



saving lives

USAFE Comm comes to aid of medical community



By 1st Lt. Billy Pope Jr.  
HQ USAFE/A6Y

RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany —The Communications and Information Directorate at Headquarters US Air Forces in Europe is transforming the way it provides information technology services theater-wide by forging partnerships with other functional areas.

One such partnership is the Flight of the Future. It was first introduced to USAFE in September 2002 and is now literally transforming the way communications support is provided to USAFE's medical community.

The service and performance improvements, cross functional integration opportunities and total cost of ownership envisioned during the program's planning phases are quickly becoming reality.

Before Flight of the Future was launched, traditional communications support functions, like network account access and application troubleshooting, were performed by on-site enlisted Health Service Administrators. The Flight of the Future pilot program consolidates network help desk support for medical system users to a single centralized help desk at Ramstein AB, Germany. The centralized help desk is manned by contractors, returning 26 HSAs to traditional medical healthcare service support.

The Flight of the Future uses remote desktop administration and helpdesk consolidation, allowing USAFE to make unprecedented strides toward tomorrow's vision of communications support.

"This program provides an equal, if not better, level of communications support to USAFE's medical personnel at a

much lower total cost," said Lt. Col. Michael Adames, the HQ USAFE/SG Chief Information Officer and project manager for Flight of the Future.

"In addition to consolidating help desk services in order to save money, the long term goal of the Flight of the Future is to return our Health Services Administrators back to their core competencies and make significant strides toward the AF-CIO vision of information technology services consolidation."

The study is expected to continue until September, but preliminary data suggests the Flight of the Future is a booming success. Recent studies show significant IT support savings since the CHD's full implementation in January. The majority of those savings are generated by the elimination of work group managers and the time they spent working on the network. Flight of the Future also relieved the health care professionals from managing e-mail services. These duties were assumed by the host base communications squadron. The next step is to move the remaining operation and maintenance function of the network to the communication squadrons. "IT is rapidly evolving to a point where stand off management and administration of networks will be common place—right down to the specific components and applications that provide voice, data, and video on the desktop," said Col. Steven Spano, USAFE's Director of Communications and information. "In a net centric environment, there are no lines between the network and end user peripherals. Building a new way to think digitally will take time, but Flight of the Future is the perfect catalyst to speed up the process."

### Comm 'Flight' team



From left, Jennifer Wortman, Master Sgt. Kevin O'Hara, Lt. Col. Michael Adames, Sharita Kemp, 1st Lt. Billy Pope, Shelley Wiley and Rob Oxendine. Flight of the Future was first introduced to USAFE in September 2002 and is now literally transforming the way communications support is provided to USAFE's medical community. In doing so, health care providers are able to concentrate on their core tasks and not overburdened with work-group management duties.