

"Command Chief Master Sergeants Forum"

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Roy

15 September 2009

CMSAF Roy: Good afternoon. Gosh, it's about filled in here.

It is good to see each of you here, and we appreciate your attendance here this afternoon.

I want to personally say thank you to AFA for putting this on for us and giving us a forum to really talk with our Airmen. That's really what we're intending to do this afternoon. We want to hear from you. So we've got a lot of stuff we want to talk about and get out. Obviously you've heard the Secretary speak, you've heard the Chief of Staff speak just before lunch. There's an awful lot of things going on in our Air Force.

From an enlisted perspective, we're going to go down the line here and introduce each other. But we're really interested in what's on your mind, what kind of questions you have out there.

With that I'll turn it over to Chief Master Sergeant Joe Baron.

CMS Baron: Hi, everyone. Chief Master Sergeant Joe Baron, Command Chief, Air Mobility Command. I'll tell you, it is truly an honor. As the Chief said, I want to thank AFA for putting this great show together and for inviting all of us to be here. You guys do a world class act, and it's an honor that you invite all of us, so thank you for doing that.

For all of our Blue Suiters out there, I'd like to thank you for what you do day in and day out. Not only for what you do and the sacrifices that you make, but for what your families do and the sacrifices that they make.

With that being said, I'll pass it on over here to my left, to Chief Badgett.

CMS Badgett: Thank you, Chief. Chief Dale Badgett, Air Force Reserve Command, here today representing the air reserve components -- Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. I'm very excited to be here. Again, as the Chiefs have said, I'm very excited about our Air Force, I'm proud

of everything that you do every day. Not only deployed, but at home station. Deployed in place is critical. We know that unlike some of the other components we have a home station mission that has to get done, and you do an outstanding job of taking care of that.

Before I pass it on to Chief Darrow, I'm looking forward to questions from our enlisted group sitting over in the corner there, so have some ready.

CMS Darrow: Good afternoon, everyone. How are we doing? That was pretty enthusiastic. How are you doing?

Audience: Good.

CMS Darrow: All right? I'm Chief Pam Darrow. I'm from the United States Air Forces in Europe. I like to think of it as the best command in the Air Force, but I usually get some disagreement from the rest of the panel members.

But I wanted to welcome all of you. We've been studying really hard. We've been trying to figure out what questions you might ask. So please ask some really hard questions because the Chief said if you don't ask us questions, we get to ask you questions. So make sure you get some good ones. Leave all the hard ones for Chief Roy, he's volunteered to take all those for us. Thanks, Chief, we appreciate it.

Again, I want to echo their comments. Thank you, each and every one of you, for what you do. Whether you wear the uniform or whether you're one of our civilians, we appreciate you every single day. Not only you, but your family. Thank you very much.

CMS Gilbert: Chief Master Sergeant Mike Gilbert representing 15,000 Special Operators in Air Force Special Operations Command. We look forward to your questions.

CMS Ussery: I'm Chief Ussery, and I'm Chief Gilbert's personality. [Laughter].

No, in all seriousness, I'm the Command Senior Enlisted Leader for NORAD and for United States Northern Command. I'm very very happy to be here and I look forward to your questions.

CMSAF Roy: I don't have any question cards yet, but I did want to personally call out and say thank you to Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Murray for coming up today

and visiting with us as well, and all the command chiefs.
So thank you.

[Applause].

Any questions?

Okay, I've got about an hour with you tomorrow, so I'm going to reserve a few comments for tomorrow's event, but I will just tell you that as we talked about a few things going on today, let me just hit on one particular topic and it's something that both the Secretary and the Chief have spoken about, and that's the Year of the Family.

As we have shared, there's a lot of information getting ready to come out. In fact it's starting to work its way out, the com plan and how we intend to communicate this. You've seen some photos out front labeling this the Year of the Family and some quotes. But as the Chief said, it's about all of us as Airmen -- not just those of us that wear this uniform, not just those of us on active duty. It's Guard and Reserve, it's our civilian force that works right alongside of us as well, and it's how we best take care of those members as well.

And here come the questions.

This question's for all the panel members. What are your ideas and plans to support the Chief of Staff of the Air Force in achieving his vision and sense of community, of culture, of family, and excellence?

So basically, the community and that of culture, family and excellence. Whoever wants to kick it off.

Since you've got a personality, Chief. [Laughter].

CMS Ussery: The first thing that comes to mind, and by no means the most important, but we touched on this, we were having a discussion about it before we came in here, it was the Air Force roll call. The ability once a week or periodically to put eyes on every Airman that's in your section. It doesn't matter whether they're just enlisted, it's the officers, it's the civilians, but we get to a point to where we spend so much time on a Blackberry, on a computer, that sometimes we lose how important that example of front line leadership is.

I'll be the first one to say that my memories of my senior enlisted and senior commanders when I was a young troop were very fleeting. I didn't talk to them, I wasn't

around them enough. But I saw my flight leaders, I saw my supervisor, I saw my squadron commander. Those are the ones that we really need to have visible and really need to be communicating, no matter what you try to do for your community. The front line in that military community is always going to be the supervisor, the first sergeant, the chief, the squadron level commanders, maybe even the group level, but primarily that flight, that squadron level. And eyes on every day is extremely important.

CMS ____: When you talk about excellence, I'll tell you, none of us should ever settle for mediocrity. We should have a high standard no matter what. We should live that high standard and we should portray that excellence and we should hold our Airmen accountable to the same standard that we would expect of ourselves. We shouldn't settle for anything less than that.

Our Airmen, they don't expect anything less than that. We're taking care of our families. We do a pretty good job of that. I think it's great that we have named this the Year of the Family and I would just hope that we just capitalize on the great programs that we already have in place and try to share that information with our families out there, with our communities out there, to make sure that they're all aware of it.

I couldn't agree more with Chief Ussery down there. Make sure that our supervisors, our team chiefs, our flight chiefs, our chiefs and all those other senior NCOs that are out there are putting eyes on their people on a daily basis.

CMS Badgett: Actually the first part of that question is fairly easy for me. The Air Reserve Component, the Guard and Reserve, have always been inherently community based as citizen airmen. We live in the communities that we serve in so the community tie has always been there.

Now I have to say that those of us who have been in a while, and pretty much everybody on the stage, when I went to my first assignment overseas, there was a different feeling about our community. When you were on that base, you were one. But when we came back to CONUS it didn't seem to be that way. I think that's exactly the challenge the Chief said this morning that we need to address, is how do we develop that community with our Air Force and how do we not roll up the sidewalks at 5:00 p.m. and drive home. It is a challenge.

I will say on the second part of that question, on our families, we as a reserve force need to do a little better

on taking care of our families. The Yellow Ribbon Program which was instituted by the Guard a few years ago, they've done an outstanding job of reintegrating. But the program has been expanded to pre-deployment and post-deployment, to help tell our families how do I find out the information I need? Who do I contact if there's an emergency while my loved one is deployed? When they get back, do we check our Airmen to make sure that they're okay? In a lot of cases an active duty Airman comes back and goes right into their unit and there's somebody there to watch them and observe. In our Reservists and Guards that doesn't happen a lot because they go home. So we have to do a better job of addressing that, and we are working with the Department of Defense to try to improve the Yellow Ribbon Program.

We have a ways to go, that's all I can say, but we are working in the right direction to try and improve it.

CMS Darrow: One of the things I took that were very important is that our family includes our single family members. Sometimes we forget about that, whether they live in the dorm or whether they live off base.

One of the efforts we're trying to do in USAFE is we're trying to make our dorms our Airmen's home, if that's where they live. Because I always remember growing up, you come home, you watch TV on the couch, you have dinner, you're having a good time. If you go in some of the dorm day rooms they're either locked down, or they're just furnished with stuff that I saw on when I came in the military almost 30 years ago. So you go in there and there's not that sense of home.

So that's what we've been trying to work on. We've really engaged and energized our dorm councils. We capitalize, we take the enlisted aids and have them go into the dorms and show them how to cook in the microwave.

One of the best times I've ever had was going over to our Chapel Ministry Program where we get all the Airmen and they made me play that Guitar Hero and stuff, and they had a great laugh at my expense, but it was the best time I ever had, because I got to go out, and you'd be surprised at what you can hear and you can learn when you go out and you interact with the Airmen face to face.

So like I said, one of our focuses is going to be on those single family members that sometimes we forget about.

CMS Gilbert: I'd agree with all of that. I think one of the things that we've been emphasizing in AFSOC, and I

certainly talk a lot about it with the Chiefs and the NCOs as I engage with them, is that level of involvement that we need to have on a personal level with our Airmen. I think a lot of people talk about loss of tradition and those kinds of things, I don't know. I don't know about a lot of the things that people point to about tradition, but over my 29 year career what I have seen change is that level of personal involvement of the supervisor with the Airmen that I grew up with.

If Airman Gilbert had pulled into the parking lot at the CE Shop at Nellis Air Force Base with a brand new Mustang there would have been a fistfight among the NCOs over who could come over and counsel me first on where did you buy it, how can you afford it, where did you get your insurance? Let's go, we're going back to the dealership. We know you got ripped off. They'd have that personal concern about could I really afford it?

Now was it my business? Of course. But what was their concern? That I was being supported, that I was making the right decisions, that I had access to their experience and counsel. We are missing some of that.

If I look at our NCO Corps, we're phenomenal in so many things, but this piece we're letting slip. It could be the email thing. I don't care. But this piece has got to get right. When you see failure among our Airmen, invariably you see they're not getting the leadership inputs that they should get.

I was at a recent forum, 14-16 staff sergeants sitting around a table. All of them two years out of ALS. All of them supervisors. I asked them how many of them had ever been to their Airmen's homes? Four. How many of them had ever had their Airmen over to their house? The same four. I told the others, hey, you guys are family. You're family. Your Airmen should know where you'll be standing when you answer the phone for them because they need something from you.

We're missing that piece. That's something that we're talking a lot about. We just see so many problems. A lot of debts this year. Just stupid stuff. We had a couple in our command, in two weeks, two Airmen dead. No seatbelts. Stuff that just blows your mind. Two young Airmen whose parents counted on us to lead this person, and I recognize they made the choice. In fact you almost have to ignore a screaming, blinking light on most cars nowadays to do some of that stuff. But wherever we see this, we tend to see Airmen that have been left kind of to drift on their own.

So as far as the culture that we're trying to build a little bit back more into our NCO piece and taking care of our Airmen, that's the piece that I try to emphasize.

CMSAF Roy: We've got quite a few questions. I'll ask that one Chief take each one of the questions.

Referencing Chief Schwartz's comments on deployments, what is your take on the morale of the force? What challenges do you have with retention, if any?

CMS ____: It is hard on our families, it is hard on our Airmen, but this is what they signed up to do. Anybody at this point, post-9/11 that is still in our Air Force that I'm exposed to gets it. We've got more Airmen wishing they could go downrange than we have opportunities to send them. The Chief says it all the time, we're all in. We've got some units that are one to one, which is tough. We have to deal especially with those families. But the leaders of those units are engaged. We are investing in them so that we can get them out of that for training and more resources. But this is what we're here to do.

CMS Badgett: I would echo that comment for the Guard and Reserve. We continue to see our Airmen step up and say I want to go. They want to be part of the process. They want to be part of the team. We have yet to not fill a tasking. We're roughly about a 90 percent rate volunteer; 10 percent mobilization. Most of those mobilizations are in the career fields that active duty is at one to one dwell rate. So we step up and we sometimes have to mobilize. But we will down the road have to address this, but I think at this point, and we're trying to plan for that, for our full operational capability concept which I think right now we're doing great and I don't think it's going to affect retention.

CMSAF Roy: They'd like to hear your top three issues. The reason I ask Chief Ussery is because he comes from a combatant command so I'm interested in what he would have to say.

MCS Ussery: Coming from a combatant command, and specifically NORTHCOM, I think probably my number one interest, I'll put it that way right now, is theater security cooperation. Of course with the NORAD construct, we've been doing NORAD for over 50 years now. However, with the standup of United States Northern Command, and just recently, within the last 18 months, Canada Command, we now have two combatant commands for two different countries that

have the same AOR. So what are the opportunities there for us to do enlisted engagements between these two combatant commands who share the same AOR, who share the same security interests? South of the border, what can we provide the Mexican military to assist them with the development of their enlisted corps, with the current war on drugs south of the border? What are the things that we can provide through the Merit Initiative? If you're familiar with that, we're talking about non-lethal equipment and those kinds of things that we can provide. That will actually not just help a neighboring nation but increase the security of the United States. Point blank, that would be probably the biggest interest I have.

I've been in the position for about three months and I've already had an opportunity to do quite a bit with Mexico as far as enlisted engagements go. So that would probably be number one concern.

Number two is probably enlisted joint PME for our headquarters. Looking at what is the appropriate level of joint education that we need, how we implement that, and how we build that construct to make that happen. Is that really the responsibility of the combatant command? Not really. Should we be doing it? Absolutely. How do we integrate the contributions of all of our services getting into a combatant command mission regardless of whether it's a geographical combatant command or a functional combatant command. It doesn't really make any difference.

I would honestly say number three is just a very basic care for all of our service members, all of our enlisted service members, regardless of the service that they come from.

Fourth, I would say always trying to promote the Airman's view in a joint environment.

CMS ____: I would say that my number one I think that concerns me is the OpsTempo. And when I say OpsTempo I'm not talking about the impact that it's having on retention, but the impact that it's having on a lot of our families out there. I've got many units where the OpsTempo is increasingly getting worse and worse, and I see the impact that it's having on divorce rates, the impacts that it's having on relationships among single Airmen, and so forth. So that really disturbs me.

The second one would be quality of life, namely making sure that we have quality dormitories for our folks to live

in and quality housing throughout the command. As well as child care.

I guess lastly would be, of course, manpower. Trying to think of ways that we can continue to do things smarter with dwindling resources, and of course the challenges that go along with that.

CMSAF Roy: As Chiefs, do you see any conflict between your role as senior enlisted leaders and perks, versus the authority of both junior and mid-level officers?

CMS ____: No. [Laughter].

I'm a Chief Master Sergeant, I'm not a commissioned officer in our Air Force. We have the best officer corps in the world, there's no doubt in my mind. And while occasionally we have to educate a junior NCO in how come I'm working right next to say a captain and yet the captain has this or that and I only get this or that, it's because you're not a captain. A captain some day is going to be a major and a colonel and a great leader in our force, and that's what they're growing to be. One stop along their way is to serve next to you and learn from you and learn this job and learn what it is to be an expert in a skill, just as you are going to continue to grow to be what our enlisted force brings to the Air Force, which is technical expertise and experience and confidence.

That's the vast majority of the effort of our enlisted force; and then there are some like us that have different kinds of jobs where we're asked to try to shape and influence and serve the top leaders in the force as they best take care of us. My general's aide is a captain, and I call him sir. That's the deal.

CMSAF Roy: How do you enlisted personnel feel about [WOPS] promotion announcements over the web, versus commanders' notification?

CMS Darrow: I think we had a little bit of disturbance in the force when we were trying to figure out the best way to do the promotion releases over the web. It was painful for a little while. But I think that for the most part, I haven't heard any complaints since we went to the new system where the senior NCOs get released, and the commanders will know prior to, and they get to do the announcement to their senior NCOs.

Again, me personally in USAFE, I haven't heard any complaints. I like the system. I really do believe that

it's the commander's prerogative to be able to tell that person that they got promoted. Probably with the exception of one promotion in my life, I always knew before my commander ever told me, and it was very disappointing. In fact I even had a commander tell me one time, I said sir, you didn't even tell me I got promoted. He goes, aah, I figured the Chiefs or the senior NCO told you, so I wasn't going to waste my time. That affected me profoundly.

Like I said, I believe it's that commander's right, and I believe that we've got it right. And I think that our personnel, for the most part, do as well.

CMSAF Roy: I will soon be a squadron commander. What advice do you have for the best way to lead my NCOs?

CMS ____: I would start by saying listen to your senior NCOs. Twenty-five, 27, 30 years you've heard up here on this stage. They've been through a lot of experiences. They've led Airmen for a long time. Just listen to their experience. Are they always right? We'd like to think so, but we know better. But more than likely you're going to find the right answer if you'll listen. They've been doing it a long time. I think that's a great question because I was just sitting here thinking that you'll find almost every senior level officer that I deal with and most of us deal with, will tell you that sometime in their career there was a Chief or a Senior Master Sergeant that took them under their wing and was a mentor to them. That's a powerful statement to me.

So the fact that the person is asking the question, how do you lead, I think is a great indicator that you know that you need to be considering those factors.

CMS ____: I would say probably the most important thing is to be visible. Get out of the chair. We tell our Chiefs and our First Sergeants the same thing. Just be visible. Every day be visible. Ask questions about photos that are on the desk, little things like that. Be visible every day.

CMSAF Roy: The Chief of Staff during his last presentation made his view of supporting the ground force commanders crystal clear. What is your assessment on how we are communicating our Air Force's and Airmen's contributions to the fight, and how can we do better?

CMS ____: I think we kind of need to get over that a little bit. Just because you're out kicking ass doesn't mean it has to be on the front of the magazine every week.

We've got great Airmen doing phenomenal things. We know what they're doing. Maybe it's because I'm not over on Capitol Hill trying to sell something or buy something and having to influence that. Maybe I'm a little removed from that. But I think in our command we feel not too much of a sense of being overlooked.

We are helpers, enablers. We've got maybe one person on a 12 person ODA that's out doing things downrange, so we are a small percent of the force that's in the fight. But certainly our sister components welcome what we bring. If it's ISR, they will not go outside the wire without it in many cases. Gunships. They will not go out without them. So they fully appreciate what it is we bring to the fight.

I suspect it's mostly a Capitol Hill kind of thing.

But we as Airmen, I think we have a responsibility to be reading, to know what we've got people out there doing. I know AMC is so huge in this whole thing, but I don't need to see it on the front of the Washington Post for me to get that. If they weren't carrying as much as they were we'd have more Airmen, more Soldiers and Marines and what not at risk in convoys.

It's clear that we are a huge part of this effort. We'll be engaged in everything that comes down the pike. I kind of take it as we've got some kind of ego issue or something on that. But I think we're proud of what we do. I'm proud as heck to be an Airman in a command that's involved in the fight, and I hope we all have the same sense.

CMSAF Roy: As we develop our Future Total Force Airmen, what is the most critical focus area and how can we best ensure they are ready to do the mission we ask them to execute?

CMS Darrow: I would say the best thing we can do, and I hear it everywhere I go, I think it's all about training. Because a lot of times I'll here we don't have time to train. Well how can you possibly do your job and be successful without training?

So I believe we owe the force the best training in the world. Not that we don't already do that, but I think that we can improve it because, as the Chief said, we're changing. We're changing every day. We need to embrace that change and we need to make sure that we keep up with that change so that our Airmen are developed and trained and

we continue to assess and train them so they're always ready to go out the door. So I would think training would be the thing for me.

CMSAF Roy: The next question for Chief Badgett. Your thoughts on how we prepared the Air Force Reserve to serve as operational versus strategic reserve.

CMS Badgett: Somebody has read the boss' message, General Stenner. [Laughter].

That's huge. We're actually going through the process now to implement what we call full operational capability. I mentioned it a little earlier. In the past, the Cold War model said that we as a Reserve and a Guard need to be gained to an active duty MAJCOM to be trained, equipped and ready to go forward. That's no longer the case.

A Reservist and a Guard member are just as prepared to go forward as an active duty. It's transparent any more. So the full operational capability that we're working toward is to be able to provide forces directly to the Air Force component to provide them forward to the COCOMs. And it takes out an unnecessary layer we really don't need. We're already training and equipping. So I think we are currently under the process that is preparing our Airmen to be that operational, and we're doing it every day. We've talked about it in a lot of different forms this week. The percentage of the mission that the Guard and Reserve are already doing as an operational force is huge. But we also have to remember, and it's inherent in that question, that we have to be able to maintain the strategic part of that so that we can do this long term. We don't want to use all the resources and then be out, because we need to continue to support, or give the capability to this country.

It was important I think that I didn't say we give this resource to the Air Force because the Air Force Guard and Reserve is a three component team. To be able to provide that team to the United States of America is the most important, and I think we're already well on the way to doing that.

CMSAF Roy: What is the difference in today's Airmen when we look at the first Airmen, and then take a look at the future to what it is that our future Airmen must look like?

CMS Barron: When I just look at the difference between today's Airmen and Airman Joe Barron when I came in the Air Force, I will tell you, it was a different Air Force back

then. When all of us Chiefs up here came in, our idea of going to war was maybe putting a pilot in a cockpit, loading some weapons in it, saluting them, and welcoming them back when they got back home after dropping them off. Those days are gone.

I'll also say that the Airmen, the great Americans that we're getting in our military nowadays are some of the finest Americans that I have ever met. I'll tell you, they're dedicated, they're energized, they're committed, and they're serving at a time of war, knowing that we're a country at war, knowing they may be asked to go to war, and the first thing they say when I get to meet them as I'm out visiting your installations, is when do I get to go? Not when do I have to go. When do I get to go. So it's a different type of a person. It makes me awful proud to serve next to these young great Americans.

And I know that we'll continue to get better and better because as I look out there and I visit those places, the Airmen I meet every day continue to get better and better, and they continue to amaze me.

CMSAF Roy: What are your thoughts regarding the new fitness policy that eliminates the requirements for commanders to give Airmen time for physical fitness during duty time? This appears inconsistent with the push to create and maintain an atmosphere of fitness.

CMS ____: It doesn't totally remove the requirement. It highly encourages commanders to do it.

The fact was, there are certain units that are not going to be able to do PT every morning. AMXS's are not going to be able to do it. So if we are going to tell Airmen that you are required to be in standards, which we are and they should be; and we're going to tell them well, you may have to do that on the weekend or after hours or whenever you can fit it in because your commander may not always have time to do it, that's a fair statement to make. It's a reality. We just clarified the language.

Look at the position we were putting commanders in. You're required to do this fitness thing, you're required to fly these jets by 9:00 o'clock. You pick. So here you had a commander who was already failing 50 percent somewhere.

So it's just a clarification. You look around the Air Force, every morning you see there's more and more Airmen out there. I think we've gotten the message. It's been a tremendous transition. When Chief Murray first took this on

back around 2003 to now, it's just tightening up the program, getting the requirement back on us internally as Airmen, as part of what we bring. I think that's as simple as that.

CMSAF Roy: A question on dormitories. What is the board members' opinions on privatizing the unaccompanied Airmen housing? We talk an awful lot about privatizing base housing, this one's on dormitories.

CMS Gilbert: As long as we do not lose in that process the ability to lead that community. If we are just going to farm them out like a college dorm -- Well, I wouldn't eat there. I don't know.

If we're just going to push them out some place where they would be unsupervised, where we would have limited access to their rooms and living conditions, and there would be legal issues about doing the kind of sweeps we need to protect the environment for the 99.9 percent of the great Airmen that have joined us and are trying to serve and give them that kind of leadership and quality of life that their parents expect that we would give them, then that would be bad.

But the discussions I've heard on that, our senior leaders get that, and they're engaging in this process in the right way to ensure that those concerns are met.

Otherwise, yeah, we've got to use good business practices to get better quality stuff. But if you look at our dorm plan, right now we've got a capacity issue at Cannon, I've got 200 Airmen doubled up. I can't fix that for three or four years under the current Master Dorm Plan. So obviously MilCon is very limited, so we've got to look at other ways of providing people, providing our Airmen the homes that they deserve.

CMS _____: I agree with Chief Gilbert 100 percent. I will also add that we need to be very careful with this because I know some of the other services have already engaged to an extent with the privatization idea. But we've got this thing, as we were talking about earlier, with housing right now called the waterfall. I don't know what impact it would have if our occupancy rate fell below a certain level in the dormitories and the effect that could have with what kind of population we would open up those vacant rooms in the dormitories to. So I think we would need to tiptoe at it and take a lot of great information and do a lot of careful studying before anyone would want to just go ahead and implement something like that.

CMS ____: One quick comment. I think in a lot of cases in our Air Force we look at programs and try to find a way to save money. I think we've heard that from both the Chiefs. I really wanted to touch on what Chief Gilbert said. I don't know of any other part of society that takes a 19 or 20 or 21 year old and asks them to maintain a \$30 million or \$50 million piece of equipment. That puts a lot of strain and stress on the individual and I think we owe it to those individuals to keep an eye on them, to make sure that we're taking care of them. And in that supervised atmosphere the Chief was talking about, we don't need that as part of our culture in the Air Force. We need to, as General Schwartz said, we need to make them feel more like community, not like we're trying to push it away from the core.

So I think if we can do privatization of dorms and keep that atmosphere, I'm okay with it. But if we can't, that has to take priority over the cost savings we could find.

CMSAF Roy: The next two questions have to do with jet taskings. For anyone that wants to take this.

Do you see any significant changes that must be made if we continue to support jet taskings? And what would those changes be? The way I interpret the question was in line with training.

CMS Darrow: I guess I would say on the jet training, I believe I just attended a briefing the other day where I believe that we are addressing that question. There's a headquarters level, big eye look at how do we train our people for the fight? And we've taken the feedback. We've understood what's going on. And I believe that we're going to be where you are in the right, whether it's inside the wire, outside the wire, when you're going, where you're going, I think that training is getting ready to be tailored to where you're going and what you're going to need to be successful.

I was very impressed at the level of detail and everything that our leadership is taking a look at that because, trust me, they want to make sure that our Airmen are trained and protected as much as possible in the fight.

CMS ____: I great appreciate the leadership of the Chief of Staff on this now. For a while, we were talking "in lieu of", this isn't really something that we do. Well, after you've been doing it nine years, it's something you do. So we need to make sure that we're doing it well. And

AETC has just done a superb job, 2nd Air Force in particular, in making sure that our Airmen are prepared properly to go out in that environment, and the record speaks for itself. They're absolutely kicking butt in every respect. I haven't heard of an Airman that's failed on the battlefield. When you consider that they weren't assessed to do those specific tasks, and that we were able to quickly -- If you look at our transporters. One day you're coming in and you're washing the wing commander's car; then somebody taps you on the shoulder and says hey, we need to send you down somewhere for two months of training, then you're going to be going driving on one of the most dangerous roads in the world. And they go. And they do it at least as well as people who were paid and trained specifically to do that for their entire careers.

So obviously we're in the business of doing it. The Air Force has responded correctly in providing the appropriate training. I guess the next thing would be to look at what other things might come down the road that we might be doing. PRTs are huge, coalition partnership capacity building, all that. We're going to be doing that for years. In fact that's how we should be fighting. As we get more into that and in future years in different places Airmen are no doubt going to be called to doing that and we need to make sure that we're providing them the right training to succeed.

CMSAF Roy: In that same vein, what do you see as the stressors on the personnel, the Airmen, along with their families? As long as not just jet taskings, but deployment and employment of those forces. Stressors on family and on the Airmen.

CMS _____: Speaking as someone who has a daughter that's 22, married to an Airman, part of the deployment that concerns me the most is the impact on young married couples. I think that's always tougher on a young married couple who's just early in life, beginning to build a foundation as a couple. My wife and I have been married long enough that if I went on deployment for six months she might now know I was gone. [Laughter]. But a young couple, it's just awfully tough on them. And again, I think it comes down to that environment within a squadron where you're taking care of the people that you work with and you're checking on them. It just should be a natural part of what leadership is. But really, the impact on our young families. I think obviously that's one of the things we'll focus on this year in the year of the family. That would be my answer.

CMSAF Roy: The Chief of Staff mentioned closing dining facilities. Based on a business case decision, what message do you think we are sending to our Airmen in doing so? Or do they care?

CMS ____: I think when it comes to a dining facility on a base, especially when there aren't a lot of other options around, I don't really care what the business case is, young Airmen need some place to eat. Are we looking at second, third effects? Are you going to go back now and build them all rooms they can cook in? Are you going to provide cabinet space? All of those kind of things, the second and third order effects. Come on, it's a dining facility where your young Airmen eat, and somebody's going to throw up a business case decision? That's just the way I feel about it personally. That we're going to take away their place to eat? It doesn't strike me right.

CMS ____: Absolutely right. I think it goes back to the dorms. The dorms and our dining facilities and those things that our first term Airmen, the ones right out of tech school, coming to our bases, experiencing the Air Force for the first time, they are completely vulnerable to our care. The staff sergeant, move off base. You don't like where you eat? Go somewhere else. Make your own food. If you don't like where you're living, change it. You don't like your couch, change it. You don't like your car, change it. The 19 year old coming right out of tech school almost never has those options. So that's where we're showing how much we care about Airmen in those first few years and just as the Chief said, when you start making business case approaches to that I hope you're taking the whole picture into that factoring process. We've got to watch what we do with them.

If we look like we don't care. Yeah, go eat at the bowling alley. That's a message I don't want to be sending to my Airmen when we ask them to do what we ask them to do.

CMSAF Roy: In that same vein as well, looking at recruiting and retention numbers, what do you see, where do you see them going, both in recruiting and retention?

CMS ____: Right now, from everything I understand, our recruiting numbers are doing pretty good, and our retention is doing very very well. And of course I think the economy has helped us out a little bit with that as well. But I'll also say, as I was saying earlier, these young guys and gals, these great Americans that we have coming in, the majority of the force right now has entered the military since 9/11. This is all they know.

What I begin to wonder about, if things start slowing down, how are they going to feel? How will that affect retention for these folks that are not used to dealing in an environment where we are not in the kind of OpsTempo that we're in today.

CMS Gilbert: I agree. I just want to put one caveat in there. For our Battlefield Airmen in many cases it's assessing the right place. Frankly, we need to find the right men willing to go through what we'll put them through for two or three years, knowing what their life will be out on the battlefield every year for the next 15 or 20, that is a challenge for us. We put 12 Special Operators out with our recruiting service. That has been huge. We're getting a big payback on that. But that continues to be a challenge for our command. And I think it goes into some other specialties, too.

Yeah, we can get the masses in and that's good, we need them, I was one. But we've also got to have that targeted section and recruitment of those elite athletes, in some cases; of elite folks that are going to go out and do those really tough jobs. We've got a lot of competition, both in sports programs in college and the SEALs and what not, and that's one that we need to continue to pump on.

CMSAF Roy: There have been some major changes in our officer PME. Has the enlisted PME changed as well? And how are those graduates doing back in the field once they graduate?

CMS Darrow: Well, speaking as a former Commandant of the Senior NCO Academy I can tell you that yes, changes are made, have been made. A lot of folks have gone to PME, and I've been parts of the officer and enlisted PME process, and the thing that you need to understand is there's a system and a process and sometimes it takes a while for that to catch up. But what we've found is that we're working on ways to make the system more reactive to the lessons learned.

A lot of folks like to say well the Army does it all the time. They get their lessons and they integrated it right away and poof, there they go. Then they find that, guess what? They tried to push that out and there were unintended consequences.

So what we've been trying to do, we do a Triennial Review. That's in progress right now. We take feedback from every one of you in here. When you go through the

schools we say tell us what you think should change. We go out to the people that have been in the fight and we go, are we teaching our senior NCOs, NCOs and Airmen the right things at the right time? We're getting ready to make some changes insofar as when the timing of PME. We've gotten a lot of complaints on it's not being done at the right time. Too many gaps in between. That's being addressed. That's being worked. It's going to be fixed.

The same thing again with the curriculum. There's a lot of work being done on the curriculum to make sure that it's the right training, the right time, and at the right level.

CMS _____: On a related note, I think it's worth mentioning that we have a current initiative now to make sure that we put Airmen into each of our sister service academies. But not just the sister service academies, but with partner nation academies as well. The one that I just happen to be working on now is with the Canadian Senior Enlisted PME. They have an E7 course, an E8 course, an E9 course, each of them three weeks long. So one of the things we're discussing right now is what's the right way to get them in there?

But again, if we're going to send our senior NCOs to sister service PME and to partner nation PME to have some type of a deliberate assignment process that ensures when they finish that that we put them into an assignment where we're going to get the most out of that.

For me being the Command Senior Enlisted for NORAD, where it is a bi-national command, by treaty, with Canada, my boss answers to both heads of state. NORAD would be the perfect place to take some American Airmen and put them through the Canadian PME system and then set them side by side with their Canadian counterparts, whether at NORAD headquarters, the continental United States NORAD region, or even the Canadian NORAD region in the sectors.

So that's one of the things we're looking at right now under the heading of PME, I guess you'd say.

CMS _____: I think we should also try not to focus so intently on PME. I think we need to look at the entire educational experience. There are some educational opportunities that the civilian education system can provide, and we need to continue to encourage our great young Airmen that are pursuing CCAF, Bachelor's, Master's degrees at rates that we've never seen before. I think that's outstanding. We need to encourage that so that they

get management level training and are getting training in their own specialties that will lend to what they're getting in PME.

CMSAF Roy: I'm a member of both AFA and AFSA. However, numbers in both have significantly gone down over the last five to ten years. How do we reverse this trend and get younger Airmen energized in those organizations?

CMS Darrow: I would say kind of along the same thing that we've been talking about, you need to get with your Airmen, and you need to look them in the eye, grab them by the arm, and say hey, come with me. Come with me to the meeting. Guess what? If you're not there, why should they be?

When we had the AFSA Conference, we brought USAFE, we brought a USAFE exhibit to the AFSA Conference and we selected the best people. We made it competitive. We're only taking the best with us when we go to the AFSA, because not only do we want you to tell the USAFE story, but we want you to learn and we want you to see what's going on in AFSA. Those young Airmen, it was a young Airman and an NCO and several senior NCOs, they went back and they're spreading the word and they're grabbing people, and we've already seen an increase in our recruitment. It's got to come from you. It's got to come from me. It's that looking them in the eye.

I guarantee you, if you look someone in the eye, it's really hard for them to say no.

But you also have to explain to them why it's important. It's important to them, why? Because of their families. Because of what we do. Because of the benefits. We used to say hey, you know, you just need to go and pay your money and shut up. And we can't do that any more because they're not going to listen. It has to be important and it has to have meaning. It's up to us to make sure that they understand the importance of AFA and AFSA and any other professional organization because we're part of a professional organization. So we ought to make sure that our Airmen understand that and are part of it as well.

CMSAF Roy: On that note, we're getting close to the time. So what I'd ask you, this last question, we'll go right down the panel. If you could close your comments up with this question. We'll start down here with AMC.

What do you see as some of your challenges within your command?

CMS Baron: Is General Lichte here? If he were here, of course the tanker. We talked a little bit earlier about the great Airmen that we've got out there. I'll tell you, it's our aging airframes. And not just the tanker. We heard earlier, the bombers are getting older, and we need new bombers; we need new fighters. But our aircraft are getting older. The bottom line is that creates a lot of work for our Airmen. As we're dwindling down, as I said earlier, with resources, our airframes are getting older and older and older. In some cases we're fabricating our own parts for these things. It's a 50 year old airplane. By the time they say we may end up retiring the last one, it could be 87 years old.

So it's the age of our aircraft. It's the dwindling resources that we've got out there. And trying to balance that and figure out how we're going to sustain the tempo where we're at today with the airframe that we've got today, with the lack of manpower that we've got today.

CMS Badgett: I think our challenge as an Air Force, and specifically related to the Air Reserve Component, is how do we build more partnerships and more associations between the three components? AFRC, Air National Guard and AMC have, for about 40 years, been conducting partnerships and flying the same aircraft and sharing facilities and equipment, and it's been a very effective, efficient means of carrying out the mission. I think we need to explore that in other missions. We need to look at also doing that in the fighters, in expeditionary combat support, medical, legal, all those other areas where we can gain efficiencies and provide a better product without having to spend the additional resources.

CMS Darrow: I agree with the Chief. Part of the challenges we have in USAFE goes along with the building partnerships. As we're downsizing and we're getting ready to lose even more fighter squadrons, we're finding that some of our NATO allies are probably going to get some of the newer aircraft maybe before we are. So we're trying to work on that building partnership capability because we know that with the limited resources that we have we're going to have to work together and we're going to have to work with the other countries so that we can get that synergy and we can capitalize on each other's capabilities.

The other area that we have a little concern with, well, a lot of concern within USAFE is maintenance experience levels. We're finding that a lot of our young aircraft maintainers come in and they don't have a lot of

experience. By the time we get them trained, they leave. So we're really working through that.

Again, we're doing another four star level look at how we do maintenance level experience training because we get a lot of issues on that.

The last thing I'd say is USAFE's a great command and the Airmen love the COLA and everything they get over there, but they experience some challenges you don't have in the United States where you know that with CDCs it's really hard for us to fill our child care providers because it's hard, it takes a long time for the hiring process. It's harder to do that.

When AETC sent out the message saying we're going to put a civilian in each organization to get your CSSes back, that kind of doesn't work in USAFE because we don't always have the ability to put civilians in some of the countries that we work with because of the SOFA agreements.

So we have a lot of challenges there that we have to work through and make sure that people understand that yes, you're in Europe and it's beautiful, but you have to accept some of the challenges and things that occur when you're over there.

I'd like to also as we're closing say thank you very much. We appreciate the opportunity, especially me, to come before you and answer your questions. We're always available, if you ever need to ask any of us any questions we're available to make sure that we help you out. I wish you all good luck in your career, and I hope you've been as happy 30 years from now in your career as I have been in mine.

CMS Gilbert: For AFSOC, first and foremost we've got to win the war. There's a huge decision coming down not far from here, I'm sure some very powerful minds are working through it, but what does victory in Afghanistan look like? And then how do we as the air component to SOCOM provide what it takes to ensure that that occurs? Whatever it is, it isn't going to be easy so that's something that we're focused on every day.

Taking care of the Airmen and the families that we ask so much of, we're incredibly proud of the young men and women we've got down-range. We're very very proud of Zach Rheiner. The guy's what, 20 years old, was the senior Airman last year on a mountain with ten Special Forces team members, fighting for their lives for six hours thinking

they were done for, and calm, cool, collected, wounded, and just as brave as could be. We've got to take care of guys like that, and we've got to take care of all his teammates and that continues to be a huge concern. Because if we can't, they won't be with us long.

The third thing is we've got to build the force that our nation is going to need of us over the next decade or two. We're going through a huge transition, but we've got some real national risk. Our ability to go deep into some country some night and put in 60 teams is questionable, and in some years from now probably non-existent given the wing box issues we've got with some of our old C-130s.

This is a huge problem for us and the smart folks back at Hurlburt are thinking about that all the time.

Vertical lift. We're woefully short of that. The CV-22's coming on at not a very rapid pace, so that's another piece of our national risk that we have, and it limits the President's ability to do things that he would need to do.

Battlefield Airmen, ISR, the exploitation piece of that tremendous asset. These are things that are just constantly being worked in AFSOC.

CMS Ussery: The number one challenge. It's kind of a tough question to answer. When you're talking about homeland defense and the AOR that is the United States, there's about 60 defense or civilian partners that we work with from the services, that then you start talking DHS and FEMA, and that is a relationship, with Civil Border Patrol, all those folks that you constantly are working on those relationships. The manning of the forces that are dedicated to our homeland defense, whether it's the CSMRFs, the CSTs, making sure that the National Guard has the equipment that they need.

But I'll be honest with you. I think that probably the number one challenge we face in the NORTHCOM AOR and that we face as a country is remembering that the threat is still a threat to our homeland, and that every combatant command that is out there is there doing one thing, and that is homeland defense. And I think the more time that passes, you always run that risk that there will be a level of complacency and people will not believe that that threat is here at home any longer. And when someone asks the question of why are we still in Afghanistan, and you're one step away from saying why do we really need homeland defense? That's really the business that we're all in.

I think making sure that the American public and the military stays aware that there is still a real threat here at home, and being cognizant of that.

CMSAF Roy: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming this afternoon. Please join me in giving them a round of applause.

[Applause].

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