

USAF Life Support/Flight Equipment Career Narratives and Stories

Aircrew Life Support/Flight Equipment Story

I was assigned to the 23rd Tactical Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem AB, Germany in July of 1974. There were two F-4 fighter Squadrons there, the other was the 81st TFS. To my surprise all of the Life Support people were wearing flight jackets complete with Squadron insignia and name tags. Since there were only a small number of enlisted guys and gals in the squadrons we all felt very much part of our units.

In April 1975 we got a new Wing Commander, no names will be mentioned. On his first flight out of our squadron he approached me and asked why we were wearing flight jackets. I mumbled through something about esprit de corps and safety, but he insisted that since we were not authorized flight jackets we WILL turn them in to supply and we should never be caught wearing them again. After I got over the not so happy experience I opted to do something legal.

The next day I went to remove a chute and survival kit for inspection while wearing my USAF authorized field jacket. After some not very difficult maneuvers I somehow got the sleeve caught on something (been so long since I was in an F-4, I forgot exactly what) that could have caused a fatality had I not noticed the problem. I was so shook up that I was forced to write up a hazard report on the situation. (Hazard Report 11 Apr 1975 #HEP75-19-DO-09)

At the same time I turned in a base suggestion that the flight jackets, L-2 and MA-1 be issued to Life Support personnel for safety reasons when working around ejection seats.

In July 1976 a TWX was sent out from IGO safety office at Norton AFB that due to the safety hazard of wearing field jackets and parkas in and around ejection seat aircraft flight jackets would be authorized in TA 016 for Life Support personnel who did work in and around ejection seat aircraft.

On 10 Aug 1976 the 52nd TAC Fighter Wing received a letter from the Director of Safety, HQ USAF in Europe stating the same and shortly after that I received \$25 for my suggestion.

On 23 Aug 1976 the Wing Commander sent a letter to my Squadron Commander commending the initiative taken by Life Support in identifying this hazardous problem.

I then informed all three of my Life Support guys and the 81st guys to break out their flight jackets. We all somehow forgot to turn them in to supply. I cannot be sure but, I think some of us toasted the event over a beer at the club while wearing our flight jackets.

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