

# 28 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON

## MISSION

The 28 Civil Engineer Squadron provides the necessary assets and skilled personnel to prepare and sustain installations throughout the world, in times of war and peace. The squadron's dual mission is to provide quality home-station engineer services for rapid, decisive, sustainable combat support, anytime, anywhere. Additionally, the Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force (Prime BEEF) mobility teams stand ready to rapidly deploy anytime, anywhere to provide fully responsive engineer capabilities in support of our nation's contingencies. This dual mission of war readiness and infrastructure maintenance is accomplished with a combined military and civilian work force capable of rapid transition between missions.

## LINEAGE

28 Installations Squadron  
Redesignated 28 Civil Engineering Squadron  
Redesignated 28 Civil Engineer Squadron

## STATIONS

Rapid City AFB, later Ellsworth AFB, SD, 12 Jul 1948-1 Jan 1962  
Ellsworth AFB, SD

## ASSIGNMENTS

28 Mission Support Group

## COMMANDERS

Maj Randall W. Woodall, #1959  
Lt Col Matt Joganich  
Lt Col Navnit Singh

## HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

## **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

A six-man team from the 28th Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordnance disposal flight responded to a vehicle collision on Highway 212 in Montana last month. The crash involved two tractor trailers – one carrying fertilizer and the other U.S. Navy high-explosive projectiles. “Around 10:30 (p.m.), I received a call from command post requesting our assistance with a vehicular accident involving military ordnance,” explained Staff Sgt. Andrew, an EOD team leader. “Initially, they were saying that ordnance was scattered all over the highway, and we were the closest team to respond. I gathered as much information as I could, recalled my team and notified my leadership.”

Andrew and two other Airmen – Senior Airman Chad and Airman 1st Class Dillon, both EOD team members – went to their shop at Ellsworth Air Force Base, gathered their gear and equipment, and headed out to the accident scene around 1:30 a.m. They drove through blizzard conditions to the site just west of Hammond, where a sheriff was waiting for them. The EOD team’s initial concern was to secure the site and determine if there were any immediate hazards. Three pallets had ejected from the truck carrying Navy munitions, two of which had broken open and scattered munitions across the highway and on the side of the road. The EOD team first needed to verify that the area was safe to operate in. Once they concluded it was, they got to work.

The Airmen set about uncovering each of the 70-pound munitions. The recovery was difficult because many of the projectiles had been obscured by the nearly white-out conditions. A metal detector was even needed to locate a final round, which had become buried in the snow. The team accounted for all 480 projectiles and sorted them into groups: damaged and undamaged. “Sixty of those I deemed to be unsafe to transport or ship,” Andrew stated. “So, we had to work with local authorities and a local land owner to find a disposal area that was not too far away, since it was hazardous to transport, but that also had adequate room away from any personnel and property so that we could dispose of them and not damage anything nearby.”

Not knowing the full extent of the accident when they first set out, the initial EOD team only brought 28 blocks of C4 plastic explosives with them for ordnance disposal purposes. After they’d sorted through the munitions, they realized that they’d need closer to 100 blocks total to safely dispose of the 60 damaged munitions. A secondary team was called in. Staff Sgt. Dustin, an EOD team member, and Senior Airman Adam, an EOD journeyman, worked with base munitions and EOD leadership to get an emergency issue done for the additional C4, which they transported in. They also assisted the first team with the overall clean-up effort of preparing the remaining 420 munitions for transport. Their efforts enabled the road to be reopened again the next evening.

“Highway 212 is almost the only route from Belle Fourche (South Dakota) into Billings, Montana,” Andrew said. “To go all the way around is a huge inconvenience. I think opening up the (Montana state road) without anybody getting hurt further than what happened initially was pretty important.” The Airmen also safely disposed of the damaged projectiles at dusk – just shy of 24 hours following the accident’s occurrence. Since the demolition was done in low light, the team returned during daylight hours to inspect the area. They searched the field in which they did the disposal shot, picked up fragmentation debris and looked for secondary hazards, of which they found none. The team worked long hours over several days to ensure the clean-up effort was entirely successful.

“I feel like (my teammates) did awesome. From the team leader on down, everyone knew exactly what to do,” Dillon said. “We’re all pretty cohesive because we’re a small shop, so we’re all a big family. We all work together pretty well.” At Ellsworth AFB, the EOD flight’s number one priority is to support base operations and B-1B Lancer sortie generation. Their number two priority, according to Andrew, is training. The EOD Airmen train diligently, because when it comes to a “real world scenario,” it’s their training that they fall back on. “I personally believe we have the best training program in (Air Force Global Strike Command), if not all of Air Force EOD,” Andrew attested, “and I think this response is just a testament to that diligent work ethic and the training program.”

By going through the different scenarios the EOD teams could potentially come across, the Airmen are able to identify shortfalls, capability gaps and limitations in a training environment. This enables them to improve and expand their reach when it comes to actual operational missions. Additionally, their training helped the team to push through the different obstacles they faced during their response in February. “I was pleased with everybody’s work, discipline and dedication throughout the whole thing,” Andrew said. “I mean, everybody was tired. The first team that responded – myself, (Dillon and Chad) – we hadn’t slept at all. We were up until 11, and then we got the call. So, running on no sleep, the team stayed very positive.

“It was terrible weather conditions so, with all of these things in mind, I was really impressed with how well the team was able to stick together ... throughout the whole response.” Master Sgt. Matthew, their EOD support section chief, worked from Ellsworth AFB as the liaison between the “guys on the ground” and the base. He informed leadership of the team’s progress and made sure the Airmen on scene had what they needed to get the job done. “We train for anything and everything,” Matthew said. “You don’t know when you’re going to get the call, and when you do get the call, you don’t know what’s on the other end; you don’t know the level of expertise needed. Sometimes it’s hung ordnance on an aircraft, sometimes it’s 4,000 pounds of explosives smashed into the side of a fertilizer truck in the middle of Montana. “So you don’t know what it is, but you have to be prepared for all that. And this team took that call at night, ran a 24-hour operation, essentially, and did it with great success. I couldn’t be more proud of the team.” 2019

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USAF Unit Histories  
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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.