



# United States Strategic Command

## Ready to Respond

By 1st Lt. Angela Webb  
30th Space Wing Public Affairs

**February 25, 2008** - OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. – A team of more than 130 military and civilian personnel throughout the U.S. Government were postured to recover debris and conduct consequence management operations following the Feb. 20 shoot down of a non-functional National Reconnaissance Office satellite.

The recovery team, dubbed Joint Task Force-Burnt Frost, consisted of more than 15 government agencies that gathered at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. Among the many agencies involved were the armed services, U.S. Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, NRO, the Department of Interior and a vast number of emergency responders.

Within those organizations, many of the team members were handpicked from across the nation and ranged in age from 20 to 61 years old. The expertise was crucial to the team, allowing chemical experts, hydrazine analysts and those that worked on the Columbia catastrophe to put their knowledge to carry out Operation Burnt Frost.

“This JTF stood up in six days, with people from around the country forming a response capability just days after the concept for the operation was conceived,” said Army Brig. Gen. Jeff Horne, JTF commander. “This task force is a team of highly-trained, highly-experienced professionals and it was our honor to answer the nation’s call as the rapid-response force to handle this situation if/when we were needed.”

To prepare, the team went to mission briefs and performed exercises around the clock. Standing up decontamination centers, conducting flight safety drills on the aircrafts, and finding simulated debris during mock scenarios were just a few precautions the team took before the shot at the satellite was executed.

The joint team was prepared to go anywhere in the world on a moment’s notice to gather the debris from the uncontrollable satellite that held a tank with 1000 pounds of hydrazine fuel. The U.S. Government was concerned that if the fuel tank hit a populated area human lives could be at risk, but with the great work of many federal agencies the intercept was a success. However, if it wasn’t, the JTF-BF, was ready.

Space analysts determined that nearly all of the debris has already entered the Earth's atmosphere, but there are still some pieces that will fall to the Earth's surface in the coming days and weeks.

The Joint Functional Component Command for Space's Joint Space Operations Center, located at Vandenberg AFB, Calif., is tracking less than 3,000 pieces of debris, all smaller than a football.

To date, there have been no reports of debris reentering the Earth's atmosphere and it is unlikely any will remain in tact to impact the ground.

To express his appreciation for the hard work and dedication of the team, Gen. Kevin P. Chilton, Commander of U.S. Strategic Command, made a trip to the base to thank the team personally.

"In pulling together from all different agencies and backgrounds, I would like to extend my greatest appreciation," Chilton said. "For the President and for our country to take responsibility and have a team ready to take responsibility for our actions in the value of human life is remarkable. I commend you all for a job very well done."