



*485th Tactical Missile Maintenance Squadron*

## **GLCM in Belgium** - by Lt Col (Ret) Roger Tollerud, *AAFM Mbr No A0117, Layton, UT*

In the spring of 1984 my wife Kaye and I were in the Santa Maria, CA, airport awaiting a flight to Rapid City and Ellsworth AFB, SD, after attending what was then known as Olympic Arena. A personnel type from Strategic Air Command (SAC) Headquarters tapped me on the shoulder and said, "Are you Tollerud?" I said I was and he said, "You're going to Belgium." And he was right! Some 90 days later, on 13 August, I got off a Capital Airways flight in Brussels, and was met by MSgts Loren (Pappy) Pappenfuss (with whom I had served before) and Larry Laurine (at that time the ranking NCO in maintenance), and headed for Florennes AB.

This is one maintenance guy's story. It contains items that were important to the assigned maintainers and my random thoughts of what made up a year in the Ground Launched Cruise Missile (GLCM) business. All of this is filtered through the prism of a career spent entirely (except for a couple of school assignments) in SAC combat support and Minuteman operations and maintenance. I was assigned as Commander of the 485th Tactical Missile Maintenance Squadron (TMMS). Command was not new to me, but like nearly all of the folks who would come to maintenance at Florennes that year, United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) was. So not only did we have to learn the USAFE way, we had to unlearn some SAC things and blend the best of both.

I have never met one, not one, GLCM guy/gal who didn't tell me how hard they worked or how many hours - it

was a badge of honor and I am probably as guilty as the next. As we were building the wing and its combat capability up from scratch, we did work some incredibly long days/weeks. But we also found time to socialize with the wonderful people of Florennes who opened their homes and hearts to us and also to see some of Belgium and a little of the rest of Europe.

So with this in mind, relying on a daily journal I kept and on my memory, here's a look at my year in GLCM. Where appropriate or obvious, I will use the names of the various players and where it isn't or might be embarrassing, I won't.

On 1 August 1984, about two weeks before I arrived, the 485th Tactical Missile Wing, with Colonel David C. Reed as its first commander, stood up. From a maintainer's viewpoint, having Col Reed as wing commander could not have been a better choice. He had years of USAFE experience, most recently as the Deputy Commander for Logistics at 17th Air Force. Throughout my tour he was a great friend to and supporter of maintenance - even when we did something stupid, and as you will see on more than one occasion we did!

On the way from the airport we stopped and looked at off base "dorms," took a quick tour of the base and found my office. At the end of the day I rode a bus to the Grand Hotel, located some 20 minutes away in Falaen. I mention this only because it sets up the whole discussion of housing. No one lived on base, and my folks were in three separate locations. As time wore on, we did get all of our folks into the Bon Soy, a resort area where we leased cabins/chalets, which worked pretty well even though it required two bus rides a day. On-base dorms came about halfway through my tour, and if memory serves not all of our folks were housed on base when I departed. About a week after I arrived, I moved out of the Grand Hotel and into permanent quarters at 68 Rue de Mettet on the north end of Florennes. "The Frat House," as the half dozen apartments came to be known was conveniently located above the "Caves de la Mulonniere," a



*Building G-4 at Florennes*

*Building G-5 at Florennes*

wine and beer store.

I was the first maintenance officer at Florennes. When I arrived, there were 21 GIs of six different AFSCs assigned. We quickly organized into work centers and got ready to receive critical vehicles that were being pushed to us.

You would think that the eager young maintenance commander would be consumed with getting ready to deter and, if necessary, fight the Soviet war machine. While that was a consideration, more importantly, there were approximately 280 of us on the base, including the 22 in maintenance, and only four washers and dryers - none of which were readily available to my people. In case you are wondering, having clean socks and underwear knocked fighting the Commies right out of first place! Civil Engineering estimated four to six weeks before the "dorms" would have units - so we asked for and got one of each for the maintenance complex in building G-4.

Two M.A.N. tractors came in on a flatbed trailer, covered and at midnight, to be as low profile as possible. The third arrived, uncovered, at 0830 three days later - so much for low profile. Near the end of the month, a C-5 brought in a Launch Control Center (LCC) trainer and a Transporter Erector Launcher (TEL) trainer. We were beginning to look like a missile outfit.

For a new weapon system, the technical orders, if we had any, were not good and the tools and support equipment were in the main somewhat ratty. Our guys worked this hard and we had good help from our local contractors, but I fault USAFE HQ for not being out ahead of these issues.

Soon after I arrived and was meeting with the maintenance folks, I ran into our first, but by no means last, experience with the language barrier. TSgt Alan Quille, who was a key part of our early success and went on to become a Chief Master Sergeant, was nearly bald. When, with a

grin, I complimented him on his haircut he explained that when the Belgian barber asked him how he wanted his haircut he held his thumb and forefinger a short ways apart indicating "just take a little off." As you can by now guess the barber thought he meant to cut it very short - and he did! Alan took no end of grief from his peers. Other examples of miscommunication between their French and our English will follow. In nearly every case their English was better than our French. This was especially true with the younger Belgians who studied English in school.

Early in September, Lt Col Gil Mayeux reported. He was our Maintenance Control Officer, and in my mind didn't receive near the credit he deserved for the structure he helped to build in the maintenance complex. He was followed shortly by our DCM Col George Cooke. Col Cooke had been with the GLCM in design and development for a long time and was probably the smartest weapon system guy I knew. He was also a no BS type, and not the least bit afraid of a fight.

Lt Col Karl Damon, Deputy Commander of the Support Group, and Maj Don Johnson, Assistant Deputy Commander for Resources were the first two officers at Florennes. They opened the base. Both were well liked and respected by the Belgian Air Force and by members of the local community. Because of his language skills Don was especially influential. As a result of their presence, we were introduced to people in Florennes, some of whom we socialized with in the coming months. At Don's suggestion, several of us joined a volksmarching club in the city of Phillippeville. One Sunday we joined them for a march, the only one we went to because we got busy at work. We did a walk around the beautiful city of Ghent, which is north of Brussels in the Flemish speaking part of the country, where we learned (just as we had been briefed) that not all those who live in that part of the country like the French speakers from the south - it was a nice event, none-the-less. Later in the year we would join the club members in a wonderful one day bus trip to Paris.

*M.A.N. Tractor and TEL*

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On 10 September the Belgian Franc was trading at 60.55 to one US dollar. By the end of the month it would be over 63.00 to one buck and stayed pretty much like that for most of the coming year.

The first Commanders Call for maintenance was held on 12 September. It went about as you would expect with topics appropriate to the moment. I introduced Col Cooke who told us about himself and his experience. Our First Sergeant, MSgt Jim Harden, provided the soda, beer and goodies. Col Cooke and Pappy were the first to the beer and Pappy promptly spilled his beer on the DCMs shiny new shoes. Pappy was red faced but everyone including Col Cooke had a good laugh.

Maintenance was located in building G-4 (Squadron and DCM administration along with DCM staff functions and Job Control), building G-5 (maintenance hangar and shops) and the Weapons Storage Area (WSA).

All of these facilities were old. Perhaps back to World War II, I don't know. They required extensive modification to support our mission and it warmed my heart to watch our senior NCOs and young officers mold them to our needs. Especially challenging was bringing the WSA up to standard. Munitions Branch NCOIC, MSgt Piotrowski and his folks did a superior job of managing the effort to get to the point where facilities could be nuclear certified.

Every time I think of our facilities I am reminded of the standing joke that "Built to NATO Standards" meant small, uncomfortable and either hot or cold depending on the season.

On 29 and 30 September members of the wing were invited to a celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the liberation of Florennes from Nazi Germany. We enjoyed two days of commemorative masses at the cathedral, music (much of it provided by the USAFE Band), a display and parade of WWII vehicles, a salute to those who died in the war at the cemetery and a wreath presentation at the war



*USAFE Band in Concert*

memorial. All of this was accompanied by great food and drink. Many of the older citizens of Florennes had lived through the Nazi brutality and were most appreciative of our presence. It was a great week to be an American in Belgium!

The celebration led to another encounter with the language, mine this time. During the celebration Col Marc Straume, 485th TMW/RM, and I had our picture taken because we were all dressed up. We decided to get each one of us an 8x10 to keep. I took the film to the local photo shop and placed the order. A week later I picked up two 20" x 28" poster size pictures! Both of us still have the pictures and have shared many a laugh over my mistake.

As the month came to a close, Maintenance Control published our first weekly Maintenance Plan and Schedule as we continued to build structure.

Early October brought a senior DoD civilian, a facilities type, to tour and be briefed - it was also one of the funniest moments that I remember. As we were showing him around, one of my very favorite senior NCOs handed him a plate of dog bones and asked him if he cared for one -. When the gentleman declined, the NCO said "do you mind if I do?" and then proceeded to eat it as we continued the tour of his area. I found it hard not to laugh - Col Reed was not amused!

We woke up one morning to find that four of five of our private vehicles at the "Frat House" had their key locks jammed with a putty-like substance. It was not a big deal, but it highlighted the fact that just as many people were happy with us being in Florennes as were not. It was never determined by the authorities if it was just a random act or something of a more organized nature, but it didn't happen again. We also found both anti-missile and pro-missile slogans painted on area buildings occasionally.

Kaye arrived for the first of three visits and, along with other wives that were visiting or permanently assigned, saw much more of Europe than any of us GIs did.

Some 60 days after we started working the washer/dryer issue, nine of each were installed in our off base "dorms." Now we could go to work on the Commies full



*Tent for the Band and the BBQ*

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*Some Anti-Missile Graffiti*

time!

I was appointed the Wing Exercise Officer. Now remember I am a SAC lifer and know nothing about USAFE exercise rules, the various color codes that dictate the pace, chemical warfare ensembles or gas masks to mention just a few of my limitations. Having said all that and with the help of team members and scenario writers from across the wing, we went on to be quite successful in our exercise program.

We had first discussions about dispersal training with the DCM and others. We didn't disperse while I was at Florennes but our early talks were aimed at laying down a baseline.

The Belgian Air Force's (BAF) 2nd Wing Tactique (TW) was our host at Base J. Offenberg/Florennes Air Base. We worked with them a lot and meshed very well. We traded visits back and forth, and late in the month I spent a ½ day with 2 TW DCM Col Liesse and two of his commanders, Commandant Hinant of the Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and Capt Remy of Transportation, touring their facilities and getting overview briefings. These three gentlemen are just a few of the people we dealt with, but are representative of everyone with whom I came in contact. They were welcoming and eager to help our unit succeed. It was obvious that attitude started at the very top of their Wing. Right at the end of the month we had the 2 TW DO Col Dusart and members of his staff for a tour of G-4, 5 and a M.A.N. tractor.

In a good start to the month, Sgt George Bradley won our first Stripes for Exceptional Performers (STEP) promotion to Staff Sergeant. Personal Reliability Program (PRP) certifications began as we continued our work to Initial Operational Capability (IOC).

Col Bosman, 2 TW commander and Col Reed were briefed on, and then drove a M.A.N. tractor followed by members of the 2 TW senior staff. Not only was it a fun event, it allowed us to showcase to our hosts what we do and

how we do it.

On 29 November we received two C-5 aircraft with two LCCs and four TELs making us critical vehicle complete following a delivery late in October.

We received an invitation from the BAF Aircraft Maintenance Squadron to join them in celebration of Saint Eloi, the patron saint of mechanics, at noon on 7 December. Col Mayeux and I attended. We had a toast with a glass of wine and a nice lunch as we continued to get to know our BAF counterparts. When we got back to the office we tried to sell Col Cooke on establishing a patron saint for us (you know with wine and nice lunches) but he wasn't buying!

On 11 December we had our first wing exercise. It was a small disaster response event that went quite well and taught us, through the law of unintended consequences, all about how the base is divided geographically, and some command and control lessons. On 15 December we had three separate exercises as we built toward day long and multi-day events to test our capability to respond.

We ended the month with the USAFE Staff Assistance team spending a week with us. Then we closed out the month with a big Christmas party in the hangar complete with Santa and Donald Duck (Why Donald Duck? I have no idea!) arriving on a M.A.N. tractor.

There were 18 exercises scheduled during January in preparation for the Initial Nuclear Surety Inspection (INSI).

Though there wasn't much to laugh about in January, I have one final language story that is kind of funny. We exercised alone and occasionally with members of the 2 TW. At one exercise planning session we agreed to meet the following day in BDUs. And we did, with USAF members in Battle Dress Uniforms and our BAF counterparts in Blue Dress Uniforms. We had a good laugh and rescheduled. In the future I would be more specific. In addition to all that we had going, on Mother Nature presented us with the coldest January in 40 years in Belgium.

On 1 February it was announced that the INSI was scheduled for 19-27 February. The days and nights ran



*Pro-Missile Graffiti*



*The BX Trailer, BX Snack Bar and Supply*

together as we prepared and exercised and prepared some more. As it turns out it wasn't enough. The USAFE IG landed on the 19th and began their inspection.

March would prove to be a very interesting and busy month. We started with a vigorous retraining and evaluation of our ability to complete our mission, because on 2 March, in the worst inspection out brief I've ever been associated with or responsible for, maintenance was rated "RED" across the board. We were about to get more help than we could stand. In a somewhat hollow victory, the Wing Exercise Evaluation program was rated above the line in every exercise.

At 0145 on 15 March, Col Cooke knocked on my door and told me that we had a deployment decision, and we were to be at an 0600 meeting in the Command Post. We were to receive "assets" early that evening. We walked through and refined our procedures throughout the day. In what I can only describe as a text book operation, the aircraft landed at 1821 local, and the "Close Watch" was complete and we were secure at 1957 local. Everyone involved hit their marks at just the right time, and our actual procedure was better than any of our practices. It felt good to know that we really could do this when it counted! With lots of follow up actions and the checklist completions required, we were at it into the early morning hours. At about 0300 on 16 March, Col Reed had us back to the Command Post and proposed a champagne toast to our success - fun to win one!

On 16 and 17 March the Stars and Stripes ran articles with big headlines about the deployment decision that had been made at the highest levels of the U.S. and Belgian governments. The paper also ran articles both pro and con on the decision.

On 25 March the USAFE IG returned for a recheck and on 29 March rated us "READY" across the board, a major milestone which we had worked awfully hard to achieve.

With all of this going on, 21 March saw the Grand

Opening of the Base Exchange (BX) in a shiny new bolt together building - it was very nice and the whole base was excited! Prior to this, the BX had been first in a step van that moved to various base locations, and then in an 18 wheeler type trailer. The picture at the left shows the BX snack bar (small white trailer) and the larger trailer which is the BX. Both are to the right of building G-10, the supply hangar.

By the standards of the previous three months April was pretty calm. We started All Up Round (AUR) build ups and entered the next phase of exercises.

On the 12th of April, the Stars and Stripes Bookstore opened. It was small but well stocked and provided newspapers five days a week, as well as periodicals and a range of books. Just as when the new BX opened, there was lots of excitement. It could be that we were pretty easily entertained, but it also helped to make our base seem a little more like home - or as the youngsters in the squadron said, "back in the land of the round door knobs."

Right near the end of the month we received another airplane, this time carrying boosters. These events were never routine, but we had done enough of them by this time that some of the newness had rubbed off. We completed the download, transportation and storage procedure without a lot of help.

We moved to the next phase of exercises with our first long (30 hours) exercise which started on 2 May. Mid-month had us receive another C-141 air shipment. It brought three boosters and a MEP 404 generator. This was the most low key of all of our shipments to date and the aircraft was on the ground for just about an hour and a half.

At commander's call, I awarded everyone an IOC medallion provided us by the wing.

Early in the afternoon of 24 May, I got a call from a pilot friend in the BAF. He said he was going to fly a recon mission on the "Frat House" that afternoon. I gathered up every resident I could find and at 1500, as we stood on a balcony and waved, he made a couple of photo passes in his Mirage II jet. While probably breaking several rules, it was lots of fun and most certainly highlighted a different era. I



*Aerial Photo of the "Frat House"*

*Major Cavilliot and the Flag*

haven't used his name because I don't know when the BAF statute of limitations on having fun runs out! One of his pictures is on the previous page.

June started with extensive preparation for the USAFE IG and the Nuclear Surety Inspection which began on the 17th. With the exception of some administrative/documentation issues in Munitions Supply, we felt good about all of the maintenance tasks which were evaluated above the line. A real bright spot for the squadron was an error free Personal Reliability Program!

The last day and a half of the month and 1 July brought the Festival of St. Pierre and St. Paul, known as "San Pierre." This was a huge annual event not only in Florennes but in towns and villages throughout the area. It was composed of bands, infantry, artillery and mounted units—all in period costume—marching in parades. Parades started mid-morning Saturday and Sunday, with concerts in the afternoon and the celebrations continuing into the evening each day, along with mass and celebrations at the Cathedral. All of this was interspersed with random cannon and musket fire. It had a real carnival atmosphere to it, and merchants took full advantage with many booths selling all manner of memorabilia, post cards/pictures, trinkets and the wonderful frites (a type of French fry cooked in lard that were so good as to be hard to explain - a real treat!) As with most Belgian parties, there was ample food and drink. From a community standpoint, it is one of the most amazing things I have ever seen. The pageantry, music and very well disciplined marching units were just amazing. It seemed that the whole town was involved and everyone was having fun.

The junior Priest, known affectionately as the "Baby Priest" carried a religious icon and led a procession from the Cathedral to a small chapel across town. Good friend and local merchant Michel Fransen led his band in a parade. Friend and BAF Major Phil Cavilliot carried the flag in the

parade. He has marched in St. Pierre parades since he was six years old.

We started the month with a full court press of exercises, study and task training in preparation for the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) which was scheduled to start 22 July. At the last moment, the inspection was cancelled. We were advised that the Greenham Common Wing had busted an inspection, and the IG team was staying there to sort that out. At that moment, we were not sure when they would get back to Florennes.

Maintainers started rotating out, a total of 12 in July or just more than 10 percent of unit strength.

In the small victories category, five young vehicle maintenance troops in room 123 of our dorm, in a room they were proud of and called "The Swamp", had their room selected as Best in the Wing in the first ever Wing-wide dorm inspection. This inspection, conducted on 18 July, also selected our First Sergeant's quarters as the best in the off-base category. The youngsters in room 123 were very proud as was new First Sergeant, MSgt Ray Hovey who had put a lot of work into this success.

On 29, July we put a M.A.N. tractor off base for the first time for driver training on a simulated dispersal route/site. A minor milestone was achieved.

On 1 August, the Wing celebrated its one year anniversary with a groundbreaking ceremony for its first permanent structure - the MWR facility. Many US and Belgian General Officers, along with prominent Belgian civilians were in attendance. In the afternoon, the Wing stood down and the people of Florennes were invited to a picnic, with, among other things, a TEL, LCC, M.A.N. Tractor and support equipment on display.

The wing and our guests gathered in the Barbeque area, and the USAFE Band performed for our Belgian friends and members of the Wing. We had a TEL on display. It was

*Michel Fransen Leading the Band*

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*The Village Priest*

a huge success even though the weather was not the best.

For me, the remainder of the month was spent tying up loose ends and getting ready to depart on 13 August 1985 - one year to the day after I arrived. It was a year marked by huge successes and crushing defeats. Incredible effort by maintainers brought us to IOC and beyond. I can't say enough about the youngsters and some not so young who made it happen!

I organized this story around the calendar, but there are a couple of stories that I can't tie to a month and a final one that happened more than once over of the course of the year.

First, at one of his Officer's Calls Colonel Reed invited Colonel Bosman to speak to us. Among his other gifts, Colonel Bosman was an expert/scholar on Napoleon. For something over an hour, with great maps and charts and very few notes, he spoke to us about Napoleon and Waterloo (the battlefield is just south of Brussels.) It was a fascinating presentation, and at the end he took questions. Someone asked why he didn't focus his efforts on Wellington, since he had won the battle? Without pause and with much laughter from us he said, "Wellington is so boring!"

Second, one Sunday afternoon, several of us were invited to an art exhibit and social in Florennes. While there, I saw a picture/painting of a World War II pursuit squadron logo. The following week, I spoke with Major Cloutier, a member of Colonel Reed's staff who spoke excellent French, and asked him if he would try and get permission for us to modify and use the logo as the 485TMMS unit crest. He was successful, and I asked Technical Sergeant Craig Edmundson to modify the logo to define our mission. Craig was, and perhaps still is, a very talented graphic artist. The picture of the patch on page 11 tells our story. Three lightning bolts are emblematic of our three flights and a very determined bee holding a missile in one hand and a pistol in the other symbolizes our striking power. The artwork was

complete before I left and later First Sergeant Hovey sent me copies of the crest in the form of stickers. I don't know if the crest was ever made into a cloth patch, but I have seen several wonderful pewter plates in my subsequent travels around the missile community.

Finally, many of the roads on Florennes AB were also aircraft taxiways. More than once, I turned a corner in my tiny Fiat sedan and looked down the road to see a BAF Mirage II coming at me - and the jet had the right of way! The first time it happened was somewhat of a religious experience, as I looked for a turn out so I could get out of his way!

To wrap this up a couple of words on things that I have not included need to be said:

-The hard work put in by other organizations to make the Wing successful - this is a maintenance story.

-Wonderful dinners at the homes of our Belgian friends.

-Periodic grocery shopping trips where our language skills were tested. In several shops it became a game of I'll teach you French if you'll teach me English and was lots of fun.

-Various trips to Greenham Common and the Headquarters to exchange ideas, discuss policy and receive guidance.

-Squadron discipline issues. Most of which were routine, some that weren't and at least one that had the potential to become an international incident, but didn't.

-Finding time to get to know new acquaintances, many of whom became lifelong friends.

So that's it, the good, the bad and the ugly of one GLCM guy's year in Belgium. Even with our mistakes and missteps, the maintenance pioneers felt that we laid down a solid foundation for those who followed to build on. Many that I served with, both officer and enlisted, went on to full and very successful careers.



*The TEL Display with Missiles*