

COMMENTARY

We play like we fight, we play hard

By Airman Alexis Siekert

502nd Air Base Wing OL-B Public Affairs

When disaster strikes, it is our responsibility to respond and overcome all obstacles to continue our mission. Knowing this and knowing how to do this are entirely different things, and this week I had some eye-opening experiences in the latter.

Randolph Air Force Base participated in a base-wide exercise Tuesday. The exercise simulated a T-38 Talon crash at Randolph's Seguin Auxiliary Airfield, about 30 miles away, near Seguin, Texas.

Being with public affairs here, I spend most of my time either behind a camera or behind a desk writing, but like every career field, there is so much more to my job when the opportunity arises.

In previous exercises, as an Airman, I have been in charge of keeping those on base up to date on all current information. Having the chance to go to an accident scene for more hands-on interaction was a huge learning experience for me.

Tuesday was the first time I witnessed all base organizations come together to accomplish a common goal.

I was assigned to keep the media at

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bay, giving them what they needed for their stories, while protecting the privacy of those involved in the crash as well as security of base operations.

As our team arrived to the site, I saw the first responders already with control of the situation.

The medics had the injured pilots loaded in a helicopter for medical evacuation to Brooke Army Medical Center, and I watched as security forces controlled the entrance to the air field and firefighters put out the smoking aircraft parts.

I believe the coordination and expertise of those involved tackled the problem head-on in a timely and skillful way.

The exercise identified all of our strengths and also our weaknesses. Realizing what can be fixed while in a training environment can make all the difference in the world when the time comes for us to apply it. In the event of something like this happen-

ing real-world, there are no do-overs.

Although growth can be painful, acknowledging inaccuracies and correcting them only makes us stronger and more competent Airmen. We want to be as efficient as possible and make no mistakes when it matters.

Training is the whole reason we participate in the exercises.

I now know how to be a liaison between media, emergency responders, public affairs and base leadership at the Emergency Operations Center.

Also, with our Unit Compliance Inspection scheduled to take place in February, I believe we all need to make strides to focus our attention toward training and training.

With a positive attitude, hard work and a few more learning opportunities like this week's exercise, I feel confident we will do well.

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ON THE COVER

Dave Skloss (left) and James Talbots, Seguin Fire Department paramedics, strap Staff Sgt. Jennifer Swain, 359th Dental Squadron and simulated pilot in training, to a stretcher to move to an ambulance during a base exercise Tuesday. For complete coverage of the exercise, see page 8. Photo by Joel Martinez

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