



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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Sabre Drill Team Promotes Patriotism

MAXWELL AFB, GUNTER ANNEX, Ala – Standing shoulder to shoulder, the drill team members twirled, tossed and caught their 35-inch long, 19-ounce sabers, often coming perilously close to their teammates — but the well-practiced team flawlessly executed the routines.

The team, the only active duty enlisted Sabre Drill Team in the Air Force, was formed in 1989 as a way to promote esprit de corps within the Standard Systems Group. "At that time rifle teams were a dime a dozen, so in order to be unique, they decided to use sabers," team chief Tech. Sgt. Tracey Ulanski, who has been a member for 6 ½ years, said.

In the past 14 years, the team has performed for more than 83,000 people, traveling more than 56,000 miles across 13 states. The team supports any military, community or civic function that increases public awareness of Air Force missions and promotes patriotism.

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SABRE DRILL TEAM

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"Being on the Sabre Drill Team is great," Staff Sgt. Jered Sledge, assistant team chief, said. "It's lots of fun and we meet all kinds of neat people. Plus, it's another way to serve and promote the Air Force."

SSG airmen volunteer for the drill team, and enter a three-phase training program to learn how to handle the saber. The training program can take up to a year to complete.

Airman 1st Class Joshua Ewart, a computer programmer with the Combat Ammunition Systems program, joined the team about three months ago. "I am about to enter Phase Three training, where I'll learn to throw the saber," he said. "I love being a part of the team. We work hard in order to give great performances."

Team members practice rigorously for the intricate maneuvers. The choreographed routines are varied, but involve some form of saber handling that "fits" the music. "It can take up to five months for us to perfect a routine," Ulanski said.

Maneuvers include an overhead toss, where four members toss their sabers into the air diagonally then catch the sabers one-handed. Another maneuver that brings 'ohs and ahs' to the crowd is an over-the-shoulder toss, with the saber again being caught one-handed.

Although the saber tip is very sharp, there have been very few injuries. "We wear specially coated gloves to help control the saber," Ulanski said. "The gloves prevent the saber from slipping, and protect our hands."

Despite the potential danger, members of the Sabre Drill Team press on as they practice countless hours with one goal in mind...to represent SSG and the Air Force.