



# Taking the Field



(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Omari Bernard)

▲ 1st Lt. Aaron Zendejas, 961st Airborne Air Control Squadron air battle manager and mid-fielder, shoots for a goal during an intramural soccer match at the Risner Fitness Center on Kadena Air Base, June 2. Zendejas played soccer for Kadena High School from 2002 to 2006 and also played for Northern Illinois University.

## By Senior Airman Omari Bernard

18th Wing Public Affairs

6/9/2015 — Stadium lights silhouette a checkered ball as it flies through the air and rolls along a green field. Players in jerseys race up and down a field in pursuit. A player wearing a white jersey with the number nine on his back dribbles the ball. The ball is passed to a teammate as he is challenged, he races past and the ball is passed back.

The defender freezes, looking for the offside flag from the referee, now there is only one last person between number nine and the goal.

1st Lt. Aaron Zendejas, 961st Airborne Air Control Squadron air battle manager, shoots and scores.

The 27-year-old mid fielder has been in love with soccer since childhood.

"I have been playing soccer since I was 2 feet tall," said Zendejas. "As soon as I could walk I had a ball at my feet."

Zendejas' passion for the game began in Germany. In fact, he was born there and as a military brat he would play with his three brothers.

"Ever since I was a kid I always had people to play with and against," he continued. "We have a really tight family unit being a military family. I attribute a lot of my soccer to that."

While living there he was constantly surrounded by the national sport. It was a family

affair, his mother played it and his father coached, even though he was more into football.

Zendejas said, "Soccer wasn't a thing in his mind until my mom forced him to coach us as kids. I guess I just learned from all my coaches growing up."

As Zendejas grew up, so did his skills. He would go onto to play in the Olympic Development Program, other middle school clubs and even at Kadena High School from 2002 - 2006. After he graduated he went on to play at the college level for Northern Illinois University.

"It's one of the top 25 division one schools in Chicago," Zendejas explained. "I had a blast there."

After graduation, Zendejas found work like most of his peers. As time at his job progressed, he yearned for two things; to give back to his country and to play the game he loved.

"I wanted to do something with my time, my youth and my leadership," he said. "Something that was bigger than me, so I started looking at the military. I got my officer training school package together, submitted it and never looked back."

While waiting for the go-ahead to go to work for the Air Force, an opportunity of a lifetime appeared. The Chicago Fire, a men's professional soccer team, were hosting tryouts. This was his chance to play professional soccer. Unfortunately, it ended because of an injury.

At OTS, Zendejas made close

friends who had similar interests in soccer. One of those was 1st Lt. Andrew Stokes, 961 AACSS air weapons officer. Together they graduated in June 2012.

"On and off the field, two words come to mind to describe Lt. Zendejas' work ethic: dedication and perseverance," Stokes explained. "When he doesn't know the answer he will work until he finds one. Then he will work until he finds the perfect answer. If he fails at something, he quickly dusts himself off and makes sure the same failure never happens again."

Zendejas' dedication on the field is mirrored in his drive to be the best at execution and strategy at work.

Stokes explained how soccer relates to their work.

"On the jet this means making the perfect radio call at the right time to drive the best weapons employment tactics," Stokes said. "On the field, it means making the perfect pass or shot while fitting all players' strengths and weakness into the best team possible."

Zendejas said air combat control is like playing soccer.

"A lot of what we do is about staying ahead of the timeline," he said. "A good soccer player has to think four or five passes ahead of the game to be effective. It definitely helps with your teamwork. Like soccer, we need everyone on that jet working as one to make our mission successful."

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## Vermont Air National Guard 158th Fighter Wing prepares for Kadena deployment



### By 18th Wing Public Affairs

6/9/2015 — Airmen from the 158th Fighter Wing in Burlington, Vermont, will deploy this month in support of the Pacific Command Theater Security Package.

Approximately 150 personnel and 10 F-16 Fighting Falcons are set to deploy to the 18th Wing at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa. The TSP deployment is designed to provide the PACOM region with forces capable of a variety of operations, including disaster relief, global situational awareness, combating piracy, active defense and power projection.

Air Combat Command routinely deploys fighter aircraft to the region to provide U.S. Pacific Command and Pacific Air Forces with Theater Security Packages, which help maintain a deterrent against threats to regional security and stability.

Movement of U.S. Air Force TSPs into the region has been a routine and integral part of U.S. Pacific Command's force posture since March 2004.

This TSP demonstrates the continuing U.S. commitment to stability and security in the region and shows our commit-

ment to the U.S.-Japan alliance and the defense of Japan.

According to Col. Patrick Guinee, 158th Fighter Wing commander, the Airmen of the 158th are ready and well-trained for this deployment.

"The Green Mountain Boys are both prepared and excited to help America fulfill its charge in the Asia-Pacific theater of operations," Guinee said. "Our Airmen are always ready and well-trained to engage in any state or federal mission when called."

Lt. Col. Daniel Finnegan, 134th Fighter Squadron commander, will lead the deployed members of the 158th.

"I am proud to lead this incredible team of Airmen on a mission that gives us the opportunity to integrate with joint and international forces," Finnegan said. "I have great confidence in the capabilities of the men and women of the Vermont National Guard in completing another successful mission."

## Heat conditions: The breakdown for Okinawa-based service members, families

### By Airman 1st Class Zackary A. Henry

18th Wing Public Affairs

6/11/2015 — On the sunny island of Okinawa, its inhabitants get to experience beaches, great hiking or even scuba diving.

However, along with the beautiful scenery Okinawa is often home to flash floods, typhoons and what has been rising as the summer months take hold, the heat.

To try and help keep the people of Kadena safe during

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