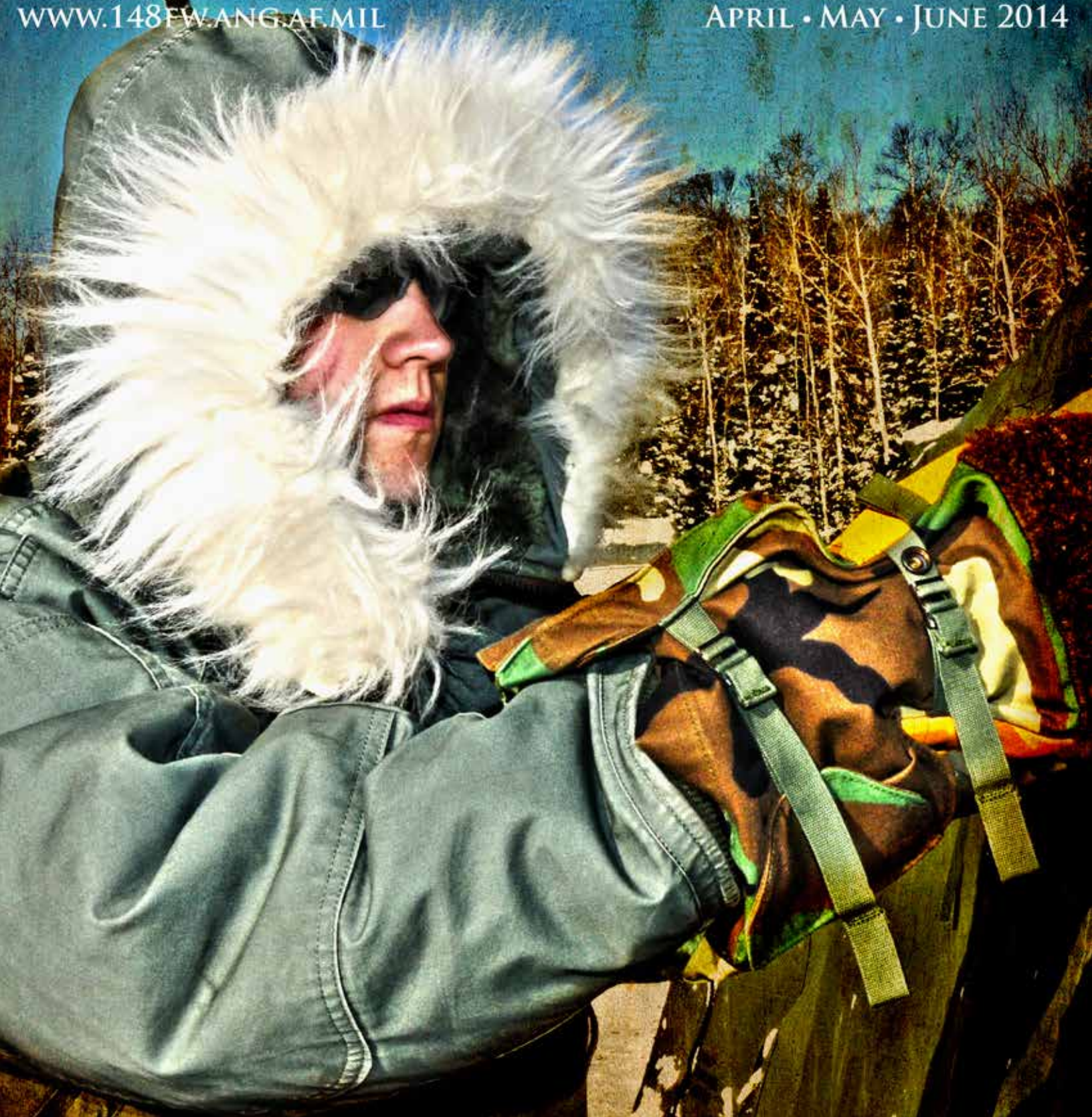


COMMUNICATING IN THE COLD: COMM SQUADRON SUPPORTS BEARGREASE

ON FIVE

WWW.148FW.ANG.AF.MIL

APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2014





I remember sitting in the barber chair in 1980, watching my long red hair fall to the floor as I took the first step in starting my Air Force career. It seems so long ago, yet, like only yesterday. The descriptive noun categorizing the 34 years since that day is the word "blur." Ask any retiree and they will tell you how fast a career flies by.

In September 1980, I started ROTC at the University of Minnesota- Duluth and met two cadets, Glenn Slotness and Eric Settergren; they will remain comrades and friends for the rest of my life. Fast forward to December 1985, and I meet Lt. Col. (Ret) Davey Johnson at pilot training; he eventually plays a role in my joining the 148th Fighter Wing. From 1985-1986, Capt. Pete Gray was my aircraft commander in the KC-135. Pete graduated #1 in his Air Force Academy class (i.e., smart guy) and I still use lessons learned from him. In 1991, Lt. Col. (Ret) Mike Ray was the guy who told me about the 148FW and flying the C-26. Davey sealed the deal for my induction with a recommendation to Brig. Gen. (Ret) Cossalter. In 1995, Col. (Ret) Gary Moe and Lt. Col. (Ret) Wally Larson sold me to the National Guard Bureau as the right guy for the environmental job even though I didn't have the proper Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). Four years ago, Col. Stokes had the faith to put me upstairs in the Maintenance Group. The lesson here is that regardless of your capabilities, you need other people to make your career happen. Do your part by working hard, completing that Professional Military Education/Community College of the Air Force degree and good things will happen for you.



*Col. Steven Wabrowetz
Maintenance Group Commander*

I am eternally grateful to many, many people for the support I've had in the last 30 years, especially to the enlisted troops I've worked with from my boom operators in the tanker, to the incredible team in the Medical Group, the unbelievable crew in the Maintenance Group who astound me daily with what they can do and all the Chiefs who kept me straight. Most importantly, are my wife Jennie and daughters Heather and Sara who stayed home while I sat umpteen alert tours, visited 23 countries on five continents and participated in two wars. Their support and love is insurmountable.

While "Mission First" allows us to do some cool things and travel the world, our best experiences come from "People Always"; those you meet, work, live and go to war with. My family jokes that we can't go anywhere without running into a 148th member; they are right and how special it is to be part of that camaraderie. The best part of my career however, has been seeing young people prepare themselves to do great things. The many fresh out of high school Airmen in the Medical Group who are now officers, doctors and nurses and senior NCOs ... wow!

Our newest officers, Whitney Olson and Stacie LaCoursiere plus those seven experts we put Chief stripes on last year give the 148th a bright future. I've said a number of times it's a great year to retire, and what better reason than to make room for those with boundless energy and fresh ideas! To all of you in the Maintenance Group, thanks for everything. To the Comedy Central team, thanks for keeping it light!

I'll see you on the river!

Wabby



ON THE COVER ... Staff Sgt. Eric Ronning, a member of the Deployable Interoperable Communications Element (DICE) team, 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn. performs a safety check on a tent while at a remote location northwest of Grand Marais, Minn., Jan. 28, 2014. Staff Sgt. Ronning and the DICE team were at the remote location to provide communication support for the John Beargrease sled dog marathon. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka/Released) (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka, Illustration by Tech. Sgt. Scott G. Herrington)

About the On Five

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Year 2014 Unit Training Assembly (UTA) and other training schedules for the 148th Fighter Wing and all subordinate units:

| UTA | SUTA |
|------------|------------|
| 17-18 May | 03-04 May |
| 28-29 June | 07-08 June |
| None July | 19-20 July |
| 16-17 Aug | 02-03 Aug |
| 13-14 Sept | None Sept |
| 04-05 Oct | 18-19 Oct |
| 01-02 Nov | 15-16 Nov |
| 06-07 Dec | None Dec |



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CHIEF'S CORNER

BY CHIEF MASTER SGT. LISA ERIKSON



Weapons loaders work as a team to outfit a Block 50 F-16 Mar. 23, 2014. The wingman concept is vital in accomplishing the mission, and doing so in a safe manner. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka/Released)

I recently attended the Chief Executive Course held at the Air National Guard Readiness Center in October. We had the privilege to meet with our 11th Command Chief for the Air National Guard, Chief Hotaling. Chief Hotaling has defined three Key Areas of Focus and in this edition of the Chief's Corner, I will pay emphasis to the second key area – Health of the Force.

This focus area touches more than our maintaining our medical readiness; it is focused upon our whole Airman concept. We, as good Wingmen, must assist our Airman to succeed. The catch phrase “it takes a village” holds so true within the climate here at the wing. We must care for each other, and with that we must protect our Airman. The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) program is the first area identified within the Health of the Force. The program itself proves awareness to all of us that we need to take a united stand against sexual assault. It will take a village to eradicate this issue and we must look within each of our organizations to work at ending these behaviors. Another focus area within health of the force is an increased emphasis on Safety. Our operations tempo in the past few years often may not have afforded us the time to step back and complete an accurate sight picture that encompassed a true Operational Risk Management. This summer numerous wing members will be afforded the opportunity to travel abroad in a non-contingency environment. Before we embark upon these adventures, let's ensure we take a good hard look and complete a true assessment of the risks. There will also be a couple smaller groups of members deploying in a contingency environment. Let us as a wing work together to ensure each of these groups return to home station as “whole Airman” and continue to focus on keeping each other safe.

Airman and Family Readiness programs are an area each of us can utilize and can assist with. Mrs. Jennifer Kuhlman carries the title of program manager, but she works in conjunction with a number of

agencies and volunteers to assist each of us with a multitude of issues. Please take the time to get to know your Key Volunteers, your Wing Family Readiness Coordinator and find out what you can do to assist with education and outreach within your own organizations as well as at the wing level.

What does the phrase “Employ Technology” mean to you? I take from this phrase a key point that technology is ours to employ throughout our career. Most recently some changes which have been implemented at the wing include the digital signature on all your pay orders. Our entire career is being migrated to the electronic medium. We are the gatekeepers of our own information; it is imperative that each Airman take responsibility and ensure their personnel records are maintained with accuracy. It begins with the individual and carries through to your supervision. Also, by employing technology we can look into innovative ways to complete tasks. Utilize the tools we have at our fingertips, let technology work, not only with you, but most importantly for you.

Finally, I will close with Resiliency. Our unit has a Resiliency Program that encompasses a multitude of resources. Mr. Maloney, our Wing Director of Psychological Health, our Chaplain core, and most recently we have a Master Resiliency Trainer, Senior Master Sgt. Tana Johnson. Each of these resources will help to embrace the four pillars (Mental, Physical, Social and Spiritual). We are sure to hear more from each of these resources in the coming months! If you get a chance to volunteer or participate in any of the Resiliency programs, please do so and provide feedback to your supervisor as to both pros and cons you can take away from these programs.

In closing, it is our responsibility as good Wingmen to take time to focus not only inward but also look outward towards each other. Remember it takes all of us to build a successful community. Maintaining The Health of the Force is imperative to that success.

Winter Warriors

BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. BILL HAWLEY, SECURITY FORCES



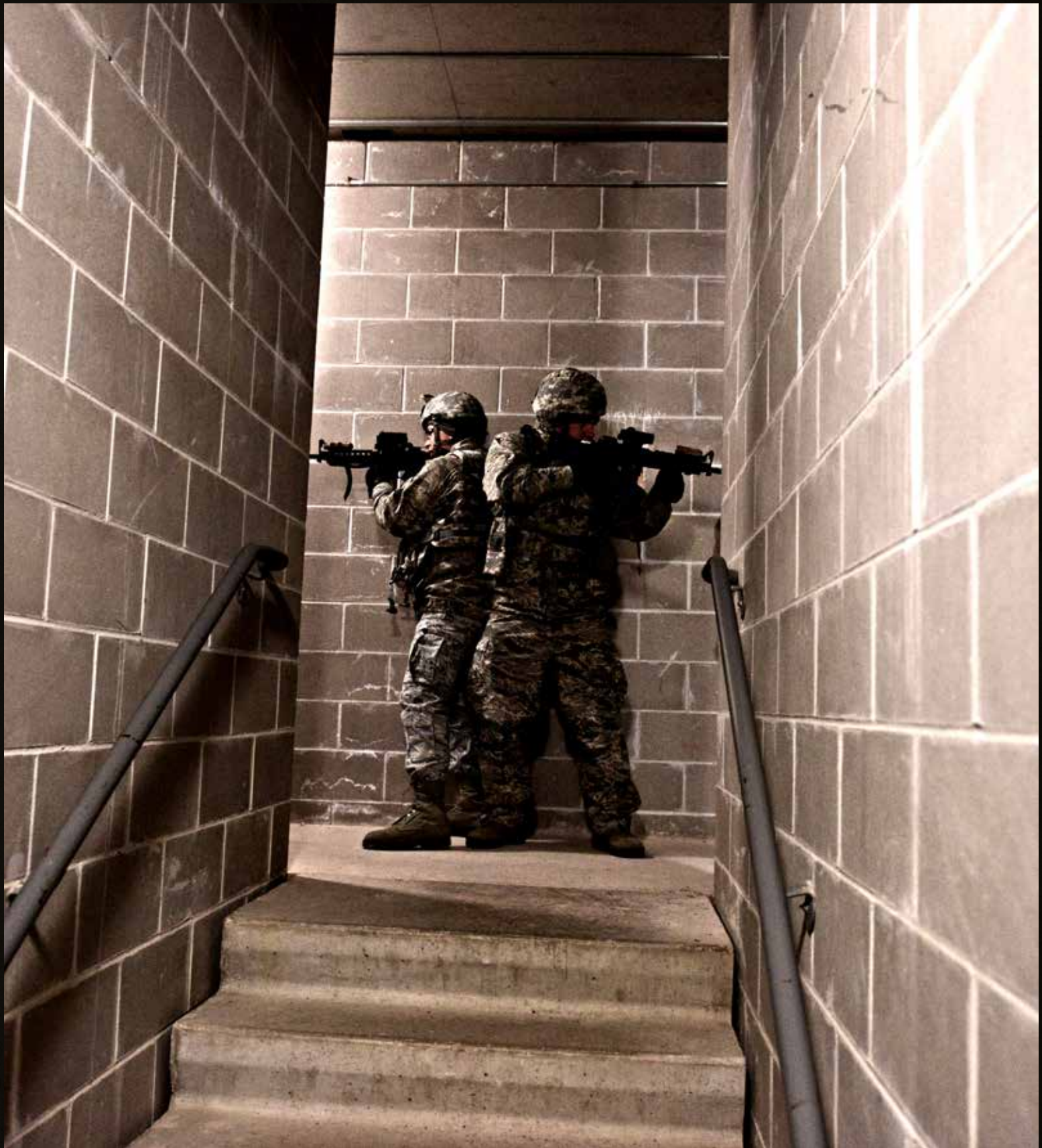
U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Brandon Shimmin and Airman 1st Class Taniya LaJesse, 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn. practice building clearing procedures while in training Feb. 28th, 2014. 148FW Security Forces personnel were at Camp Ripley, Minn. from Feb. 27 - March 2, 2014 to train in combat readiness tasks. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Anthony A. Housey/Released)

With winter winds blowing steady, and wind chills hovering at 30 below zero, 21 members of the 148th Security Forces Squadron (SFS) took over parts of Camp Ripley, Minn. in a four day combined drill. Led by Capt. John Christenson and Chief Master Sgt. Ryan Gunderson, the Airmen of the 148th SFS took part in advanced weapons and tactics skills training while utilizing state of the art weapons and vehicle simulators, as well as a large assault village.

During the period of Feb. 27 - March 2, 2014 the teams of the 148th SFS, arrived at Camp Ripley and went straight into simulated combat. Using the Engagement Skills Trainer (EST 2000), individual and squad weapons simulators, the SFS used M-4's and 249 Squad Automatic Weapons (SAW's), overcoming combat situations as a team, and handled law enforcement "shoot, don't shoot" scenarios. The group then spent two days working in the bitter, winter weather at the Combined Collective Training Facility (CACTF), a mock city set up to simulate any and all building configurations. Broken into two squads, they practiced

crossing open areas, entering a building, clearing hallways, rooms, and stairwells. Stepping up the training, Senior Master Sgt. Bill Hawley, Master Sgt. Jozef Miketin and Tech. Sgt. Rob Lucas moved the squads through multiple building search scenarios, from alarm activations, search warrant entries, large building clearing and lastly, active shooter scenarios.

The last day, the squads were challenged using Camp Ripley's Combat Vehicle Simulator. The two squads were assigned spots in a high tech computer simulator of Highly Mobile Multi-wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV) and Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Trucks (HEMTT's). Taking part as drivers, gunners and leaders, the member's vehicles are linked together with computer screens taking the members through convoy scenarios on roads simulating Afghanistan, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries, with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and attacks being thrown at the team.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airmen Tyler Ranta and Joshua Nelson, 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn. practice building clearing procedures while in training Feb. 28th, 2014. 148FW Security Forces personnel were at Camp Ripley, Minn. from Feb. 27 - March 2, 2014 to train in combat readiness tasks. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Anthony A. Housey/Released)

Capt. Christenson commented, "even though the temperatures were frigid, the 148th SFS enthusiastically embarked on another successful training run at Camp Ripley. These trips allow our squadron to hone combat readiness skills that are vital to the ability for us to perform stateside or overseas missions." Christenson also wanted to remember

the 148th SFS members that are currently deployed and unable to be at Ripley, as a critical part of the team, reminding everyone that they are utilizing the skills we have trained with at Camp Ripley in the past on their current deployment.

COMMUNICATING IN THE COLD

PHOTOS AND WORDS BY MASTER SGT. RALPH J. KAPUSTKA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The 148th Fighter Wing Communications Flight, Deployable Interoperable Communications Element (DICE) team braved wind chill factors up to 60 below zero to support the 2014 John Beargrease sled dog race that took place in Northern Minnesota during the last week of January 2014.

The DICE team's deployment site was a wooded area northwest of Grand Marais, Minn. The deployed location had limited road access and no amenities and forced the DICE team to set-up a place that they could sleep and work out of; a place where nothing previously existed.

The deployment gave the DICE team the opportunity to set-up and test their communications equipment. It included establishing communications via a mobile package called the Joint Communications Platform 3 (JCP3). The equipment and technology contained in this package can support both military and civilian operations. Some of the services this package can provide include satellite internet access, radio and phone communications, video teleconferencing (VTC) and satellite television. The package can bridge together separate organizations to allow them all to talk on the same network, be it computer, radio or phone networks.

"We test all capabilities of the JCP3," said Master Sgt. Bryan T. Druar, DICE team leader. "To us, this is a functionality test/exercise of our equipment before we deploy to a real world crisis, such as a flood fight. In addition to communication operability, we also perform training on tent set-up and get some exposure to cold weather survival."

Besides lending communication support for the race, the DICE team also provides direct support to each Musher. "We provide safety while they cross Pike Lake Road and we have the capability to provide first aid and shelter should the Musher need it," said Druar. "In the past

we have assisted in searching for Mushers that may have been lost on the trail. In addition, we provide HAM radio contact back down to Beargrease Net Control to keep them informed of the sled dog teams that pass our location."

"The annual local deployment in support of the John Beargrease sled dog race provides the 148th Communications Flight with a real world training exercise," said Lt. Col. James E. Stauber, 148th Fighter Wing, Communications Flight Commander. "Not only does it give us the opportunity to test our command and control capabilities in austere conditions, it also allows us to build a level of confidence and camaraderie among our Airmen that we can't get anywhere else. Additionally, this training exercise gives us the opportunity to maintain or expand the relationships we have built with local emergency management personnel and local residents."

The first remote John Beargrease training deployment to Northern Minnesota happened over 20 years ago in 1993. "The concept to support the race came out of a round table discussion which identified the need to provide wing leadership with a DICE team. The vision was to have a rapid deployable command and control capability that the Wing Commander could call upon at any time, an example would be a downed F-16 in remote Northern Minnesota. Due to this, we looked at doing an annual remote training exercise in Northern Minnesota and supporting the Beargrease at the same time turned out to be a perfect fit," said Stauber.

Over the years, the DICE team has been activated on numerous occasions to provide command and control support. They have always been well prepared and successful, thanks in part to the annual training exercises in support of the John Beargrease sled dog marathon.





U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Ryan Niesen and Staff Sgt. Eric Ronning have a warm meal while supporting the John Beargrease sled dog marathon Jan. 27, 2014. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka/Released)



U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Tom Walden operates communications equipment while supporting the John Beargrease sled dog marathon Jan. 27, 2014. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka/Released)

U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Bryan Druar, Non-Commissioned Officer In Charge (NCOIC) of the Deployable Interoperable Communications Element (DICE), 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn., sets up and tests communication equipment at a remote location northwest of Grand Marais, Minn., Jan. 28, 2014. Master Sgt. Druar and his team were at the remote location to provide communication support for the John Beargrease sled dog marathon. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka/Released)



SHORT SHOTS



434th Civil Engineer Firefighters are blindfolded to simulate extractions and victim recovery operations in a smoke-filled environment at the 148th Fighter Wing, Duluth, Minn. Mar. 2, 2014. They were tasked various firefighting techniques by 148th Fighter Wing firefighters. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Amie Muller/Released)



148th Fighter Wing recruiters Tech. Sgt. Denise Owen and Tech. Sgt. Brenda McCorrison pose for a photo new enlistee Jeffrey Clancey, who received his Eagle Scout award on Mar. 22, 2014. Clancey is among the less than 2% of Scouts that attain this prestigious award. Obtaining the rank of Eagle Scout is not an easy task as the requirements include earning at least 21 merit badges, progressing through five ranks, demonstrating scout spirit, service and leadership. A senior at Proctor High School, he has been involved in drama, cross country and band. He enlisted with the 148th Mar. 6, 2014 into Aircraft Electrical and Environmental Systems. (Courtesy Photo.)



Col. Penny Dieryck, 148th Fighter Wing Mission Support Group Commander, salutes Maj. James Bittmann during a change of command ceremony for the Civil Engineer Squadron Mar. 2, 2014. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Brett R. Ewald)



Members of the 148th Fighter Wing take in a year's worth of ancillary training at St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minn., Jan. 11, 2014. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Amie M. Muller)



Past and present chief master sergeants of the 148th Fighter Wing pose for a photo during the military ball at the Greysolon Ballroom, Duluth, Minn. Feb. 22, 2014. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka, graphic illustration by Tech. Sgt. Scott G. Herrington)



Current and retired members of the 148th Fighter Wing take part in a presentation during the military ball at the Greysolon Ballroom, Duluth, Minn. Feb. 22, 2014. (U. S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph J. Kapustka)

A NEW WAY OF DOING BUSINESS

BY MASTER SGT. RALPH J. KAPUSTKA, PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Master Sgt. Jennifer Long, Lt. Col. Thomas Ruud and Master Sgt. Sean O'Connor take the Inspector General (IG) oath of office from Col. Jon Safstrom, 148th Fighter Wing, Vice Wing Commander, Jan. 14, 2014. The three members are part of the 148th Fighter Wing IG team and will execute the Wing Commander's Inspection Program. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph Kapustka/Released)

Back in 2011 and 2012, the Inspector General (IG) completed a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Air Force Inspection System (AFIS) and found it to be wasteful, inadequate and unsustainable in the current and future resource environment. In short, the inspection system that was currently in place did not meet Title 10 requirements for commanders and the IG to inspect and report on the efficiency, economy, state of discipline and readiness of Air Force units. Something had to be done.

Born from this assessment is the new Commander's Inspection Program (CCIP) and it is now the foundation of the Air Force Inspection System (AFIS). The new inspection system is structured to report in accordance with the four key areas of Managing Resources, Leading People, Improving the Unit, and Executing the Mission. "What's great about seeing these four Major Graded Areas (MGA's) is that AFIS is finally in-line with what our Bulldog Action Plan and Minnesota National Guard Campaign Plan (MNNG CAMPLAN) look like, said Master Sgt. Jennifer Long, 148th Fighter Wing, IG Superintendent. AFIS is finally mirroring what commanders have been doing all along."

AFIS is going to help the 148th Fighter Wing (148FW) by eliminating the wasted effort and resources of preparing for large scale inspections. "The goal is to usher in a cultural change from spending countless hours and resources to present an unrealistically discrepancy-free program, to a process of continuous self-assessment

and improvement, said Maj. Paul Thornton, 148th Fighter Wing, Director of Inspections. We need to know our jobs well enough to recognize discrepancies and inefficiencies, be honest and admit them to ourselves and continuously find ways to get better at what we do."

The culture change associated with the new AFIS is not going to happen overnight. "Airmen need to realize that the 148FW IG is here to help them do their jobs as effectively and efficiently as possible, said Thornton. It is much better to seek out deficiencies than to hide or ignore them. We can't fix what we don't know (or won't admit) is broken." As part of the new AFIS, the 148FW now has four fulltime and one traditional member making up the IG team. The IG along with the support of Subject Matter Experts (SME's) will report on the health of each 148FW section through inspecting programs and core capabilities.

In order to improve, each Airmen needs to be a critical thinker and be creative in presenting solutions at a time when budgets are tight. "If a process in your shop is inefficient or does not make sense to you, do something about it. Just because "that's the way we have always done it" doesn't mean there isn't a more effective or efficient way to do it," said Thornton.

Ultimately, we all need to be open to feedback and change in order to improve. Remember that we all have the common goal of being the best shop that we can be and the 148FW IG team is here to help you accomplish that goal.

PROMOTIONS

JANUARY

PROUTY, SEAN, MDG, A1C
CARLSON, TYLER, SFS, SRA
SHIMMIN, BRANDON, SFS, SRA
SORCI, VINCENT, MXS, SRA
COUCH, AARON, MXS, SSGT
DAVIDSON, CALIN, AMXS, SSGT
CROSS, MICHAEL, CES, TSGT
NELSON, TYLER, MOF, TSGT
SAWYER, CHRISTINE, CPFT, TSGT

FEBRUARY

JANCKILA, KELSEY, LRS, AMN
GRAMS, OLIVIA, FSS, A1C
FLEISSNER, SARAH, FSS, SRA
SCHRECENGOST, DEREK, LRS, SRA
SMART, KATIE, MXS, SRA
ERIKSON, JASON, CES, SSGT
FISH, MICHAEL, SFS, SSGT
GORMAN, CRAIG, SFS, SSGT
KENYON, JOHN, LRS, SSGT
SANDA, PATRICK, CES, TSGT
ERICKSON, CASEY, SFS, MSGT
HILBERT, CATHERINE, HQ, MSGT
LESCH, REBECCA, FSS, MSGT
SCOUTON, ZACHARY, MXG, MSGT
HAWLEY, WILLIAM, SFS, SMSGT
RITSCHKE, DAVID, AMXS, SMSGT

MARCH

DERESCHUK, SHANE, CF, SRA
KUCZA, CORY, SFS, SRA
LAWERENGE, RACHEL, OSS, SRA
HANNA, THOMAS, CES, SSGT
SOUTH, NICHOLAS, CES, SSGT
KNEISL, HOLLY, FSS, TSGT
LUCAS, ROBERT, SFS, MSGT
PALKIE, RAYMOND, SFS, MSGT
WALKER, DAMON, CES, SMSGT

THE CLEANSING TREES

BY CAPT. RYAN BLAZEVIC, ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



Approximately 300 hybrid aspen and willows are planted to control the contamination in the upper reaches of the soil near the Civil Engineering Squadron. These trees are genetically enhanced and specifically selected to remove organic and inorganic pollutants from contaminated soil to a depth of 15 feet. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph Kapustka/Released)

There has been many a question that has been brought up over the past few months, over what is really going on below the hill along the front entrance road. The space that most of us remember as being occupied by the warehouses for the Civil Engineering, Logistics Readiness Squadron, and Security Forces Squadron had a greater purpose for the first twenty years of our installation. Prior to 1969, the flat area in front of Civil Engineering (building 252) was a sewage treatment system for the installation. This specialized septic system called an Imhoff® tank treatment system handle both domestic and industrial waste for the installation. Imhoff® systems were great at handling the domestic solid waste but they did not provide any form of treatment for industrial chemicals, such as many of the compounds that were used in the aircraft maintenance process. These contaminants of concern (COCs) included; benzene, trichloroethene (TCE), tetrachloroethene, and vinyl chloride to only name a few and let's face it these COCs are hard enough to pronounce, and the list only gets worse from here.

Starting all the way back in 1988 there had been some initial investigation work within the Site 21 area. Over the past 20 years, several different phases of remediation have been taking place, most of them not as obvious as what has been occurring over the past year. In late summer 2013, after the completion of the 2013 Readiness Inspection environmental mediation, contractors quietly began setting up operations for the final phase of clean-up work on Site 21. This phase began with the below ground injections of Emulsified Edible oil (EEO) and a special bacteria called KB-1®. The EEO is mainly a soybean based salad oil and provides a great food source for the bacteria which really does the work. The bacteria are anaerobic (do not require oxygen), and therefore chosen with the depth of the

contamination in mind. In some places it reaches down to 30 feet below ground surface. Over the approximately two plus acres of Site 21 about 300 hundred injections were made. Each point received 400 or more gallons of injectable brine, made from the EEO, common food grade lactate, and KB-1®. These injections of the bacteria brine will slowly degrade the deep layers of chlorinated industrial solvents that remain at levels above that recommended by the Minnesota Pollution Control agency. It is actually the bacteria that are the "stars of the show" here. They are able to consume the COCs as a food source.

Finally the most common asked question recently is, "what is with the sticks?" Currently the injections are taking care of the contamination that is in the 15-30 feet below ground surface. Now enters the "twigs," I prefer to call them a Phytoremediation buffer system. Some may think we were crazy, but the trees were actually planted on schedule late last fall. The experts from Ecolotree® wanted 6-12 inches of frost in the ground during the planting. Approximately 300 hybrid aspen and willows have been planted in a linear pattern to control the contamination in the upper reaches of the soil. These trees are genetically enhanced and specifically selected to remove organic and inorganic pollutants from contaminated soil to a depth of 15 feet. The trees themselves are not the real workhorse here though; once again the bacteria come into play. The root ball structure of the Willows and Aspen just happens to be the best places to have the bacteria grow. This whole process will take about another five years to reach completion. At that time most of the hybrid trees will be removed from the site. Later this spring, if the snow ever retreats, you may notice the addition of 30 Sugar Maples trees. These will be placed randomly throughout the project area to break up the pattern and to remain for base enhancement.

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Bulldog Bits



By Col. Penny J. Dieryck

Hopefully spring will arrive in the Northland prior to July 1st. At this time last year we were experiencing the greatest amount of snowfall for the month of April in the recorded history of weather. This past winter was another record setter.

Sixty days of minus zero temperatures, snow up to our eyeballs, Lake Superior freezing over, and snow banks/piles over three stories high. The snow industry, which has been lagging for the past several years, for lack of the fluffy, white stuff. The snowmobilers, restaurants, hotels, gas stations ... are overjoyed with the winter. Although many days were extremely cold, it did not stop people from enjoying the ski hills, cross country ski trails, or outdoor hockey games. These opportunities helped many people from going stir crazy or suffer from cabin fever.

As this winter rolled along, those of us who want to remember it now can tell their grandchildren, "I lived through the worst winter on record. It was below zero for 60 days in a row. You should have seen the snow banks, the wind, the drifts, black ice, vehicles in the ditch. I was shoveling snow almost every day from December through March. I wonder how my grandparents made it during these harsh winters with no snow plows, snow blowers, for wheelers, etc.? They sure were hardy people."

Speaking of hardy, hard-working people, the 148th Fighter Wing Honor Airmen were announced in November. I am sure they were very excited about the nominations and selection. They were as follows:

Airman of the Year: Senior Airman Aaron Couch

Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year: Master Sgt. Zachary Graves

Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year: Master Sgt. Cynthia Wahl

Company Grade Officer of the Year: Capt. Jennifer Peterson

Pilot of the Year: 1st Lt. Joshua Felleggy

First Sergeant of the Year: Senior Master Sgt. Scott Twining

It is a pleasure to work with these members and the caliber of the individuals is truly amazing. They not only devote time and energy to the Minnesota National Guard but hundreds of hours to their communities. It sure is great to have them on our team.

I wanted to close with a small pitch for the National Guard Associations, both officer and enlisted. These associations are diligently working issues on behalf of the Army and Air National Guard to include end strength, reduction of military retirement benefits to age 55 or 50, modernization of equipment, and numerous other GI Bill benefits for unit members and their families. With these factors to consider, please think about joining your respective organization.

To find out more information, visit www.ngamn.org or www.mngea.com or contact the following individuals:

Officer Association- Capt. John Christenson, (218) 788-7345 or Capt. Chris Rogge, (218) 788-7072.

Enlisted Association- Senior Master Sgt. Mark Wasserbauer, (218) 788-7254 or Tech Sgt. Kelly Hraban, (218) 788-7313.

To connect to the 148th Fighter Wing
website, scan this tag with your smart
phone or visit www.148fw.ang.af.mil

