

“The Enlisted Imperative”

Voiceover:

Good morning, Airmen, Guardians, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to the AFA Warfare Symposium. We have another busy morning in store, but before we begin our first panel, please welcome AFA’s Board Chair Bernie Skoch.

Bernie Skoch:

Morning. I hope you all have enjoyed what we've done over the last couple of days, even half as much as I have. What a wonderful symposium this has been so far. I've been struck with three things. One, I've been reminded that our enlisted core is the strength of the United States Air Force and the United States Space Force.

I am the son of a KC-135 boom operator, and my father taught me more about leadership than anyone in my life. So thank you to our enlisted core. They're more innovative, better led, better educated than any force on earth. The second thing that struck me about yesterday was these are perilous times. And I was reminded that in perilous times, it's best to have brilliant gifted leaders and Secretary Kendall and General Brown and General Saltzman and Chief Bass and Chief Towberman. We could not ask for better leaders in these troubled times, thank you to them. And the third thing that struck me was we have a defense industry in this nation, unlike any on planet earth. The partnerships that we have formed that we've been reminded of at this symposium and others are profound. They provide capabilities and response to requirements unlike anyone on Earth. And it's that capability that's going to take us into the next century.

So if you haven't visited our exhibit hall, I encourage you to do so before 11:45 when they're obligated to close. Let them know that we appreciate them. They're not only the fuel that fuels our Air Force and our Space Force, but they're the fuel of AFA. Which leads me to my final comment this morning. Please join us. We advocate for dominant Air and Space Forces and we need you to join our voice in that advocacy. Stop by the AFA booth by the exhibit hall, and we'll give you a special deal on membership. So best to you today. Hope you have a wonderful day. I'm looking forward to great spark tank competition. Thank you for being here.

Voiceover:

And now, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our AFA Director of Communications, Amy Hudson.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you so much. As a former staff sergeant in the Air Force Reserve, it's my true honor to be your moderator today for the enlisted imperative panel. The enlisted force is not just the backbone of our United States military, it's our secret advantage. No other force on earth is built on an NCO core that is so well educated, so well trained, and so truly professional as ours is. Empowering enlisted Airmen and Guardians regardless of rank or occupational specialty, to become the best leaders they can be, to accelerate change and embrace innovation, to help shape a brand new service and to lead in a truly joint operating environment is in itself a critical operational imperative.

All three leaders here with us today are embracing that challenge. Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Ramón "CZ" Colón-López, Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force, Roger Towberman and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, JoAnne Bass. Thank you all so much for being here today. SEAC, we're staring down a strategic competition with two near peer

competitors. How is the joint force posturing and developing to meet the challenge head on and ensure American dominance is maintained across all domains?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Well, thank you Amy. And before I answer that question, I just have to give props to my teammate over here for 30 years today in service. So Jo...

So near peer competition, strategic power competition is got many names, but our approach is got to be the same. One thing that we need to do is make sure that we learn from the lessons passed, especially after 20 years in combat and figure out what worked and what didn't. Then we have to start looking at our strategic documents, the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the National Military Strategy, and see how our roles and responsibilities fit within those documents and what is our specific tasks to be able to do that. I always cringe when I hear people say, well, I'm Justin, fill in the blank. The fact is that every single one of you matter to the overall outcome of that mission, whatever it may be.

And the last thing that I will say is that we need to bridge the no-do gap. A lot of people talk about the say-do gap, but when it comes to the listed force specifically, we need to better educate you. We need to make sure that we make everyone a thinking entity to go ahead and look through these complex problems. Because one piece of feedback that I provided for the National Defense Strategy was the balance between three grays. The first gray is the area that you're expected to operate in the future, which is highly uncertain. The second gray is the gray steel, the rivet, the steel, the ships, the planes, the subs, everything that we have that creates that integrated deterrence. And lastly, the most important and most often neglected is the gray matter, the people. What is it that we do to make sure that we have the most lethal force in the world to when the chips fall and the human factor is a deciding factor in the outcome of the battle, that your best [inaudible 00:06:31] to be victors in that fight? Thank you.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you. CMSAF, the Air Force just announced the future operating concept, and it's completely changing the way that it's presenting forces to the joint force. And Chief Towberman, General Saltzman spoke yesterday about the unique challenges that the Space Force has with employing in place. Can you each take a minute to talk about how this ties into the enlisted force and how it's building the force of the future?

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Absolutely. First of all, good morning AFA. I just want to say this is actually a pretty surreal experience to be between my two brothers, one who I had the privilege to know for over 26 years when we served together in the 24 special tactics squadron, and then the other one I've known well over 10 years and who I admire so dang much, so this is a privilege for me. So thanks brothers for being with us.

When it comes to our future operating concept, we have lots of discussions on it yesterday, general Brown spoke about that. What I would say as it relates to our enlisted force and more importantly kind of the future and challenges that we have is, we're talking about doing things relatively the same, the same five functions that we're doing. It's how we're going to do it, which gets after what SEAC said, how we're going to do it, that is different?

And so we are going to have to capitalize on our people, our Airmen to really help define what that how is and how we get there and use our Airmen to help connect those dots. And each of you all are doing that right now. As we get after action order D, design implementation and reimagine what our air force might need to look like in 10 years from now, 15 years from now or 20 years from now. It's our Airmen

that are going to help drive how we are able to operate as an air force and fit right in and integrate with our joint force to be able to get after that mission set.

We're doing a lot of work right now. I think the challenges that we're probably going to have with that, being able to move as fast as we need to be able to move. You heard our secretary of the Air Force talk about speed and we've got to be able to act fast. And so I think speed and getting everybody to shift their mindset on how we're going to be able to get after the challenges that are in the future will be the biggest challenges we have.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

So everybody else talking about everybody else and it's amazing. I mean, this is Air Force icons sitting next to me and probably SEAC, this is probably your last AFA. So I think just one more time from all of us because...

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Thank you.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

We love you man. And I know that there was a rumor that SEAC and I were going to have a pushup contest and you guys were really excited about that, but he's injured so we can't do it. I know there was a lot of suspense, but unfortunately for me...

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Oh, here we go. Don't do it.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

I'm off the hook. Employed in place, it really is something that I'm not sure we even still understand all the challenges that come like that in both services. That as General Saltzman said the other day... I mean, fighting a war and going home to your child's soccer game, that's not how it's supposed to work, right? It's not how we're wired to deal with these things. And so I think that's the most significant challenge. But there's other things that I think we don't think about as much, and especially with our Air Force teammates because the HVAC systems, the electricity, the perimeter defense, all of that stuff for 24 hour in place missions has to be no fail.

And so how do we move forward team with FMC and with the Air Force to make sure that those missions never fail in any way and ensure that Guardians have sort of some semblance of normalcy in their training and employed in place cycle? So the force gen model I think is going to help that a lot. But really this is about wrapping our brains around what it's like to be fighting a war and then go home and check out and check in, and what special stresses does that put on our minds and on our hearts because it's not insignificant and many people in here know that. So we'll keep working on it.

Amy Hudson:

Chief Bass, you're leading the charge, developing the next generation of Airmen to build the Air Force our nation needs. How is the Air Force working to deliberately develop its people to create the force of the future that you just spoke about?

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Thanks for that question. I'll tell you, we've done a lot of work over the past few years in focusing on what does that future force need to look like and how do we develop them. There are some folks in this room, in fact, who've been pretty critical to helping us develop what that might look like. And I shared at last AFA that we released the enlisted force development action plan, really focused on how do we develop an Airman of 2030. It's meant to be agile, we meant to do modifications to it, but that action plan really helped inform us to start to kind of guide us, if you will, on the things that we need to do. And it pushed us to release some foundational documents that hopefully some of you all have seen. Some things like the blueprint that I wish I had when I was a young senior Airman Bass to help kind of guide me throughout my career and understand what my role as a United States Airman.

We also release a blue book, the brown book, the purple book, which I couldn't be more excited of. And by the way, if you don't have your copy of one, I think my team has about 40 copies of each. So come here after this and we'll make sure you get them. But we release those foundational documents to help inform today's Airmen on what the expectations are on them as it relates to readiness and being the Airmen that we need them to be, but also help guide us into the future. And that's super important. Again, understanding what is at stake, understanding that we're serving at some of the most complex times and we need to understand the adversary. And again, we have to understand our role as United States Airman as it relates to our joint force and partnering with our allies and partners as well.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you. SEAC, force development's been one of your priorities since you took the position. Do you want to talk a little bit from a joint perspective of where you're at with that?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

On?

Amy Hudson:

Force development.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Force development. Absolutely. One of the greatest lessons that we learned over the past 20 years is that no service is going to go at any mission alone. It's going to take a combination of assets, of talents, of cultures to be able to get after the high end fight. Not only internal to the United States, but also with our allies and partners, which is nested in every single strategic document, the heavy reliance on people to be able to carry on their own fights. And if you were skeptic about us handing over a fight to somebody else, look no further than Ukraine today. There we're just providing equipment, advice and training and they're fighting their own fight, that may be the way of the future. Sometimes we get, I wouldn't say upset, I wouldn't say disappointed, but sometimes we think that because we have proven that we're the best of the best in the world, that we have to take on every fight ourselves. And that is not going to be the case in the future.

Sometimes we just have to go ahead and step back and let people do things because global security is not hinging upon the actions of the United States of America. We are a key contributor to that, but eventually people are going to have to start owning up their own fights in order to be able to go ahead and have that span of control and lethality that we need in order to maintain world order.

So for our training, we're capitalizing on every single one of those ideas. We're crossing the services to make sure that we are more transparent on lessons learned. And the most important thing that we're doing is learning from our partners globally, to make sure that we understand their capabilities, their

shortcomings, and the way that we can interoperate here in the near future. So those are just a few things that we're doing from the Department of Defense.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Hey Amy, can I add one thing?

Amy Hudson:

Absolutely.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

SEAC jogged my memory when you talk about Ukraine. Do we have any international guards in here? Okay, few of y'all. Y'all can shout. Do we have any international guards in here? Okay, good. So I'm going to give a shout-out to our state partnership program. When you talk about Ukraine and you talk about what the California International Guard has done since 2014 as it relates to training and spending time with our Ukrainian Air Force, teaching them mission command, teaching them how to empower at the most junior level. When I talk to my counterpart in the Ukrainian Air Force, the chief master sergeant in the Ukrainian Air Force, Constantine, he shared with myself and a bunch of other senior leaders across the globe that the reason why they are continuing to fight so strong, the reason why they will win, the reason why they have the grit to do what they do is because the strength of their sergeants, their NCO core.

And that did not just happen. That happened because of our training, our partnership, the Army National Guard, the Air Force, the International Guard, and so big kudos to our state partnership. And then one last thing on big kudos too that I forgot to mention. As we developed the force that we need in 2030, I have to give a shout-out to AETC and all of our force generator, starting with our recruiters who are bringing in today's talent, and then our MTIs, our MTLs, our PME instructors, and everybody who is focused on developing the force. It is really through AETC that we are going to be able to develop the Airmen that we need in the future.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

So what is this place? Is this like Noah's Ark? We just brought two of everything. I mean, typically people are just fired up.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

It is 7:30 last day. It's 7:30 in the morning, last day.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you so much. That's actually a perfect transition. Chief Towberman, why does this Space Force depend on recruiting highly technical skilled Americans to accomplish this mission? And if that's the case, what are you doing to retain those Guardians who might be attracted to private sector?

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Yeah, so I mean, we absolutely need them. We can't navigate this very complex, very complicated domain without a good noggin. This gray matter matters to us for sure. I think when it comes to retaining them, we talk about this a lot and everyone always wants to frame us against someone or

something else, and that really isn't how we're approaching it. Our commitment to Guardians is to not give them a reason to quit this team, that's where the focus has to be.

If you're worried about other people, other opportunities, then you're not spending the energy that you need to make your experience better. So we're really focused on providing Guardians an experience that matters to them, that they're empowered, that they feel cared about, that they're connected to each other and to the mission. And we believe that in this ecosystem, in this value proposition, that they're informing for us that if we can do what we can to make sure no one wants to leave the team, then the few that move towards other opportunities, that's okay. Moving towards things is in general, a pretty good strategy, but moving away from things is what gets you in trouble. So it's really our commitment to not give them reason to quit.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

And if I can elaborate just a little bit on that too, because this is not just a Space Force issue, it's the force at large. Retention and recruitment. We're currently undergoing the 14th quadrennial review for military compensation. And in that review, what we have been tasked to do is just to see if the pay system is still relevant based on the competition with industry. Are people being properly compensated? And what is it that we need to do when it comes to allowances, bonuses, and other compensation to make sure that we retain the talent? And I will tell you that there's a lot of thought that it's going to be put into this. I have the first responsibility of voicing your concerns when it comes to it, which is basically in concert and collaboration with the servicing enlisted advisors. But SEAC number five, eventually it's going to be the driver of that function as we continue to go through the process.

But the one thing that we know is that in very few cases, we're going to be able to compete with industry, but the kind of entity that stays in service, myself included, wasn't for the money. Now, money matters to our families and everything else. So we better them well compensate you good enough to make sure that you decide to stay with us. But we always have to remember that honor is a psychological salary of every warrior, and that we need to make sure that we create an institution and an environment, a culture and a climate that promotes that kind of mindset. So there's a lot more coming and we're wanting to take care of you. All we want you to do is just take care of the mission.

Amy Hudson:

So to follow up on that, this is a question for all three of you. Yesterday we heard a lot of talk about encouraging public service. So what do you say to the Airmen and Guardians in this audience and to service members everywhere, at all levels of how do they spread that message?

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Yeah, I mean, we've been talking about this all week. You all have a story and many of your stories are amazing. You've got to be sharing them with each other, with the outside world, be involved in your community. Be proud. This is an ancient and noble profession, and we should all feel absolutely honored just to be led in the door, just to be given the opportunity to wear the cloth of our nation and be participants in this ancient and noble profession.

If you don't feel that, then by all means go do something else. If you do feel that, do not feel that just at home. Get out there, be proud, puff up your chest. Tell people your stories and tell them your whole story. That's what they want to hear, that's what they need to hear from us. That this is an opportunity like no other, especially on the enlisted front. We're on day one of service. You can literally hit the reset button on your entire life and do anything you want to do, and that just doesn't come along every day. So I think we've got to embrace it. We've just got to share our stories.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

So I learned on Monday, don't pass up an opportunity to speak, and I'm going to let you go last SEAC. So I would say, we are all owners in the Department of the Air Force, every single one of us. And so as owners, we have to own that this is all of our challenge to really get after. And the best recruiters that we have, the best recruiters are every single one of our Airmen, every single one of our Guardians. And then it gets back after what SEAC said, when you talk about the culture, if we have a strong culture in our Department of the Air Force, then our Airmen will naturally recruit and share their stories well. If we don't have that strong culture within your organization, within your flight, within your squadron, within your wing, you can guarantee that it'll have the opposite effect. So I would ask every single one of you all, you are owners in our Department of the Air Force, we need you to help get after this and share the story that you know is true about our United States Air Force.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

I'll go ahead and put the cherry on top on that. We live in very negative times. We're still looking at the narrative that is being regurgitated there, mostly on the negative side of the equation and not necessarily on the impact that you're having on global security. And often we'll let people drive that narrative because we stay silent. Or even worse, we jump in the bandwagon like, yeah, this sucks, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Well, I'm going to go ahead and violate some rules of AFA, but I personally think that that is bullshit.

I know General Minihan is probably smiling already. But let me tell you why. Because as I look across the force and I start looking at the data that is being put up there, three quarters of the nation cannot serve because they're fat, dumb, lazy, criminal or stupid. Or the 20 some percent that are able to serve, they don't want to do it because the institution is bad. That is not the case. Just yesterday, I came back from Coronado and I went to Butts, and I actually put a post on this because I'm actually sick of the negative narrative and the naysayers that actually said that we don't have the talent in our youth to be able to fight tomorrow's wars. And I got to see hundreds, hundreds of young people that are wanting to do nothing more, but to put their metal to the test to actually move forward. Now, how do they get that motivation from the 1% that actually serves or from the 99% of the people that actually benefit from the freedom that every single one of you gives them?

We need to remain united on the way that we speak about everything that is near and dear to us. Now, we realize from the second that we took the oath that there was going to be sacrifice with every single thing that we did from that moment on, from the moment that we done the uniform, to when we take it off. And then we have a lifelong commitment to speak on the opportunities, the actual challenges, the places where we were placed, to make a difference where 99% of your peers from school don't have a clue what it's all about. So we need to do a better job of actually every person here being a recruiter and telling your story, just like Joe and Toby said, because if we don't do that, we're going to let somebody else drive the narrative. So again, we need to help ourselves before somebody else decides to shoot us in the foot. Now I'm getting fired up.

Amy Hudson:

SEAC, we'll stick with you. What can service members take from the National Defense Strategy with regard to prioritizing readiness and building that war fighter advantage in the joint force? And how does each member fit into the broader strategic picture?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

So I guess I better not take another shot of coffee before I answer that one. All right, so here's the deal. Every single one of you's got an AFSC, right? And that AFSC comes with a certain list of things that you're required to do. Every single one of you's got a rank, right? And with those ranks, Jo mentioned the brown book as an example. There's roles and responsibilities that you must do in order to go ahead and pay back the institution that made you who you are today.

The first thing that I will say is you have to take those things seriously. When I was a first time command chief, and it just so happens that I have my former commander over here, then Colonel [inaudible 00:26:48]. He said something, I think it might have been day one sir, but he said, people have to understand that they call orders for a reason, not suggestions. And when you think about that and you think about the...

Oh, let me just ask a question here across the room. How many of you can recite the oath if I were to put you on the spot and come up here and say it? How many of you can sing your favorite song if it came on the radio right now? The majority of you. There's a matter of priorities in there. When you took that oath, regardless of what was it that you did or your reason for coming in, whether it was education, steady paycheck, just to get the hell out of town, just like me, all of that stuff went to the side because you made a promise to the American people and the Constitution of the United States. And we have to realize that with people's rights comes responsibility, and that responsibility is for every single one of us to make sure that we do not violate that oath from day one to the end of our days.

Our enemies don't have that. They do not have the force. And when people try to be like us and they take that mindset and that culture and that order spirit to the battlefield, great things happen. Again, point to Ukraine. Since 1993, we developed partnerships with them. In 1993, Milli Vanilli was still for real. So it's been a long, long time. But if you look at that fighting force today, in that short amount of time, they became lethal, proud, and effective because they wanted to be just like you.

We need to continue to capitalize on that, and we can give you all the training and all the education and all these other things, but the one thing that matters the most is how you feel inside about the task that you are carrying on every day, and how you speak to your peers and actually have the discussion with people inside and outside of the institution on what service means to you. If we maintain the fighting spirit, it doesn't matter who goes toe-to-toe with us because we're going to kick their ass. It's plain and simple.

Amy Hudson:

That was an excellent answer. Thank you.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Now I'll have some coffee.

Amy Hudson:

All right, so we're running out of time, but before we get to closing remarks, I want to try something a little bit different. This is going to be a lightning round. Each of you will get a question, and in five words or less, get an answer. Chief Towberman, we'll start with you. What does...

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

I've never used five words in my life.

Amy Hudson:

Super easy questions. What does a 2030 enlisted member look like to you?

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Smarter, better, more fulfilled Guardian.

Amy Hudson:

Nice job.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

This is hard.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Yeah, it's probably your idea.

Amy Hudson:

Chief Bass, what should every service member understand about the high-end fight?

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Our adversaries won't fight fair.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

That's good.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Can I do one more?

Amy Hudson:

Yes.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Airmen are our most competitive advantage.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Damn. You're cheating somehow.

Amy Hudson:

SEAC, what will roles and responsibilities look like in the future?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Five words, huh?

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

That's hard.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

That's three.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

You see, this is what happens when you have the glee club on that side, and the jocks on this side, he's about to get a wedgie. So the five words, roles and responsibilities the same as they've ever been. That doesn't change. Only the actual character of war, the nature of war will actually flex.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

What were the five words?

Amy Hudson:

That's a little bit more than five words.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Exactly. All right, next question.

Amy Hudson:

Chief Towberman, what's the biggest difference between service members when you first enlisted to the Guardians you're bringing in the service today?

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Better at everything except sports.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

We're not doing five anymore, are we?

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

I think we're still in five. I don't know.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Are we still doing five? This is hard.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Seems fair.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Yeah, five.

Amy Hudson:

Chief Bass, what does education and training look like in the future to meet joint requirements?

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Are we still doing five?

Amy Hudson:

Yes, ma'am.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Say that again.

Amy Hudson:

What does education and training look like in the future to meet joint requirements?

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Agile, technical... Can I phone a friend?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Intellectual.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Intellectual.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Discipline.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Discipline. You go.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Connected.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Connected. Ooh, that's good. Yeah, connected.

Amy Hudson:

SEAC, got an easy one for you. How do we beat the PRC?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Shoot them in the face. That Space Force finger thing works.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Why do I think that's going to be a headline?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

But if I may, can I elaborate just a little bit on that one?

Amy Hudson:

Yes please. I'll give you more than five words.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

You just made the one headline.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Well, so go ahead and repeat the questions for the audience.

Amy Hudson:

How do we beat the PRC?

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

PRC. What does PRC stand for? Now, are we fighting China or are we fighting a military? Is it the PLA that we're actually going to go toe-to-toe with? Are we going to go ahead and kill all Chinese because we're at war with them? Or are we going to go ahead and affect the rules of war and fight military to military? We start treading very dangerous ground when we generalize how we're going to carry on the lethal means of military power. Just a national power. But we have to be disciplined in the execution of. I recall many days in the global war on terror to where some of my peers would say, well, we got to go ahead and kill all Muslims. Now think about that for a second. That is a pretty hateful statement.

We were fighting extremist organizations. Now, if the war comes between us and China, we're going to be fighting the PLA. And any terrorist organizations respond from that. And we hope at some point, just like the Germans, just like the Japanese, that we come up with a diplomatic agreement to be able to cohabitate the world. It has proven in the past, but we have to be very, very careful about generalizing. And the last thing that I will say on that, because I say shoot him in the face, which is necessary a lot of times in combat, but remember that a warrior fights not because he or she hates what's in front of him, but because he or she loves what they left behind. And I love every single one of you.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you so much. So we're running out of time, unfortunately. I want to give you each an opportunity to kind of offer your closing remarks. Chief Towberman, we'll start with you.

CMSSF Roger A. Towberman:

Yeah, well, one more time. First, thanks. I mean, it is last day of the music festival, seven in the morning, and here you are filling up the chairs and we appreciate that. I know I speak for all of us. We are honored at this opportunity. And just to look out at, I guess a thousand people sitting here, it's just really fantastic that you would want to come and hear from us in the first place. So thanks, from the bottom of our heart.

We've talked all week about war fighting. We've talked all week about the future, and it's sitting in this room. We're all on short final, and we're doing everything we can till the day we hang it up to empty what's in our brain bucket into yours, and to give you all of everything that we have to give. At the end of the day, the future belongs to you, and you'll determine, you will write your own future. And I beg you to take full advantage of that opportunity, to grab it with both hands and invest yourself together with your teammates in that narrative, in that story that's unfolding. You really are the greatest advantage in the history of war fighting. Embrace that, know that, and do not accept that it's good

enough. Because tomorrow you need to be even better in the day after that, even better still. So thanks in advance for being part of your own story, and thanks from the bottom of my heart for being part of mine. I love y'all. I appreciate you.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you. Chief Bass.

CMSAF Joanne S. Bass:

Awesome. Hey, thanks for being part of the 1% that we talk about. Who serves, wears this uniform, wears our nation's cloth at some of the most complex times we've ever served in, period. Thanks for leading through these complex times. Leadership is easy when nothing's going on, but the true test of leadership is now. And what I share with our Airmen, when I spent time with them at basic training, or even our tech training is... I actually don't really care if you signed up for four years, six years, eight years, 28 years. I've shared with people broadly, I've signed up to do four quick years, get my GI bill and I was out. And so regardless of how long you serve, the expectation that we have is that you make your organization better, that you make your squadron better, that you make our Air Force better, you make your career feel better and that you move the ball.

So thank you for being part of the 1% who serves our great nation. Have fun while you're at it. If you're not having fun, something is wrong. Take care of one another. Your brothers and sisters on your right or left, take care of this great military family that we are all part of. And as I mentioned on Monday, also thank your family members and your loved ones for their support for you. It is truly because of them that you're able to dawn this uniform every single day and continue serving that. And that's for our civilian teammates as well. Thank you for serving.

Amy Hudson:

SEAC, close us out.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

Well, going back to Toby's comment. Our time on station is coming to an end. I myself, I'm a carton of milk. I'm about to expire in six months. But I do have full confidence that the Department of Defense is going to be in great hands, and a lot of it's because of what you do. But I will caution you of the inherent danger of individualism in an institution that requires teamwork to accomplish every single mission.

Each of us brings value to the organization, but that doesn't mean that it's got to become about us as individuals, and my wants versus organizational needs. Look at discipline, which is a foundation of everything that we do, and then look at what's going to happen here in the near future when the fight comes. We had those cadets here earlier on this morning, and I told them point blank. It's like, hey, this is not going to be my fight. I'm going to be sitting on some lazy boy looking at you taking this fight to the enemy, but I'm going to be grinning ear to ear because we knew and had confidence on your abilities to be able to carry on that fight.

When it comes to our families, they sacrifice far more than what any one of us do. So please give them the time and given the love and the care that they need to be able to go ahead and continue to support us. Because recruitment and rotation has two parts to the equation, the uniform member and those that live under the same household.

And then the last thing that I will say for the leadership and specifically AFA, thank you for creating forums like this to where a lot of us can come together and just have some good, honest, and candid

conversations about the way that we need to go ahead and move on to the future. And then to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, colleague, teammate and friend. Sir, thank you so much for leading us to this challenging times. I know that we have been taking our lickings left and right, but at the end of the day, a fight is a fight, and that's who we are. We're fighters. So thank you so much and really proud to serve alongside you.

Amy Hudson:

Thank you all so much for joining us today. This has been a really fun and motivating discussion. If you could please remain on the stage, we're going to do the Team of the Year award presentation.

SEAC Ramón "CZ" Colón-López:

All right.

Voiceover:

We now are honored to present the Etchberger Team of the Year award. Will Senior Master Sergeant Jacob Gerald, and members of the 9S100 Scientific Application Specialists career field please come forward.

40 years ago this year, the Air and Space Force's Association and the Office of the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force worked together to establish the Team of the Year program, now known as the Etchberger award. The purpose of this award is to recognize the superior performance of our enlisted force across the full spectrum of the Air Force's operations and missions. Often that recognition has been bestowed on a lesser known, yet very critical career field. Today, we are pleased that the tradition continues with recognition of the 9S100 Scientific Application Specialists career field. These Airmen led the way in solving intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance problems by instituting, validating, and certifying the DODs first and listed data analytics training pipeline across the Air Force with their superior technical expertise. The 9S100 Airman innovated multiple data quality review processes, synchronizing three disparate sampling systems, and increasing confidence across the 300 global sensors.

In addition, they also spearheaded support to the Ukraine crisis, expediting development capability to 24/7 operations and delivering near real time warnings of 350 events to national leaders and combatant commanders. Members integrated machine learning into workflows, thus increasing reportable sites fourfold covering 225 areas of interest, pushing a leading edge capability that autotagged 400,000 targets and saved 32,000 analyst hours per year. This reporting identifier continues to find innovative methods that advance capabilities.

The 9S100 Airmen dominate innovation to solve ISR problems through applied science, demonstrating the pinnacle of superior technical performance. These Airmen reflect great credit upon themselves in the United States Air Force. The United States Air Force is pleased to present the 2023 Richard L. Etchberger Team of the Year award to the 9S100 Scientific Application Specialist career field.