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KNOWLEDGE

FEBRUARY 2017

OFFICIAL SAFETY MAGAZINE OF THE U.S. ARMY

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KNOWLEDGE

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KNOWLEDGE is published online monthly by the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, Building 4905, Ruf Ave., Fort Rucker, AL 36362-5363. Address questions regarding content to the managing editor at (334) 255-2287. To submit an article for publication, email christopher.n.frazier.civ@mail.mil or fax (334) 255-9044. We reserve the right to edit all manuscripts. Visit our website at https://safety.army.mil/media/knowledge.

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Mission Statement:
The Army Safety Team provides the Army with safety and risk management expertise to preserve readiness through the prevention of accidental loss of our Soldiers, Civilians, Families and vital resources.

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GET THE PICTURE?

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

After serving 20 years in the military, I've found that, in many cases, accidents and mishaps are due to a lack of situational awareness. It nearly cost me my life during my first assignment in the U.S. Army.

I was a combat medic assigned to the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment and had participated in the Battle of 73 Easting during Desert Storm. I treated and evacuated wounded in a bullet-riddled vehicle and lived through the 100-hour war. Shortly after, my regiment was given marching orders to establish checkpoints and humanitarian aid along the Euphrates River.

Over the next couple of months, we provided medical support to many Iraqi citizens. In every case, I remained cautious of them — feeling they were still a threat. I sometimes wondered, "Does he or she have a weapon or a bomb, just waiting to kill an American Soldier?" I never felt safe unless I was inside the unit compound or in my trusty M113 armored personnel carrier.

Eventually, the peace accord was negotiated and the regiment was given a short timeline to depart Iraq. Our route out of Iraq was pretty much the reverse of how we entered and involved little rest along the way. This meant we traveled west for a time, then south to Saudi Arabia. Throughout the mission, our first sergeant and commander constantly stressed situational awareness and the importance of the buddy system.

Unlike most convoys, where movement is usually single file, we traveled in tactical formations. Throughout the war, I always positioned the vehicle to the left flank of the other combat vehicles. This provided extra protection since there wasn't much of a weapon system on a medical vehicle besides two M-16s.

Once we made our turn south, our pace picked up to meet our mission timeline. We soon came upon a large assortment of battle-damaged enemy vehicles. As the unit continued its movement, my tactical commander took pictures of the damaged vehicles while I focused on our position and movement.

At the next rest and refueling, the commander came over the net and said we needed to remain focused because there were still many threats out there. We continued the tactical march and soon came upon more battle damage. As I drove, my TC once again began taking pictures. Before long, I was doing the same.

Suddenly, there was an explosion that brought my M113 off the ground and sent a shower of flames over the vehicle. My combat vehicle crewman helmet struck the back and front of the driver's entrance as we came down and rolled to a stop. I saw my TC lying on the floor of the vehicle and called out to see if he was OK. He said he was fine and asked the same of me. I sat there for a few minutes, making sure I wasn't bleeding and still had control of my faculties.

Within seconds of the blast, the first sergeant radioed to check on us. We acknowledged his orders and informed him we were both OK. My TC and I then climbed out of our hatches to assess the situation.

While we were busy taking pictures, I had driven into a field of unexploded ordinance. This incident resulted in two damaged road wheels, the driver-side shroud blown half off and four damaged track shoes. Fortunately, our mechanics were able to get us back up in a couple of hours so we could continue our mission.

In the Army, we often hear the saying "Stay alert, stay alive." On this day, my TC and I failed to stay alert and we're lucky to be alive. We both lost situational awareness — something that had kept us safe during the previous five months of our deployment. This incident was a wake-up call. No matter how routine the task, never let your guard down. ■

SLIP AND SLIDE

RICHARD D. LICHTWARDT

I consider myself a pretty safe person. I take into account the conditions around me, identify the possible hazards and come up with solutions. I use risk management in both military operations and my off-duty activities. Sometimes, however, what I think is a good solution to a hazard isn't always correct.

It was an exceptionally warm November day for the Fairbanks, Alaska, area. Normally during this time of year, the temperatures were in the single digits. On this particular day, though, the sun was shining and the temperature was above freezing. It was warm the previous day, too, and the ice had melted and the roads were drying out. I figured this would be a good day to visit a place called Chena Hot Springs, which was about 55 miles from my home.

It was almost noon when I began my trip. Since the driving conditions looked good, I took my pickup out of four-wheel drive to save a little gas money. The previous night's temperatures had dropped below freezing, and the roads were now wet again, but I seemed to be doing OK in two-wheel drive. As I drove through the city, I maintained a safe speed and distance from other vehicles while monitoring the road conditions. I didn't have a clue that I was about to get into trouble.

I'd covered about five miles and was going up a gentle slope at 50 mph. When I accelerated to maintain my speed, my rear tires lost traction and I began sliding to the right. I turned my wheels in the direction of the slide and slammed on the brakes, trying to avoid going off the road. On either side, there was a 30-foot drop-off with trees and other objects. Instead of stopping, however, my vehicle began sliding backward and sideways toward the left side of the road. I went off the road and down the steep slope, certain my pickup was going to roll over.

Fortunately, there was enough snow on the slope that my vehicle didn't overturn. Instead, it came to rest at the slope's bottom. I got out and checked my vehicle and everything seemed fine. As I went on foot to look for a spot to get back onto the road, I realized how lucky I'd been. Fortunately, there hadn't been any oncoming traffic. I'd also narrowly missed a tree line and cement water pipe.

While walking on a snowmobile trail, I noticed access roads on both sides of me. The problem was these access roads were about 10 feet higher than the trail, and the slope was steep getting up to them. As I headed toward my pickup, I realized someone else could make the same mistake I did and slide off the road and hit my vehicle. I ran back through the snow to my truck, put it in four-wheel drive and drove to one of the access roads. I eventually made it out of the ditch with the help of a tow truck. The tow truck also pulled out another vehicle that had gone off the road the previous evening and struck the tree line about 50 feet from me.

After everything settled down, I thought about what happened and how I could prevent it in the future. I realized because there hadn't been much traffic and the road was shaded from the sun, it was still icy. I don't know if using four-wheel drive would have prevented this accident. However, I decided I would keep my truck in four-wheel drive during the winter and always check road conditions with appropriate agencies. ■

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

Snow and ice can make winter driving hazardous. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Occupational Safety and Health Administration offer the "Three P's of Safe Winter Driving" in hopes of preventing motor vehicle injuries due to winter storms.

Prepare

- Maintain your car. Check battery, tire tread, and windshield wipers; keep your windows clear; put no-freeze fluid in the washer reservoir; and check your antifreeze.

- Have on hand. Flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter, even floor mats), shovel, snow brush and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. For long trips, add food and water, medication and cellphone.

- Stopped or stalled? Stay in your car, don't overexert, put bright markers on the antenna or windows and shine the dome light, and, if you run your car, clear the exhaust pipe and run it just enough to stay warm.

- Plan your route. Allow plenty of time (check the weather and leave early if necessary), be familiar with the maps/ directions, and let others know your route and arrival time.

- Practice cold weather driving!
  - During the daylight, rehearse maneuvers slowly on ice or snow in an empty lot.
  - Steer into a skid.
  - Know what your brakes will do; stomp on antilock brakes, pump non-antilock brakes.
  - Stopping distances are longer on ice.
  - Don't idle for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space.

Protect yourself

- Buckle up and use child safety seats properly.

- Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air bag.

- Children 12 and under are much safer in the back seat.

Prevent crashes

- Drugs and alcohol never mix with driving.

- Slow down and increase distances between cars.

- Keep your eyes open for pedestrians walking in the road.

- Avoid fatigue. Get plenty of rest before the trip, stop at least every three hours and rotate drivers if possible.

- If you are planning to drink, designate a sober driver.

WHY IT'S A TWO-

As an aviator, I am cautious around anyone who uses the word "easy." Just because a mission appears to be simple does not mean it will turn out that way. It is our responsibility as pilots to conduct proper flight planning procedures and risk management to identify potential hazards in the mission before takeoff.

As it was, the mission I had been handed did appear relatively simple. I would pick up a team and drop them off at one of the remote sites in the terrain flight training area to conduct a noise abatement survey. The air mission request called for a hovering altitude of 500, 1,000 and 2,000 feet for noise data collection. After three patterns around the landing zone at three altitudes, I would land, pick up the team and return to base. The whole mission would take 30 minutes.

As a relatively new pilot in command, I did not want to overlook any details. I planned the flight, calculated the fuel requirements and performance planning card, filled out the mission risk analysis worksheet, confirmed details with the AMR point of contact and printed mission packets. Weather was forecast for ceilings at 3,000 feet with seven miles visibility and winds calm. The TFTA was next to a ridgeline, and weather typically degrades there first, so I would need to update frequently.

The morning of the flight I briefed my co-pilot and crew and filled them in on the details. We updated weather and flew our passengers to the LZ. Upon drop-off, the noise abatement data collection team established communications over the radio and we took off to establish a pattern at 100 knots.

With the first two altitude checks accomplished, I switched duties with my co-pilot, at his request, for cockpit management practice and took the flight controls. I was sitting on the left and wanted a visual on the team in the LZ, so I started patterns to the left in a slow climbing turn to 2,000 feet. The weather update had stated the ceilings at 3,000 feet, but when we reached 1,800 feet, the clouds appeared to be descending on us. My co-pilot radioed the team to let them know we could not accomplish the requested 2,000-foot hover but would be deviating to 1,500 feet.

I finished the turn and began a descent to a high hover. My co-pilot was making the 15-minute operations-normal call required in the TFTA when the aircraft started shuttering. My initial thought was I had found some turbulence.

PERSON COCKPIT

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ANYA SHARMAN
A Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Aviation Regiment
Hawaii

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO IMPLEMENT AN OPEN COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT AND WORK TOGETHER AS A TEAM."

I pushed forward on the cyclic just as my co-pilot looked over and asked, "Are we settling with power?" Of course, I was settling into my own downwash. We had already begun to fly out of it with the slightest forward movement, but I initiated a traffic pattern to realign the approach to a hover without a descent. We were able to hold the hover for the time required to collect noise data and get the noise team back to base on time.

As a PC and crewmember, it is my responsibility to not only provide a safe and efficient mission task for the customer, but also to communicate with the crew and get us all back home. It is important to implement an open communication environment and work together as a team. I was distracted by the physical implications of the event and the adverse weather, but my co-pilot immediately identified the situation we were in and offered assistance.

There is most definitely a reason it's a two-person cockpit. I hope to continue to establish a climate that encourages teamwork and open communication throughout my Army career, both in and out of the cockpit. ■

A Lack of Good Judgme

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 R. JAMES STEPHENS
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Fort Knox, Kentucky

As aviators and crewmembers, we are highly trained professionals. We do our job repeatedly to the point of muscle memory. The only thing that changes are the conditions or missions we fly. We are expected to operate with great attention to detail. But once we are off duty, why do we find ourselves taking risks we might not take on duty?

I was a state highway patrolman a few years ago in Arizona. Just before Christmas, my partner and I took a call for a fatal accident involving a motorcycle and an SUV. An ambulance service from Nevada was en route to the scene and would arrive before us. But for investigation purposes, we had jurisdiction.

The accident was on Highway 93 between Kingman, Arizona, and Boulder Dam, which is on the Colorado River, separating Arizona and Nevada. We left Kingman at a high rate of speed with our lights and siren on, cutting through the cold, dark desert. The drive was about 50 miles, so we knew it would take a while to get there.

When we arrived on the scene, traffic was backed up a couple miles in both directions and many people were standing outside of their vehicles. The scene was quiet except for a few vehicles that drivers had left on for heat. In the distance, you could faintly hear occasional radio traffic from emergency vehicles that had arrived about 30 minutes prior.

Emergency responders had already secured the scene and extracted the driver of the SUV. A Life Flight from Las Vegas was also just landing to transport the driver to a hospital. As I surveyed the scene, I noticed there was a large indentation in the SUV's shattered windshield, and the driver's-side door was caved in.

The SUV was now off the road and turned 180 degrees from its original direction of travel. The driver's air bag had deployed, probably saving his life.

The driver of the motorcycle was lying face up in the road. His bike was in pieces, scattered about 200 feet across the roadway. As I examined him, I noticed he wore most of his personal protective equipment. Unfortunately, he chose to wear a novelty helmet that did not provide appropriate protection. The whole top of the helmet was missing, as was the man's upper cranium. Brain matter was lying in the road not too far from the body.

The man was traveling from Phoenix to Las Vegas, just as he probably had many times in the past. Witnesses said he'd passed them at a high rate of speed, weaving in and out of traffic before colliding with the SUV. Sadly, this lack of good judgment claimed his life. Now, his family and friends, as well as the driver of the SUV, will have to pay for that bad judgment.

I have been in Army aviation since 1990. Over the years, I've seen numerous decisions and incidents that involved a lack of good judgment. Some paid the ultimate price for it, while others miraculously lived to see another day. My challenge to you is to always have a plan and execute it using sound judgment. With a good plan and sound judgment, you can't go wrong. Don't let your daily routine lead you to becoming complacent. Whether you're riding, driving or flying, always think safety. ■

Take a hike

WILLIAM J. LADD
Directorate of Emergency Services
Fort Drum, New York

Are you one of those hardy souls who enjoys the great outdoors during winter? Sure, the Army trained you to work and fight in the cold, but what about when you're off duty, hiking or backpacking with friends or family? Do you remember to plan for the cold weather hazards? And what about the people hiking or camping with you? How well trained are they to survive? To ensure your visit to the outdoors ends happily, here are some tips derived from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation:

• Plan your trip well in advance and leave a trail plan with someone at home and, as a backup, a friend or co-worker. Don't overestimate your stamina and choose a reasonable daily destination. Stay in good physical shape and get plenty of rest. If you're hiking a trail, sign in at all trailhead registers on your route.

• Be familiar with your area of travel. Obtain up-to-date maps and take them with you. Check your maps often and stay oriented.

• Avoid traveling alone. As a minimum, travel in a group of three or more. If a hiker is injured, a member of the group can stay with the victim while the others seek help.

• Carry gear suitable for changing weather conditions, including rain and snow. If you're planning an overnight trip, take a tent, space blanket or good tarp for shelter. Also bring a stove, good rain gear, wool pants, hat, sweater and a change of dry clothes for the cold. Always wear wool or appropriate synthetics. Cotton does not insulate when wet; it actually draws heat away from the body. Also, every group of day hikers should carry at least one sleeping bag in case of an emergency. Should someone be unable to get to shelter, the bag can help keep them warm.

• Bring plenty of high-energy foods such as cereal, granola bars, dried fruit and nuts to snack on while traveling. Drink lots of fluids to prevent dehydration.

"USE RISK MANAGEMENT TO ASSESS THE HAZARDS AND DEVELOP COUNTERMEASURES TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THEM."

• Camp early and set up well before dark or at the first sign of stormy weather. Keep your group together, especially toward the end of the day.

• Don't take unnecessary chances or push too hard. Abandon the trip if anyone becomes sick or bad weather sets in. Know your group's limitations and make modifications as necessary. The mountain, lake, river or trail will still be there for the next trip.

• If you think you're lost, stop and sit down. Try to think calmly, refer to your map and compass and check for landmarks. Don't continue traveling unless you know where you are. The other members of your group should also stay put. Remember, there's a leader in every team, and sometimes it has to be you.

• If you are indeed lost, stay in one place. Put out signals in threes: three yells, whistle blasts, gunshots or columns of smoke. Any signal of three is a standard distress signal. Make your area and yourself highly visible. Also ensure children know what to do if they get lost.

• Each person should carry a survival kit that includes the following items as a minimum: map, compass, signal mirror, matches, whistle, enough change for a pay phone, flashlight, rope, space blanket, raingear, extra wool sweater and snacks. Carry a cellphone or, better yet, look into renting a satellite phone so you can call for help if needed.

Following these steps can lead to a fun, safe and successful winter outing. Use risk management to assess the hazards and develop countermeasures to reduce or eliminate them. And when you're warm and cozy back home, take a few minutes to remember the great time you had thanks to your risk management skill. ■

FYI

Visit the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's website at http://www.dec.state.ny.us for more outdoor safety tips. Additional information on hypothermia and other cold weather injuries can be found on the U.S. Army Public Health Center website at https://phc.amedd.army.mil/.

SURVIVING HYPOTHERMIA

Hypothermia can pose a serious danger should you or others be caught without shelter during cold weather. Hypothermia happens when the body's inner core begins to cool and leads to the victim's progressive mental and physical collapse. Hypothermia can occur at temperatures above freezing and is accelerated by dampness, wind and exhaustion.

Because the signs of hypothermia are progressive, victims might not recognize the beginning stages. Here are some of the more noticeable early warning signs:

- Uncontrollable shivering
- Reduced muscle coordination leading to difficulty walking, or fumbling when trying to handle things
- Reduced mental awareness leading to incoherent speech, apparent drowsiness and irrational or uncooperative behavior

Treat hypothermia by immediately warming the victim. If possible, protect the victim from the wind and rain and remove any wet clothing, replacing it with dry clothes. Also try to get the victim to a source of warmth such as a campfire. If a campfire or heater isn't available, warm the victim by placing them inside a sleeping bag where they can have skin-to-skin contact with a healthy person. Give the victim hot drinks such as soup or sugared water, but avoid caffeine and alcohol. Keep the victim awake and conscious and seek medical help immediately.

WORDS HAVE MEANING

DANIEL JOHNSON

In early 2008, when I was a new Soldier with just over a year in service, I was assigned to Fort Sill by the Oklahoma National Guard to work in the control tower at Henry Post Army Airfield. I was there to get my FAA control tower operator certificate. During my training, I observed several interesting events, but the day of a near miss sticks out in my mind.

It was a sunny spring day and there was a GSAB from the California National Guard conducting premobilization training at Fort Sill. I was working the ground position unsupervised because I had recently been signed off to work ground. Since the weather was so nice, there were an unusual number of operations taking place that day. In addition to the ARNG unit, there was an extraordinarily high number of airplanes from Shepard Air Force Base coming through to conduct various instrument approaches. The Air Force frequently used Fort Sill to practice PAR, ASR and ILS approaches as well as flame-out patterns. All of these aviation operations, as well as artillery live fire in the ranges, made for a busy Class D airspace.

In the afternoon, a UH-60 Black Hawk called requesting taxi instructions. This particular aircraft wanted to take off from the runway and depart the pattern. So when he requested to taxi, I gave him the standard instructions to taxi to the active runway at that time, Runway 17. The clearance I gave was somewhere along the lines of, "Black Hawk 030, post ground, taxi to Runway 17. Winds 180 at 10, altimeter 29.92." This is a standard piece of phraseology that all pilots, military and civilian, should hear frequently. It means the pilot is to taxi to and hold short of Runway 17 at the hold short line and await further instructions.

The aircraft proceeded from its parking spot down the parallel taxiway. However, instead of holding short at the runway, the pilot decided to taxi onto the runway and begin conducting a hover power check. He made no request to taxi onto the runway or come to a hover. What the pilot and crew of that aircraft were not aware of was that at the time of their runway incursion, there was an Air Force T-38 conducting a PAR approach on a one-mile final to Runway 17.

"WHEN INSTRUCTIONS ARE NOT UNDERSTOOD AND FOLLOWED, THERE IS A POTENTIAL FOR CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES."

During a PAR approach, the local controller has no radio contact with the aircraft conducting the approach. The only person who communicates with the aircraft for the duration of the approach is the PAR controller. The local controller gives landing clearance, as well as any other instructions, to the PAR controller, who then relays them to the pilot. It is the responsibility of the local controller to keep the path clear for the aircraft conducting the approach. Any emergency instructions must go through the PAR controller and that takes precious time.

As I watched the aircraft cross the hold short line and take off, I began yelling at him over the radio, as did the local controller, because at this point we didn't know what frequency the pilot was monitoring. One way or another, the pilot decided he knew better than the air traffic controllers and continued to do what he wanted. So the local controller had to relay side-step and go-around instructions through the PAR controller to the aircraft. The T-38 was on very short final when it careened out of the way, just missing the UH-60. An OHR was filed against the UH-60 that day.

The moral of the story is words have meaning. When instructions are not understood and followed, there is a potential for catastrophic consequences. It is incumbent upon aviation professionals to understand every aspect of their job to provide for the safest operations possible.■


D342FRS

A Disaster AVERTED

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST

Movement operations might not sound dangerous, and they're certainly not all that glamorous. As my unit's movement officer, I must confess I wasn't thrilled at the prospect of moving our equipment — all 1,500 pieces — from theater and being the last to arrive home. We were redeploying from Iraq after a year-long tour, and all of us were eager to see our loved ones.

Despite our "get-home-itis," we managed to clean all the equipment in record time with no injuries thanks to the great leadership and supervision of our NCOs. Everyone got on the plane and headed home except for about 15 troops who stayed behind to help load the ship.

We received the last of our equipment at the port the day before our ship arrived. The equipment was mostly ISU-90 storage containers, but there were a few broken vehicles that had been hauled to the staging area by privately contracted civilians. Everything was accounted for except a broken fuel truck, which finally arrived at 2300. By that time, we'd been up for 18 hours and really wanted to get some sleep. Needless to say, we were ready to get the fuel truck unloaded and finish our day.

Since the fuel truck wasn't operational, the contractors had winched it onto a lowboy wrecker for the drive. Now we had to figure out how to get it off the lowboy. We didn't have a crane that could lift the vehicle, and it would have taken hours to get one. The contractor driver suggested elevating the lowboy's platform to roll the fuel truck off the back while another driver rode its brakes. I thought this sounded like a great idea. We even had a sergeant who was licensed and had a lot of experience driving fuel trucks.

"I WAS THE MOVEMENT LEADER, AND I ALLOWED SAFETY TO TAKE A BACKSEAT TO MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT."

Although I was tired, I was still concerned that the truck's tires might slide off the lowboy's side as it rolled down the platform. The sergeant got into the truck and gave the thumbs-up for the contractor to lift the platform. Everything looked good as the truck slowly started to back off with its wheels straight, which helped ease my mind a little.

My worst fears were soon realized, however, when the truck shot off the wrecker as its rear tires hit the ramp. I remember thinking, "Wow! This guy really knows how to drive!" That thought quickly faded as the truck kept rolling right through a barbed-wire fence and crossed the street toward our stacked ISUs. Fortunately, the truck's rear tires hit a cement barricade just short of the ISUs, and the vehicle came to an abrupt stop.

If you've ever driven a HEMMT or fuel truck, you can probably figure out what went wrong with our plan. The driver didn't start the truck and allow the brake system to pressurize, so the truck just kept rolling even though he was slamming onto the brakes. Fortunately, the truck wasn't damaged and no one was injured.

We were lucky — but we also were careless because we were very tired. I was the movement leader, and I allowed safety to take a backseat to mission accomplishment. Even with high operational tempo, we need to slow down and put safety first. ■

Looking back, there have been a few occasions where I nearly made it into the statistic column. There is one, however, that really stands out in my mind. It forever ended my perception that I was invincible.

SNOOZE CONTROL

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 4 PAUL LOCKHART
A Company, 2-228 Aviation Regiment
Naval Air Station-Joint Reserve Base
Willow Grove, Pennsylvania

I was a rookie reservist, a private first class in a transportation (heavy boat) unit, based in my coastal hometown of Morehead City, North Carolina. We were such a hodge-podge unit. Our boats (Landing Craft-Utility) were left over from the World War II era — hand-me-downs from the Navy. Nearly all of our field manuals and technical manuals were copied from the U.S. Coast Guard. And to top it off, our training area was on a Marine Corps base. What a mess.

One drill, we were scheduled to qualify with our M-16s at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. We were provided maps the Friday night before the drill weekend, as most of us would drive our own vehicles to the range. That would allow us to leave right after we qualified, helping shorten an inevitably long duty day. With a little luck, I could make it from home to the range in about an hour and 15 minutes.

I pulled out about 5 a.m. that Saturday morning in my Mitsubishi "Mighty Max" pickup and got to the range without a hitch. I didn't have any breakfast, but what the heck; nothing was open anyway. I would regret that decision later.

I reported to the range as ordered. After firing 40 rounds, several of us were released with instructions for the next day's drill. So, I turned in my personal battle cannon and jumped back in my pickup. Everything had gone fine so far. I'd found my way to the range, showed a paper target who was boss and headed home for some grub. That is, I thought I was headed home.

It was about half-past noon and I'd been awake since 4 a.m. As I headed north on the highway I thought, "Man — why do my eyelids feel like they

DID YOU KNOW?

The National Safety Council reports that more than one-third of drivers surveyed admitted to falling asleep behind the wheel. Perhaps even more startling was that 60 percent of those drivers admitted to falling asleep on highways with a posted speed limit of 55 mph or higher. These drowsy drivers not only put themselves at risk, but other motorists around them. Here are some tips from the NSC to keep you awake and alive:

Recognize the symptoms of fatigue

- Eyes closed or going out of focus
- Persistent yawning
- Irritability, restlessness and impatience
- Wandering or disconnected thoughts
- Inability to remember driving the last few miles
- Drifting between lanes or onto the shoulder
- Abnormal speed, tailgating or failure to obey traffic signs
- Back tension, burning eyes, shallow breathing or inattentiveness

Safety tips

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule that allows adequate rest.
- When you show signs of fatigue, get off the road and take a short nap in a well-lit area. Don't simply stop on the side of the road.
- Avoid driving between midnight and 6 a.m.
- When planning long trips:
  - Begin your trip early in the day.
  - Keep the temperature cool in your car.
  - Stop every 100 miles or two hours to get out of the car and walk around. Exercise helps combat fatigue.
  - Stop for light meals and snacks.
  - Drive with your head up, shoulders back and legs flexed at about a 45 degree angle.

weigh 100 pounds?" The hum of the engine and the buzz of the tires on the road were almost hypnotic. I was drifting gently into never-never land when, suddenly, I was jolted back into reality.

"BAM — BAM — BOUNCE — BANG — BA-BOOM — BA-BOOM — SMACK!

My eyelids shot wide open. My normal day suddenly turned ugly really fast! It's difficult to convey in words how violently shaken in mind and body I'd become in less than five seconds. I was halfway off the road in a pickup bouncing up and down. Had I awakened one second later, I would have launched at 60 mph down a wet, grassy slope into a stand of trees.

As I tried to maintain control, I remembered being told, "Don't jerk the wheel," in my high school drivers' education class. I was careful not to force my truck back onto the pavement too quickly for fear of catching the front tire on the edge and flipping. While I was being bounced and tossed around, I steered gently to the left to get back on the highway. Fortunately, I made it.

This incident occurred just 15 minutes after I'd left the range. That's significant because when your adrenaline fades after doing something, it's easy to become groggy, complacent and even incoherent. On the upside, I'd maintained my vehicle. The fluid levels were good and my tires had good tread. I didn't have a lot of money, but I took care of my ride. If I hadn't, something else — perhaps a blown tire, could have led to a tragedy. I believe my life was spared that day for various reasons. Maybe one was to share my experience with others.

So what dangerous ingredients went into the mix for my near-disaster that day? How about poor diet (no breakfast), fatigue and complacency. It doesn't take all that many things going wrong to get yourself hurt or killed. Had I taken the time to identify and assess these hazards — the first two steps of risk management — I could have reduced my risks. But I was complacent that day. I'd forgotten that the difference between life and death can be as short as one tick of the second hand. ■

KNOW WHEN TO CALL IT A DAY

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 ALAN MARTIN
Company B, 777th Aviation Support Battalion
Wheeler Army Airfield
Wahiawa, Hawaii

Professional courtesy is an integral part of the military system. In the cockpit, however, excessive professional courtesy can be fatal.

It was a typical day in Hawaii when I arrived about 1430 to prepare for my night vision goggle flight later that night. The sun was gleaming through the clouds just to the west of the airfield. As I walked into our facility, I looked at the condition of the weather in the tactical flight training area to the east. It was completely normal that afternoon and showers started to roll in over the mountains. After receiving my initial weather brief, it was forecasted to be a visual flight rules night with no illumination.

I walked out to our aircraft and started to preflight. Just as I finished, I looked up into the TFTA and saw the cloud layer had come down a few hundred feet over the past few hours — but not to the point I needed to cancel the flight. Before climbing into the cockpit, I called for a weather update. It came back at 1000/3, which is the minimum to enter the TFTA under NVG. So, I climbed in and said we were good to go.

"I WAS THE YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED PILOT WITH A SENIOR PILOT IN COMMAND WHO HAD THOUSANDS OF COMBAT HOURS. "

After running the aircraft up, we began our taxi to the hover area and I watched another aircraft enter the TFTA. We performed our hover checks and prepared for takeoff, and I decided to perform a few traffic patterns prior departing for the TFTA. Feeling ready after our basic traffic patterns, we departed the airfield and executed a standard takeoff and entry into the TFTA.

After completion of the terrain flight route, we went directly to our landing zone, which was in the northeast sector of the TFTA, close to the ridgeline. The closer we got to our LZ, I saw the rain getting heavier and the clouds creeping lower and lower. After landing and doing a traffic pattern with a 10,000-pound block, I set up for approach back into the LZ. The clouds were dumping rain on us now and our visibility was decreasing quickly.

I was the young, inexperienced pilot with a senior pilot in command who had thousands of combat hours. Fresh out of progression, I was reluctant to voice my concerns that I was uncomfortable flying in those conditions. I had to put away my pride and make the announcement. The crew acknowledged my concerns and we decided to pick up the slings and head home.

As the slings were recovered, it started raining harder. The crew chief came back up on the ICS and said we were good to go. We took off out of the LZ and the clouds had pushed down the mountain and almost covered the TFTA. We departed the training area and started heading back to the airfield. As I looked back at the TFTA, it looked completely socked in. Had we not made the decision to depart when we did, we would have been stranded in the LZ or gone inadvertent instrument meteorological conditions.

Being the young PI with a senior CW3 and an experienced crew with multiple deployments, I had to overcome the pressure and thought they would know what's best and make the right call. Anyone, however, has the right and ability — regardless of rank and experience — to make the call others may be hesitant to make. Pride has no place in the decisions that may save your life. ■

LEAKY RE

I was a private first class assigned to a maintenance company at the beginning of the first Gulf War. I worked in the motor pool as a heavy wheeled vehicle mechanic. My company was preparing for movement immediately following the start of the air campaign. The motor pool section was short on drivers, so the motor sergeant asked me about my previous driving experience. It wasn't much — I had four years' experience driving a PMV, but I'd once driven an M35A1 2½-ton truck while I was in the Army Reserve. Since we were in combat, that meager experience was enough to satisfy my leadership. I was put in a 5-ton tractor with my squad leader, who was supposed to train me while we convoyed north.

We started our movement shortly after dark, and all was uneventful for the first hour. My squad leader was training me on the "finer points" of driving while towing the tool van. For example, he told me I could greatly reduce my driving workload by pulling the throttle cable and locking it into position at my current speed setting. I tried it and, sure enough, my right foot was free and I could stretch my legs. What he didn't tell me, however, was that using the throttle cable as a cruise control is extremely dangerous because the cable doesn't disengage when you hit the brakes. This was the first of many dangerous practices he would teach me.

We had been told in the convoy briefing that we would stop every three hours for a short rest break. The second and third hour came and went, but we never stopped. I'd been drinking a lot of caffeinated beverages, so after the fourth hour, I really needed a break. I told my squad leader this, but he responded that we couldn't stop or signal the lead vehicle because we were under radio silence. Instead, he instructed me on "how we do things in combat."

To my amazement, he opened his door and stepped onto the running board. He then climbed onto the right fuel tank and straddled his leg over the protruding spare tire. Next, he crossed between the fifth-wheel deck and cab and climbed down on the left running board. Then he opened my door — remember, I was driving — and grabbed the steering wheel while I slid over into the passenger seat. I couldn't believe what I'd just witnessed, but nature's call still had to be answered. He told me to climb up on the fifth-wheel platform, take my long-overdue relief break and, while I was there, get him a soda.

Traveling at 49 mph in a convoy on a narrow desert two-lane highway, I stepped onto the running board and onto the right fuel tank. I then threw my leg over the spare tire. I had my right hand on the handhold by the door and my left hand on the spare tire's rim. I froze for a moment

EASONING

CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 LARRY KYLMAN
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Tikrit, Iraq

because my left hand couldn't touch any part of the truck's frame. The only thing I could grab hold of to pull my weight around the spare tire was the tire itself, and it was loose and rattling in its carrier.

I finally overcame my fear and pulled myself onto the fifth-wheel deck, where I got some much-needed relief. I then reached into the left-side tool storage compartment and passed the squad leader a soda through the cab window. I got into the truck and we continued on our way. About an hour later, we finally stopped to refuel.

Since I was relatively new to the Army and vehicle operations, I assumed this unsafe behavior exhibited by my squad leader was perfectly normal. After all, we were in combat. It wasn't until later that I found out how wrong he really was.

My lesson learned from this experience was safety isn't something we just discard when hostilities start. There's no such thing as peacetime safety and wartime safety. There is only safety, which is a state of being. The only way to achieve this state is to actively manage risk. How well you do that is directly proportional to how well you mitigate risks. In my case, we didn't even attempt risk management. In fact, we did the opposite.

My squad leader ignored rules, regulations and policies normally followed during peacetime because he thought doing so was more efficient. I don't think he was intentionally trying to do things unsafely; his behavior was just the byproduct of taking shortcuts. Don't get caught in the same trap of ignoring safety in the name of combat efficiency. Use the risk management process wisely so you can make it home to tell your war stories! ■

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS PEACETIME SAFETY AND WARTIME SAFETY. THERE IS ONLY SAFETY, WHICH IS A STATE OF BEING. THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE THIS STATE IS TO ACTIVELY MANAGE RISK."

Are You a Distracted Driver?

BARRY D. JOHNSON
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Jacksonville, North Carolina

How many times have you answered your cellphone, ate or drank, read a book, adjusted your radio or put on makeup while driving? For many drivers, these tasks are part of their normal driving routine. Unfortunately, sometimes the result of distracted driving is mangled vehicles and dead or injured victims.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that in 2014, there were 3,179 people killed and an estimated 431,000 injured in motor vehicle crashes involv¬ing distracted drivers. These crashes could have been avoided had the vehicle operators paid attention to driving and not doing other things.

Distractions cause crashes when drivers take their hands off the wheel, look away from the road or mentally focus on something other than driving. As a result, the lengthened reaction time may prevent drivers from responding in time to avoid a crash. In addition, distractions may cause drivers to lose situational awareness, missing things like changes in speed limits, stop signs and other warning signs and traffic signals. These errors behind the wheel may also lead to a crash.

Have you ever been guilty of distracted driving? Think about when you have been driving. Were there times when you took your eyes off the road? What happened? Many times, perhaps nothing dangerous resulted. However, were there times when you realized the vehicle ahead had stopped or slowed down and you had to jam on the brakes or swerve to avoid a crash? Have you ever found yourself running a red light that just a few seconds ago was green? This is what happens when motorists aren't focused on their driving. These minor and sometimes innocent distractions can put us and other drivers in danger.

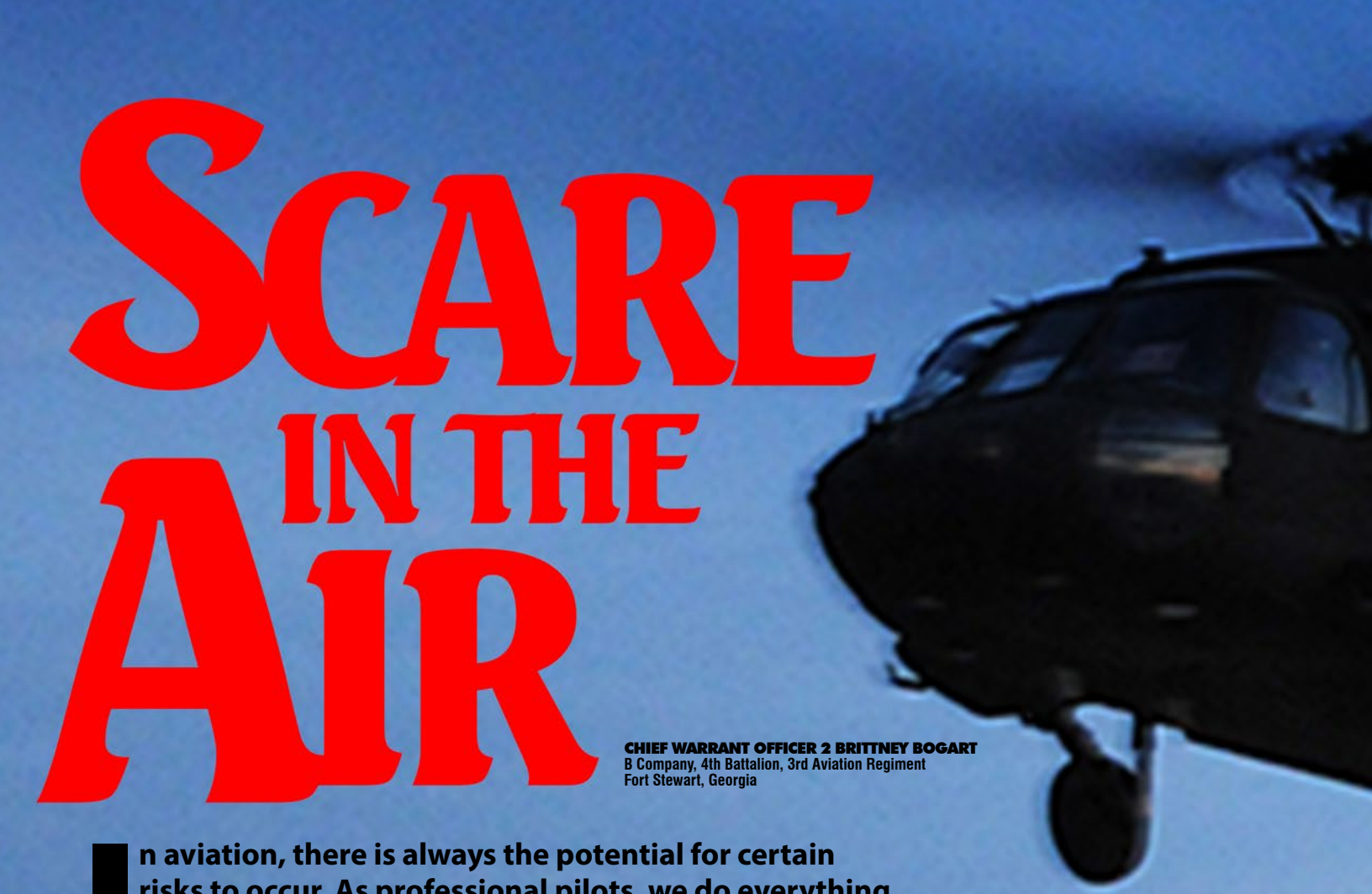
There are many ways to prevent distracted driving. One is to pull off the roadway and park in a safe place to answer calls or texts. As tempting as it might be, avoid adjusting your GPS navigational device while driving. Know where all the controls for our vehicle are located so you don't have to take your eyes off the road when you need to operate them. Plan ahead and know your route; avoid trying to look at a map or read a printout of directions while you're driving. Lastly, keep children properly secured with a seat belt or child seat and pets secured in a carrier or a seat belt harness.

Preventing distractions while driving should be part of your risk management before starting out on any trip. Reducing distractions will greatly increase the chance you will arrive at your destination safely. ■

FYI

For more information on distracted driving, visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website at www.distracteddriving.gov

Scare in the Air



CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 BRITTNEY BOGART
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Fort Stewart, Georgia

In aviation, there is always the potential for certain risks to occur. As professional pilots, we do everything in our power to mitigate those risks. Sometimes, however, unforeseen events can occur.

In May 2015, I deployed for my second time to Afghanistan. This was my first fixed-wing deployment as well as my first time flying out of Bagram Airfield. I was assigned to the GRCS detachment in Task Force Odin and our mission was aerial reconnaissance. There were only eight full-time aviators within the detachment, so we were able to get to know each other's habits — both good and bad.

On a morning like any other, my co-pilot and I completed the mission brief, got our weather and headed out to the aircraft for our preflight. At the time, I was working on becoming a pilot in command, so I was running the show. After our preflight, we continued with the checklist items for the engine run-up. We performed our communication checks with IEW and, once cleared with all green communications, were ready to taxi. I made the call to Bagram ground and, while my co-pilot was taxiing, completed the before-takeoff checklist items. There were no issues, so I transferred to tower and made the request for takeoff. Bagram tower cleared us for takeoff.

With my co-pilot on the controls, I did the standard callouts, "Normal," "V1, rotate." As he began applying backpressure to the yoke, the nose began to pitch up and we started our climb. The other callouts were made and, as we were passing through 500 feet, there were no apparent issues.

Right as I began to read off the climb checklist, I heard him yell, "Oh, $@#%!" I immediately put down the checklist and looked at the master warning panel while simultaneously asking, "What's wrong?" The only light illuminated was the cabin door light in the caution/advisory annunciator panel.

As we continued our climb, I told approach to keep us below 10,000 feet and requested to hold at our present position due to mechanical

"RIGHT AS I BEGAN TO READ OFF THE CLIMB CHECKLIST, I HEARD HIM YELL, 'OH, $@#%!'"

issues. Approach quickly responded and asked if we needed to declare an emergency. I let them know we didn't need to declare an emergency; we just needed some time to make a decision.

After I finished my conversation with approach, I told my co-pilot to never scare me like that again. When someone yells, "Oh, $@#%!" right after takeoff, you immediately think something serious has occurred. A cabin door light right after takeoff is not a situation that warrants any type of panic.

The cabin door light flickered on and off for a few a minutes, so we returned to the airfield to have maintenance look at it. We were in air for a total of 20 minutes from the time we took off until we landed. After we taxied back to parking, we had a maintainer come on board and take a look at the micro switch by the cabin door. We decided not to shut down so we could save time and get on track.

Once we were established on track, we discussed the situation. A few seconds into our conversation, the commander came over the radio on our internal frequency. He asked us how much fuel we had when we landed. The sinking feeling hit and we immediately started calculating. The numbers came close to our max landing weight. We told our commander and, even though he was disappointed, he told us just tell maintenance when we landed. Maintenance had to perform a hard landing check. Fortunately, there was nothing wrong with the aircraft.

Even though the maintenance procedure was simple, it could have been avoided. From that point forward, it became a part of our company's before-takeoff brief to burn off fuel for non-critical situations that required immediate return to the airfield after takeoff.■

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