

# Air Traffic Controllers keep watchful eye on skies

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During times of conflict the skies become filled with the constant roar of incoming and outgoing aircraft.

To orchestrate the flow of traffic, the pilots and crew rely on the Marines of air traffic control to guide them in and send them out safely in any clime or place.

"As air traffic controllers, we ensure to avoid aircraft collisions in the air space that is delegated to us and to direct the flow of traffic," said **Staff Sgt. Terry Flanary**, tower watch supervisor. Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, and an Orlando, Fla., native. "We give clearances, instructions, and follow all regulated Federal Aviation Administration standards with the addition to our military regula-

tions."

As military air traffic controllers, the ATC Marines' are given precedence within their air space jurisdiction, which not only military aircraft adhere to, but the civilian flights as well.

"Whenever an aircraft comes into our air space, they have to follow our guidelines on top of FAA regulations," Flanary said. "In order for us to do our job, we have to know every principle of the average air traffic controller and be able to apply even more regulations because of the fact that we serve military aircraft."

The ATC Marines constantly train and study continental, international, and military procedures to keep their skills sharp in the case of deployment to a foreign theater.



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Lance Cpl. Brandon Strasler, and Lance Cpl. Kyle Reneham, air traffic controllers, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, scan the skies in the darkness of the radar room.

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"We are continuously in the books, training, and improving our skills as military air traffic controllers," said **Sgt. Phillippe Audibert**, air traffic approach controller, H&HS, and Houston native. "It's key, even in the rear, to fine tune and hone our skills. We are at the top of our game before we deploy."

During deployments, the air traffic control element works alongside and acts as liaisons with the host nation's air traffic controllers.

"We sit in the same tower and work side-by-side with our host nation counterparts, assisting them with their operations," Flanary said. "But when we are out there, our mission is to provide services for all the coalition forces, U.S. forces, enemy countermeasures, along with our host nation's civilian aircraft."

The ATC Marines support the aviation element during deployments to guarantee all aircraft are guided in safely and launched out to accomplish the mission.

"Pilots rely on us to bring them in and we make sure that we guide them in expeditiously

and get them out to take care of their tasks at hand," Flanary said. "We're trained to be mobile, independent, and expeditionary as an ATC element. We will do our job in any clime or place with precision."

When ATC Marines return from deployment, they go back to station where they can refresh their proficiency and knowledge in national regulations.

"At times we tend to forget certain procedures and regulations after being deployed and working with foreign procedures for so long," Audibert said. "So station allows us to get back into swing of things and also give us a chance to teach and prepare other Marines about our experiences in a combat environment and new skills."

With deployed ATC Marines' newly honed skills in a combat environment, they are able to carry on their knowledge and train new Marines for the next deployments to come, allowing them to be prepared to face situations in any shape or form, Audibert added.