap, and choose controls that can help avoid an incident—while continually reassessing conditions as they change.

The first ORM decision occurs before you kickstart the bike: Should I ride today?

Experience and readiness matter when using a motorcycle and ORM. It helps to be honest about your current level of riding experience and mental clarity,

Spacing is one of the most reliable controls you have. The more distance between two vehicles, the more time available to recognize a problem and respond efficiently.

rather than relying on how you rode last season. After a long break from riding, everything can feel normal until something unexpected happens and a quick reaction is required.

As mentioned, small details can accumulate into a bigger issue. For example, a new or heavier bike can affect low-speed control, new tires may grip the road differently than expected, and a scratched visor can turn headlights into glare and streaks. While these issues are not inherently dangerous, they can collectively increase the likelihood of a traffic incident.

Readiness extends beyond your bike or personal protective equipment to include mindset. Some days, riders may leave home calm and focused. Other days, stress from work, family, or financial concerns may follow them onto the bike. A tough day can make a rider impatient, and as a result, their following distance shrinks, lane changes are rushed, and risky decisions become frequent and feel normal. Safe riding depends on wide scanning (reacting to the total traffic scene); stress narrows scanning.

Weather—extending beyond rain—is another major factor that ORM can help assess. Following storms, sand and gravel can build up near drains and across roadways, affecting traction and turning.

Managing weather does not require complicated tactics. For example, if damp spots are expected after sunset, slow down for turns and keep lean angles conservative. If strong winds are likely, avoid riding at the lane edge and back off in places where crosswinds tend to hit. If hazards begin stacking up during your ORM assessment, choosing not to ride is a reasonable control.

All hazards cannot be eliminated, but you can choose how to address them. For instance, settle your speed before crossing a steel plate rather than braking on top of it to reduce skidding. Keep the motorcycle as upright as possible on questionable surfaces. Give yourself extra space in and around construction zones to avoid hitting objects and individuals, and treat detours as unfamiliar territory until you have ridden them a few times.

Speed drift is another way riders can lose control. It often starts as an attempt to stay ahead of traffic; however, when traffic suddenly slows, the rider has less time to respond, which requires faster and harder steering and braking. These sudden actions reduce tire grip and increase the risk of a crash.

Riding under the influence is a clear line not to cross. Alcohol and some medications impair reaction time and judgment. Familiar roads and short trips are not a solution for driving impaired. If you have been drinking, do not ride. If a medication warns against driving or operating heavy machinery, do not ride.

Fatigue makes navigating hazards even harder. Fatigue does not always feel like sleepiness; it can appear as delayed mental processing and narrower scanning (e.g., mirror checks become quick glances and braking becomes less smooth). If you are tired, always consider leaving your bike parked for the day. Moreover, if riding, slow down more, change lanes less often, pick a simpler route to travel, and leave more space than usual between the vehicle in front of you.

Spacing is one of the most reliable controls you have. The more distance between two vehicles, the more time available to recognize a problem and respond efficiently. Lane position matters for visibility as well. A motorcycle that sits in a blind spot depends on another driver to make good decisions. A motorcycle that stays visible depends less on luck.

Before you start your motorcycle, conduct an ORM assessment. Check the day's traffic and weather conditions, note any fatigue or ailments, and name any controls or equipment on the bike that can change your typical ride. In other words, take a moment to check the basics: yourself, the weather, the road, and traffic. That brief reflection can keep a routine ride from becoming risky and prevent a serious (or fatal) mishap.

A Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) vehicle assigned to the 87th Civil Engineer Group hovers midair at Joint Base-McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL), NJ, Nov. 20, 2024. The sUAS program at JB MDL is designed to equip every Airman with basic drone operational training, fostering a deeper understanding of the technology and its potential impact on modern warfare.

USAF photo by SrA Matt Porter

DRONES: Sustaining and Enhancing Operations

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

In today's ever-evolving battlefields and mission areas, drones provide a unique capability to free up human resources and access hard-to-reach spaces, enhancing effectiveness and supporting operations in ways other assets cannot. Chad Zeigler, an Air Mobility Command (AMC) Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) Program Manager, explained how a security drone conducts perimeter sweeps instead of humans. Not only are human assets protected from potential dangers, but they are free to do work that only a person can perform at this time. He also explained how drones aid in maintenance inspections of an aircraft's tail and more. Today, these drones incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance the identification of parts and pinpoint deficiencies.

Drones are especially important in today's climate of harsh, contested, or degraded environments and enable technological advancements that contribute to the future fight. Whether enhancing a warfighter's capabilities or delivering goods and supplies to a disaster zone, drones bring a new type of capability that drives innovation and capacity.

"We have to leverage technology [to] sustain our capabilities," said Zeigler.

Due to the changing characteristics of war, the ability to scale up drone production and deployment is paramount, explained AMC sUAS Program Manager Patrick Richard. Not only is producing the most advanced devices important, but ensuring the most efficient quantities is also important for readiness. He added that many career fields contribute to drone technology development and implementation, making it a vast field.

In the next five to ten years, Zeigler anticipates drones further enhancing the AMC mission by, for example, delivering materials and supplies more efficiently. He believes enhancements in the Airborne Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) field are likely. "It's changing the battlefield," he remarked. "It's . . . delivering lethal

Capt Justin Lewis, 22d Air Refueling Wing Small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) Installation Program Manager, cleans a small sUAS at McConnell Air Force Base, KS, Dec. 10, 2025.

USAF photo by SrA Paula Arce

TSgt Robert Gerry, 87th Civil Engineer Squadron Fire Protection Specialist, MSgt Brett Mason, 87th Civil Engineer Group Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) Program Manager, and TSgt Christopher Anderson, 787 Civil Engineer Squadron Engineering Section Chief, observe an sUAS vehicle exercise at Joint Base-McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ, Nov. 20, 2024.

USAF photo by SrA Matt Porter

SrA Mathew Closas, 860th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Airlift and Special Mission Aircraft Maintenance Specialist, flies a drone in a hangar at Travis Air Force Base, CA, Jan. 30, 2025. The 60th Maintenance Group has initiated the first in-house drone training for Small Unmanned Aerial Systems used for aircraft maintenance in the Department of War.

USAF photo illustration by Gary M. Edwards Jr.

capability to enhance the warfighter." He also noted that ISR missions designed to collect data and observe the forward-operating enemy will be crucial. "Now, you don't have to put somebody in harm's way," he stressed. "That drone does everything. And with the emergence of AI, you have the capability of that software learning stuff on the fly—friend versus foe, nefarious users, all that kind of stuff."

Richard suggested that drone technology could improve mission-support capabilities. He envisions enhancements to the operating system that would enable enable multiple Airmen to operate more than one drone at a time, allowing several drones to contribute to completing a mission and returning to base with important data, deliverables, and insight. Richard also sees unmanned in-air refueling as a strong possibility in the future.

Some of the biggest logistical and technical challenges in deploying and sustaining drone operations include ensuring timely and up-to-date training and managing the ever-evolving technological nature of the system.

Zeigler named an additional challenge: different operating rules and regulations depending on the environment or location. "When you look overseas, you're not in your own country. You've got to abide by the red tape—the rules [and] requirements that are levied by that foreign nation." Richard noted that overseas environments can be congested for small, unmanned aircraft systems: "It's very difficult if there's constant jamming of those drones."

Zeigler encourages Airmen to learn how drones can support their missions. "It's [an] emerging technology that needs to be embraced because it's only going to positively affect their [execution of] mission sets."

Similarly, Richard acknowledges that the Air Force has extremely smart, talented, and gifted Airmen. He encourages Airmen not to become intimidated by the various rules and regulations surrounding drone usage, but to be patient and embrace a drone's innovative capabilities, knowing that the future of operations is evolving.

Earlier in the year, Exercise Mobility Guardian 2025 included the use of drones. Richard understood that incorporating drones into the exercise "was just really to get the Airmen to start thinking about the battlefield from not just a two- or three-dimensional but four-dimensional perspective."

Drone usage and collaboration will likely expand in future exercises and readiness across many perspectives, including offensive, defensive, and tactical.

"We're really starting to embrace it; the sky's the limit as far as the use cases that will be developed going forth," said Zeigler.

A Reflection on Safety:
Protecting Airmen on the Flightline and in the Warehouse

BY MS. PETRA J. OLIVER, 727AMS/SE, USAF

The flightline—a realm of roaring engines and precise operations—and the warehouse—a bustling hub of logistics with forklifts and constantly moving pallets and packages—both demand unwavering focus from users and, above all, stringent safety measures. Yet, when it comes to ensuring adequate visibility for our Airmen in these high-risk environments—particularly amid heavy equipment, variable lighting conditions, and fast-paced operations—a critical question arises: Are we truly doing enough?

Current guidance for flightline operations in inclement weather often focuses on the use of a reflective belt; however, in warehouse environments, there seems to be a lack of specific guidance. Although the Air Force Instruction (AFI) mandates reflective clothing around traffic, this protocol is open to interpretation (e.g., does "traffic" include aircraft on the flightline?). More importantly, how does this instruction apply to hazards in a warehouse setting?

The U.S. Air Force (USAF) maintains well-established safety standards and regulations. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), through its General Duty Clause, also requires employers to provide workplaces free from recognized hazards that may cause serious harm or death. This implicitly includes ensuring adequate worker visibility in hazardous environments such as the flightline and warehouse.

Furthermore, the American National Standards Institute/International Safety Equipment Association (ANSI/ISEA) 107 standard provides specific performance criteria for high-visibility (Hi-Viz) safety apparel designed to minimize the risk of struck-by incidents. This standard categorizes materials as background (fluorescent for visibility), retroreflective (reflecting light back to the source), or combined performance (fluorescent and retroreflective properties) fabrics. These materials must be certified by an independent laboratory to verify compliance.

ANSI/ISEA 107 defines three performance classes of Hi-Viz clothing, along with a fourth (Class E) for standalone trousers. In general, the higher the class, the greater the amount of reflective and fluorescent material required. For instance, combining Class E pants with a Class 2 or 3 garment effectively creates an overall Class 3 level of protection.

However, the limitations of a reflective belt are glaring. At approximately two inches wide, the belt often disappears beneath uniform shirts and relies on the presence of light to be effective. Without light, the belt's effectiveness is severely reduced.

A stark contrast exists between USAF practices and those beyond the installation fence. At civilian airports,

Airmen from the 7th Logistics Readiness Squadron load an engine trailer onto a C-130J Super Hercules during a Combat Readiness Inspection at Dyess AFB, Texas, July 1, 2025.

USAF photo by A1C Adrien Tran

personnel are often clad from head to toe in Hi-Viz clothing whilst working on the flightline. Yet, inside the wire, Airmen frequently wear camouflage uniforms with only a reflective belt. While concealment is understandable and a priority in deployed locations, the same justification does not apply in the Pacific Air Forces, U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa, and Continental United States, where commanders have the authority to implement stronger safety measures.

The disparity extends to warehouse safety protocols. In most non-automated warehouses, Hi-Viz apparel is mandatory personal protective equipment (PPE). USAF prioritizes steel-toe boots (to protect toes), gloves (to protect hands), and ear protection (to protect hearing). Yet, comparatively, little attention is paid to protecting torsos, legs, and arms—vital body parts essential to mission performance. While a toe injury may be debilitating, injuries to major limbs or the torso can be life-altering.

The opportunity to strengthen PPE policies and safety standards (i.e., implementing additional proactive measures) is clear. A comprehensive review of USAF safety policies, along with relevant AFI and ANSI/ISEA 107 standards, would provide clear, more enforceable guidelines for Hi-Viz clothing on the flightline and in warehouse environments.

Ultimately, safety is not only about regulatory compliance; it is about valuing the Air Force's most valuable asset—its Airmen, each of whom deserves the highest level of protection available to ensure they return home safely at the end of each shift.

Airmen assigned to the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing stand by before loading container delivery systems onto a C-130J Super Hercules for an airdrop mission supporting Department-Level Exercise 2025 at Yokota Air Base, Japan, July 17, 2025.

USAF photo by SSgt Tristan Truesdell

Reducing Flightline Mishaps Through Process Improvement

BY 1 LT CHRISTOPHER WINTERS AND SMSGT JAMES LEE, U.S. AIR FORCE

Personnel stationed at the 730th Air Mobility Squadron (730 AMS) at Yokota Air Base (AB), Japan, may receive from others a sympathizing nod of approval, a sign of understanding, or implied respect. In the Pacific Area of Responsibility, Yokota AB is a central hub for logistics, one that has been tested more than ever in the past decade as geopolitical tensions have risen. As a tenant unit on the installation, 730 AMS serves as a hub for receiving cargo, breaking down cargo for shipment across the country, and dispatching cargo in a timely manner. In short, 730 AMS Airmen are cargo specialists. In 2025 alone, 730 AMS supported nearly six thousand missions, including cargo handling for Presidential and Secretary of War trade negotiations. With so many moving pieces in this unit, being keenly astute to one's immediate surroundings is an absolute requirement—otherwise, operations can quickly go astray.

During the summer of 2025, the aerial port at 730 AMS experienced its most dramatic surge in months.

In the three months since implementation, our aerial port has reduced loader-related mishaps by EIGHTY PERCENT.

In July, mission workloads increased seventy-nine percent from the previous month before returning to baseline. From September to October, another seventy-five percent increase followed—both surges more than doubling typical workloads. In July, Tokyo also experienced its hottest summer on record, with an average temperature of 92 degrees Fahrenheit.[1] As operations and temperatures rose, critical incidents involving personnel and equipment rose as well.

Over the past year, considerable time and mental and physical effort have been dedicated to improving safety within the unit. Although the work performed by 730 AMS Airmen is inherently dangerous, mishaps are not justified as the cost of business. The team leverages process improvement techniques to better understand why events unfold as they do. Understanding the human behaviors that contribute to mishaps allows leaders to adjust processes and provide Airmen options to reduce overall risk. (When Airmen are forced to choose between two poor options, the process has already failed.)

Two major projects were undertaken to reduce the risk of mishaps on the flightline. Both initiatives were designed to provide Airmen working with cargo in warehouses with additional structure as they conduct flightline operations.

The Tunner 60K Aircraft Cargo Loader/Transporter, a vital piece of equipment used by Aerial Transportation Specialists to palletize cargo from staging areas to aircraft, weighs approximately sixty-five thousand pounds and measures fifty feet in length. With twenty wheels and a massive diesel engine, it is the crux of Air Force cargo operations. Accompanying the Tunner 60K Aircraft Cargo Loader/Transporter is the load team, a four-person squad responsible for uploading and downloading the cargo.

To address and counter the number of mishaps, 730 AMS leadership created a local operating instruction that is more restrictive than current Air Force guidance, providing Airmen with clearer procedures for cargo movement. Root-cause analyses revealed a lack of standardized, process-driven activities, which led to guesswork and, ultimately, mishaps. The local instruction now includes a chronological checklist for load teams, with clearly defined roles for each team member before operations begin. The checklist also prompts team leads to conduct a miniaturized risk assessment matrix to prime the team for flightline conditions. Further, the checklist was translated into Japanese to ensure host-nation partners could follow the procedures with the same clarity and consistency. In the three months since implementation, the 730 AMS aerial port has reduced loader-related mishaps by eighty percent.

The second project stemmed from a string of personnel mishaps and the realization that the field of aerial transportation lacks a dedicated human factors course. Equipping flightline personnel with critical thinking skills enables more informed decision-making and reduces the occurrence of mishaps. Developed over three months, a six-person team from 730 AMS created an eight-hour course examining mishap data, peer-reviewed research, and current Air Force Instruction. The course incorporates risk management principles outlined in DAFI 90-802, as well as workflow management, holistic health (e.g., getting adequate sleep before a twelve-hour shift), and personal protective equipment (e.g., hearing protection). One of the course's instructors, a technical sergeant in his early thirties who recently began wearing hearing aids after years of hearing loss, provides a powerful real-world example of the long-term consequences of risk exposure.

The goal of the course is to teach Airmen critical thinking skills to help them make informed decisions under stress, build confidence, and take appropriate action to prevent mishaps. More importantly, it reinforces a cultural shift—one where safety is not reactive, but proactive and embedded into every aspect of the mission.

Reducing flightline mishaps requires more than enforcing compliance. By combining structured processes with human performance-focused training, 730 AMS is helping ensure Airmen are not only prepared to execute the mission but to do so safely and with resilience.

[1] https://www.data.jma.go.jp/stats/etrn/view/monthly_s3_en.php?block_no=47662&view=2

Testing Your Limits:
Risk Management and the 731 AMS Experience

BY MSGT ANDREW G. HUNTAMER, JR., AIR MOBILITY COMMAND SAFETY ENGINEER OFFICER

The 731st Air Mobility Squadron (731 AMS), stationed at the "Tip of the Spear" at Osan Air Base, South Korea, understands what it means to test—and strengthen—the physical and mental limits of its personnel to make the mission happen. We pride ourselves on flexing our capabilities to meet ever-changing requirements, a necessity in today's dynamic operational environment. But how do we, as a squadron constantly asked to perform outside of normal operating parameters, do so safely?

The answer lies in robust and proactive risk management, a lesson vividly reinforced during a recent mission.

One operation stands out: the short-notice deployment of the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade (35 ADA) to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), tasked with providing critical air and missile defense. This high-stakes movement presented a multitude of potential hazards, including shifting to 24-hour operations, training U.S. Army load teams, jointly inspecting massive amounts of cargo, managing airfield congestion, coordinating vehicle traffic, and mitigating fatigue. These challenges amplified the risk to personnel and equipment.

In the limited planning window before the aircraft arrived, 731 AMS recognized that success hinged on collaboration. We fostered a true joint environment with 35 ADA, a unified movement—it was not *their* or *our* cargo; it was *everyone's* cargo. I had the privilege of working directly with the Air Defense Artillery Brigade Safety Specialist to ensure that our personnel were protected. Critically, both the squadron and battalion command teams were fully engaged, prioritizing safety above all else. Together, we meticulously conducted risk assessments and ensured everyone understood, and was comfortable with, the planned execution.

Prior to the movement, our Airmen trained Army personnel on crucial flightline safety protocols, vehicle spotting procedures, proper personal protective equipment usage, and general safety requirements. We integrated soldiers directly into our load teams, further fostering a cohesive joint force.

Did this intensive planning and preparation pay off? Absolutely. Everyone knew their role, their responsibilities, and how to execute them safely. This contributed to a faster-than-expected initial aircraft upload, mitigating stress when challenges inevitably arose. As with any operation, things may not go as planned. The strength of this team enabled us to handle unexpected hiccups without delaying aircraft or creating a backlog.

Proactive risk management is a force multiplier when correctly implemented.

Whether utilizing deliberate risk management via the Department of War's DD Form 2977 or employing real-time risk management on the flightline, a commitment to safety enhances mission effectiveness. The collaborative planning by squadron and battalion leadership ensured that this large-scale deployment from Korea to CENTCOM was safer, less stressful, and ultimately successful. This experience highlights the crucial role of input from the command when capturing and sharing real-world experiences, lessons learned, and best practices across Air Mobility Command.

Planning Ahead for Safe Flying

BY LT COL ERIC WOLF, CHIEF,
AMC FLIGHT SAFETY DIVISION

Flying safely starts long before you enter the plane. Safety is a lifestyle, a mindset that permeates every aspect of a pilot's preparation. This commitment to safety begins long before arriving at the airfield and is built on a foundation of physical well-being, rigorous mental preparation, and meticulous planning.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL READINESS

A pilot's body and mind are their most critical assets. Prioritizing proper sleep is nonnegotiable; a well-rested pilot is an alert and decisive one. Complementing this practice is a disciplined diet that provides sustained energy, avoiding the peaks and valleys that can come from sugary or processed foods. Regular exercise builds the stamina and resilience needed to handle the physical and mental stressors of flight.

KNOWLEDGE AND PROFICIENCY

Beyond physical health, mental sharpness is paramount. This practice is honed through the continuous study of aircraft systems, emergency procedures, and regulations. A key practice is to "chair fly," or mentally rehearse every step of the flight, from startup to shutdown. This visualization builds procedural memory and helps anticipate potential contingencies. Furthermore, actively seeking counsel from more-experienced members provides invaluable insight and mentorship, accelerating learning and reinforcing a culture of safety.

MISSION AND SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Effective mission execution hinges on a deep understanding of the mission's priorities and a realistic assessment of the proficiency of the crew. This shared understanding is forged during a good, thought-out pre-mission brief. A thorough brief is essential, as it is the forum where the entire crew aligns on objectives, individual roles, and contingency plans, ensuring everyone is on the same page before wheels are up. Finally, a critical component of any brief is a comprehensive weather review beforehand. Understanding the forecast and potential hazards and having solid contingency plans are critical steps in mitigating risks and ensuring a safe and successful operation.

Airmen assigned to the 92d Air Refueling Wing receive Individual Protective Equipment as part of Exercise Global Thunder 26 at Fairchild Air Force Base, WA, Oct. 21, 2025. Global Thunder is an annual command and control exercise designed to train U.S. Strategic Command forces and assess joint operational readiness.

USAF photo by SrA Samantha Thorn

GPO U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE: 2026-758-094/20003.
For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Publishing Office.
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A Day in the Life

TSgt Emily Knight, an Instructor Loadmaster with the 130th Airlift Squadron, Charleston Air National Guard Base, Charleston, WV, waits for the next pallet of cargo to be loaded on a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft at Komatsu Airport, Japan, July 29, 2025, during Exercise Resolute Force Pacific (REFORPAC) 2025. Air Mobility Command aircraft provide critical airlift and air refueling capabilities to project, connect, maneuver, and sustain the Joint Force during REFORPAC and the first-in-a-generation Department-Level Exercise (DLE) series. The DLE series encompasses all branches of the Department of War, along with allies and partners. It employs more than four hundred joint and coalition aircraft and more than twelve thousand members at more than fifty locations across three thousand miles.

USAF photo by TSgt Nicholas Monteleone