

## Pilot Safety

Award of Distinction

On Jan. 11, 2003, Maj Geary "General" Padden was the flight lead of an F-16 ADF adversary element during a 4v2 defensive counter air flight lead upgrade ride in support of the 179th Fighter Squadron, Minnesota Air National Guard. After three engagements, the flight "Fenced Out," rejoined, and headed for a post attack air-to-air refueling. En route to the tanker, Maj Padden noticed that his engine oil pressure did not increase with an increase in throttle movement. The F-16A does not have a Lube Low caution light, so the lack of increasing oil pressure represented a 50 percent or greater loss of oil. Maj Padden immediately declared an emergency and pointed the aircraft toward the nearest possible divert base, Duluth, Minnesota, which was 52 nautical miles to the west. Maj Padden directed his wingman to rejoin and accomplish a Battle Damage Check, which confirmed oil was running off the right underside of the fuselage. With temperatures at zero degrees Fahrenheit, a wind chill at -20 degrees Fahrenheit and facing

the possibility of having to eject over the icy waters of Lake Superior, Maj Padden kept his aircraft within gliding distance of land and executed flawless checklist procedures. The weather at Duluth was reported as overcast, 6 miles visibility and blowing snow. Maj Padden was forced to fly a flameout penetration through the weather in the event of possible engine seizure. Maj Padden maneuvered his aircraft to intercept the localizer approach to the active runway. Ensuring that a 1:1 glide ratio had been established, Maj Padden flew the steeper than normal approach perfectly. Maj Padden broke out of the weather in perfect alignment, visually acquired the runway at 3.5 miles and executed a textbook landing. Upon post flight inspection, the aircraft had lost 75 percent of its oil through the chip detector. It was also determined that it was only minutes until the rest of the oil would have been completely gone. Maj Padden's outstanding systems knowledge, keen situational awareness, and superior airmanship prevented the potential loss of two valuable combat assets: Maj Padden and his aircraft.



Maj Geary L. Padden, 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minnesota

## Crew Chief Safety

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On Jan. 14, 2003, as a member of 12th Air Force's Viper West Demonstration Team, SrA McClain was performing the final walk-around inspection prior to launching an F-16CG from its parking location. During the inspection, he discovered a bolt protruding through a drain hole in the engine exhaust nozzle fairing (panel 4409). He immediately notified the pilot to shut down the engine and recommended the pilot abort the sortie. Following aircraft shut down, SrA McClain began investigating the origin of the bolt. Upon completion of a thorough inspection of the engine and engine bay, it was verified the bolt belonged to the hydraulic

pump of an engine currently in the propulsion flight. The engine in back shop repair was removed from this F-16CG the week prior to this occurrence. SrA McClain's close attention to detail and positive actions prevented the aircraft from launching with a loose bolt in the engine bay, potentially causing serious damage to the engine and engine bay components, and possible loss of a 28 million-dollar combat aircraft and an invaluable pilot member. His actions additionally highlighted a previously undetected condition on the engine in the propulsion flight, helping to ensure a completely serviceable engine upon repair completion.



SrA Matthew L. McClain, 388th Aircraft Maintenance Sqn., 388th Wing, Hill AFB, Utah

## Weapons Safety

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Sgt Larry Driver displayed supreme safety awareness when he was called to respond to an A-10 ground emergency after its GAU-8 30-millimeter gun jammed during an ammunition up-load. He immediately took charge of the situation and ensured the area was quickly and safely evacuated. SSgt Driver then briefed the Explosive Ordnance Disposal team and fire department personnel on the unique safety hazards associated with the High Explosive and Armor Piercing rounds (API) in the jammed gun. In fact, all of the API rounds in the A-10 contained portions of depleted uranium making this MISHAP an unusually dangerous situation. SSgt Driver ensured that operations provided a pilot quickly as the aircraft needed to be taxied to the gun berm expeditiously. He determined that towing the aircraft was out of the question due to the hazard posed to the driver. Next, he diligently followed technical orders in attempts to safe the gun; when the gun couldn't be safed using the procedures in technical orders, he ensured all work was stopped until the "Unsafe Gun Rapid Response Team" could

be flown in from Eglin Air Force Base. SSgt Driver's masterful leadership of this crisis enabled the A-10's gun to be safely cleared of ammunition and ensured the safety of the emergency response team. His efforts preserved a \$135,000 GAU-8 gun from destruction and prevented an environmental catastrophe. A stickler for attention to detail, SSgt Driver also discovered the root cause of an inadvertently fired impulse cart on aircraft 80-0140. He identified a faulty micro switch in the bomb rack which allowed voltage to reach and fire the cart. An acknowledged weapons system expert, SSgt Driver led the investigation of a recent in-flight loss of a Triple Ejector Rack (TER). His team duplicated the malfunction and discovered a shorted wire in the TER cable. He inspected the cable and discovered the exposed wire not only had been spliced incorrectly but also improperly wrapped. This short turned out to be a systemic problem: SSgt Driver instigated an immediate one-time inspection of all TER cables with 61 of 68 cables identified as bad! His swift actions prevented untold future USAF weapons mishaps.



SSgt Larry L. Driver II, 23rd Aircraft Maintenance Sqn., 23rd Fighter Wing, Pope AFB, North Carolina

## Unit Safety

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During the month of January, the 32d Combat Communications Squadron mobilized and deployed in support of the continuing Global War on Terrorism. Immediately upon return from the New Year holiday the squadron began the enormous task of inventorying and packing over 138 tons of tactical communications equipment, support items, and tents. Quickly realizing the potential for mishaps, the squadron mandated the use of steel-toed boots, reflective belts, work gloves, and hard hats when building cargo pallets. The importance of personal protective equipment was reiterated at daily safety briefings. Exterior lights were set up to illuminate outdoor work areas and reduce the potential for tripping hazards as crews often worked late into the evening. In all,

44 increments of cargo, consisting of 19 pieces of rolling stock and 25 pallets were built. Facility chiefs prepared 81 hazardous cargo declarations to ensure aircraft loadmasters were aware of potentially dangerous materials. In order to ensure aircraft safety, the squadron's Quality Assurance (QA) team personally inspected each increment of cargo. No increments were frustrated at Tinker Deployment Control Center. Additionally, the squadron conducted refresher training for 27 personnel requiring Self-Aid and Buddy Care and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation training. Squadron effort ensured deployment of over 4-dozen troops without a single safety mishap. Once on the ground in Southwest Asia, the team downloaded and set up 67 tons of communications equipment and assisted civil engineering by erecting 30 living tents — without incident.



32nd Combat Communications Sqn., 3rd Combat Communications Group, Tinker AFB, Oklahoma