

AGE emphasizes COMBAT FLIGHTLINE

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS MICHAEL HESS

48TH FIGHTER WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

“One plane, one pilot; think of all the different people who are involved, and every one of them, except for the one who declares (the pilot) fit to fly, wears stripes,” said retired eighth Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Sam Parish at an enlisted call during his recent visit to RAF Lakenheath.

According to Chief Parish, the Air Force is an interlocking spider web of career fields. In order for Airmen in one career field to complete their mission, Airmen somewhere else must first do theirs.

Aerospace ground equipment Airmen have a big responsibility on their shoulders. The Liberty Wing crew chiefs, bomb loaders and other maintainers are dependent on AGE to supply the equipment necessary to do their jobs.

There are four combat AGE teams supporting the 48th AGE Flight. There is one CAT supporting each fighter squadron and one CAT supporting the wing, which provides the support for transient aircraft, maintenance support and NATO flying missions as well as base support as needed.

The equipment ranges from generators and air conditioners for stationary jets being inspected, to bomb lifts for the 48th Munitions Squadron to load bombs onto the aircraft.

Supplying the equipment is only a part of the battle. A faulty piece of equipment is of no use on the flightline. AGE Airmen must maintain and inspect the equipment regularly and make repairs when necessary.

“Every single piece of AGE equipment is inspected in 180-day cycles. The first inspection of the year is a minor inspection and the second is a scrutinizing examination,” said Master Sgt. Kenneth Blount, 494th Fighter Squadron CAT chief.

In addition to the regular inspections and maintenance, whenever equipment is deployed with the flight’s Air and Space Expeditionary Force tasking, it is inspected thoroughly before it’s sent and again

when it gets back, said Sergeant Blount.

“Returning from a deployment, the equipment is not only inspected for mechanical failures, but also for plants and animals from the deployed location that sometimes survive,” said Master Sgt. Raymond Moss, 48th AGE Flight chief.

“Camel spiders, sand vipers and scorpions have been found in the machines, after returning from the desert. Even equipment coming back from the United States can house black widow spiders,” said Sergeant Moss.

The goal of the thorough inspections is to ensure every piece of equipment is in top condition.

Anything from a loose bolt to a corroded wire can cause a machine to malfunction when the maintainers need it the most, said Airman 1st Class John Nelson, AGE journeyman.

Equipment maintenance is not only important for deployment. The equipment is also used off the flightline as well. Airmen with 48th Security Forces Squadron and the 48th Civil Engineering Squadron use AGE equipment, said Sergeant Moss.

For several years, their portable flood light cart and heaters were used by the 48th SFS to light the vehicle inspection areas at the base gates before permanent lights were installed.

“Our equipment and our troops are very versatile,” said Sergeant Moss.

Regardless of location, conditions or creatures lurking within the equipment, the AGE flights do their job, so that the mission can go on. “No air power without ground power” Sergeant Blount said.



Staff Sgt. Maggie Brown, 48th Equipment Maintenance Squadron aerospace ground equipment journeyman, replaces the bearings from a wheel from a mobile generator here Aug. 12.



Above: Senior Airman Aisha Davis, 48th Equipment Maintenance Squadron Aerospace Ground Equipment Flight journeyman, reinflates a bomb loader tire in Building 1226 here Aug. 12. **Far left:** Airman 1st Class Clinton Cunningham, 48th EMS AGE Flight journeyman, tightens a bolt while working on a bomb loader in Building 1226 here Aug. 12. **Left:** Staff Sgt. Javier Rangel, 48th EMS AGE Flight journeyman, loosens a “bleeding line” here recently in order for the jack rod to fall into place.

