

Dedication pays off

Story and photos by Airman 1st Class Thomas Trower
27th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

If there ever was an all-purpose Airman for the F-16, it would be the crew chief. From inspections to maintenance, these highly-trained Airmen keep some of the Air Force's oldest fighter jets flying safely.

From the moment that new crew chiefs arrive at their first duty station, one of their first goals is to become a dedicated crew chief (DCC).

After being on the job for six months and proving they are able to diagnose and fix common aircraft problems, they are awarded the title of a DCC. They are assigned a jet of their own and they keep that jet operational when it is on the ground.

"We handle pretty much anything that is mechanical," said Senior Airman Clayton Moreno, 523rd Aircraft Maintenance Unit. "We don't handle electronics or radars."

The job does have its downfalls such as long hours and odd shifts, but it does also come with some perks.

"We've been TDY five times so far this year," said Airman Moreno. They have visited through areas like Las Vegas, Nevada, and Canada, and seen several countries in Europe and Southeast Asia, including Spain.

When their jet is in the air they don't sit around either. "When people finish on their own jet, they help out their brothers [and sisters]," said Staff Sgt. Brad Huthsteiner, 523 AMU.

When a group of them was asked "What is the best part of being a crew chief?" They all shared a response of "working with each other and knowing someone will help you out if you need it."

"Everything around here has a very team concept," said Chief Master Sgt. Jesse Paul, 27th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron.



Staff Sgt. Brad Huthsteiner, 523rd Aircraft Maintenance Unit, is a dedicated crew chief (DCC) and uses a flashlight and mirror to check inside of a panel on the jet that is assigned to him.



Above, Left: Sergeant Huthsteiner secures a panel onto the top of the left wing of his F-16. Above: Airman Moreno inspects the cockpit to make sure that nothing is out of order on the 523rd Fighter Squadron Proud Falcon jet. The jet is maintained in pristine condition and is showcased in quarterly competition. Below: Sergeant Huthsteiner reads out of his technical order while Staff Sgt. Brant Herbert, 523 AMU, checks the depth of the tread on a tire of an F-16's landing gear.



As a DCC, Senior Airman Clayton Moreno, 523 AMU, helps his fellow crew chiefs do preflight inspections while his is flying or being repaired. The DCC program is used to signify when a crew chief has received enough training to become responsible for their own aircraft.



Staff Sgt. Bryan Waldo, 524th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, has earned the title of the DCC for the 27th Fighter Wing jet after years of practice in the field.

