Seahawks take flight with WADS

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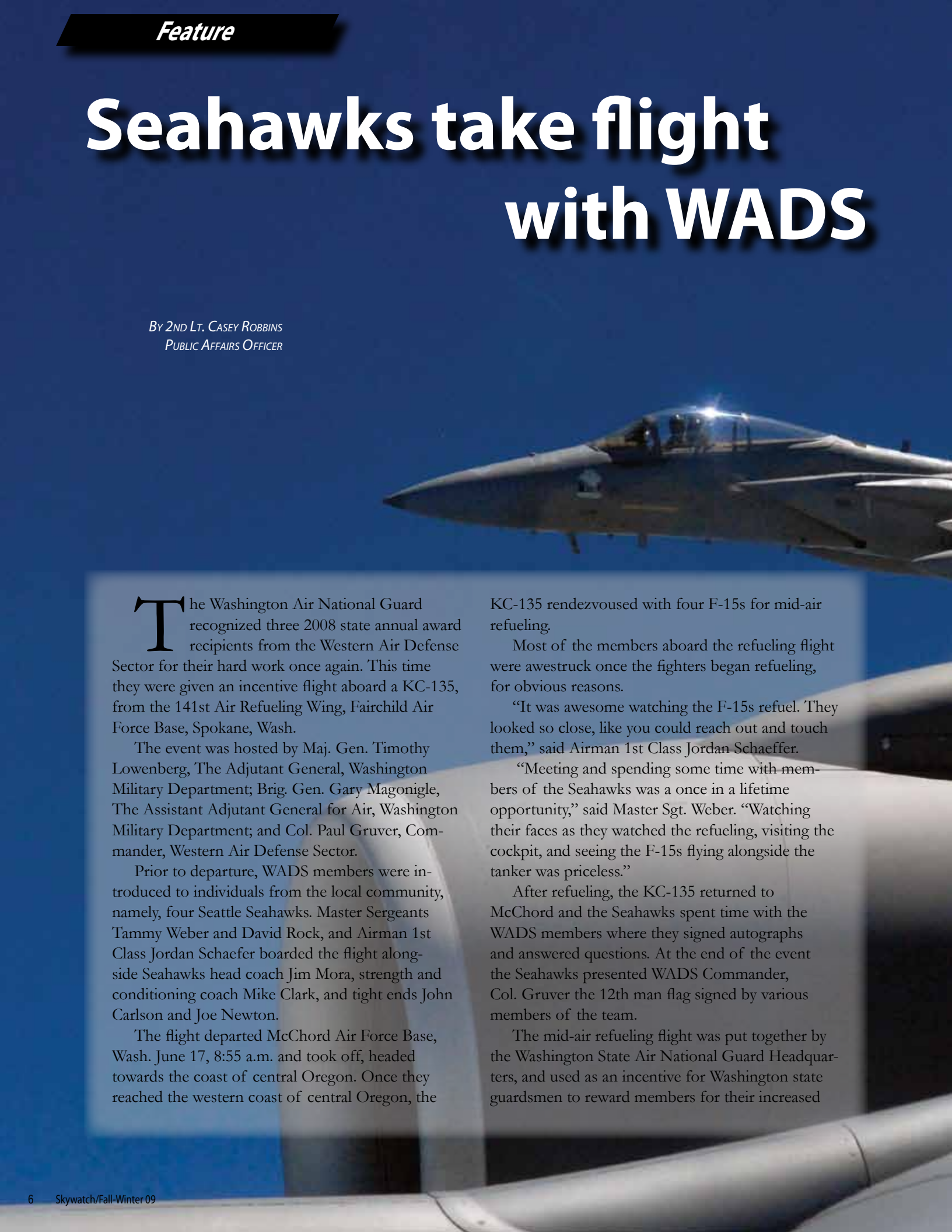

The Washington Air National Guard recognized three 2008 state annual award recipients from the Western Air Defense Sector for their hard work once again. This time they were given an incentive flight aboard a KC-135, from the 141st Air Refueling Wing, Fairchild Air Force Base, Spokane, Wash.

The event was hosted by Maj. Gen. Timothy Lowenberg, The Adjutant General, Washington Military Department; Brig. Gen. Gary Magonigle, The Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Washington Military Department; and Col. Paul Gruver, Commander, Western Air Defense Sector.

Prior to departure, WADS members were introduced to individuals from the local community, namely, four Seattle Seahawks. Master Sergeants Tammy Weber and David Rock, and Airman 1st Class Jordan Schaefer boarded the flight alongside Seahawks head coach Jim Mora, strength and conditioning coach Mike Clark, and tight ends John Carlson and Joe Newton.

The flight departed McChord Air Force Base, Wash. June 17, 8:55 a.m. and took off, headed towards the coast of central Oregon. Once they reached the western coast of central Oregon, the KC-135 rendezvoused with four F-15s for mid-air refueling.

Most of the members aboard the refueling flight were awestruck once the fighters began refueling, for obvious reasons.

"It was awesome watching the F-15s refuel. They looked so close, like you could reach out and touch them," said Airman 1st Class Jordan Schaeffer.

"Meeting and spending some time with members of the Seahawks was a once in a lifetime opportunity," said Master Sgt. Weber. "Watching their faces as they watched the refueling, visiting the cockpit, and seeing the F-15s flying alongside the tanker was priceless."

After refueling, the KC-135 returned to McChord and the Seahawks spent time with the WADS members where they signed autographs and answered questions. At the end of the event the Seahawks presented WADS Commander, Col. Gruver the 12th man flag signed by various members of the team.

The mid-air refueling flight was put together by the Washington State Air National Guard Headquarters, and used as an incentive for Washington state guardsmen to reward members for their increased

efforts in 2008.

According to Master Sgt. Rock the incentive flight was more than an opportunity to fly around with professional athletes.

"The most rewarding part of the event was seeing all the different Washington state guard members come together to make an event like this so successful," said Master Sgt Rock. "I have always been proud to represent WADS and to be the face of WADS when meeting members of the community such as the Seahawks means a lot."

Also on the flight were other members of the local community which included: Scott Brittan, Principal, Rogers High School; Gene Bowen, Head Football Coach, Rogers High School; Daniel Stetler, Cadet, Bethel High School ROTC; and Jason Terrill, Firefighter, Brownsburg Fire Department.

The incentive flight was a special moment for the WADS considering all three state annual award winners present were from the WADS. The event was especially significant to Col. Gruver.

"It was quite gratifying to see the rarefied elite of our nation's athletes and coaches meet the very best men and women of our Washington Air National Guard…at 400 miles per hour, in an Air Guard tanker, surrounded by world class Air Guard F-15 fighters," mused Col Gruver.

"The players and coaches were extraordinary gentlemen, and though few of us will ever know the thrill and power of an NFL gridiron, I'm not sure which group impressed the other more: my Guardsmen or the NFL superstars!"

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Douglas Olson/194 RSW

Members of the Seattle Seahawks and members of the Western Air Defense Sector pose for a picture following an incentive flight mid-air refuel aboard a KC-135. Pictured clockwise from left to right is Col. Paul Gruver, Mike Clark, John Carlson, Joe Newton, Jim Mora, Master Sgt. Tammy Weber, Airman 1st Class Jordan Schaefer, and Master Sgt. David Rock. Background photo, refueling mission during incentive flight.