

2000 SECRETARY OF DEFENSE MAINTENANCE AWARDS

by Robert T. Mason
Assistant Deputy Under Secretary
of Defense for Maintenance Policy,
Programs and Resources

The phoenix is a mythical bird that is consumed in flames but then rises from its own ashes. It symbolizes immortality, resurrection, and life after death. Thus, it is fitting that an award for superlative performance of maintenance to give new, sustained life to equipment and weapon systems be named for the phoenix.

The Secretary of Defense Maintenance Awards annually honor six military maintenance organizations for outstanding performance. The awardees—two each in the small, medium, and large categories—are chosen from active and reserve units that perform maintenance at the intermediate or unit level—that is, below the depot level. One of them—singled out as the very best—receives the Phoenix Award.

THE PHOENIX AWARD WINNER 555TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

The 296 men and women of the 555th Fighter Squadron—the famed “Triple Nickel”—have done themselves proud by being “the best of the best”—winners of this year’s Phoenix Award. The 555th made Air Force history by supporting two real-world contingencies—Operation NORTHERN WATCH and Operation DELIBERATE FORCE—simultaneously from two locations. The unit distinguished itself by exhibiting excellence in aircraft and munitions maintenance.

During the intense three months of Operation ALLIED FORCE, the squadron dropped

the most bombs of any F-16 unit. They attained a 98.6 percent weapons release rate and a direct hit rate of more than 80 percent—the best of any unit in the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing. They led the first NATO mission and flew the most combat sorties and logged the most combat hours of any unit assigned to the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing. Results like this prove the quality and effectiveness of their maintenance operations.

For the year, the 555th generated more than 4,000 successful sorties totaling almost 11,000 flying hours, the majority of

which were combat missions—the most of any unit in the United States Air Force. More astounding is that the Triple Nickel flew 8,000 hours in just 60 days! That means that the Triple Nickel maintenance people generated more sorties and hours than any other unit engaged in combat operations. The maintainers also reduced delayed discrepancies by 40 percent.

To win the most prestigious award in a field as distinguished as that populated by the maintainers—women and men—of today’s armed forces is a singular triumph indeed.



2000 AWARD WINNERS

AT SEA, AT HOME

The Aircraft Intermediate Maintenance Department (AIMD), Naval Air Station, Whidbey Island, a winner in the medium category, has performed superbly in maintaining and repairing EA-6B (Prowler) electronic warfare squadrons and other aircraft embarked on board 11 aircraft carriers. AIMD Whidbey deployed to support operations SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, NOBLE ANVIL, and ALLIED

FORCE, or were stationed state-side in the Pacific Northwest.

With more than 1,400 combat sorties flown during operations ALLIED FORCE and NOBLE ANVIL, the organization's expeditionary logistics units supported two dozen EA-6Bs around the clock with a facility intended for single-shift support of no more than five aircraft. No combat missions were flown without EA-6Bs, and AIMD Whidbey ensured that no EA-6B missions

were missed because of lack of intermediate-level support.

AIMD Whidbey's maintainers processed more than 100,000 maintenance actions during the past year. Their determination to provide the highest-quality maintenance to the fleet was clearly reflected in the Navy Electronic Warfare community's good health during an extremely active period of operations.

POINTING THE RIGHT WAY...ALWAYS FORWARD!

Special Operations Command's 16th Logistics Group, headquartered at Hurlburt Field in Florida, distinguished itself not only in maintaining aircraft, but also operationally by meeting no less than 99.3 percent of their flying-hour goal, and for one aircraft type, 103.9 percent. But beyond exceeding their goals, the 16th Logistics Group was true to their motto, "Always Forward," by devising and implementing revolutionary improvements in resource management.

The men and women of the 16th maintained an impressive

80 percent mission-capable rate on seven different airframes, generated the two most important combat missions of the Balkans conflict, and furthered the vision of improved readiness and reduced total ownership cost. Mobilizing more than 120 times in 12 months, for an unprecedented 75 contingencies and exercises worldwide, the group led first-in, last-out operations in the Balkans, capping more than 6 years of continuous presence in that theater.

These logistics warriors posted record readiness numbers for all

aircraft they were assigned and generated the first combat use of the AC-130U. Additionally, their MH-53Ms plucked downed F-117 and F-16 pilots from enemy territory while under fire. To accompany their operational achievements, the personnel of the 16th Logistics Group initiated such advances as the Depot Agile Repair Team (DART). The DART concept has worked so well that it is being used as a benchmark for the Army's and the Navy's special operations forces.

THE PROJECTION: AIR SUPERIORITY



The USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), a winner in the large category, is the first aircraft carrier since World War II to conduct sustained combat operations in two different theaters during the same deployment. Throughout the deployment, the Roosevelt's maintenance people kept the ship and her air squadrons in top-notch material and mechanical condition—ready to meet any tasking. Their accomplishments ensured the

carrier's presence in projecting American sea and air power throughout the world.

The Sixth Fleet's commander summed up the importance of their presence: "This carrier . . . there's nothing like it in the world. When this beast sails over the horizon the impact is enormous." The Roosevelt deployed to the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Gulf for combat operations to support Kosovo and over Iraq. Roosevelt

launched 9,300 sorties during deployment, more than half of them over hostile territory on combat missions that delivered more than 2 million pounds of ordnance.

Roosevelt's maintenance people made depot-level repairs that reduced costs of operations, in one instance saving almost \$6 million. The maintainers also made modifications that were so effective that they are being made throughout the fleet.



HEAVY LIFTING

The 60th and 349th Aircraft Generation Squadrons, from Travis Air Force Base, California, were awardees in the medium category. Like the other units receiving the Secretary of Defense Maintenance Award, these squadrons have distinguished themselves by superior aircraft maintenance—in this case, for the C-5 Galaxy, moving troops and heavy-lift cargo to support warfighters around the globe.

The two units are associate units, one being in the active

component and the other in the Air Force Reserve. Together, they are responsible for keeping nearly one-quarter of the Nation's airlift capability flying. Every recent use of the Nation's military might has required their work and dedication. They increased departure reliability by 12 percent the first month after implementing a "hot pre-flight" checklist they developed. The maintainers' efforts kept C-5s in action during operations PHOENIX SCORPION and

SOUTHERN WATCH. They also showed their mettle by aiding Puerto Rico, Honduras, and Turkey following natural disasters.

These units achieved the highest reliability, mission-capability, and maintenance delivery rates for C-5s in the Air Force. Their C-5s flew an impressive 23 thousand flying hours with an average worldwide reliability rate of 85 percent—the best in the Air Mobility Command—and delivered 100 percent on time.



HARD DAYS AND NIGHTS

Cherry Point's Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 2 (VMAQ-2) is a winner in the small category. The unit's maintenance personnel performed magnificently while supporting EA-6B (Prowler) operations during an unexpected five-month deployment to Aviano Air Base in Italy, providing sorties for Operation ALLIED FORCE. The unit overcame severe challenges of deploying on 96-hours notice. They provided more than 33,000 maintenance man-hours supporting over 600 sorties and



nearly 2,500 flight hours, with phenomenally high mission-capable rates—over 80 percent. The squadron innovatively managed personnel and material resources to introduce new test equipment, the USQ-113 communications jammer, and the HAVEQUICK frequency-hopping radio, increasing warfighting capabilities significantly.

To appreciate VMAQ-2's accomplishments fully, one must note the huge difference between what the squadron was expected

to do and the tasking actually executed. At the outset, VMAQ-2 had several maintenance-intensive aircraft requiring depot-level modifications and inspections. To keep the strike force operational, the maintainers worked around the clock for 100 straight days.

The fact that this squadron cancelled no missions throughout ALLIED FORCE speaks volumes for the Marines who kept the aging, maintenance-intensive EA-6B airframes flying.



WHERE WE STAND

In the 16 years of the Phoenix Award's existence, some 100 units have stood out by winning Secretary of Defense Maintenance Awards. From their number, each year is selected one unit to receive the highly coveted Phoenix Award. This period has seen—in addition to a peacetime OPTEMPO that is demanding enough in itself—a series of hot spots, contingencies, and conflicts. These include Panama, the Persian Gulf War, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and continuing difficulties with Iraq. All through this time, our warfighters have been sustained by unsurpassed support from highly motivated and extremely competent professional maintainers. Today, because of the general excellence of the maintenance teams throughout the armed forces, it is not easy to select only six to represent the others. These six units exemplify the way in which our maintenance personnel, day in and day out, employ innovative thinking and creative energy to meet the challenge of keeping our Nation's critical air, sea, and land systems deployed and functioning worldwide.

**2000 Secretary of Defense Maintenance Awards
Presented by
The Honorable Roger W. Kallock
Deputy Under Secretary of Defense
(Logistics and Materiel Readiness)**

