

# **Czar 52; A Case Study of Failed Leadership**

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## Preface

In a dynamic leadership climate, errors are bound to happen. Negligence in leadership has become an all too common issue in military command structures and has continually proven to be a shortcoming of modern military leadership hierarchies. Apathy and non-compliance flourished in the case of Czar 52. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1994, tragedy struck Fairchild Air Force Base when all 4 United States Air Force officers on board Czar 52, a Boeing B-52H Stratofortress, crashed.<sup>1</sup> An example of apathetic, improper command, and reporting procedure, the Fairchild AFB incident is more than simply an accident. It is an event that can be learned from.

The Fairchild AFB incident was caused by a plethora of conglomerated actions and inaction. As such, blame cannot be directly placed on one individual. The overall command hierarchy, however, can be combined as a single major factor in this calamity. Both private sector and public sector leadership can learn from these events to develop new strategies that tackle this issue from the lowest level possible. Proactivity and critical inquiry are key in preventing future issues like the Fairchild AFB catastrophe.

## Significance of this Case Study

This breakdown of proactive, effective leadership is certainly worth further analysis and investigation. The military operational climate, even though thoroughly enforced, has a myriad of examples where rules are metaphorically bent. In the Fairchild Air Force Base incident, we find a prime example of such mishap and ultimately see a command structure which frequently neglected concerns. The nature of their mission ultimately speaks to how far the operational risk and guidelines can be stretched, evaluations differ from higher headquarters missions, and airshows likewise are subjected to a different operational climate. Decision making can become gray when ego-driven personnel and nepotistic commanders are thrown into the mix. This case is ultimately a forward example of aviators who felt that regulations were different for them.

## Situational Overview

From a basic level, airmen are taught a level of cognitive reasoning and decision making. Standing by a set of core values and embracing the “warrior spirit”, Air Force personnel exemplify a quality of judgement and airmanship.<sup>2</sup> Judgment plays a massive part in the overall expansive nature of aviator mission tasking. They are given a wide berth of available opportunity, this stems from the aspect that “flexibility is the key to air power”.<sup>3</sup> However, with such great responsibility comes the tendency to deviate, the instilment of overconfidence, and the abuse of their judgment elasticity. Due to the frequency of these issues, aviators who repeatedly bend the rules and have extensive knowledge of when and where to break the rules are often referred to as rogue aviators.<sup>4</sup> Rogue aviators tend to be widely popular and respected, which makes decision making difficult when trying to balance morale and ethical standards.

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<sup>1</sup> "FINDINGS OF THE B-52 BOMBER CRASH AT FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE ARE RELEASED". *CBS News Transcripts*. September 29, 1994, Thursday. <https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:3SHY-VFS0-009C-B344-00000-00&context=1516831>.

<sup>2</sup> "Air Force Fosters "Warrior Ethos" in All Airmen." U.S. Air Force. March 21, 2007. Accessed December 05, 2018. <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/127527/air-force-fosters-warrior-ethos-in-all-airmen/>.

<sup>3</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Frequently referenced by Major Anthony Kern is a “culture of compliance” which proves to be a continually necessary aspect throughout the military command structure.<sup>5</sup> Compliance allows for a streamlined operational tempo and limits outlying variables and extreme circumstances. Compliance, however, was not a frequently practiced operation in the 92d Bomb Wing over a 3-year period (May 1991-June 1994). To effectively evaluate this case study, we must look at a series of mishaps and apathetic leadership ultimately leading up to the tragedy.

### **19<sup>th</sup> of May 1991, Fairchild Air Force Base Airshow**

There is no telling how long Lieutenant Colonel Arthur “Bud” Holland was a rogue pilot, but to look at lackadaisical leadership we can begin from the first instance. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1991, Lt Col Holland was the pilot and aircraft commander of the B-52 portion of the 1991 Fairchild AFB airshow. In this, the first of many public shows of poor airmanship, Holland performed techniques far exceeding allowable limits. Known as Technical Order 1B-52G-1-11, or Dash 11, Bud proceeded to exceed the allowable angle of attack and banking limits of the B-52.<sup>6</sup> In addition, in violation of Federal Aviation Regulation Part 91, Lt Col Holland performed maneuvers which involved flying directly over the air show crowd. Holland was fully aware of these regulations and pushed them.

With blatant disregard for regulations and federal laws, Bud performed these acts, and naturally, one would expect a response from his command structure. Quite the contrary occurred, both the Wing Commander at the time, Colonel Arne Weinman and the Deputy Commander for Operations, Colonel Arnold Julich, did not act. The question must be asked, “Why?”. As previously mentioned, rogue aviators tend to convey a level of power by retaining popularity through prowess and social skills. The unknown risk is; “What would happen to both morale and leadership respect or reputation if they had openly reprimanded Lt Col Holland?” Additionally, we must ask, if pleading ignorance; “How do two top United States Air Force officers become unfamiliar with protocol (Dash 11) regarding their own aircraft?” When evaluated there is not only blatant disregard for air force protocol but also a toxic command structure. Transparency and regard were clearly not at play in this incident; in any effective command hierarchy there should have been no way that a rogue pilot could possess the ability to plan and carry out such maneuvers without interruption. Al Gini and Ronald Green in *10 Virtues of Outstanding Leaders* outline this situation properly as “incompetent leadership”.<sup>7</sup>

### **12<sup>th</sup> of July 1991, 325<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 92d Bomb Wing Change of Command Ceremony Flyover**

In a second instance we find Lt Col Holland performing maneuvers far beyond technical recommendations and not in accordance with both air force and federal regulations. In his section of the fly over and during the various practices leading up to the ceremony, Bud performed maneuvers including; super-low passes (100-200 feet above the ground), steep bank turns and pitches, and a maneuver known as a “wingover”. Wingovers are another blatant violation of Dash 11 protocol.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Gini, Al, and Ronald M. Green. *10 Virtues of Outstanding Leaders: Leadership and Character*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> United States of America. United States Air Force. Air War College. *Leadership and Ethics, Syllabus and Readings, Book 1*. By Department of Leadership and Ethics. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2001.

Lt Col Holland was a safety hazard to all in the flight zone of his B-52. During this flyover, wing staff had full view of the events unfolding and managed to act, for once. The Assistant Director of Operations (ADO), Colonel David Capotosti<sup>9</sup>, went to the Deputy Commander for Operations (DO), Col Julich, and made the remark "We can't have that, we can't tolerate things like that, we need to take action for two reasons – it's unsafe and we have a perception problem with the young aircrews."

Colonel Capotosti was the first of many to introduce a formal recorded complaint of Lt Col Holland, and he was right in doing so. As an effective leader and role model one must realize that "all attitudes, good and bad, are contagious."<sup>10</sup> As a ranking officer, Col Capotosti acted well within boundaries and was setting an active example for junior officers and enlisted by speaking out against unsafe practices. The rogue pilot attitude of Lt Col Holland set a poor example, one that acted without regard for safe Air Force practices and regulation, for junior officers and enlisted alike. The leadership acted sub-par, their negligence speaks to their leadership strength.

Col Capotosti's actions proved to be futile. While evidence shows a debrief and possible verbal reprimand, action was not taken. The 325<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron commander, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Harper, has stated "No overt punishment... ever occurred..."<sup>11</sup> Negligence, poor attitudes, and negativity set a wing-wide image.

### **17<sup>th</sup> of May 1992, Fairchild Air Force Base Air Show**

In a 3<sup>rd</sup> string of instances in less than a year, Lieutenant Colonel Holland was back at it again. This procedure included similar banking turns, high pitch maneuvers, low-altitude – high speed passes, and a wingover.

The previous inaction of the command staff set the precedent; and once more, Bud received no punishment for his erratic actions. There is a plethora of theories regarding subordinate action, but the most convincing hypothesis regards the leadership's influence. Major Kern states "... perhaps because the senior staff were eyewitnesses to the violations, the junior crew members kept their opinions on the flyby to themselves."<sup>12</sup> Even fellow B-52 pilots made remarks that they were genuinely shocked that the wing staff still permitted Bud to continue his flying habits.

Following this incident however, the ADO, Col Capotosti set his own objective; to never let an issue like this occur again. Seven days following this incident, Col Capotosti became the Deputy Commander for Operations. In his first set of tasks, the now DO took Lt Col Holland into his office and verbally threatened him. The DO stated "If you go out and do a violation and I become aware of it, I will ground you permanently."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> United States Air Force Historical Research Agency. "92 Operations Group (AMC)." Air Force Historical Research Agency. July 14, 2010. Accessed December 09, 2018. <https://www.afhra.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/432713/92-operations-group-amc/>.

<sup>10</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 1-Personal Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>12</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

Contrary to belief though, there was not an official record of counseling or reprimand, while it may appear that there was hope for the situation, the administrative aspect was still lacking. The change of office for the Deputy Commander for Operations was brief and inconclusive, any and all counseling sessions from Colonel Arnold Julich's term were not passed onto Colonel David Capotosti. Communication plays a vital role in any leadership scenario, something that clearly did not occur in this situation. George Bernard Shaw states "The single biggest problem with communication, is the illusion that it has taken place."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps, the junior officers and enlisted believed that Colonel Julich's sessions were passed on to Colonel Capotosti, and therefore they did not speak up. There are plenty of unknowns, but we do know that "A leader is useless if he or she can not communicate well."<sup>15</sup>

### **14-15<sup>th</sup> of April 1993, Global Power Mission**

Nearly a year later, Lt Col Arthur Holland was given the opportunity to be the mission commander of a 2 aircraft operation. While the maneuvers undertaken here were not as drastic it continues to show his rogue pilot attitude and conduct unbecoming of an officer. While in flight, Lt Col Holland, flew a very tight formation with the other aircraft in blatant violation of Air Combat Command regulations. Bud additionally allowed a crew member to leave the main compartment to take a video of live munition being released from the bomb bay.

Surely, violations like this must have accompanied reprimand of a sort, right? Yet, like previous situations, nothing came of this series of events. A crewmember from this operation approached the now 325<sup>th</sup> BMS commander, Lt Col David Bullock, with this evidence "attempted to coerce him into taking a job as the wing scheduler by using the videotape as 'blackmail.'"<sup>16</sup> This very same crewmember later went to the Judge Advocate General to file a complaint but was turned away and told "he could not win."<sup>17</sup> In a strategy to make himself irreproachable, Lt Col Bullock denied any claims that he attempted to coerce the crewmember and denied knowledge of the incident. Similarly, when the crewmember approached the ADO, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Harper, he was told to "not show any of this..."<sup>18</sup> Even the DO, Col Capotosti, said he did not want to know anything about the video. Col Capotosti, as mentioned previously, had stated that he was keeping tabs on Lt Col Holland and even threatened him, yet he failed to fulfill his leadership role.

The 325<sup>th</sup> BMS commander, the ADO, the DO, and even the Judge Advocate General all brushed this incident to the side. They did not want to be involved, perhaps out of fear since Lt Col Holland had stated that the wing commander told him to "do what it takes..."<sup>19</sup>

Regardless of their fears or concerns, these officers are held to a higher standard, and a level of integrity must be upheld. When presented with physical evidence of Lt Col Holland's erratic piloting the command structure failed to address the concern. A crewmember wasn't adequately heard either, which leads to the evaluation that the command environment was far from effective. Inhibited communication

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<sup>14</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 1-Personal Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> McGary, Joshua, Godair, Bill. Northeast Region Cadet Leadership School-Winter 2012 Case Studies Handbook. Center Strafford, NH: United States Air Force, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

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and negligence were in full swing setting the pace for future response and a breeding ground of continual rogue attitudes. The United States Air Force defines leadership as "the art and science of influencing and directing people to accomplish the assigned mission."<sup>20</sup> Lt Col Holland and his command staff continued to influence their subordinates, perpetuating the surely ineffective command structure.

### **8<sup>th</sup> of August 1993, Fairchild Air Force Base Airshow**

By now, it has become common knowledge that Lt Col Holland would continue to push the envelope and practice unsafe maneuvers. The 1993 airshow was no different, Lt Col Holland performed multiple techniques in violation of Dash 11 protocol including a near-vertical (80°) climb. But once again, zero disciplinary action ensued.<sup>21</sup>

If status quo was maintained and once more there was zero action taken against Lt Col Holland, why focus on this event? -Well, it was his actions on this day that influenced other pilots across the Air Force to begin performing such dangerous maneuvers. One such example is Captain Nolan Elliot, who while in Kamloops, Canada attempted to perform the same pitching maneuver as Lt Col Holland. Capt Elliot had a stroke of luck though, his aircraft reached as low as 70 knots, an indication that stalling occurred. Fortunately, the aircraft managed to recover from the deadly situation and finish its maneuvers.

A similar instance occurred in Roswell, New Mexico when another aircraft commander attempted to mimic a high g-force turn. Unlike Capt Elliot, this pilot was administratively grounded (not allowed to fly). The site commander at Roswell immediately acted on the Dash 11 violations unlike the 92d Bomb Wing Commander, Brigadier General James Richards.

Influence spreads far and wide, especially in the military. Lt Col Holland had already proven to be a poor role model and a danger to his fellow airmen. Additionally, his continual performance of conduct unbecoming of an officer set an example across the Air Force. And likewise, his command hierarchy failed to exemplify three of the previous six Air Force core values; integrity, competence, and service.<sup>22</sup>

### **10<sup>th</sup> of March 1994, Yakima Bombing Range**

In the last major event leading up to the tragedy, Lt Col Holland was the aircraft commander on a bombing exercise. Bud performed maneuvers including; flying less than 30 feet above the ground, joining an unbriefed aircraft formation, and flying directly over ground forces. Lt Col Holland was in blatant breach of Federal Aviation Regulation Part 91 and Air Force Regulation 60-16. Crewmembers on board the B-52 voiced their concerns during the flight and post flight many stated they would never fly with Bud again.<sup>23</sup> In flight, Bud was found in breach of both air discipline and regulations by his crewmembers. There are even reports that Lt Col Holland called his radar navigator "a pussy" when he protested his order to violate regulations.

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<sup>20</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 1-Personal Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>22</sup> Tower, Pat, Dunford, Doug. *Air Force Core Values Guru's Guide*. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, .

<sup>23</sup> McGary, Joshua, Godair, Bill. Northeast Region Cadet Leadership School-Winter 2012 Case Studies Handbook. Center Strafford, NH: United States Air Force, 2012.

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But that was just the tip of the iceberg, later during the exercise Lt Col Holland performed a maneuver that nearly cost the crew their lives. The following excerpt is from Major Anthony Kern's evaluation:

"We came around and (Lt) Col Holland took us down to 50 feet. I told him that this was well below the clearance plane and that we needed to climb. He ignored me. I told him (again) as we approached the ridge line. I told him in three quick bursts 'climb-climb-climb.'. I didn't see any clearance that we were going to clear the top of that mountain ... It appeared to me that he had target fixation. I said 'climb-climb-climb.' again, he did not do it. I grabbed ahold of the yoke and I pulled it back pretty abruptly ... I'd estimate we had a cross over around 15 feet . . . The radar navigator and the navigator were verbally yelling or screaming, reprimanding (Lt) Col Holland and saying that there was no need to fly that low ... his reaction to that input was he was laughing- I mean a good belly laugh."<sup>24</sup> -Captain Eric Jones, Co-Pilot of the B-52

This event sparked action in the squadron, when Capt Jones returned to the airfield he reported the events to Major Donald Thompson, the 325<sup>th</sup> BMS Operations Officer. Capt Jones along with numerous other officers in the squadron all stated that they never wanted to fly with Lt Col Holland again, some even threatened to never fly again. In this case, Maj Thompson brought forth his report to Lieutenant Colonel Mark McGeehan, the 325<sup>th</sup> BMS Commander, who forwarded the report as well as a recommendation to ground Lt Col Holland indefinitely.<sup>25</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Holland seemed untouchable for so long due to his duty assignment. Bud was the Chief of Standards and Evaluations for the wing (which is superior in command structure to the squadron both laterally and longitudinally), a position which is supposed to uphold regulatory standards, training, and operational capability.

Maj Thompson and Lt Col McGeehan's report was delivered to the Deputy Commander for Operations, Colonel William Pellerin, who simply stated that "he would get back to him after he heard the other side of the story."<sup>26</sup> In a breach of integrity once more, Lt Col Holland made the comment that he was exhibiting the B-52's capabilities to the junior officers, which was clearly not the case.

Colonel Pellerin decided against any formal punishment and instead opted for an undocumented verbal reprimand. Col Pellerin exhibited a lack of thorough investigation and rushed to a conclusion. The inaction taken by the DO speaks to the command capability of the wing. By neglecting to view the whole situation, dissect it fully, and act in a manner to prevent future incidents, Col Pellerin set the wing up for disaster. It should be noted though, that the squadron staff of the 325<sup>th</sup> BMS made outstanding effort to attempt to resolve and mitigate the situation. The staff's exemplification of integrity and ethical decision making are an honorable attempt to protect the well being of their subordinates. Leading from the front and placing the safety of those you direct first is an important aspect of any modern leader.

Curt LaFond states "Professionals must have a habit of putting the community's interest above their own."<sup>27</sup> Major Thompson was a good friend of Lt Col Holland, yet by his own judgment and taking

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<sup>24</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 2-Team Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

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into consideration the safety risk he posed to his fellow airmen, he acted accordingly and in proper manner. "Professionals hold themselves and their peers to an ethical code.", Maj Thompson and Lt Col McGeehan certainly acted professionally, and the record shows their attempts to rectify the situation.<sup>28</sup>

Like the strategies outlined by Steve Yetiv's in *National Security Through a Cockeyed Lens*, Maj Thompson accurately avoided cognitive bias.<sup>29</sup> While the major recognized that he would be putting his friend in an uncomfortable position, he acted upon the ever-present safety issue Lt Col Holland posed on the airmen. The decision was ultimately made in the best interests of the Air Force with his own squadron as a definitive driving force.

### **17<sup>th</sup> of June 1994, Air Show Practice and Evaluation**

Lt Col Holland and the same crew that would later fly on the 24<sup>th</sup> practiced a nearly identical pattern to the air show. When Bud was briefing the crew on the proposed pattern and maneuvers when the wing commander, Colonel William Brooks, interjected. Col Brooks gave Bud explicit instructions that maneuvers would not exceed 45 degrees of banking and 25 degrees of pitch, ironically this was still against Dash 11 protocol.

During the practice, Lt Col Holland exceeded those limitations, even with the Deputy Commander for Operations, Col Pellerin onboard. Once on the ground, Col Pellerin reported to the wing commander that the profiles (maneuvers) flown were well in parameters and deemed safe.

Colonel Pellerin blatantly disregarded Air Force protocol and technical orders by allowing for these patterns to be flown. Col Pellerin exhibited blatant ignorance and disregard for the safety of both Air Force personnel and bystanders.

### **20<sup>th</sup> of June 1994, Shooting Incident**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, the base was struck with great loss when a gunman entered the base killing several Air Force personnel before being shot by responding security police officers. As a result, the airshow and its arrangements were put on the back burner. Base and wing command staff underwent deliberation in the days following and saw a noticeable decline in personnel's resolve. With turmoil spread throughout the base an airshow seemed to be one of the few items left to boost morale following such a catastrophe.

### **24<sup>th</sup> of June 1994, Tragedy at Fairchild Air Force Base**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, a B-52H, code named Czar 52, took to the skies. Czar 52 was tasked with a simple flight pattern to prepare for the upcoming air show, and with it was a crew of four. Lt Col Arthur Holland took the controls as the command pilot, Lt Col Mark McGeehan sat as the co-pilot, Col Robert Wolff, the Vice Wing Commander, took the role of safety observer, and Lt Col Ken Huston operated as the weapon systems officer/radar navigator.<sup>30</sup> The aircraft was to follow a simple pattern with a few low

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<sup>28</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 2-Team Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Yetiv, Steven A. *National Security Through a Cockeyed Lens: How Cognitive Bias Impacts U.S. Foreign Policy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

altitude passes, sharply banked turns, a steep climb, and a touch and go.<sup>31</sup> The maneuvers had gone off without a hitch until the aircraft was forced to perform a go-around, while making its final turn the aircraft stalled out. Only 18 minutes after taking off the B-52H struck the ground killing all four crew members.

The actions of Lt Col Holland ultimately led to the crash. When Bud performed the final banking turn, he exceeded 60 degrees of banking and begun to stall. When attempting to recover, the B-52 took over eight seconds to respond to power input. When banking at that angle, the stall speed is 147 knots, Czar 52 was flying at approximately 145 knots. Lt Col Holland's lack of response input and judgment ultimately led to the crash.

### **Leadership Shortcomings**

The travesty that occurred at Fairchild Air Force Base could have been avoided and halted at multiple points over a three-year period. The command staff of the 92d Bomb Wing had multiple opportunities to ensure continuity, act accordingly to stop a rogue pilot, and perform as an officer should. In a high-tempo environment, everyone must retain the ability to have sound judgement and maintain a level of ethical standards. The lack of responsibility and negligence played a massive part in this event, but it was not solely the leadership's fault. Lt Col Holland maintained a destructive personality, that of a rogue aviator, a cocky individual with zero regard for those he directed. Unlike how an officer should act, Lt Col Holland continued to set a poor example for junior officers and enlisted across the nation. The combination of actions from both parties leads to the notion of poor accountability. Curt LaFond states "If everyone on the team is in charge, no one is in charge. If everyone shares the responsibility, no one owns the responsibility."<sup>32</sup> But perhaps we can view this from the opposite perspective, the officers involved often lied about their knowledge of Bud's flying malpractice and failed to act accordingly or in an appropriate manner. We can therefore construe that no one is sharing the responsibility and thereby, all are responsible in one way or another for the June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1994 tragedy.

### **Conclusion**

The events that transpired at Fairchild Air Force Base were nothing short of a catastrophe. But, from the ashes of this mishap comes a strong lesson in negligence, strategic thinking, and ethical decision making. Since the incident, the United States Air Force has continually taught this case in both cadet learning environments and even larger schools such as the Air War College. As is often found, the best way to learn is from the mistakes of our predecessors, with the all too real consequences we can drive our young airmen to act in a manner befitting the Air Force core values and standards. The Fairchild Air Force Base will never be forgotten and likewise, the takeaways from this leadership breakdown will continually resound with United States Air Force personnel for years to come.

The events that unfolded are more than just a travesty, they are a learning experience. Leaders all over can learn from the gross negligence and brash attitudes exhibited by all parties. As developing and growing leaders it is important to learn to watch out for destructive attitudes and tackle them at the lowest level possible to mitigate future challenging ethical decisions. We can also take away from these drastic

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<sup>31</sup> Kern, Tony. "Darker Shades of Blue: A Case Study of Failed Leadership." Golden West College Leadership and Ethics Institute. November 29, 2011. Accessed December 05, 2018. <http://gwclei.com/darker-shades-of-blue-a-case-study-of-failed-leadership/>.

<sup>32</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 2-Team Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

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events that constructive discipline, while a very helpful tool, is not always the go-to method.<sup>33</sup> Lt Col Holland was repeatedly verbally counseled and reprimanded but never truly put under scrutiny which created an environment that allowed his attitude to continue to become less unbecoming of an officer.

Additionally, as a leader it is important to discern ability and willingness, and "There are many reasons for people to fall short of a standard."<sup>34</sup> Lt Col Holland however, repeatedly fell short of federal and Air Force standards without justifiable cause other than the fact he could get away with it and for his own personal gain. Bud repeatedly undertook maneuvers that placed his crew and those on the ground in harm's way. If Bud was an ethical leader with sound decision making, he would have been capable of dissecting the situation, thinking big picture ("The practice of stepping back from an issue or problem so as to take more of it in."), and making proper decisions rather than taking selfish actions.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Bud should have employed realistic thinking ("[The] approach where the leader tries to see the world for how it actually is, not how we might wish it to be."), if he had done such there is a high probability he would have recognized that his actions were causing distress across the wing.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the wing staff themselves imperatively needed to apply shared thinking ("Valuing the thoughts and ideas of others"), if they had, the concerns of many would have been heard and acted upon in a proactive and thorough manner.<sup>37</sup> Col Pellerin is a prime example of the unemployment of shared thinking, when brought with hard evidence of Lt Col Holland's rogue piloting, macho attitude and almost a whole squadron protesting flying with Bud he failed to act.

Leaders everywhere can learn from the events that unfolded at Fairchild Air Force Base. There is no room for negligence in any leadership role. To prevent future incidents, leaders must learn from the consequences of their predecessors' actions and apply strategic changes to their methods. Finally, as a leader, there are distinct moral and ethical obligations that must be upheld to preserve the image of both themselves and those they represent.

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<sup>33</sup> LaFond, Curt. *Learn to Lead*. Edited by Neil Probst. Vol. 2-Team Leadership. Montgomery, AL: United States Air Force, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.