

'New kid on the block':

California steel fabricators keep Air Force mission aloft

by Wayne Masters
Contracting Officer
542 SEVSG/GBZRKIB
Robins AFB, Ga.

In January 2005, 60th Air Mobility Wing officials at Travis AFB, Calif., presented the 542 SEVSG at Warner Robins Air Logistics Center, Robins AFB, Ga., with a critical and time sensitive challenge.

Wing officials had just received notification that their C-5 Isochronal Maintenance Stand (ISO) could not be placed in service due to non-compliance issues with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration

and Air Force Occupational Safety. The Travis ground safety office could not, in good conscience, allow workers to use the stand prior to correction. The loss of use of the stand meant longer ISO inspection times, increased maintenance downtime, losses to sortie production rates, and numerous mission readiness impacts. Command officials knew that these impacts were unacceptable and had to be mitigated immediately.

542nd SEVSG officials conducted market research and an acquisition plan was formed; information was sent out to vendors to see if any commercial vendor could perform the needed repairs and how fast they could get them completed. Time was absolutely critical. After the market surveys were returned, one company, Kern Steel Fabrication of Bakersfield, Calif., was identified as the only vendor that could devise a plan, implement the

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The C-5 Isochronal Maintenance Stand (ISO) could not be placed in service due to non-compliance issues with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Air Force Safety. KSF repaired the defective welds quickly and efficiently to keep the 60th Air Mobility Wing flying. (U.S. Air Force photo)



Steel Fabricators help keep Air Force flying (continued from previous page)

needed repairs, and complete the entire job and return the stand to use in less than 150 days.

A contract was awarded to KSF on 28 March 28, and within 2 days of contract award, KSF had gone to Travis AFB, met with the aircraft maintainers, and devised a timeline that would allow the repairs to be completed by June 15 which would be a full 15 days ahead of contract requirements. KSF ordered the materials required and began moving equipment to Travis within 20 days of award.

As the repair progressed, the customers at Travis provided information to Robins AFB regarding daily progress. We quickly realized that not only would KSF complete the repair ahead of schedule, they would complete it "way" ahead of schedule. Their projection of June 15 was substantially improved upon, with a 100% repair completion on May 31, a full month ahead of contract requirements. Wing officials and aircraft maintainers were very pleased.

With this kind of speed often come errors or mistakes, but not in this case. We received first hand reports from the aircraft maintainers, who were looking over KSF's shoulder, and the comments were 100 percent positive. Comments included these:

"KSF has made exceptional efforts to complete the modifications ahead of schedule, with quality work and customer service as their main

priorities. In addition, KSF has repaired other defective welds in the areas of the modifications at no additional cost to the government in order to facilitate the best possible modification effort for these stands."

"There have been no problems with the contractor whatsoever, and excellent lines of communication have been established and maintained between Travis AFB, 542 CSW, and KSF."

KSF's effort was truly outstanding, but when you add the fact that this was the first contract KSF had ever entered into with the Federal Government, it becomes even more outstanding!

A first time Federal Government contractor, a high visibility program, safety issues and a critical timeline were all the ingredients for a failed effort. The Government and KSF were both shouldering more risk than was

desired, but with teamwork and a proactive vendor, the Air Force got the ISO stand back in service one month ahead of schedule, met every safety requirement, and developed a new small business partner for future steel/stand related acquisitions. This is truly a success story for both the Air Force and Kern Steel Fabrications.

