

**With a MiG-21 Fishbed and two TS-11 Iskra aircraft in the background,**

Lt. Col. Steve Jarvis (center) and Polish air force officers Maj. Marek Warminski (left) and Maj. Waldematr Golebiewski discuss preparations to field 48 F-16 Fighting Falcons, which will be added to the Polish air fleet beginning in 2006. Jarvis led a team of 35 U.S. airmen and civilians to two Polish air bases assisting with logistical and training requirements in fielding the aircraft.



Their names will probably be a mere footnote in the annals of Polish air force history, but they're fully aware of the key roles they played in assisting their NATO counterparts to take a giant leap forward.

"It's great to be a part of history. It's a historic event in their air force," said Maj. Fausto Padilla, a senior aircraft maintenance officer from the 162nd Fighter Wing in Tucson, Ariz. "In some areas, it's like a quantum leap for these guys, not just with the aircraft but the whole system of aviation."

Padilla was speaking as a member of the Air Force site survey team that visited Poland in July to help pave the way for the 48 F-16 Fighting Falcons it purchased from the U.S. government for \$3.5 billion. As part of the multifaceted transaction, the U.S. government agreed to assist Poland with logistical and training requirements.

The team, composed of 35 airmen and civilians, visited two Polish air bases to help establish the vast support structure needed to transition from the MiG-21 Soviet-era jet fighter to the world's most modern version of the F-16, complete with all the bells and whistles.

**Getting down to business**

The team spent less than one week at each of the two bases scheduled to receive the Fighting Falcon. It was an ambitious task that fell upon the shoulders of Lt. Col. Steve Jarvis, who temporarily swapped his job as the Poland country director at the Pentagon to site survey team chief.

"At first I stopped and asked, 'OK, how are we going to do this?'" Jarvis said while moving from one group of team members to another. "We don't fully

# Paving a Pathway

Air Force team breaks a trail leading to the addition of F-16s to the Polish fleet

understand their concept yet," he said at the beginning of day two during their first stop at the 31st Air Base near the city of Poznan.

The plan was simple and effective. "We ask a lot of questions, such as how they do business and how they plan to do business," said Jarvis, an F-15E Strike Eagle pilot by trade. It was obvious to airmen of both nations the aircraft upgrade would be more than just a new way of doing business.

"They're going to take a huge leap in technology, processes and infrastructure," said Vic Olson, the F-16 logistics manager for the F-16 program office at Hill Air Force Base, Utah. He and fellow team members helped the Polish air force prepare for a soft landing when the first of the F-16s are scheduled to arrive in 2006.

The survey team, primarily Air National Guard members, spent long days combing facilities, equipment and processes alongside their Polish counterparts. Their findings and recommendations were included in an in-depth report for the Polish govern-

## Bridging the gap

When the Polish military looks to narrow the gulf between past and present technologies, it calls the Office of Defense Cooperation.

"We bridge that gap," said Maj. Dave Paynter, a member of the office's small staff of Air Force, Army, Navy and Polish local nationals located at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw, Poland. Created in 1996, its work includes, among other things, anti-terrorism, military exchange programs, promoting regional stability, and free and open markets under guidance from European Command and the U.S. ambassador.

ment to use in finalizing preparations.

To gather information for that report, Master Sgt. Charles Higgins and fellow team members were bussed each morning from a nearby military training center. As they passed through the gate of the

In support of Poland's recent purchase of 48 F-16s from the United States, the office worked the sale in the same manner as similar requests for unmanned aerial vehicles, helicopters, Humvees, handheld encryption radios and excess Navy frigates. First, the office determined the requirement and then sought the best agent to handle the requirement.

The task is sometimes tedious. The office helped pore over a 100-page document detailing facets of the F-16 program ranging from spare parts to training. The tedious task took three weeks to complete to make sure nothing was lost in the translation.

Along the way, cultural differences also emerged in the

way the two countries conduct business. The American contingent would show up for a meeting ready to get down to business, while their counterparts preferred a more gradual approach consisting of coffee and conversation. And when it was time for lunch, Americans suggested a quick sandwich at the table while their Polish friends preferred a lengthier affair at a local restaurant.

"Each side would give and take," Paynter said with a laugh. "It was a compromise, and we still got the job done at the end of the day. The accomplishments speak for themselves."

— Master Sgt. Chuck Roberts

air base in a remote wooded area, they saw remnants of the Cold War, including MiG-21s juxtaposed with modern state-of-the-art equipment and hangars recently built for the Fighting Falcon.

The game plan was to "sit down with the Poles and look at what they currently have that's acceptable with the F-16 and suggest how to get up to speed so they're ready when they arrive," said Higgins, a weapons specialist with the 162nd.

After a morning brief in a new NATO standard hangar, Higgins broke away with his U.S. and Polish counterparts to analyze how and where armaments would be handled for the F-16. They joined the bustle of other like-minded airmen walking around asking questions about proposed handling of munitions, inspecting weapons storage sites, taking notes and generally trying to do a lot in a short amount of time.

Higgins found support facilities in place for missile trailers, stands and bunkers, while noting improvements still needed for equipment testing. Along the way, he discovered an abundance of cooperation.

"The people here want to learn," Higgins said. "They're always feeding for information and are excited to learn. They have definitely put some effort into their base and flight line." Higgins had no doubt about Poland's ability to successfully field the F-16s. "They'll be there. It'll take some work, but they'll be there."

## The great leap forward

Capt. Krzysztof Pusz is fully aware of the daunting task ahead in the aircraft transition that he likened

to going from "an old Volkswagen to a new Mercedes," but the Polish senior maintenance officer's excited about his country and air force having the F-16.

Although their native tongues are different, Pusz said the transition will be easier because maintainers can "easily find a common language." Besides, he added, "the final work is the same" even if it involves new terminology such as "nondestructive inspection."

Pusz looks forward to future NATO exercises when he can pick up the phone and talk F-16 issues with fellow maintainers in the United States. But the young, energetic captain said he hopes for the opportunity to compare firsthand how things work at U.S. air bases.

Olson, a veteran of seven previous site surveys, said Pusz and his air force have come a long way the past eight years in areas such as speaking English. In the early going, a translator was often required, but now English-speaking Polish airmen are becoming more commonplace.

Similar changes have occurred in facility upgrades. To prove his point, Olson gestured around him to an empty hangar. "This is a beautiful hangar," Olson said, but nearby stood a facility Olson said would only create more work, referring to a World War II bunker warehouse.

He, too, is confident the base will be ready to house the units it's scheduled to receive: one training squadron and one active squadron.

"They realize their aircraft is their future to guard their borders and in joining NATO conflicts," Olson said. "This is a long-term airplane, and I think you're

### Senior Master Sgt. Steve Aguilar (left) and Lt. Col. Michael Knutson (right)

discuss ideal usage for the state-of-the-art Polish hangar they're standing in with senior maintenance officer Capt. Krzysztof Pusz. Minor alterations were proposed to more effectively house F-16 maintenance operations. Aguilar and Knutson, both from the 162nd Fighter Wing in Tucson, Ariz., spent two weeks helping the Polish air force prepare for the aircraft.





**Master Sgt. Robert Appling, deputy fire chief from Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.,** checks a firefighter's suit during a demonstration by Polish firefighters at the 31st Air Base near Poznan, Poland. Appling said his Polish counterparts are ready and able to support the 48 F-16 Fighting Falcons.

going to see Poland become a front-runner in NATO exercises. They want to be known as living up to their commitments, and the F-16 will allow that."

Another veteran of site surveys, Lt. Col. Michael Knutson, also expressed confidence in the probability of success. "Their preparation is outstanding," Knutson said while examining a long line of support equipment displayed on the flight line. "I've never seen it so prepared in advance of an aircraft coming. These Poles are progressing tremendously."

Knutson, the maintenance team chief who also hailed from the 162nd, described the shiny new equipment as "some good stuff I'd love to have in Tucson" such as a generator cart on a truck instead of the U.S. version that's towed.

### A new way of business

The biggest challenge, Knutson said, will be adapting to a different type of maintenance philosophy. "The philosophy of who does what is extremely different," Knutson explained. "Our job is to find a

happy medium while continuing to operate safely and efficiently."

One issue of discussion was the absence of a "hush" house for conducting engine tests. Such a facility increases the type of tests that can be conducted while reducing the noise level in the local area. It was decided that particular issue would be addressed at a meeting later that night, the first of many on different topics.

A few hundred feet away, a firefighting demonstration was under way. There, too, a difference in technology and methodology was displayed by Polish firefighters. But something similar, and perhaps more important, was evident to Master Sgt. Robert Appling, deputy fire chief at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla.

"It's an occupation in which you're very proud of what you do," Appling said while his Polish counterparts subdued a simulated blaze with foam, which is no longer used by the Air Force because of environmental concerns.

"These guys want to do the best job they can.

But Warsaw didn't offer the same support network and amenities found at other overseas bases, such as a commissary, base exchange, base theater, bowling alley or military medical treatment facility.

The large commissary Jennifer was accustomed to was replaced by an embassy mini-commissary. You can get a particular brand of diet soda, but if it's not on the shelf, it must be shipped from Germany at about one-third more cost.

### Getting out & about

But the adjustment was made, and the Paynters were soon discovering the pleasures of Poland. Just a few blocks away from their home, Jennifer found the outdoor Sadyba market with fresh fruits and vegetables at a price that would make a commissary envious. A short drive farther, the old city offered streets and squares for leisurely strolls bathed in old-world architecture. Much of the old town was destroyed by German forces during World War II, but it was rebuilt in duplicate fashion. The family also found a favorite retreat in the ancient city of Krakow, a short weekend drive topped off by dining on Polish cuisine.

Rees made the transition from home-schooling to a more bustling international school where he discovered a love, and talent, for bass guitar. School

They're very proud of what they can do and are capable of," Appling said. "There's really not much difference between us and them — we both save lives and property."

He added that with new equipment arriving, the gap would be reduced even further, especially when added to the Polish air force's professionalism. "They're very dedicated to making this happen."

Those sentiments were shared by Senior Master Sgt. Steve Aguilar with the fabrication element covering areas such as metal technology, structural repair, nondestructive lab and survival equipment. Aguilar also found differences between the way the two countries conduct business, but no showstoppers.

In a few days he would file his report, board the bus and head to the next base in Lask where the process would begin again.

"It's incredible to help someone who will be your partner some day," said Aguilar, a guardsman from the 162nd. "It's a great experience for me to do something like this. I'm glad to be a part of it." ❖

was academically challenging, said the now 15-year-old, and it featured intriguing aspects such as field trips to the Czech Republic. Rees also turned out to be the family's most proficient Polish speaker. Dad and mom both abandoned hopes of mastering the language and often turned to him for translation services.

Paynter, who reported for a remote tour at Al Udeid, Qatar, in November, said he regretted not pursuing the language more. But the lack of language skills didn't hinder his ability to characterize the Poles as caring and friendly people.

"Once you get to know them, any problem you're having becomes their problem," he said. The major said the embassy community also is a close-knit community with family get-togethers each Friday and embassy-sponsored trips to immerse families into the Polish culture.

Although the Paynters look forward to their next assignment in the United States where ketchup-flavored Cheetos will be replaced by Taco Bell, Paynter said his family would always share warm memories of life in Poland.

"I'm lucky to have had this assignment," he said. "It's been rewarding and a great opportunity for my family."

— Master Sgt. Chuck Roberts

## PCS to Poland?

When he first learned of the terrorist attacks in New York City, Maj. Dave Paynter wanted to be home with family and friends in North Carolina. Instead, he was attending a military ceremony on the remote Hel peninsula in northern Poland.

Since he couldn't be back home, he was glad to be somewhere where the same compassion could be found, explained Paynter, who was assigned with his family to the Office of Defense Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw. The tragedy seemed to strike home with everyone around him.

"It was like a strike against Poland," Paynter said of the compassionate response of Polish citizens. "Clearly Poland had an outpouring of emotion," the major said of the response he witnessed after returning to Warsaw where he discovered candles and flowers placed in sympathy in front of the embassy.

### Cold War visions

The warmth extended to the Paynter family differed from earlier visions they once shared of Poland. When Paynter first learned he'd been tapped for a special duty assignment in Warsaw three years ago, he, his pregnant wife, Jennifer,

and their 13-year-old son Rees, had visions of a dark and dreary Warsaw Pact nation. Their youngest son at the time was 7-year-old Luke. Sam, now a 3-year-old, joined the family after the move.

"I wasn't even aware that Warsaw, Poland, was an option, but I was willing to give it a try. It turned out to be a great opportunity," Jennifer said. But when the family arrived on a dark, dreary October day, she was concerned her fears had been validated.

An hour after their arrival, the self-described homebodies were left to their own devices to seek out dinner in a bustling capital city of 1.6 million residents. They spotted a McDonald's. A sigh of relief at the sight of something familiar; however, the menu board featured a Big Mac with "zestaw," which Paynter guessed to mean some type of sauce.

Not caring for such possible sauce, Paynter said he tried to order his without. "I wound up with nothing but blank stares," he said. It seemed to the staff that he wanted a Big Mac value meal minus the value meal. "Zestaw" means array and is the closest translation for value meal.

So the transition process began. Soon the Paynters were successfully overcoming all the typical changes military families encounter when moving overseas.

"It didn't take long not to be fearful of this assignment," the major said.