

ABOVE THE BEST

Fort Rucker plays key role in commission's efforts to improve aviation safety

By Jim Hughes

Fort Rucker Public Affairs

Fort Rucker is playing a key role in helping the nation and the Department of Defense reduce future military aviation mishaps.

Members of the Congress-established National Commission on Military Aviation Safety visited the post to meet with U.S. Army Aviation Center of Excellence officials July 23-24 in order to get a firsthand and detailed look at Army Aviation training, according to retired Gen. Richard A. Cody, chairman of the commission.

While at Fort Rucker, the commission was also able to meet with U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center and U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory officials for detailed looks into aviation safety and aviation medical research, as well, Cody added.

"Excellent," is how the chairman described the two-day visit to the home of Army Aviation. "This visit is important because this is where Army aviators undergo initial flight training on the AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Black Hawk, UH-72 Lakota, CH-47 Chinook and the C-12 Huron."

The input and information gleaned from the Fort Rucker visit will pay big dividends for the commission's work, according to Cody, who said Congress established the commission last year to conduct a comprehensive review of military aviation mishaps occurring between 2013 and 2018 to reveal trends, identify shortcomings and highlight best practices.



PHOTO BY KELLY MORRIS

Maj. Gen. David J. Francis, Fort Rucker and USAACE commanding general, walks with retired Gen. Richard A. Cody, who visited Fort Rucker July 23-24 as chairman of the National Commission on Military Aviation Safety, at Cairns Army Airfield before an aerial tour of stagefields.

"The commission is examining the full range of man, train and equip issues associated with aviation safety," Cody said. "The commission is looking for aggregate trends from previous mishaps, including lessons learned and how they are incorporated into current operations, training and maintenance procedures."

The commission is also reviewing orga-

nizational and supervisory influence, human factors, training, physiological effects, maintenance, operational tempo and budgetary constraints, the retired general said, adding that the commission is aiming to provide its final report on how to improve aviation safety and readiness to Congress in March.

During their Fort Rucker visit, commission members met with Maj. Gen. David J.

Francis, Fort Rucker and USAACE commanding general; took in a UH-60 instrument class at Cairns Army Airfield where they observed students and instructor pilots; visited five stagefields; were briefed on aviation training; toured simulators and virtual reality training resources; and Cody spoke with students at the captains career course.

"I put my commissioner's hat on, and I talked to them because these are going to be the next company and troop commanders," he said. "I asked them quite a few questions about how they feel about the training they get from Fort Rucker and how well they were able to do going to their units – if that training got them ready for success. I got very positive answers, which I expected."

The commission also spent time at the CRC getting briefed on the different ways the Army is not only looking at and investigating the Class A through C mishaps, but also looking at predictive analysis and causal factors, Cody said.

"I'm very impressed with that," he said.

The commission members also visited USAARL, "which I think is a gem of a capability," Cody said. "We took a look ahead at the physiological aspect – everything from helmets and seats, as well as cognitive decision making crew coordination overload, and all of those types of things. I hadn't been there in about four or five years. I'm impressed with USAARL and what they are doing. It's been a very good visit."

And it won't be the last one, he added.

While the commission is visiting various other military operational commands, flight training centers and maintenance facilities,

SAFETY *cont.*



PHOTO BY KELLY MORRIS

Members of the National Commission on Military Aviation Safety observe a student preflight brief in a classroom at Cairns.

and even looking for best practices in the civil aviation industry, Cody fully expects they will be back at Fort Rucker.

“I’ve had my executive director down here three times already,” he said. “This is my first visit as the commissioner, but I’ll be coming back and probably sending people back. We’ll probably come back and forth a couple of times to make sure we got it right and give people the time to say, ‘Geez, you know what, last time we briefed you on this and you asked some of these questions. We’ve taken a look at it and this is what we think.’ It will be a continual process until we actually put pen to paper to start writing the report.”

Cody said he expects that report to have a profound impact on the future of military aviation.

“We have great expertise across our eight commissioners, but, more importantly, we’ve assembled a team of subject matter experts that have been doing this type of work in other arenas,” he said. “We’re taking a look at these mishap rates, everything from jets all the way to training helicopters and every-

thing in between.

“What we’re seeing is no new accidents, from our experience, just more people having accidents.” Cody added. “We’re looking at how we can take this data and look at the causal factors, look at training, look at organizational op-tempo, look at the physiological aspects, materiel, maintenance, and the



PHOTO BY BRYAN WHITMAN

Francis and Cody speak with a Soldier about aviation training at Fort Rucker.

currency requirements versus proficiency requirements across the services and across the aircrews.

“We also are looking at the funding and resourcing – not just the resourcing of parts, fuel and aircraft, but also crew resourcing in critical areas,” the chairman said. “Our goal is to provide some insights as to where we need to improve across DOD in terms of funding, resourcing, new technologies and training. And what we’re finding is the services are already doing a lot of this stuff – they’re looking at all of these things.”

By providing an outside-looking-in perspective, Cody said the commission’s overall goal is simple – improve aviation safety.

“We hope to be able to stop one accident – one accident is one too many,” he said. “We hope that we’re able to provide Congress, DOD, the service leadership and, just as importantly, the people on the flightline, some lessons learned and some experiential data points to raise the level of safety awareness to a level that everybody gets better and we avoid some of these catastrophic accidents. We’re looking at it through that lens.”

**FORT RUCKER
MOVIE SCHEDULE**

FOR AUGUST 1-17

Thursday, August 1

Shaft (R) 7 p.m.

Friday, August 2

Shaft (R) 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 3

The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG) 4 p.m.

Rocketman (R) 7 p.m.

Sunday, August 4

The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG) 1 p.m.

Men in Black: International (PG-13) 4 p.m.

Thursday, August 8

Men in Black: International (PG-13) 4 p.m.

Friday, August 9

Godzilla: King of the Monsters (PG-13) 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 10

The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG) 4 p.m.

Crawl (R) 7 p.m.

Sunday, August 12

The Secret Life of Pets 2 (PG) 1 p.m.

Spider-Man: Far From Home (PG-13) 4 p.m.

Wednesday, August 14

The Angry Birds Movie 2 (PG) 4 & 7 p.m.

Thursday, August 15

The Angry Birds Movie 2 (PG) 7 p.m.

Friday, August 16

The Angry Birds Movie 2 (PG) 4 & 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 17

CLOSED

TICKETS ARE \$6 FOR ADULTS AND \$5 FOR CHILDREN, 12 AND UNDER. MILITARY I.D. CARDHOLDERS AND THEIR GUESTS ARE WELCOME. SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 255-2408.