



CONR - 1 AF/AFNORTH

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CONR and CBP work together to secure the border

By Capt. Jared Scott, 601st AOC Public Affairs

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Through coordination with the Western Air Defense Sector in Washington State, the Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region intercepted an ultra light aircraft near the Arizona-Mexico border May 16.

Two F-16s from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., were dispatched at approximately 6 a.m. local time after the aircraft crossed into U.S. airspace from Mexico.

“The Western Air Defense Sector notified us of the track of interest and we began to monitor the aircraft,” said Col. William Platt, 601st Air and Space Operations Center chief of combat operations. “WADS quickly established that the aircraft had no flight plan, was not talking or squawking the required beacon code, and was entering U.S. airspace without following established procedures, so the decision was made to scramble F-16s to intercept the aircraft.”

The 601st AOC – America's AOC – is responsible for the detection, deterrence, defense and defeat of threats to the citizens of the United States and its critical infrastructure and remains at the operational level of command and control to monitor all air traffic in the Continental United States.

The CONR fighters shadowed the ultra light plane for approximately 30 minutes before handing the aircraft off to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The Customs and Border Protection Cessna C-550 Citation, a twin-engine aircraft, monitored the ultra light plane until the aircraft crossed the border back into Mexico.

“There are procedures established by the FAA and enforced by NORAD when any aircraft penetrates U.S. airspace,” said Perry Davis, 601st AOC Customs and Border Protection liaison officer. “Aircraft entering U.S. airspace without following the correct protocol is something Customs and Border Protection pays close attention to.”

CBP is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is also charged with keeping terrorists, terrorist weapons and contraband out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.

“Interagency coordination is key to our Operation Noble Eagle mission,” said Col. Randy Spear, 601st AOC commander. “We have representatives from CBP, FAA and other agencies on our operations floor. Having these representatives here greatly reduces the amount of time it takes to coordinate among the agencies which is paramount when conducting time-critical operations.”

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2-2-2 BORDER

The Operation Noble Eagle mission began Sept. 14, 2001 in response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93 that crashed in Shanksville, Pa. The operation is designed to protect North America from an airborne attack.

"I am extremely proud of the men and women of this command and all of our interagency partners for the job each of us do securing our borders and our airspace," said Maj. Gen. Garry Dean, CONR commander.

A component of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, the Continental U.S. NORAD Region directs air sovereignty activities for the continental United States. Since Sept. 11, 2001, CONR has been the lead agency to protect the U.S. from further airborne aggression from inside and outside America's borders.

NORAD's mission – in close collaboration with homeland defense, security, and law enforcement partners – is to prevent air attacks against North America, safeguard the sovereign airspaces of the United States and Canada by responding to unknown, unwanted and unauthorized air activity approaching and operating within these airspaces, and provide aerospace and maritime warning for North America. NORAD may be required to monitor, shadow, divert from flight path, direct to land and/or destroy platforms deemed a potential threat to North America.

The Western Air Defense Sector is headquartered at McChord Air Force Base, Wash., and is responsible to NORAD and CONR for peacetime air sovereignty, strategic air defense, and airborne counter-drug operations in the western continental United States. WADS is a Washington Air National Guard unit which reports directly to First Air Force and Air Forces Northern here.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, CONR fighters have responded to more than 2,600 possible air threats in the United States and have flown more than 56,000 sorties with the support of Airborne Warning and Control System and air-to-air-refueling aircraft.

For more information on CONR, America's AOC or the Operation Noble Eagle mission visit www.1af.acc.af.mil, www.facebook.com/americasaoc, or www.twitter.com/1staf.