

Escaping safely

*Egress maintainers
give pilots a
sense of security*

**Story and photos by
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332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

When he's thousands of feet above ground and it's a matter of life or death, 1.8 seconds is all it takes for a pilot to safely eject himself out of his seat and survive a potentially fatal crash.

Although, 1.8 seconds doesn't seem like a lot of time, the members of the egress team here ensure it is all a pilot needs for survival.

The egress team is responsible for the maintenance, repair and modification of the F-16's egress or escape system. The system includes the Advanced Concept Ejection Seat II and canopy for the F-16 Vipers. Within that system, detonation cords, initiators and rockets make up the removal system for the pilots.

"We feel it is our responsibility to provide the men and women who fly our aircraft into battle with the safest, most reliable ejection system possible," said Staff Sgt. Steven Rosenberg, 332nd Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron aircrew egress systems craftsman, deployed from Cannon Air Force Base, N.M.

Every egress system for the Vipers here is checked every 30 days or when something appears to be tampered with, Sergeant Rosenberg said.

"Some of the things we check for are hoses with cracks or loose parts," he said.

Because missions are constant, the egress



Staff Sgt. Steven Rosenberg, aircrew egress systems craftsman, helps Senior Airman Steven Graff aircrew egress systems journeyman, and Senior Airman Mike Fire aircrew egress systems apprentice, with a canopy inspection Tuesday.

shop provides support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

"There's a day shift and a night shift. We always ensure there's a good turnover," said Senior Airman Steven Graff, 332nd EMXS aircrew egress systems journeyman also deployed from Cannon AFB.

Airman Graff also said although this is his first deployment, he realizes the importance of his shop's mission.

"These pilots are going out risking their lives. What I do could help save a life," Airman Graff said.

Sergeant Rosenberg said camaraderie among his coworkers is good, and the egress shop is also an example of how the total force of active-duty, Reserve and Guard Airmen work together for the Global War on Terrorism.

"I don't get treated any differently because I'm with the Guard," said Senior Airman Mike Fire, 332nd EMXS aircrew egress systems apprentice, deployed from Hancock Field Air National Guard Base, Syracuse, N.Y. "I'm working with a good group of people, and I'm able to learn from them."

Airman Fire said one example of learning

from his active-duty counterparts came from a recent canopy inspection. Members of the egress shop discovered a canopy was so defective that a whole new frame assembly had to be ordered.

"Normally we don't have this issue," said Sergeant Rosenberg. "The canopy and the frame are able to bend and twist to form together."

"This was definitely a learning experience for me. I'm able to take this knowledge and know what to look for back at my home station," said Airman Fire.

Sergeant Rosenberg also said the egress shop works closely with life support and survival equipment so pilots are well taken care of.

"We really have to rely on each other. We can't do our job without them (life support and survival equipment) and they can't do their job without us," Sergeant Rosenberg said.

When a pilot takes off on a mission, he hopes he doesn't have to use any of his survival equipment, but in the event he does, the egress shop will continue to ensure pilots are able to escape safely.



Senior Airman Mike Fire tightens a screw on an F-16 Viper canopy.