



Ohio National Guard Leadership

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA



Recently I had an amazing experience with the Ohio National Guard (ONG) Refueling Wing out of Rickenbacker Airport that I wanted to share with you. Last spring I gave a speech on leadership and afterwards I was approached by Lieutenant Colonel Kathy Lowery and Sergeant Major (ret) Atrel Henderson. They talked to me about doing leadership training for the Ohio National Guard. They also invited me to fly on a KC135 refueling tanker on 9/17/09. I excitedly accepted their kind offer.

To be honest, I didn't expect much when I arrived at Rickenbacker Airport on 9/17/09. Boy was I in for a surprise. From the moment I walked into the briefing room I was impressed with the ONG personnel. They were enthusiastic and professional. It was obvious that they take their mission seriously.

We spent the morning learning about the Ohio National Guard and what they do for Ohio and America. We also got to sit in a Blackhawk helicopter and see several vehicles and firearms used by the ONG. But, the day went from good to amazing in the afternoon. At 1p.m. we boarded a KC135 and taxied out to the two mile runway. I was lucky enough to be selected to sit in the cockpit. It was so exciting to hurtle down the runway at 150 knots and feel that machine lift into the air as I watched the runway slip beneath us.



We then climbed to 20,000 feet and headed north to the thumb area of Michigan. At that point 6 F16s left Toledo and climbed to our elevation. We all waited like giddy children on Christmas morning for the fighters to arrive. One by one they sidled up to our wingtip and then pulled behind us to be refueled. As Major Andrew Mossman and First Lieutenant Jason Morgan expertly piloted our aircraft, refueling pros Sergeant William Gilbert and Sergeant Mark Gilbert piloted the refueling pod into the waiting fighter jet.

I was allowed to lie down next to William and watch as the F16 approached us from the rear.



The precision with which these crews did their jobs amazed me. We were flying at 350 miles per hour and the fighter would position themselves twenty feet below our tail as if they were attached to our aircraft. It was a surreal feeling for me. I felt like I could reach out and touch the fighter jet below us. I knew that one false move could have sent the jet crashing into us, but I felt very little anxiety because everything was done like clockwork. Once the fighter was in position William would extend the pod and insert it into the F16. It looked like he was threading a needle at 350 miles per hour. In twenty seconds he would pump 2000 pounds of fuel into the waiting fighter, which would then disengage so that the next fighter could be refueled.

As we flew back to Columbus all of the guests on the airplane chatted excitedly about this amazing show we had just witnessed. I want to thank all of the members of the National Guard who entertained us on 9/17/09 and to tell them how inspired I was by their leadership. Here are some things I think we can all learn from the ONG personnel.

- 1) Be proud of your mission. Do something you love to do.
- 2) Believe that you make a difference for those around you, no matter how small your contribution.
- 3) Show enthusiasm for your work. It inspires others to follow.
- 4) We are all pretty darn lucky to live in America and to have such fine, well-trained, men and women keeping us safe from harm.

