

A Fireside Chat with CMSAF JoAnne Bass

January 4, 2024

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, welcome to Air & Space Warfighters in Action. I'm Orville Wright, President and CEO of your Air & Space Forces Association. Thank you to everyone joining us online today as we talk with the 19th Chief Master Sergeant of our Air Force, Jo Bass. Jo, you crashed through a glass ceiling in August, 2020 when you became the first woman to serve as the Air Force's highest enlisted member. After nearly four years on the job, Chief Bass will soon retire, but not without leaving her mark on the service and more than 600,000 total force Airmen she represents and leads today, Chief Bass, it's an honor to have you with us here today and before we begin, allow me to also share a moment of special thanks to our sponsors listed on the screen. We are grateful for your continued support in making Warfighters in Action possible and so now we'll get started. Again, Chief, welcome.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Wonderful.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

We can't thank you enough in time and a busy schedule. We know as you just said this morning, you're going to run to the tape and this is an opportunity I think for you just to share with the audience and for you and I to talk a little bit about how you look back and I know how you would offer, we should all look forward from a terrific foundation you've left us. So what are the big rocks and policy initiatives you are working on to build irreversible momentum? And will you be able, do you think, to get them across the finish line before you leave your position? And my expectation is how will they carry over into Chief Flosi's, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force number twenty's time as he takes your seat?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yeah, so first off, Orville, happy New Year. Very excited to be here spending time with AFA. It's always a treat to spend some time with you and I certainly appreciate the things that y'all are doing. It is going to be a great year by the way. Even today waking up, I put my feet on the ground, I'm like, "It's going to be a great day and it's going to be a great year and certainly we're excited as Air Force senior leaders," big rocks. And by the way, we're not really talking about retirement yet. I tell people all the time, "I am going to be an Airman for life. It's just going to be serving in a different capacity." How do you do this for 31 years and then you never quite give it up. And so Airman for life. And so I've told my team, I said, "We're not talking about transition yet," but certainly it'll come very fast on the 8th of March by the way.

And I couldn't be more excited to pass the torch off to Chief Dave Flosi, who's just a great human being and a great American. But that said, thank you to you as well who have served over 50 years as an Airman and then still as an Airman in this capacity. So thanks for your service as well. So big rocks that I've been focused on, we've been pretty vocal in sharing the things that throughout the force of the things that matter to our service members and their families. And so I'm very focused on first and foremost the force of the future.

The challenges that we have today look different than the challenges that we had 30 years ago and the challenges that we had 70 years ago. And so we're very focused on how do we ensure that we have a

force today that is leading us into the force that we're going to need in the future? And that requires for us to have proper pay and compensation. If you look at today's pay and compensation model, if you will, specifically the pay chart, it really hasn't evolved since 1949 and so today, the Department of Defense and military were at large, we need a holistic look at today's military pay and compensation, especially because as we celebrated last year, 50 years of an all-volunteer force, that's huge. But we have to be focused on how do we ensure that we have a all-volunteer force in five years from now and 10 years from now.

So pay and compensation is one of those things. Nobody joins a military to get rich, but they have to be compensated appropriately. And when you look at today's force, especially the folks that wear stripes, you have the most educated, talented, brilliant enlisted force in history and that really does matter, the backbone of force. Healthcare is another thing that I'm very focused on. I am concerned about healthcare for those who wear uniform. I'm concerned about it for our family members, for our veterans, and so we've got to put some attention to that. I'll never forget, I'm a daughter of an army warrant officer and my dad told me years ago, "You never have to worry about healthcare. You just go to any hospital and you'll be good." Back then it was, Champus, now it's Tricare. And so we've got to make sure that we're taking care of today's service members from a pay and compensation, from a healthcare because all of those quality of life things. Child care, spouse, employment, all the things that matter to AFA as well, those are readiness impacts. And so we've got to take care of all of those quality of life, quality of service things so that our Airmen and our Guardians and so forth can take care of the mission of being America's Air Force.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

You bet. Well, great points and also obviously encourage all of us across your Air and Space Forces Association to engage at the local level, politics are local, and as we engage and help our elected officials stay informed absolutely in the realities of what our Airmen and our Guardians bring to a tough fight around the world.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yes, for sure.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, Chief, during your nearly three and a half years as our Chief master sergeant of the Air Force number 19, you've dealt with everything from a global pandemic to a refocus on the Indo-Pacific to rapid advancements in technology that can both aid our forces but also be stolen and used by our enemies.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yes.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

You've kept your focus on what it means to be an Airman of the future. How have you worked to, in your mind, or would offer for the future, to deliberately develop Airmen so that they can successfully tackle the challenges of today as well as look towards the future?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

So this is where I'm going to give a shout-out to some of our folks serving in AETC, right? We have done a lot of work over the last three and a half years focused on developing the force that we're going to need in the future. And we talk about it sometimes as the Airmen of 2030. Really it's just a force of the future. When we first got into the seat, we rolled out an enlisted force development action plan and just quick story there, some of you all have heard me share when I got in the seat, I asked, "What is our strategy to make sure that we can continue being the world's greatest Air Force, empowered by our Airmen?" And we didn't necessarily have codified a strategy. And so we rolled out the strategy, I shared it with General Brown at the time, our Chief of staff, and he said, "Chief, I love everything about it but the word strategy, because the strategy doesn't mean anything unless we apply some action."

And so we rolled out an Enlisted Force Development Action Plan, 28 objectives that really helped shape and inform how we were going to develop the force that we need. The first objective was, "Ensure every Airman understands what's at stake." And so that was really what we honed in on, making sure that what we teach in professional military education is focused on ensuring Airmen understand what's at stake. Challenging our command teams out there to make sure that our Airmen are receiving ops intel briefings to make sure that Airmen understand what's at stake. The majority of the force, depending on what career field you're in, may or may not ever get an ops intel briefing. As an aviator, you got that, that was part of your DNA. As an aviation resource manager for myself, I got ops intel briefings because I was always part of the OSS's, but if you are services or finance or whatever your career field is, you may have never gotten one.

And so our focus on the development of the force has been to ensure that every Airman understands what's at stake, and I can see that we have made an impact and made a difference. When I go out and have Airmen engagements across the globe, our Airmen are really asking thoughtful questions on what is their role on ensuring that our Air Force is ready for great power competition? And most of these, the engagements I have, the questions that I get that are thoughtful about, "How do I help prepare our Air Force for the challenges in the future," are coming from our E4s and below, and so they're ready for it. So we've worked really hard from a PME standpoint, from a what's being taught at basic training and technical training and all of the things in between, and really empowering and promoting our command teams to make sure that they're filling in the gap of experiences and our Airmen understand that the challenges we have today are very different than the past. And just one quick note on that, Orville, right? When I first joined our Air Force, we really had to be strong in three primary war-fighting domains: air, land and sea. That is not the case today. We've got to be good in air, land and sea, but we better be good in cyber information and space. And so that's what we've been focused on.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

It strikes me that as we look to the future, our Airmen, our enlisted force is pretty phenomenal in their levels of education.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

For sure.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

The Air and Space Forces Association, AFA initiated the 12 outstanding Airmen of the year competition and recognition. And as I've interacted over the years with those 12 outstanding Airmen, it seems to me every one of them has an undergraduate degree and many of them have master's degrees and they've

gotten those on their own time many times. So I don't know if you have the numbers, but I think we ought to point out the education level of our enlisted, including your own, by the way.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yeah, for sure. Over 30% of today's enlisted Airmen have a degree of some sort, but having a degree is one part, but the other piece is the certifications, the licensing, the training, the leadership development. I mean, again, the most educated, talented enlisted force in history, and I get to see it all the time. I tell people that I have the best job in the world, I wish I had a GoPro on me so that everybody could see what I see because today's Airmen are so clever, so innovative. We just need to set the conditions where we're giving them the challenges that we really do have.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

You bet. And worldwide, well, you can help us too a bit talking about Secretary Kendall's announcement for new five lines of effort aimed at re-optimizing the service for Great Power Competition, and we'll talk more about this by the way, 1215 February in Colorado at our Warfare Symposium, as we'll have Secretary Kendall on the stage as well as Chief Bass. What changes within how you understand Secretary Kendall's lines of effort? Can you focus on or share with us to see as the personnel part of those lines of effort? Because one of the lines of effort is all focused on personnel and you're the expert. We have the expert sitting here I think. So could you talk just a little bit about the personnel lines of effort that Secretary Kendall's continuing now to roll out?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I will, but if I can shape a little bit some of the re-optimization efforts, because I think it's important that everybody kind of understand the why, although many folks do. We've been talking about, we have to re-optimize our force to ensure that we are postured for great power competition, right? Secretary Kindler sent out a memo to the entire department of the Air Force in early September that said, "We are not optimized for great power competition," that ought to have made every Airman just pause for a minute and just really internalize, "My Air Force isn't postured or optimized for great power competition." You've heard when previously General Brown was in the seat, "We've got to accelerate change or we stand the chance of losing." You've heard me talk at AFA about what got us here will not get us there. And really everything again is alluding to we have to reorient to the threats that we have today which are different than in the past.

And so that means we have to modernize in all senses. And so we know the why based on the potential adversaries, near peer threats that we have. And I argue sometimes peer threats, but we have to reorient to make sure that our Air Force is postured for those things, so we know why. The question has been the what do we need to re-optimize, and then how? To some degree we understand what we need to re-optimize: our weapons systems, our people to have the mindset that we're going to need, the policies that we're going to have and how will be worked out. And so to that point, as I mentioned, one of my big rocks, the force of the future, the people piece, LOE-III, we are focused on how do we make sure that we have the Airmen and the Guardians that we're going to need that are optimized to be able to take on any challenge that might come their way?

And I would suggest to you that it's not going to be with old antiquated policies from when I came in. Those worked when I came in and they were good, but if we think we're going to onboard talent into today's Air Force with old processes, old policies, different ways, in agile ways of doing business, and that's probably not right, and so there is nothing that is off the table. We are looking at all things on how we onboard talent into our Air Force, how we retain the talent that we are going to need. We're looking

at different pathways to retain that talent. By the way, if I can offer the audience and use some new books, we're going to put some of them on my reading list as we roll that out later on this month. But as we study Generation Z, the generation that is serving in the workforce today and will be coming into our workforce, I often share that Gen Z is a most misunderstood generation.

People say, "This generation doesn't want to serve," but that's not true. They want to serve, they just want to serve in their own way. And so the department of the Air Force has to have pathways to allow that service. And so I think, teaser alert, you're going to see the different pathways that we think about how we retain technical expertise in our force and it's going to look different than it did 20 years ago and 30 years ago. We just have to think unconstrained in that way. Here's another one that I might, a vignette. If we have a cyber Airman who's serving with us and they've served for four honorable years and then they decide to get out and maybe they're going to go work in industry for four years and then they say, "Hey, I actually want to come back because I love wearing the uniform. So I've worked with industry for four years in the cyber field. I want to come back to the Air Force."

Today's policy would say, "Hey, yeah, you can come back. You'll come back as a senior Airman or a staff sergeant, whatever you were." That doesn't make sense because he just got experience for the last four years in industry, maybe whatever company. We ought to figure out ways to make sure that, again, how we manage the talent that we have on the bench is in a way that makes sense for this day and age we're serving in. So lots of people initiatives going on and lots of great Americans focused on how do we, again, cultivate the talent that we have in the Air Force.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, it strikes me, it's motivational. Your heart comes through loud and clear, prepare our Airmen so that they are fully able to defend this nation. In building off that, you've traveled to every combat command. So you've been in the joint fight, you've seen our Airmen and our Guardians in the joint fight from Middle East bases to Europe, certainly across the Indo-Pacific. I'm not sure if you traveled South America or not, but you've seen our Airmen all over the world and you've seen the demands for them not just to be in some sort of a traditional support role, but leading the fight in our JTACs, are a good example. Could you talk a little bit about our Airmen in the joint fight and what they bring to combat commanders around the world? You've been there and you're that tough Chief full of, with the candor really to say, "Here's how our Airmen are leading the joint fight and keeping the bad guys defensive."

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yeah, so a couple things. When it comes to, again, the US military, our enlisted force by and large is the most empowered, trusted force ever. Our Airmen are empowered and they are trusted. We get after mission command because we realize that we've got to understand commander's intent. We've got to, our commanders have to trust us and we've got to execute and the JTACs were a phenomenal example. What I'm also pretty proud of is how our Airmen are able to understand what they bring to the joint fight. By the way, we rolled out a thing called the Purple Book last year, and I was so proud of it. In fact, the combatant command SELs reached out to me and said, "We wish we had this in our service," but we created a Purple Book because we need every Airman to understand what their role is in the joint fight and how we deliver air power and whatever that means. And so if you haven't checked it out, Google, "The Purple Book" and see how we get after that, but our Airmen understand their roles. There is an insatiable demand for air and space, and so we've got to make sure that our Airmen are delivering what they need to that joint fight because we are not going to be able to fight without air power and air superiority.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Within that context, essentially having the Airmen with the skills, at the same time, every combatant command now facing unique unexpected threats, a war in the Ukraine. We're at war obviously in the Middle East in many ways. There is a capacity discussion here and in your own words, when you talk about the requirements, the growing requirements, I think, and I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, but the growing requirements, your Air and Space Forces Association president thinks we have for Airmen and Guardians around the world to meet combat commanding requirements.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yeah. To that point, I would say that I have a lot of faith and trust in our senior leaders and the commanders that we have in the field to make sure that we strike a perfect balance of being able to take care of the requirements that are asked of us from our combatant commanders, our warfighting tasks, and also maintain the number one job that we have to do, which is to defend our homeland. And so our senior leaders really do have that balance in mind, which really gets back after where we are focused as a department of the Air Force on re-optimization, we've got to be optimized to be able to cover down on our near-peer threats that we have. But oh, by the way, there's challenges across the globe and as an Air Force, we have to be focused on all of those things, again, in the name of our national defense.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah. Chief, would you like to talk about, you're a technologist.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I am? I don't think my kids would say that. "She doesn't know..."

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

By virtue of your history in the Air Force, I mean you started out with combat aircraft, which had their own technology, but...

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I'm going to go home and tell my family that, they're going to say, "We beg to differ. But..."

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

You've seen the technology, I guess, maybe a better way to say it, at work. It's one thing to really understand the bits and bytes and the technology, but how the technology is applied to the fight. So for industry from advanced technologies associated with targeting some more about that. Certainly you already talked about the cyberfight, artificial intelligence. I'll just kind of open that opportunity up for you to talk about how, and you've already said that our Airmen are technologists among all the services, we are a known technology force, if you will. Could you talk about the application as you've seen, and you've got a lot of experience, you've been in the meetings, that you might share with industry where you see technology opportunities for our air and space forces for air power?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

So what I would say, just for my seat, the technology's out there. We as a Department of Defense and Department of the Air Force have to figure out faster ways to be able to acquire the technology that we

need to be able to get it in the hands of our war fighters. That is on us. When it comes to artificial intelligence, we need to be able to do so in a way that is ethical and responsible, and we're going to have to have some set of parameters as we are in that age, if you will. And again, I have a whole lot of faith and trust in some of the people who are more in that space that we will get there appropriately. I would say that on the technology piece, as I think about opportunities that we have as a force and sometimes challenges as well, that opportunities grow from those challenges, one of the challenges that we have is being able to move at the speed of relevancy and be able to obtain the technology that we are going to need quicker and smarter.

One quick point on technology as I put on my second Air Force hat when I was in AETC, we have a lot of technology coming our ways as we were looking at how do we train the force that we need? And we have companies from everywhere showing us what they can offer to train our folks. We have to be smart and good stewards of America taxpayer money, and we probably have to do a good job of making sure that we're also sharing that stuff, sharing the technology broadly and scaling it across the force. Whatever we're doing from a technology piece and training and the training environment needs to be what we are also using operationally. And so that takes us breaking down silos so that we know what is going on across the force and just being really smart with that.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, it makes perfect sense. Well, shifting a bit, turning the clock back for a moment, and imagine yourself as a twenty-something a year old Airman, what advice would you have for that woman today as she looks towards a career, and we hope a long career like yours in our department of the Air Force?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I would give that 20-year-old Airman and any 20-year-old Airman the same advice that my mom gave me years ago, which is do your job and do it well. That doesn't matter if you're a young Airman basic, a lieutenant a GS6, or if you are a general officer or Chief master sergeant in the Air Force. Even as I came into this position, I remember telling myself, "Do my job and do it well." It matters. If I'm not, there was consequences to that. And so I would say that the other thing, advice I might give that 20-year-old is I have three pictures on my wall in the Pentagon. If you ever come in there, you'll see them. One is a picture of my dad enlisting me and it says, "Never forget where you came from." So I would say never forget where you came from.

The second is never forget why you do what you do, because there's going to be bumps in the road, tough times. And when you're experiencing that, you need to be able to just step back and say, "Why do I even do what I do?" And so I have a picture of Liz Jacobson up there for all the defenders out there. And then the third principle that I have is never quit learning. Always a learner. Part of my daily practice is learn something every day, and so I have a picture of the Barnes Center up there to remind myself, never quit learning. So those are some bits of advice I might give my 20-year-old self.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

In one of our Air and Space Warfighters in action previous sessions, episodes, we had the Project Athena leaders, the ladies with us, and really motivating, inspirational, informative in what our women in the Air Force and the Space Force are bringing to the fight. As I've shared with you, our daughter is an Air Force fighter pilot, do you think or could you share your perspectives on, are there constraints for at least certainly the opportunity to offer women combat roles, combat employment opportunities?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yeah. I think I'm really proud of our Air Force and what we've done in the past several years to make sure that every one of our Airmen, regardless of your gender, have opportunities to be able to serve in any career field. There's always going to be constraints, but what I've learned from my own experience is for me, when people ask me, "Hey, was it hard to break the glass ceiling?" What I share with them is what I've learned my constraints were and my glass ceiling was typically me and self-limiting beliefs that, "You can't do that." When I grew up, by the way, I know I look young, but 31 years ago, joining the Air Force, I didn't see a female Chief until I was a tech sergeant.

That was profound to me. So I didn't see other female leaders or people who looked like me. And so at that time as a young female Airman, I saw leaders like my husband or other male leaders, and that was my definition of what a strong leader was, so I couldn't see myself leading as a Chief. And so when I realized that, again, self-limiting beliefs can keep people from serving at their highest potential, we've got to knock that down. So the sky's the limit for people like your daughter, and I would offer your daughter as a fighter pilot is just something that she probably doesn't realize how many people she's motivating just by wearing that flight suit.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, we're proud of her, we're proud of all of our women who, as you've said, I've watched in my career, started out a few years back, the same evolution you've seen and what women have brought to the fight is an incredible level of professionalism. And honestly, sometimes I've seen some just ruthless warrior kind of approaches to the fight that we should not discount, kind of the Marvel Lion thing. I'll just say that because I'm old. Well, what more would you hope to accomplish in this job that you don't, clock goes too fast, what you haven't been able to get accomplished that you would've liked to have gotten done, gotten across the line?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Oh so many things.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

All of us. Yeah.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

There really is. So I came into this seat and I told my team, "By the way, I have a bias for action, so we got to get stuff done." So I have this things to get after list and I'm really proud of the work that we have done and we've done a lot of it and hopefully we'll have an opportunity at some point to just share some of the things that your Air Force has done in the past three and a half years, but there are some things still coming. We are finally getting in with the times and with this century in that today's enlisted Airmen will no longer have to take a number two pencil into the testing room for promotion testing because we're finally going to have digital WAPS testing. So, very excited for that. That'll roll out this year for all of our enlisted Airmen.

And it's funny, because most of their commanders had no idea. They're like, "They take a number two pencil in to go, promotion test?" So that change is coming. The other thing that my office plans on rolling out within the next several weeks is we're going to roll out and codify in writing some things that we hold dear in the enlisted force, and that is some of our traditions of how we value the NCO Corps and how we value our senior NCO. So NCO tier, senior NCO tier. Way back in the day, we used to go to NCO induction ceremonies. I don't know if you remember.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Absolutely.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I haven't been to one in a while. And that said, it is a big deal when you transition from senior Airmen to staff sergeant. It's a big deal becoming a non-commissioned officer in the military, and I know I felt like that when I made E5.

And so that said, we'll codify in writing some things that we believe are valuable traditions, even though everybody hears me say, "What got you here won't get you there," there are some traditions that we've got to hold near and dear and will codify in writing these: the NCO induction, the Senior NCO induction. The other thing that we will also codify in writing is the value of a change of responsibility. The Air Force typically hasn't done a lot of changes of responsibilities, our joint sister services do, and I think that we haven't capitalized on those opportunities. And so now we will roll that out and we will not be prescriptive in how you do it, but as a commander, if you want to recognize your senior enlisted leader at a group level, a squadron level, or however that might look to show and signify what it means to pass on that flag and the role that senior enlisted leader plays in that organization, I think that's a great opportunity to really highlight within the formation, "Here's your senior enlisted leader and here's what they do for you." So we'll codify some of those in writing before I get out to see.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

I think it's really important, Chief CZ, Colonel Lopez was here a few weeks ago and obviously in a lot of time in the Air Force, I could be biased, but both of you have been so phenomenal as senior enlisted leaders and in those particular, your changes of responsibility to note that we need to pay attention to the level of responsibility, the demands, the leadership demands that are now shifting and how much will depend on Chief Flosi as we depended on you.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I don't know if you know that myself and Suzy come from the same cloth, so we served together when I was a senior Airman and he was a staff sergeant way back in the 24 Special Tactics squadron. And so again, it's amazing what culture within an organization can do, culture that empowers your Airmen, the culture that we need throughout our Air Force. That unit has given us some of the best leaders I've ever seen.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

It's comradeship as throughout the history of Air Force, history of the military, and I know we share in reading loving military history, it's comradeship. It's that brotherhood, that sisterhood that wins spikes and wins wars. So, great story. Well, before we shift to the audience here for a few minutes for audience questions to close out, what advice will you give Chief master of the Air Force number 20 Dave Flosi when he succeeds you? And I'm sure you're talking already by the way.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

We are talking again, as I mentioned, good friends, what I've shared with Dave Flosi already is don't read the comments. Leadership can be tough and everybody loves to throw out advice and give feedback and some feedback's helpful, some is not. But you can't get caught up in the comments, right? You've got to talk to the people in the, you've got to be aware. I think that's goodness, but don't get caught up in the

comments, right? You've got to lead. Leadership is not a popularity contest. You've just got to... Leading, by the way, is easy when nothing's going on. That is not the case today. So I would say that. The other thing I would tell him is stay focused. Even as we sit here today, Orville, I looked real quick at my notes and I said, "Hey, I think the first question you asked me was on focus yours," and I think I was about to share with you books and then I forgot to talk about books, but if I can, right?

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Absolutely.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

What I'll also tell Dave Flosi is read every day, and he won't have time to read, but he's going to have to find five minutes, 10 minutes, or whatever it is. And so two books if I can offer that are going to be on my reading list. One already is in fact, is "Generation Z Unfiltered." So for all the audience members, all the parents out there of Gen Z or if you lead people in Gen Z, Gen Z Unfiltered is really a phenomenal book, but the one I'm getting ready to put on my reading list, because all of us have to understand the five generations that are serving in today's workforce, the one I'm putting on my reading list is profound in many ways, and it's written by a currently serving lieutenant in the Marine Corps, Matt Weiss, and he wrote the book, "We Don't Want YOU, Uncle Sam," like the title itself should just grab you, which it did for me. And so I find that I'm unable to put the book down. I stayed up way too late the other night just reading this book, and it's written by Gen Z-er for Gen Z to help us understand how we might get this generation to want to serve.

And that's whether it's in the military or serve public service, whatever it is, we've got to start to understand this. So "We Don't Want YOU, Uncle Sam," I'm not getting anything. I don't know the lieutenant who did it, but that lieutenant is helping to shape my mind to be, I think, a better leader.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, it's a great vector. Thank you. We're going to go to a couple of questions. I see one already from retired Chief Master Sergeant Dave Babcock. Dave Babcock is one of our chapter leaders at Right Pat. "When you alluded to allowing professionals to come back into the air or space force at a higher grade, which recognized their increased experience and knowledge, how do you shape or differentiate our ranks and pay structure, et cetera, as you go through that process?"

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Dave, was that Dave?

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Babcock.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

I wish you were here, Dave Babcock, because I'd want to pull that thread on really understanding that question. I think a couple things I'd offer as it relates to pay one, we have a 14th QRMC that is looking holistically at pay and compensation for today's force, and I think some of the work that they're doing and the studying that they're doing is what might that look like? From a service side, I think what we owe is doing some analytics, if you will, on if we're bringing people into the force that already have the training and the education and the experiences, what might that look like? If you grab somebody who's

28 years old and they already have all of the certifications in the skill that we're going to do, so we've got to give them some profession of arms training and skill sets, but do they come in as an E1 or E2 or E3?

I don't know. But that's what that LOE working group for people is really thinking about, right? This gets back to unconstrained thinking on how do we have policies and processes and practices in our force that just makes sense, that would attract service in the Air Force? And it can't necessarily be like it was with me, especially if you're grabbing a 28 or 29-year-old who comes to us with all the experience and skill sets that we need. We're going to have to have pathways for them to be able to come in a different way is I think what Dave's asking.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, I think that's exactly right. It sounds like obviously you have a very open view of this and the working groups are at work trying to expand those opportunities for experienced people to come either back into the Air Force or come to the Air Force for the first time. Are there timelines in your mind for those opportunities starting to unfold for a 28-year-old who has a master's degree and loves cyber but wants to serve the nation and deploy? What do you think is there, is it next year or is it 25?

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

So I don't know because we've got folks that are working on that right now. What I would say is if you want to serve our military, come on in, right? Come in and help be part of the solution of helping us figure out how we need to get after these people policies. But no, we will throw out some timelines. I think, by the way, in February at AFA, the intent is that our senior Air Force leaders, the secretary of the Air Force, the Chief of staff, they're going to share some of the reoptimization efforts that we have and I would anticipate that to that point, we'll start to have some timelines solidified.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Moving forward at a relatively rapid pace, it sounds like.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Oh, very fast.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Here's what I love about the senior leaders leading our department today. We're not staffing these things. It is, we've got, since the memo came out in September from the Secretary of the Air Force, we have got to take a hard look at how we are optimized for the threats that we have today. We're not staffing paperwork, like these are all real-time working groups of not just folks in the Pentagon, by the way, people throughout every major command, all stakeholders are all part of these working groups to really figure out some meaningful changes that the Department of the Air Force needs to make sure that we are postured appropriately and ready to take on any challenge that might come up.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, that's really, Chief, that's really helpful insight I think, for all of us, that accelerate change or lose continues. Obviously, new Chief staff of the Air Force, Dave Allvin said...

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Follow through.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Follow through, and clearly the momentum is there.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Yeah, for sure.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

So that's really encouraging. Well, we have another question from Patrick Mulligan. "Chief Bass, how do you see the relationship with the Civil Air Patrol developing as we in the Civil Air Patrol face shortages in our air resources, but a significant increase in the requests made of us by you recruiting the Civil Air Patrol increasingly important to our Air Force? And it's always about resources, not enough resources, but at the same time, your perspective and your leadership impact is its own resource." So a bit on the Civil air patrol.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Absolutely. So Patrick, I couldn't be a bigger fan of the Civil Air Patrol for many reasons. One, for being an auxiliary to the U.S Air Force so that we have more capacity and more resources available to our nation, but two, for the development that you provide to America's sons and daughters to just become better citizens, better followers, better leaders, better Americans. So hats off to civil air patrol for the work that you do in that space. And I'd encourage anybody who wants to serve in civil air patrol and be part of growing this generation, I think all of us need it. I think we need to make sure that we have more connective tissue, we've done a lot of work to do that at our Commander's conference last year after AFA, we encouraged every single one of our Wing Command teams to make sure that they know who their civil air patrol leaders are within their area.

And not just that, by the way, if I can just pivot, Patrick, a little bit. Civil Air Patrol's part of our whole of nation, whole of society efforts that we need, but our command teams need to be connected with Civil Air Patrol, they need to be connected with ROTC. They need to be connected with their recruiters, they need to be connected to their AFA chapters, their Air Force Sergeant's Association chapters, with their community leaders. The challenges that we have, by the way, as a nation are not Air Force challenges. It's a whole of nation, whole of society approach that we're going to need, industry partners like everybody who just wants to be a good American. And so that connective tissue, no more silos, but everybody understanding how we all get after national security is a fundamental must, and Civil Air Patrol is a great part of that. And thanks for the work that you all are doing, especially on the humanitarian front across the nation.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, thanks. Let's see if we can, Amy, if you want to try to give someone up voice or if we're still trying to do that. It looks like we have a question from Jayden Vicenzi. If not, I have a couple more questions. We can keep rolling here. Listening for Jayden. Sounds like that's not going to happen. Chief, we talked a

bit about what AFA chapters could do. We talked about our recruiting task force initiatives. My good friend Keith Reed, who leads the Air Force Sergeant Association and I collaborate constantly in that chapter presence, AFA and Air Force Sergeant's Association, chapter presence can really reinforce your fight, reinforce your leadership in many, many ways. Yours, Chief staff of the Air Force, certainly Secretary Kendall, some thoughts on what our chapters, in this case both AFA and Air Force Sergeant Association chapters, might do to ramp up their support, encourage a bit.

They will probably tell you they'd like to do more, they'd like more base access, they'd like to interact more with the leadership wings and now Space Force stations, deltas. You all gave me the opportunity to speak to the Wing Commanders conference in September. So we talked about some examples of chapters that really are very, very active with their Air Force leadership in big cities, major places where the presence of our bases is important for the economy of those cities. Rapid cities is going to start booming here with the B21 coming to town at Ellsworth. So please.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Again, a huge fan of what AFA does, what all of our professional organizations and support organizations do to help make our Air Force better, and so the encouragement really is to the installation command teams to help provide those opportunities for our Airmen and their families to be part of organizations like AFA. You know, I'll never forget it was 2013, 14 timeframe and sequestration was happening, and I was the 86 ops group Chief, by the way, and I know you were the commander at the 86 OG and sequestration hit. And what was interesting to me was everybody who during sequestration and when times were hard, and oh by the way, tuition assistance had to come to a stop because of tough decisions our senior leaders had to make because of sequestration that we didn't ask for, by the way, everybody wanted to join AFA and Air Force Sergeant's Association then because we're like, "We need somebody on the hill who's fighting for us." The reality is we're always going to need organizations like AFA to be helping to advance the messages that we need to decision-makers, whether it be on the hill or help the connective tissue with industry leaders. We're going to need organizations like AFA and that's where that whole of nation, whole of society approaches. And so we just have to make sure that we have the connective tissue there.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, you certainly define where our hearts are to give voice to our Airmen and Guardians, to support Airmen and Guardians and families. We have a number of initiatives to really focus on families and spouse opportunities across AFA, and I know Keith has done the same thing. As you've gotten to know our Air Force families, spouses, certainly, and children, the opportunities, challenges in many ways for good education, childcare. I just open up the opportunity for you to talk about what we need to do to talk about better, improved, needed support for our Air Force families.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

One of the things that the Air Force has been pretty vocal about, and I really appreciate our Air Force, is we've leaned forward quite a bit when it comes to child care and making sure that we have affordable and accessible child care throughout the force. Again, today's military family looks different than it did 30 years ago. You have more dual working parents, more dual military parents, more single parents. And so to that point, we've got to be able to, as a department, I think, figure out is child care a requirement or is it a nice to have? And so your help and support as AFA in highlighting the need for us as a department to make those determinations, and when I say department, I really mean DOD. We have to

think about what that model might look like. Our installation commanders, by the way, across the board, are doing phenomenal things to make sure that they're addressing at the local level.

Our child care capacity has increased over the last year, and I couldn't be more proud. We have less people on waiting lists and more FCC providers, which is really helpful, especially for Airmen doing 24/7. But we've got to, I think, take a look as a department on how do we increase the capacity even more so that our service members can focus on the mission and know that their children will be taken care of? And so support on the child care front, certainly on the hill, on making sure that we have the milk on and appropriations for child care, CDCs, youth centers, all of those things, really do matter.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Right. I think you make a great point. We talked early on today about compensation and pay, salaries for our Airmen and Guardians. In many cases, for an enlisted force, they need both incomes, whether it's two Airmen in uniform or an Airman and a spouse who's also working. Those two incomes are really important in many parts of the country and around the world where we serve. And so now that builds in an expected level of support from the Air Force for child care. It just makes sense. It's one big package in terms of how we take care of and compensate our Airmen and families. So I think that's a great point. Well, let's see from Dave Rosa, "Chief, when you meet with lawmakers later this month to discuss quality of life issues," we already started talking about this I think, "When you meet with lawmakers later this month to discuss quality of life issues, what are some of the key issues or takeaways you hope to flag for them?" And I think you just did a marvelous start of talking about one.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

No, I think that's good. I've learned that you have to communicate seven ways, seven times, right? Different... Pay and compensation, pay and compensation, right? Again, and this is, I need everybody to understand, nobody joins the military to get rich, right? At least I don't think so. But we can't be too far off when it comes to what is being offered on the economy today in America, right? I mean, you could look at, in fact, somebody sent me a In-N-Out Burger, not that I want to compare, right? We're talking the profession of arms, military service and In-N-Out Burger. But boy, In-N-Out Burger 20 years ago or 15 years ago, didn't offer things like healthcare and dental care and all those things. Today they do. So the compensation packages at Buc-ee's or In-N-Out Burger or Home Depot, all of these other organizations, they're offering compensation packages, which we're all competing for talent.

And so again, people join the military for many different reasons. We've got to figure out how to grab that talent and encourage service. I have a seventeen-year-old, still living at home, and I talk with her often on what is it that would make you inclined to serve? And so we've got to just look at service in a different way. And so we will talk a lot about pay and compensation on the hill, I hope. I hope that we talk about healthcare. We've made a promise to America's moms and dads that if your son or daughter joins the military, we will provide a roof over their head. We will feed them, we will take care of our national treasures. Because again, the things that we ask our service members to do, you can't compare that to Buc-ee's, Home Depot or In-N-Out Burger or whatever. This is a profession of arms. And so we hold this institution sacred. We've got to be able to take care of them, and that starts with pay and compensation, healthcare, child care, all of those things.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Just to drill down to that a bit, as I engaged recently with a couple of professional staffers, there's this idea that because we fund dining facilities, which are primarily for single Airmen, that somehow Airmen are not taking advantage of that opportunity in managing their pay. And I tried to make the point, and if

you would help me here, and I don't know what the percentages are, but while we have single Airmen that are taking advantage of terrific dining facilities, they're outstanding. There's this broader cohort of Airmen who are married and have children and that's a different construct. So I don't know how you'd approach that in numbers or not, but I think that it makes a compelling point to sort of dissuade or further inform, I guess, professional staffs that the compensation has to include how we take care of obviously our married members who may or may not, well, obviously a spouse, a non-military spouse is not going to be able to use the chow hall. So just simple things like that.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

So first, thank you for talking with staffers and sharing that because that gets back after highlighting today's modern military family looks different than it did years ago. When I joined, everybody ate at the dining facility. We used to call it a chow hall, by the way. But anyway, everybody-

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

I just did, sorry.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Everybody ate at the dining facility. There were more single Airmen. Today, there are more Airmen joining the military who are older, who are responsible, who have families. And so to that point, we have a younger junior enlisted for an officer force that has a family. And so this gets back after understanding the atmospheres of those who serve and making sure that we have all of the things set to be able to keep that talent.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, Chief, we've unfortunately come to the end of a wonderful hour. Most important for your Air & Space Forces Association and certainly for a Orville Wright, is the thank you, for your inspirational leadership, your encouragement, your sense of humor, which often is what we need to keep the bad guys defensive as much or more than anything else. And just your exemplary heart for our nation, and certainly for our Airmen and our families, Airmen and Guardians and families. So thank you. We'll get to see you again here in February 12 through 15 when we have our warfare symposium preparing for great power conflict. We've been coordinating closely with Secretary of the Air Force staff, as well as your own staffs and Chief B-9, general Saltzman, and obviously with General Allvin and Undersecretary Kristen Jones is going to be on the stage with us. So it's going to be a really very focused professional development event. The education's going to be there, and we'll build, continue to build a strong, strong partnership between the Department of the Air Force and industry to ensure that the taxpayer gets the most bang for the buck for their investment in those weapon systems that will keep us decisive at the merge. And so we're looking forward to seeing you again, and we just cannot thank you and ROM both and your family enough for what you've brought to the defense of our nation. God bless.

CMSAF JoAnne Bass:

Thank you, Orville. Hey, if I can just thank everybody here at AFA for the work that y'all do to help take care of the most important weapon system, which is our people. I very much appreciate that. To anybody who's even thinking about joining the Air Force, I'd say you belong on this winning team, so come on. Right? We're super excited about that. And to all of our Airmen, to all of our Guardians, to all of our service members and their loved ones, thanks for being part of the 1% and for defending this great nation. Thank you.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Thank you, ma'am. And with that, thank you audience, and I know we have a plan for the next Air & Space Warfighters in Action event. I will not be here after March, looking forward to retirement. But again, thank you all and certainly for Industries for supporting your Air & Space Forces Association and the Air & Space Warfighters in Action series. God bless.