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OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE 141ST AIR REFUELING WING
DECEMBER 2024



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DECEMBER 2024

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IS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE EVENTS
AND INFORMATION OF THE 141ST AIR REFUELING WING
TO UNIT MEMBERS, THEIR FAMILIES AND RETIREES
AND TO RECOGNIZE PERSONAL AND UNIT
ACHIEVEMENTS WITHIN THE WING.

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OVER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY: SENIOR MASTER SGT. SHAUN BOPP



NOTES FROM THE TOP

MAJOR MARK WEST COMMANDER, 141ST FSS

"Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." This cautionary warning was famously delivered by Sir Winston Churchill while addressing the British House of Commons in 1948 in the aftermath of World War II.

This Saturday of Drill will mark the 83rd anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor and I think it's important we all reflect on that moment in history in the context of the world we live in and the threats we face today.

On December 7, 1941, Japan staged a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, temporarily crippling the U.S. Pacific Fleet. During the attack, 353 Japanese fighter and bomber aircraft descended on the base and carried out a relentless assault. U.S. forces were caught completely unprepared, and the Japanese navy managed to destroy or damage 20 American naval vessels, including eight battleships, and more than 300 aircraft in less than 90 minutes.

In total, 2,403 Americans were killed in the attack, and another 1,178 people were wounded. Following the assault on Pearl Harbor, Japan overran American and British forces in the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, Hong Kong, British Malaya, and Burma.

Within months, the Japanese were the masters of the Pacific with an empire that spanned from the Dutch East Indies to western Alaska.

Although the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor stunned Americans, Japan and the United States had been on a path to confrontation for decades, with each country escalating tensions through a series of diplomatic and economic provocations prior to the war.

There are many historical parallels between the rise of Imperial Japan in the early 1900s and the emergence of the People's Republic of China as a global power over the last three decades.

Both nations harnessed strong nationalist sentiment to unify their populations and portray themselves as the rightful leaders of their region.

Both nations undertook rapid modernization efforts to build themselves into technologically advanced industrial states to boost their economies and military capabilities.

Both countries invested heavily in their militaries to project power and secure their interests in the Pacific, fostering geopolitical tension with neighboring countries and the United States.

For a short time, Imperial Japan was able to establish dominance over large parts of East Asia and the Pacific, while today, the People's Republic of China threatens the world with expansionist ambitions to claim Taiwan and disputed territories in the South China Sea.

As we mourn the loss of Americans who made the ultimate sacrifice at Pearl Harbor, it is important to remember the lessons our country and military can learn from this tragedy.

While our nation finds itself in familiar territory as it confronts the global ambitions of the People's Republic of China, our fate is not predetermined.

Our greatest chance to preserve peace and prevent history from repeating itself is through the credible deterrence provided by our military's readiness. For deterrence to succeed, our adversaries must believe that they will suffer unacceptably high costs that outweigh any perceived benefits gained from attacking the United States or one of our treaty allies.

To strengthen America's Pacific deterrence strategy and optimize our service for great power competition, the Air Force is undertaking a rapid reorganization that will restructure our service to Combat Wings, Air Base Wings, and Institutional Wings to better support combat operations. There are still a few details being ironed out on how this will be implemented across the Air National Guard, but this new force generation model should eliminate "crowdsourcing" from multiple wings to fill deployment taskings. Under the new construct,

Airmen will deploy and fight alongside the teammates they know and have trained with while in garrison.

In addition to significant changes at the institutional level, Colonel McGovern will be unveiling an intensive training plan to produce Combat Ready, Multi-Capable Airmen for a potential conflict with China as early as 2027. Every member of the 141st Air Refueling Wing plays a pivotal role in our nation's collective deterrence by learning and performing their duties to the best of their ability so that our wing can project aerial refueling capability across the world at a moment's notice.

Thank you for all that you do and have a great Drill!

Mark



STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

WING MAKES U.S. MILITARY HISTORY BY
REFUELING RUSSIAN MADE SU-30MKM STORY & PHOTOS BY:
MASTER SGT. MICHAEL STEWART

light drizzle falls over the tarmac at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) Subang Air Base in Malaysia as pilots and maintenance crews from the 141st Air Refueling Wing begin their quarter-mile walk from the passenger terminal to two KC-135 Stratotankers. The team prepares the aircraft for the day's State Partnership engagement flights, a task they've done many times before in Malaysia. However, today's flight will be different. They are about to make U.S. military history by refueling a Russian-made aircraft—something that has never been done before.

As the maintenance crews begin their work, the drizzle turns into torrential rain, flooding the area. Water cascades off the sides of the aircraft like waterfalls, creating hard-edged outlines on the ground where the wings act as umbrellas. Lightning and thunder can be seen in the distance, growing closer. Crews

continue working cautiously, but there's a sense that history might not be made today, at least not in this weather.

"In my 12 years as a crew chief, this was the most rain I've ever had to work in," said Tech. Sgt. Dallas Browning, crew chief with the 141st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "We weren't too concerned about the lightning since it was six nautical miles away. The real challenge would have been performing maintenance on the hydraulics, which would have required us to walk out on the wings. Fortunately, we didn't need to do that."

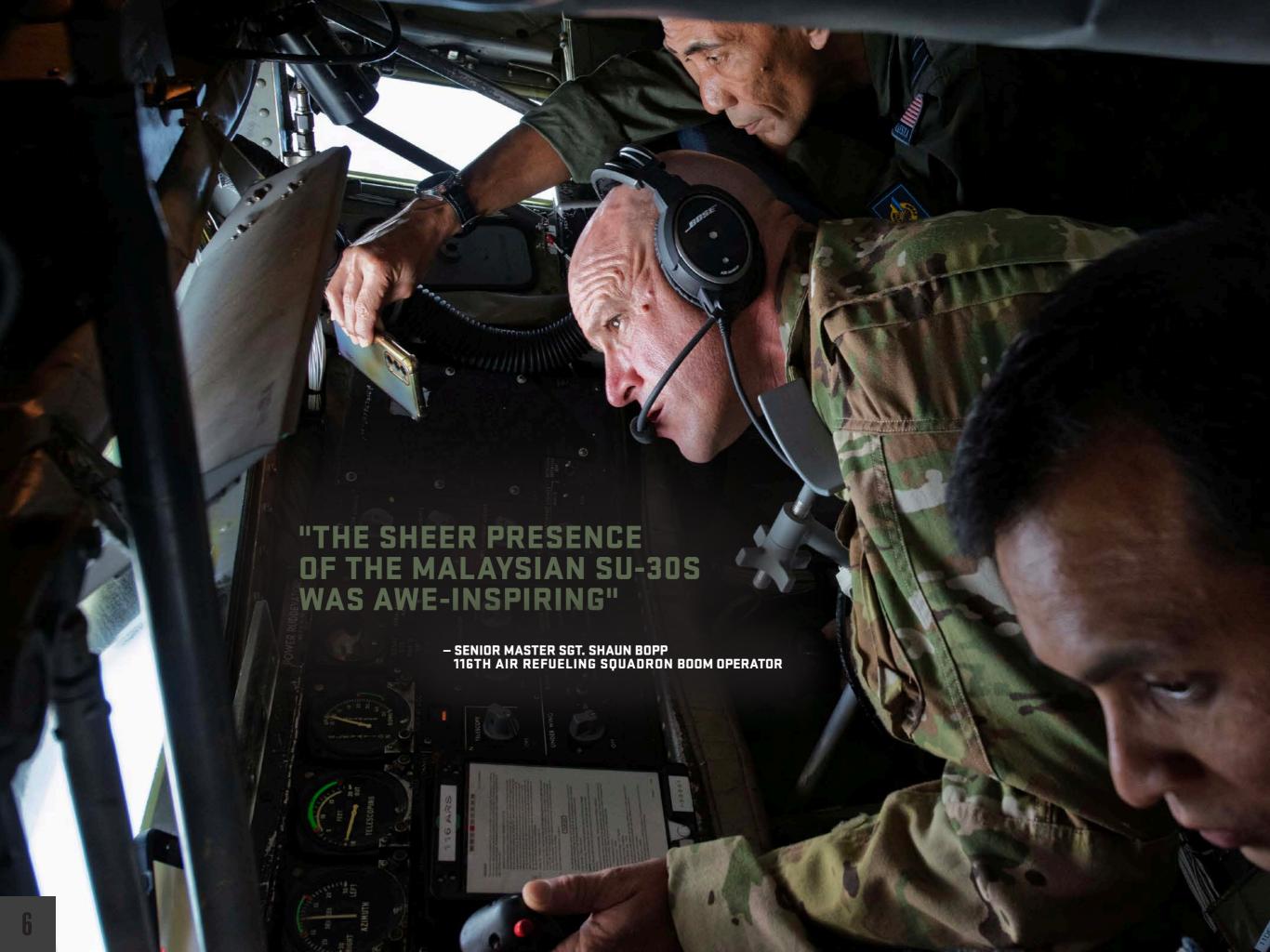
The heavy rain subsides, and the lightning warning clears just in time to board passengers. For this flight, the RMAF would fly two different aircraft: the Boeing F/A-18D Hornet and the Russian-made Sukhoi Su-30MKM. Each KC-135 is equipped with a different type of drogue to accommodate the two aircraft. One tanker,

supporting the Sukhoi, is fitted with dual underwing attachments known as the Multi-Point Refueling System (MPRS), while the other uses a Boom Drogue Adapter (BDA). Unlike the soft canvas basket of the MPRS, the BDA units use a steel basket, grimly known as the "Iron Maiden" by naval aviators because of its unforgiving nature. Although the probes on the Malaysian fighters can accommodate either system, there are risks involved.

"Due to the unforgiving nature of the 'Iron Maiden,' there is a higher risk of damaging or even breaking off the probe of the Su-30," said Chief Master Sgt. Walt Hinton, in-flight refueling manager with the 116th Air Refueling Squadron.

"We weren't sure about the durability and strength of its probe, as we had never conducted a refueling mission with this aircraft. It was safer to use the softer basket of the MPRS."

The momentous occasion attracts several





distinguished guests, including Maj. Gen. Gent Welsh, adjutant general of Washington state; Brig. Gen. Kenneth Borchers, commander of the Washington Air National Guard; Mr. Manu Bhalla, deputy chief of mission for Malaysia; and Gen. Tan Sri Dato' Sri Mohd Asghar Khan bin Goriman Khan, chief of the RMAF.

Both flights take off on time, which is crucial as they are scheduled to rendezvous with five Malaysian aircraft in a predetermined airspace. The location is only 20 minutes away, so everyone must be ready to execute the mission quickly, with little time to process what's about to happen.

The lead aircraft, piloted by Maj. Matt Fisk and Maj. Brian Kranches of the 116th Air Refueling Squadron, climbs to a cruising altitude of more than 20,000 feet, maintaining a steady flight pattern while awaiting the Malaysian fighters.

a call comes over the headset: "They're approaching." The crew quickly huddles around the small window as the aircraft comes into view. Witnessing a Russian-made fighter approaching a U.S. Air Force

On a KC-135, window space for observing a probe-and-drogue refueling is extremely limited. The fuel hoses are positioned at the ends of the tanker's wings, with the primary viewing spot being a five-by-seven-inch window. Everyone aboard huddles around it, jockeying for a clear view.

As they wait, Senior Master Sgt. Shaun Bopp, boom operator with the 116th Air Refueling Squadron, positions himself in the boom pod, ready to orchestrate the historic refueling. There's pressure to get this right. Everyone aboard the KC-135 peers out the windows, hoping to glimpse the approaching Su-30s. Ten minutes later, a call comes over the headset: "They're approaching." The crew quickly huddles around the small window as the aircraft comes into view. Witnessing a Russianmade fighter approaching a U.S. Air Force

plane, even in a friendly posture, felt unsettling for most aboard the jet.

"The sheer presence of the Malaysian Su-30s was awe-inspiring," Bopp said. "They're highly capable, multi-role fighters, and being up close to such advanced aircraft during a refueling was incredible."

During a refueling operation, the in-flight refueling specialist, more commonly known as a boom operator, takes complete control of communications and coordination between the refueler and the receivers when the aircraft are within half a mile of each other. Even for an experienced boom operator, this refueling mission was complex.

"The radio communication process was a significant hurdle," Bopp said. "The accents, mixed with slight differences in procedural phrasing, meant we had to speak slowly and clearly. We rehearsed key phrases beforehand









to ensure we were all on the same page. There was a slight delay at times due to radio compatibility issues."

When the first of three Su-30s approaches and makes contact with the drogue, a loud cheer erupts from those aboard for this once-in-a-lifetime moment. It's clear history has been made.

"It was so impressive to see the number of people who stepped up to make this happen, from the outstanding effort of our maintainers to the truly great work from our planners," said Fisk. "Multiple agencies within the Washington Air National Guard came through in a big way to get this done. I'm truly honored to have been a part of it. Hopefully, that's the message our partners in

the Royal Malaysian Air Force received—that members of the Washington ANG will step up and come through when it counts."

In 2017, the Washington Military Department partnered with Malaysia under the National Guard State Partnership Program to establish long-term relationships and interoperability between the two nations' armed forces.

The partnership includes sharing best practices in military support to civilian authorities, emergency management, disaster planning, port security, HAZMAT/WMD response initiatives, and airport security. It also facilitates economic, commercial, social, and cultural interactions between the two governments.

"This was an auspicious moment for our relationship: one that shows our outstanding interoperability and cooperation with key partners in the Indo-Pacific Theater," said Borchers. "I'm incredibly proud of the team at the 141st ARW for this truly historic accomplishment after years of effort and determination. I want to thank our partners in the Royal Malaysian Air Force for their professionalism and airmanship. This engagement was a high point in our more than seven-year relationship with Malaysia under the State Partnership Program. I'm excited to see how we can build upon this success in the future."



















The 141st Air Refueling Wing is changing with the strategic environment and adding a new Air Force staff structure, more commonly known as the A-Staff. These wing structure changes are tied to the sweeping changes announced in February 2024 by the Department of the Air Force. The Air Force made 24 key decisions to reoptimize the department to compete in Great Power Competition.

The current structure requires wings to accomplish multiple missions and balance competing manning and resource challenges to

achieve their missions. To reoptimize for Great Power Competition, our future organizations will be required to rapidly deploy as a unified warfighting capability and be agile and maneuverable with a much leaner staff.

"This optimized design empowers subordinates to make decisions at the lowest levels," said Col. James McGovern, 141st Air Refueling Wing Commander. "This structure will allow leaders at all levels to focus on the war fighting mission and integrate easily into Joint environments."

The first step of moving towards the DAF's

desired end state for wing structure, the new Unit of Action, is to establish A-Staffs within wings.

The A-Staff at wings consists of six Air Force functions categorized A1 through A6. These Air Force functions include A1- Manpower, Personnel, and Services, A2-Intelligence, A3- Operations, A4-Logistics and Engineering, A5- Plans and Integration and A6- Communications and Special Staff.

The 141st has designated 21 military positions for the A-Staff to improve readiness. The A-Staff is responsible for informing and implementing the wing commander's decisions, generating



recommendations and cultivating and maintaining the internal and external relationships needed for success. The joint force, major commands and field command levels of the Air Force have used the A-Staff construct for decades. Implementing A-Staff structure across wings will ensure a seamless transition when Airmen are deployed and need to work with a Joint Staff or A-Staff.

"Strategically it makes more sense." Said Lt. Col. Shannon Yellin, A4–Director of Logistics. "If you activate a wing and take it downrange you know the person to your right and the person to your left, knowing their individual strengths and weaknesses. This new structure allows us to train in-garrison how we will deploy and fight."

This new structure facilitates the wing's ability to prioritize needs that keep the wing mission ready.

"Anything at the wing level and below is going to stay with the groups but anything at wing level and above will be the responsibility of A-Staff to coordinate or collaborate with agencies like the National Guard Bureau and state headquarters," said Yellin. "Deployment taskers, whether they are for federal operations or domestic operations, would all flow through the A-Staff. "

The groups and squadrons can utilize the A-Staff for mission needs. It can help improve capabilities to integrate as a team, provide a strategic outlook on mission abilities and deliver opportunities for the team to be successful.

"As the A-Staff, we work with the groups and squadrons under our authority and know whether or not we could fulfill a given deployment tasker," said Yellin. "The A-Staff can also be used as a resource for squadrons for mission needs by collaborating with the proper channel, leaving the squadron more man hours for mission critical operations."

The 141st is familiar with this type of strategic structure but historically never called it the A-Staff.

"The Guard is going to be a little bit different than Active Duty because of the domestic mission we have. But the A-Staff concept is something that we have been doing a long time in the 141st," Yellin said. "We have a staff that helps integrate in a joint environment to support operations; examples are the Oso mudslide, wildfires, civil disturbance, and COVID operations. The transition to a wing-level A-Staff enhances what we have been doing in the wing for about a decade."

The wing-level A-staff went into effect at the 141st in September 2024 and is scheduled to reach full operational capabilities by the end of the year.

"As with any type of reorganization there will be some growing pains," said McGovern. "But I am confident our team will come together to work through these issues and succeed on any front."

CHIEF'S CORNER

CHIEF MASTER SGT. MATT AVILES 141ST FORCE SUPPORT SQUADRON





reetings 141st, It has been one year since I arrived here at Fairchild, and I am extremely grateful for being a part of an amazing wing. I am also extremely proud of the advancements we have made in the Force Support Squadron.

We have executed our mission while facing manpower constraints, a full-time releveling, commander support staff integration, and the eminent transition to a deployed combat wing. These challenges have forced the FSS to search for innovative solutions to achieve efficiency and to keep pace with the ever-evolving environment that 141st Airmen face as we support our allies and protect our interests in multiple theatres around the globe.

Streamlining processes and implementing innovative digital platforms have become a priority for FSS as we look towards the future in a complex battlefield opposite a Great Power Competitor (GPC). We have shifted our FSS SharePoint to be an interactive customer service platform where Airmen can find the resources and tools they need to help navigate their careers. The squadron is currently pursuing efficiency by testing

systems aimed at improving workflow and communication. One program is aimed at improving the current lodging process and another, PowerApps, can possibly replace Tasker for the 141st ARW and the Military Department for the entire state of Washington. Leveraging technology will enable us to support our members at any time from any location which will allow Airmen to focus on the mission and increase their capabilities.

A more efficient FSS will also enable its members in the MPF and Services to finally prioritize development and professional military education within. It will also help us to focus on compliance as we prepare for a Unit Effectiveness Inspection in 2026. The young and creative minds of the FSS have adopted and have fully embraced the priorities of Maj Mark West. People. Readiness, and Future (PRF). These priorities will continue to push the FSS from being reactive, to a proactive organization focused on serving its customers within the wing and beyond. Have a great drill!

CMSgt Matt Aviles



WINTER DRIVING

STATISTICS:

In 2022 there were 153,620 police reported crashes, 498 fatal, and an estimated 32,213 injury crashes that occurred when there was snow/sleet conditions at the time of the crash. Preparing yourself - and your vehicle for winter weather is key.

COMMON HAZARDS:

Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs Longer than normal hours at work Working odd shifts Long distance travel during the holidays

MITIGATION EFFORTS:

Practice winter driving in a controlled environment Prepare your car for winter and keep an emergency preparedness kit with you Leave early, plan-ahead for heavy traffic Put that cell phone away; many distractions occur while

driving, but cell phones are the main culprit

Designate a sober driver





he 141st Air Refueling Wing opened the Mark E. Fischer Airman Care Center with a ribbon cutting ceremony performed by Mark Fischer's wife, Robin Fischer, on October 18, 2024, at Fairchild Air Force Base, WA.

The care center was dedicated in honor of the late Col. Fischer who retired as the 141st ARW Vice Wing Commander in 2018 after 34 years of service. The center was created to embody the spirit of care, kindness and community that Fischer stood for throughout his life.

The care center is meant to be a place that supports the mental and emotional wellbeing of our airmen and their families—something that Fischer cared for deeply. With that in mind, the center houses the directors of psychological health, sexual assault response coordinator, victim advocate, military and family life counselor, and integrated prevention specialist.

In addition to those resources, the center has created a tranquil environment that includes a MindGym, massage chairs, and a soothing water feature to promote a place for relaxation, reflection and rejuvenation.













Feeding troops in combat situations has always been tough. Since commanders recognize that good morale comes with serving hot chow to troops in the combat zone, aggressive commanders instructed their cooks to bring one or two hot meals forward each day, often under the cover of darkness. These commanders knew

what happened to morale when their troops subsisted on C-rations for weeks on end.
William F. Ross and Charles F. Romanus wrote in The Quartermaster Corps: Operations in the War Against Germany: "In most situations, [the commander] could modify tactical dispositions enough to make feasible one expedient or

another for feeding hot food to his troops. The initiative and effectiveness of mess personnel in the subordinate companies reflected the interest of the battalion commander. It was observed that in aggressive units, mess personnel were also aggressive and provided more cooked meals in the front lines."



LEGAL CORNER

141ST JUDGE ADVOCATE OFFICE

We all appreciate the opportunity to come together and maybe even celebrate at various times of the year. These opportunities take many forms. We might be asked to speak at a local event because of our military service and be given a gift or we might simply want to recognize a member within our own organization with a gift. Regardless of the nature of the gift, there are rules that likely apply. These rules have been updated so a review is in order.

Generally, employees MAY NOT accept a gift from a lower paid employee or give a gift to a superior because of the perception of an unfair or unprofessional relationship. However, there are exceptions for gifts given on an occasional basis which include: items valued less than \$10; food and refreshments consumed at the workplace; and personal hospitality at a subordinate's home.

Another exception to the general prohibition of gifts between employees is the special infrequent occasion gift. This gift includes gifts for: marriage, serious illness, birth of a child, and termination of a superior-subordinate relationship by retirement, transfer, or resignation. They do not include promotions, holidays, or birthdays. Subordinates may give a gift or donate toward a group gift for the superior and the superior may accept the gift. Individual gifts have no firm monetary limitation but should be limited to that appropriate to the occasion. Solicitations for group gifts may not exceed

\$10 per person, but any employee is free to donate more. The total value of the group gift is limited to \$480 per donating group and all donations must be truly voluntary.

For gifts from outside sources, the general rule is that DoD employees are prohibited from soliciting or accepting if it is offered because of the employee's official position unless an exception applies. Additionally, DoD employees are prohibited from accepting a gift from a prohibited source (e.g., an organization seeking to do business with the defense agency, seeking official agency action, is regulated by the agency, etc.).

Exceptions to the general rules include: prizes/discounts/incentives open to the public or all DoD employees without regard to their official position; 20/50 Rule: DoD employees may accept a non-cash gift valued at up to \$20 per occasion and no more than \$50 per year; gifts based on a family/ personal relationship or an outside business relationship; and a gift given at a widely attended gathering. If you want to accept a gift at a widely attended gathering, you should seek guidance in advance because a detailed analysis is required. The bottom line is accepting and giving gifts can be fun, but it can also complicated. Every member needs to know the rules and follow them, keep your leadership informed, and ask questions. Let's keep the rules in mind, do the right thing, and keep everyone in compliance.

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