

Teamwork, Leadership, and Friendship

Rhien-Main Combat Controllers tell why they're "Super Team"

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RHEIN-MAIN AB. Germany (S&S) — Teamwork, leadership and friendship are a big part of the success of the base Combat Control team, according to Lt. Col Ronald H. Lafond, head of combat operations here.

La Fond said he knew the group was a "super team" and last month they reinforced his confidence by winning the top award in the Volant Rodeo at Pope AFB, N.C.

The Combat Control team is a group of 20 air traffic controllers trained to move from one place to another by whatever means available such as scuba diving and skydiving.

Four controllers were selected in a competitive run-off to represent their team at the Volant Rodeo. They competed in various Combat Control exercises against 30 other units from the United States, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

Chosen were M.Sgt. Don East, T.Sgt. William Tynan, S.Sgt. Dale Peterman, and Airman I.C. Mal Ringlieb.

East, the unit's trainer, won the "Burgess L. Everson" award, by popular vote, for displaying the most admirable characteristics during the competition.

The Combat Control team, which originated in 1953, is a highly selective unit, said a unit spokesman. According to East, a former Combat Control school instructor, "Out of 25 entering the class, only about seven to 10 graduate."

After a Combat Controller graduates, he is required to train in special areas such as survival, scuba, and weaponry. "The training is just a basic foundation," Tynan said. "To be a fully capable Combat Controller, you need at least three to four years of experience."

La Fond said the Combat Controllers, particularly Rhein-Main's, are elite airmen. "If ever there were a war, the Combat Controllers would be the first to be called, and Rhein-Main's one of the first to go."

The Rhein-Main team was not always so successful in its endeavors, LaFond noted. "The team has taken a 180 degree turn in the past year. It had taken a lot of criticism the year before. It had screwed up on a major exercise.

In the past year, three men have been added to the unit. This also contributed to the team's recent success, LaFond said. The men are East, S.M.Sgt. Billy Moore and Capt. Michael Vorsch, all of the 435th Tac Airlift Wing Combat Control team. According to LaFond, these men have helped "close the big gap between middle management and leadership," which was considered to be the problem.

Combat Controllers are required, aside from their special training, to skydive and set off at least one explosive detonation once a month, a unit spokesman said. Also, unit officials noted that Combat Controllers on the average must go on temporary duty for 10 days each month.

Airman I.C. Steve Plummer graduated from Combat Control School in March. He said that "the work is tough, but I came into the service to keep in shape."

Many Combat Controllers are pursuing activities outside their work. Tynan, for example, has been going to night school to finish his bachelor's degree. According to Tynan, the entire unit will be taking German classes every Friday night. He said, "It is typical of Combat Controllers to want to continue their education."

Sgt. Mike Sanders, who took a nine- year break in his service as a Combat Controller to work on a ranch, said there are "threads that bind Combat Controllers together. We are a brotherhood, so to speak."



Combat charts

T.Sgt. William Tynan shows Airman I.C. Jeff Quesenberry how to make a chart illustrating the training done by each Combat Controller on the 475th Tac Airlift Wing Combat Control team. Combat Controllers are required to train in special areas such as survival, scuba, and weaponry.



AIC Mal Ringlieb

Sent by Patrick Aguilar