



Guardian Challenge 2004

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Photo by Master Sgt. Rodney E. Jones

Giving coordinates

Staff Sgt. Brian Waits, a flight engineer with the 30th Space Wing, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., performs pre-flight checklist tasks prior to take-off in a UH-1N helicopter during competition.

SMC in sync during first year at GC

By Airman 1st Class Chris Smith
Guardian Challenge Public Affairs

At one point during Guardian Challenge's past competitions, each and every unit participating was in its first year at the event. This year, Space and Missile Systems Center from Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif., has joined the ranks.

Even though the SMC is now in its Guardian Challenge infancy, many say the team is performing like it has been here all along.

"They are fitting right in," said Master Sgt. Reggie Brunner, SMC Security Forces. "Everyone has welcomed us in and that's really what counts."

SMC joined Air Force Space Command two years ago and would have participated in last year's Guardian Challenge had it not been cancelled due to the war on terrorism. The unit transferred to AFSPC from Air Force Material Command.

Although the SMC team is only competing in security forces events, Sergeant Brunner said the presence of the newest team is a great benefit to the competition.

"It lets everyone see another light to security forces," he said. "It also lets everyone know there's another security forces entity out there."

See SMC, Page 3



From the top

“We’re not just a space command, we’re a combat command. We must use space to our advantage and deny those who would try to use it against us.”

-- General Lance W. Lord
Commander, Air Force Space Command

Tomorrow's weather



68/48



Firsts ...

In 1998, the competition included space operations teams from both the 50th SW and 21st SW competing at Vandenberg. It marked the first time that each mission operations area competed for the right to be the best of the best. Additionally, the competition was realigned from a squadron-level to a wing-level competition. The 45th SW from Patrick AFB won the best spacelift honors for an unprecedented fifth consecutive time.

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Past, future of space command discussed

By Airman 1st Class Katie Booher
Guardian Challenge Public Affairs

General Lance W. Lord, commander of Air Force Space Command, talked about the history of the command, the current situation and where the command is headed in the future Wednesday at the base theater.

"It's interesting to see what our allies and partners have been able to do when we change the economy in respect to powered flight," he said. "Just think what we've done in space and we're only half as old as the air business."

The sputnik launch in 1957 was an important step in the beginning of the space age, said General Lord.

"That was an important day for the world and set a precedent for what happened in the [space] business," he said. "In some respects, I think [our allies] were caught off guard with it, but it certainly generated a lot of interest in the United States and with our friends in the [rest of the] free world."

Between 1945 and 1991, missiles served as the United States' backbone for avoiding any major conflict, said General Lord.

"The work on the Atlas and Titan Intercontinental Ballis-

tic Missiles and the Thor Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile became the cornerstone of deterrence during the Cold War," the general said. "[During the war,] we trained United Kingdom crews in the operation of Thor missiles at space launch complex 10 at Vandenberg Air Force Base."

Recently, space has played an increasing part in the global war on terror during Operation Iraqi Freedom, said the commander.

"[Air Force chief of staff] General [John] Jumper mentioned to me that we've had the opportunity and capability to bring space to an equal partner of air, land and sea," he said. "He said we couldn't have done it without having the fundamental backbone of deterrence of the ICBM forces on alert every day doing their jobs."

The general said the vision for the future is to take control of the space force and be proactive before a situation takes anyone by surprise.

"The best way to predict the future is to invent it," he said. "It's hard and makes your head hurt, but the rewards are more lasting if you dedicate the intellectual, operational and financial investments into creating this strategy."



Photo by Master Sgt. Thomas Deering

Sticking together

Senior Airman Justin Sonnier of the 45th Air Wing, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla., recovers from the mile-and-a-half run during the obstacle course portion of Guardian Challenge.

Helo crews demonstrate flying skills



Photos by Master Sgt. Rodney Jones

Maj. Scott Mackenzie, a course judge, assigned to 20th Air Force, F.E. Warren Air Force Base Wyo., watches a UH-1N helicopter assigned to the 40th Helicopter Flight, 341st Space Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Mont., attempt to make its way through the helicopter hover course while being guided by the on-board flight engineer Tuesday.

By Airman 1st Class

Lauren Hasinger

Guardian Challenge Public Affairs

In the skies over Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., four helicopter crews battled for air supremacy during Guardian Challenge.

Teams are made up of four Airmen each from F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo., Malmstrom AFB, Mont., Minot AFB, N.D., and Vandenberg.

Each helicopter crew team consists of a pilot, co-pilot, flight engineer and crew chief.

The competition involved three events worth 200 points each: the navigation event, the hover event and maintenance event.

There are two major goals the competition is designed to evaluate. The first is to demonstrate helicopter skills, while the second is to foster crew coordination, said Lt. Col. Roger Dellinger, Air Force Space Command Headquarters helicopter representative.

During the eight-hour navigation por-

tion Monday, crews flew a low-level tactical mission much like what they do on a daily basis back at their home stations.

Minutes before the hover competition began Tuesday, a helicopter crew from Vandenberg AFB proved just how valuable an asset they are when they flew to help fight the forest fires raging in Los Padres National Forest.

With the hover event underway, a bucket of water was suspended from the helicopters and the pilots and co-pilots took turns flying through an obstacle course by direction of the flight engineers. They had to navigate the bucket through several tactical objectives. Competitors are scored by time, completing the obstacles and the amount of water left in the bucket.

Teams competed head to head during the final phase of their competition Wednesday. With the crew chief in charge, teams changed configurations from one mission to another.

“The biggest thing I hope the teams will take away with them from this competition is a good exchange of informa-

tion and to share what they learned here with their co-workers back home,” said Colonel Dellinger.

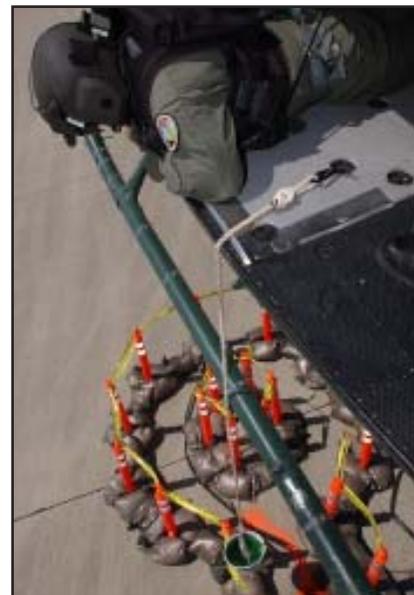


Photo by Master Sgt. Rodney Jones

Staff Sgt. Brian Waits, a flight engineer, calls out elevation distances to the on-board aircraft commander.

Chefs stir up GC competition

By Airman 1st Class

Lauren Hasinger

Guardian Challenge Public Affairs

For those who work long hours at the missile alert facilities for days at time, one thing that keeps their spirits raised is a warm home-cooked meal. Those who prepare that food are here for the third time to demonstrate their own warfighting capabilities.

Chefs from the 90th Space Wing, F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo., the 91st Space Wing, Minot AFB, N.D., the 341st Space Wing, Malmstrom AFB, Mont., and the 21st Space Wing, Peterson AFB, Colo., competed in teams of two.

"I'm very excited to prove that we're the best team," said Staff Sgt. Jason Shaw, 91st SW chef competitor.

The events are set up to challenge what the competitors would do in a deployed environment.

"This year there seems to be more of a readiness challenge," said second-time chef competitor Staff Sgt. Sandra Sturkie, 90th SW.

The teams are judged in three areas: safety events, marksmanship and food services.

During the safety event at Cocheo Park, the teams were given the task of disassembling, reassembling and lighting a burner.

While time isn't an issue, unless in the event of a tie, the competitors demonstrate their lightning fast speed while still making all of the appropriate safety and procedural measures.

The 90th and 91st SWs, the first to compete, were middle of competition when they were given matches to light the burners without a match strip.

"It's kind of like getting all fired up in the locker room only to find out the door is locked," said Col. Mark Owen, 91st SW commander, who was there in support of his team.

After the problem was solved, the chefs quickly got back into their

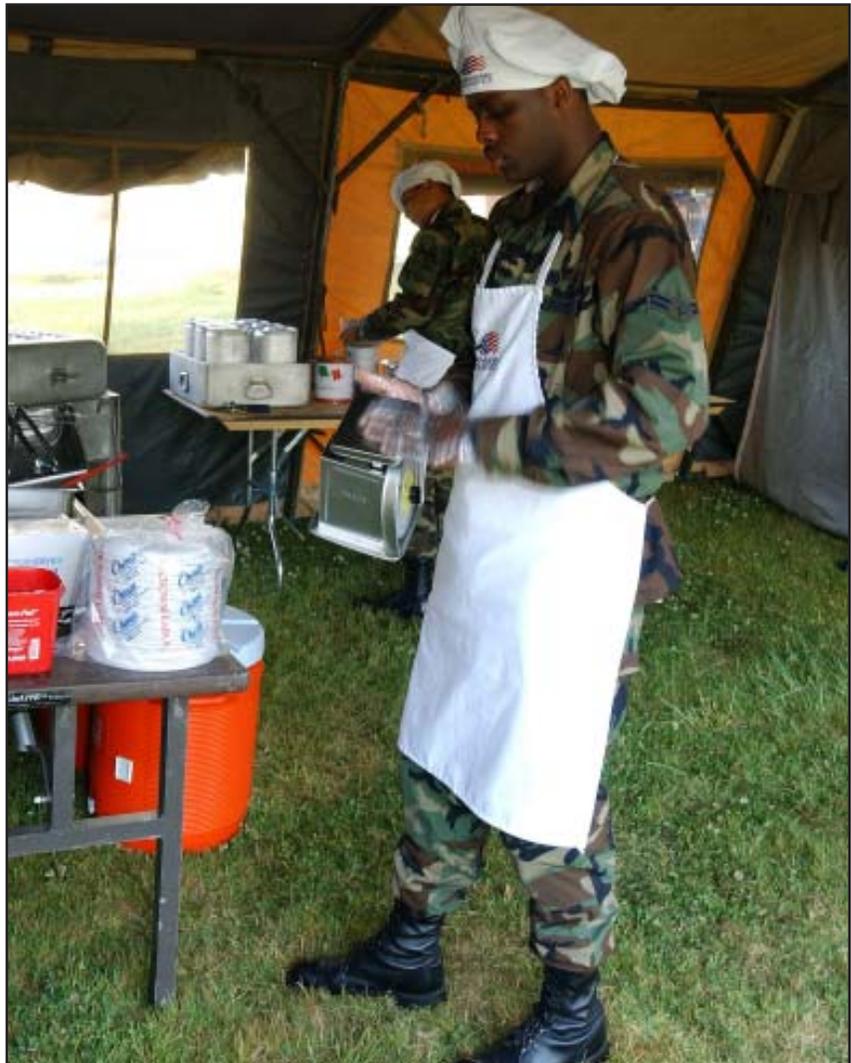


Photo by Staff Sgt. Jennifer Wallis

Airman 1st Class Marcus Walker, missile chef from the 91st Space Wing "Roughriders," Minot Air Force Base, N.D., cleans off a food scale prior to weighing ingredients during the cooking competition.

warfighter mode in hopes of bringing their team one step closer to victory.

Keeping with the field-like challenges, the chefs were also tested on marksmanship. Firing 30 rounds at various targets tested their ability to accurately protect resources.

Rounding out the competition was the food service event, in which the chefs prepared a meal for their team members.

They were given a menu and told

how many people they were going to feed and they had to figure out the exact measurements of each ingredient. During the three-and-a-half hour-long event the chefs were judged again on safety and sanitary measures.

"Chefs are absolutely an important part of moral," said Gen. Lance W. Lord, commander of Air Force Space Command. "When troops come back from dispatch there's nothing like a hot meal. Chefs are amazing."

Smooth operating for missileers

By Staff Sgt. Susan Mrowiec
Guardian Challenge Public Affairs

At their home stations, these "Guardians of the High Frontier" are responsible for safeguarding and maintaining the nation's Intercontinental Ballistic Missile systems.

Here at Guardian Challenge, they were put to the test being evaluated on their peacetime and wartime missions.

Missile operators from the 90th Space Wing, F.E. Warren, Wyo., 91st SW, Minot AFB, N.D., and the 341st SW, Malmstrom AFB, Mont., spent 90 minutes in a simulator facing scenarios that tested their knowledge on troubleshooting, security response and monitoring maintenance activities.

According to competitors, the competition was a grueling one.

"It was the most challenging ride I ever took," said 1st Lt. Justin Littig, 90th Space Wing.

But according to Lieutenant Littig, his previous training prepared him for the competition.

"Our trainers were the workhorses of the team," said 1st Lt. Mike Pettibone, 90th SW. "They got us to this level so we could compete and be successful."

Operators from the 90th SW weren't the only ones putting long



Photo by Staff Sgt. Lee A Osberry Jr

1st Lts. Michael Harrison and John Blackman, 341st Space Wing, Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont. are prepped and ready to blaze through the missile operations competition Wednesday.

hours into preparing for competition.

"We put a lot of work into training," said 1st Lt. Rachel Cathcart, 91st Space Wing. "It was fun to see it pay off while competing among the best."

Training is critical because even a minor error will cost teams points on their final score. Because errors are assessed to the entire team, cooperation also becomes essential.

According to Lieutenant Littig, "The competition rebuilds that sense

of teamwork you sometimes lose sight of when you are working in your own little world."

Errors range from critical, which would result in mission failure or endangerment of human life, to minor, where a team-member would break a ground rule.

Capt. Brent Wells, 90th SW, said he doesn't expect any errors from the competitors.

"Guardian Challenge brings the best out in everybody here."

SMC, from Page 1

While Sgt. Brunner feels the entire competition is better because of the addition of SMC, he believes the competitors benefit from competing, he said.

"It makes [SMC security forces] have a sense of belonging to the Air Force. Even though they're civilian security forces, they have been welcomed to Space Command.

People are cheering for them along with cheering for their own teams," said Sergeant Brunner.

While Sergeant Brunner says the new addition to the competition has its benefits to all the teams, Frank Vigil from the SMC said he enjoys competing against the other teams because he thinks they have a good chance at glory and a trophy.

"We could win because we've trained hard ... for five days a week

from morning until night," said Mr. Vigil.

One very unique aspect of SMC Security Forces is most of them are civilian. There are only twelve security forces Airmen at the SMC – the rest are contracted civilians.

Although some SMC members are civilian, they're showing the same warrior blood that courses through the veins of their fellow uniformed competitors

Kicking back

Curtain Raiser party time to relax after stressful comp week

