

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force James Cody
Enlisted Perspective
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CMSAF Cody: It's a real pleasure for me to follow the Chief. I thought we squared this away in September and I got a whole day reprieve from when you got to brief and now here we are a year later after this and they put me right up after the Chief.

I think what I'll be presenting will certainly get a little bit in to some of the areas that the Chief talked to you about and talk about our Airmen.

But Mr. Chairman, General McKinley, General Newton, thanks as always for what AFA does for our Air Force, does for our Airmen and their families. We can't really thank you enough for your support, and certainly the industry partners that are here today and continue to partner with our Air Force and give us the things that we really need to do for air power around the world, I thank you also.

As you're thinking about preparing for one of these presentations, you look at kind of the theme of the symposium, so we have preserving the air power advantage. When you think about that...you can talk about all the things that the Chief talked about, the great capabilities that we have, the great capabilities that we're going to have in the future, and those are all absolutely necessary to have that advantage, but they won't do it alone. They just won't do it alone. We can have all that stuff, and to be honest, I think most of us can appreciate some of our adversaries will have that stuff too. They're developing it -- Not all of them, but some of them will.

What will give us the advantage is always going to be our Airmen. You heard the Chief talk about many stories and I'll share some with you. But when you talk about preserving it, I think it's important to kind of think about the legacy of where we come from. Those Airmen that kind of started it for us and those giants which we stand on the shoulders of every day.

I like to talk a little bit about Master Sergeant Ralph Bottriel. He goes back to the 1910, 1920 time frame. This is one of the first Airman, Army Air Corps. We're just getting into aviation now. Right? This guy's jumping out of them. He's the first Airman to jump out of an airplane with a parachute. He's actually wearing a parachute right now. The first Airman to do that in May 1990. That's a pioneer moment right there, giving us an advantage into the future.

You look at Chief Master Sergeant Edward Jolly. What an incredible Airman. I actually had the pleasure of meeting him a few months ago just as he retired from our Air Force for the

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second time. Thirty years as a Chief, almost another 30 years as an Airman, as a civilian working in our ISR Agency. He goes back to Vietnam as a cryptographic specialist, kind of that peripheral morphed into communications, operating specialist. He continued to serve as a mentor to shape our Air Force for nearly 60 years. Just a phenomenal Airman.

Chief Master Sergeant Dale Armwood there. Dale is just a phenomenal lady. She still resides down in San Antonio. She served 26 years in our Air Force. Came in in 1963. Comes in as a WAF and transitions into the force. The first ten years of her Air Force career she's a pharmacy specialist because we had very limited peripherals for our female Airmen coming in then. She goes to the Strategic Air Command NCO Academy at the ten year mark. That's a picture of her right after that. You can see that proud smile she has on there. Right? And I'll tell you why she has that look on her face when she told us her story, we got to chat with her about this. She goes to the Academy and they ask her to come on as an instructor. And to be honest, things going on in our Air Force she said I'm really not interested in doing that if you're hiring me because I'm an African-American. And the Commandant kind of explained to her, because she was a good student there and what not...He said no, that's not why we're hiring you. We already have an African-American instructor. We're hiring you because you're a woman. That's exactly what he said to her. But she took the position. She stepped up to it like great Airmen do, and before she ever taught her first class she was receiving critiques from students on how terrible of an instructor she was. She hadn't taught a class yet. She never stood in front of an Airman. But she loves to tell the story about how her professionalism and how she did her job overwhelmed that and overcame that and how they came to appreciate her and she really enjoyed her time as an Academy instructor. She turned and then became an MTI for a few years and really finished out her career as a superintendent down there at Lackland Air Force Base.

You kind of chuckle about it and realize that certainly isn't where we are today, right? We've evolved radically beyond that. But what a positive attitude she has. She still serves on the Airman Heritage Board today and is so proud to be an Airman to this very day.

Airman Hector Martinez. Another great Airman, part of our legacy, served for four years in the Air Force, from '70 to '74. He's an aerial port guy. I heard his story. It was reminiscent of World War II when you talk about the Navajo code talkers in the Marines. So he and four of his fellow Airmen that came from Texas actually had their own variation of Spanish that they spoke in their hometown, and his OIC caught onto that. They were

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talking about this and he couldn't figure out what they were saying. And they adopted it, that small unit adopted that to communicate with each other so that the Vietcong would not know their movements and activities. Again, adapting, innovating Airmen. That's the kind of legacy.

You heard General Welsh talk about Staff Sergeant David Thatcher and our Doolittle Raiders. It's going to be one of my greatest honors of my military career and of my life, spending this small period of time with Staff Sergeant Thatcher on the stage as we did his final toast. A tremendous story. Engineer, bomber, enlisted guy, crew 7 goes in there. They go on a mission, you all know the story. They end up crash landing after taking some fire on the beaches in Japan. He is the only crew member uninjured. He was knocked unconscious, but he comes through and he helps the entire crew to safety on the China side. What a tremendous legacy for us to know and understand. I really have to call out General Rand and the folks down at Air Education and Training Command, because they teach our Airmen about these great Airmen and the legacy that they're going to carry on as Airmen, as they transition as Airmen into our Air Force. But I think it's also important for all of us in this room to appreciate what are we -- Those shoulders we talk about, who are they? What do they mean to us? So I think if you start to know those people you start to want to step up just a little bit more to live up to their legacy.

We've got some great Airmen doing some great stuff. That legacy continues.

Look at this helicopter, this downed helicopter. It's a great story. The boss kind of teed it up for me really well when you talked about our ISR assets and I'll talk to you about some great Airmen and what they did and how they've adapted and how they respond and how the enemy just has no idea how really good we are.

So here we are. That helicopter goes down in Afghanistan. We have certainly some insurgents there and they're chatting on their radio about the fact that they saw this helicopter go down. Some rebels are claiming that they shot it down. We have an Airman at Fort Gordon who is monitoring the transmissions in that area and he hears this chatter going back and forth. He hears this chatter so he immediately reaches forward to Joint Base Langley/Eustis and Fort Meade and connects with others that are controlling ISR assets in that arena and we get situational awareness on what's going on within minutes, literally minutes.

So at the same time that we are coordinating, they are coordinating the combat search and rescue team to go in and take

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it. They're also coordinating to bring Special Operators in there and they take out those bad guys. And those bad guys had no idea that anybody was watching them, listening. They thought they just had the coup d'état, right? We're going to get these folks, we're going to get this helicopter. And what I thought was really powerful about that story and what really inspires me as I represent, as you heard, the enlisted force. That was a Senior Airman monitoring that chatter, that's been in our Air Force three years. Now do you really think three years earlier when his mom was saying get up, make your bed, make sure you get to school on time, that he would be saving those Airmen's lives in a combat zone? That he would have that situational awareness?

So we have all that great capability out there and we need the partnership of industry to develop that, to have that available to us, but if you don't have that Airman monitoring that platform, making the decisions. And those Airmen that he talked to at Langley/Eustis and Fort Meade? That's a staff sergeant and tech sergeant. They coordinated that whole effort. That's what we have going on in our Air Force every single day.

Let me tell you about another great hero. I had the real distinct honor, General Hogue and I did just recently to sit down with a few of our recent inductees into the Portraits of Courage, both the Secretary and Chief spent time with them also. And this is Master Sergeant Delorean Sheridan. I tell you, you listen to his story and you listen to the way he tells it, so matter of fact, and the whole time you're listening to each and every detail, you just need to step back and think did this really take place. But the scenario that took place last year is he's in Afghanistan, he's mounting up with his team mates, the Afghan National Police Corps, so they can go out on a mission. They're mounting up in their compound. Just as they're getting ready to go, kind of the typical thing when you're inside the compound, one of the Afghani National Police opens up fire 25 feet away from them on our Airmen, on our team mates.

At the same time it's a coordinated back, there's about 15 or 20 insurgents outside the compound that start firing on the compound and try to breach it. This is going down in split seconds. Delorean is getting his wits about him as his teammates are falling beside him. He immediately assesses he has got to take out this sniper, this enemy amongst them. He kind of tries to take them out with his M4. It's not working. He jumps into one of the Humvees, comes up through the turret with his M9 and he takes this guy out, while there are still bullets flying from around.

And amongst this whole activity he then backs out, tries to drag, assist his other teammates to remove the wounded and those that

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have already lost their life in action to a safe place while he's calling in for airlift to take out the wounded as well as back. This goes on for quite some time.

The end story in here is this hero and his teammates, they take out the bad guys. They gain control of the system, several lives were saved, 23 Airmen's lives were saved. The tragedy is we lost Airmen that day. A real tragic loss.

Then you see up there a general awarding him or pinning on the Silver Star. What a hero. What a legacy for Airmen to think about.

That's his family. He has five of his kids there, all adopted, and his wife Angela. They've been married six years. She kind of came into the family with four older children and since they've been married they've adopted two other children. Just a great family. We got to spend some time with her. What a phenomenal Airman she is as she supports him in what he does. She came into this knowing full up what his life was like. It wasn't something that kind of evolved. She came into it. She herself had a career as a correctional officer several years before she had put her career on hold to kind of support her Airman and our Air Force. So what a tremendous, tremendous legacy that we are creating with our Airmen today. It's important to preserve that.

More about those great, 22 of these great heroes in the Portraits of Courage, I really encourage you to read those stories. If they don't make you cry, if they don't make you cheer, you're just not reading the words for what they say and what these Airmen did. They are just that amazing. That's a representation of those 690,000-plus Airmen that the boss talked to you about. It really is this representation. There are so many more stories to be told.

There's another great Airman...this is Senior Airman Allison Glover, as her dad would call her, Allie. I'll tell you, I had the pleasure of spending about 30 minutes chatting with her. If you aren't fired up to be an Airman after talking to her, she's been in our Air Force two and a half years. She's a metal fabricator on B-52s. So she's working on airplanes clearly twice-plus the age of her. Came in our Air Force open, general, had no idea what she was going to do. They gave her this job. To be honest with you, even when they told her, she wasn't that excited about it. She didn't really understand what it was. It didn't sound like something she'd be excited about, but she got into it and she tells the story about how she used to work in the workshop with her dad. Her dad was a single parent, raised her and her older sister. Small town in Iowa. Not a lot of options

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available to her to do after high school. This is the kind of character that she came in with and then we built upon.

She said you know, Chief, my sister's going to college. My dad's working several jobs to kind of support and maintain the family. When it came to the end of high school, what am I going to do?

He said hey, if you want to go to school, I'll do whatever I have to do. I'll help you wherever I can. We'll make it happen. We'll do it. She, instead of having her dad kind of make that continued commitment said nope, I'm going to go in the Air Force. There's opportunity for me there. I want to serve. Her dad had done a couple of years in the Marine Corps, so there was a connection to the service. So she comes in, she gets this job. This is what's great about our Air Force family. She used this word over and over when I talked to her. She talks about the people she works with, the people that take care of her, the fun she has and the enjoyment she has every day, getting up for work. Getting grungy dirty trying to rebuild this old B-52 so we can keep that capability alive and available to our nation.

She's married to another Airman, a crew chief on B-52s. They've been married a couple of years. So what a great Air Force family. But I'll tell you, you can't talk to her for two seconds and not just get motivated and be an Airman. This is good. This is just that good. You can't get motivated any more than talking to her when she talks about the leadership she has around her and how well we take care of her. She talks about the mentorship she gets, the guidance. She's a Senior Airman going on two and a half years. That's a sharp Airman.

We have other Airmen doing things too to kind of keep us together. Both the Chief and I have had the pleasure with Mrs. Welsh and Athena to travel around over this last year and meet tens of thousands of Airmen and hear the stories that they have and see the things that they're doing to strengthen our Air Force. To make us a better Air Force.

This is a great venue that we were kind of exposed to down in Grand Forks. They call it "The Tunnel." We try to bring our Airmen together and understand some of the challenges we face, they kind of help each other gain strength as we move through those things. They've kind of created this no-frills approach to it and basically it's a series of rooms where a young Airman or old Airman or anybody comes in and they kind of dim the lights, sit down, and you can see, no frills, just stuff that they did themselves from articles they print. And each room has a theme. This room happened to be about bullying. There are others about sexual assault, alcohol abuse, domestic violence. What it is, it's an Airman in there that leads the discussion that has had

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that happen, has personal experience and exposure in [inaudible]. So they dim the lights to not make anybody uncomfortable and they tell the stories, and others share. Then they kind of bring up the lights and they kind of look at some of the stuff on the wall and further tell the story.

What's really powerful about this is it becomes real to everybody in the room. It was already real for the person telling the story. It becomes real for those that go through it. Some of them start to open up and share their stories. But to a person, the people that share their stories and the people that kind of open up, say it makes them stronger. It helps them move on and gain strength because they're connecting and working through these difficult challenges.

This is the type of stuff our Airmen are doing. This is no frills. There's no money here. This is a building that we are probably going to tear down eventually, it's just not being used right now. But our Airmen took it over, cleaned it up, and they're making a difference. They're making a difference for each other, for our community, creating resilience. It really is an amazing thing. It's something we can't forget about. It's our great strength. It is the advantage that we have.

So when you talk to preserving the air power advantage, there is just no way you can't talk about Airmen. You've got to have stuff, you've got to have it, got to invest in it. But if you don't have these Airmen, you just have stuff --

How do you preserve it, though? When I was here a year ago I talked a lot about how we care for our Airmen and families and how important that is.

We've had a turbulent year and we have some turbulent times ahead as an Air Force. It's very easy to get focused on the people being concerned with taking things away. We're losing that connection as an Air Force. We're not necessarily giving the focus or resources to taking care of our Airmen and family as we should because there are so many things being discussed it would seem more [complex]. And to be honest, we're doing a lot. We're just not talking about all the stuff we're doing. We've done a lot of stuff and we continue to do a lot of stuff and we will look to continue to build on those things. But it's important to know how we do take care of our Airmen and families and talk to them about it, because while they're hearing about the things we might not do or might change, they're not focusing on all the things that we are doing and that we're not going to change and that will never make [inaudible]. We have 58,000 of our family members' children being cared for in our child development centers. That is not a small commitment by our Air Force.

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That's a big commitment, to make sure that they're able to serve, that their readiness is there for the nation. That's just the facilities we have. We have expanded that through in-home care and robusting those programs to give options to our family members when they have to work extended hours, or those CDCs don't meet their needs.

We continue to focus in on the health and welfare of our families. We have reduced those that smoke in our Air Force significantly. We're at 14 percent, four percent below the national average of those that smoke. We used to be the leading average of that in the military. We used to issue cigarettes back in the day. So that does promote a healthy lifestyle and that doesn't come cheap. That's not free. That's an investment in our force, an investment in our Airmen and their families.

We have privatized housing to the tune of 53,000 new homes. We would still be living in legacy homes. That takes care of our Airmen and their families. It really does. Almost 650,000 youth programs for our families' children to be able to participate, building their resilience in sports activities. I mean we are committed to taking care of our Airmen and their families and we should not lose sight of the fact that we do invest in that and care for them in very meaningful ways. And I think we will continue to do that. It is where our strength comes from, it is how we're able to continue to serve over time.

So I don't say any of that to say okay, we're done, we're tapping out, we've kind of resourced in and we're not doing any more. We have to continue to evolve these programs. We have to look at which ones have the greatest effect on our Airmen and families as they evolve, how we look to care for them has to evolve, and we have to do that with a keen eye on resources, and I do believe we'll do that. It is important that we do that.

We're trying to communicate. We are really trying to communicate in a big way. You can see some of the things that we have been doing. You see the Chief's up there with Airman to Airman. We brought back roll call. We're doing Chief Chat. Any way we can communicate. And when I say communicate, that is distribute information to the force. How can we get the information out there? Things are moving so fast, so rapidly, there is a lot of turmoil, there is a lot of uncertainty. We're constantly trying to keep everybody informed of what's going on, and you're trying to do that in methods that those that are receiving want to receive it, correct? Despite how hard we try in this we still struggle to get the message out.

While I absolutely know every time we say something we know exactly what we say, I have no idea what you're hearing. Because

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it always turns out when we go to that end state of where that communication ended, it sounds a little bit different than maybe what we talked about when we first started talking about it. But we'll do better.

I think the bigger piece here is this, and this is where we have to continue to focus. So we can send all the information out that there is to send out, and if you really have time you can find a lot of information. This is the piece that we have to continue to focus on as we move forward as an Air Force as we work through these turbulent and challenging times. We have to connect with our Airmen. It has to be meaningful; it has to be [inaudible]. There has to be a level of respect and dignity amongst us, a level of caring. It is a bond that we'll work through all of the challenges; it is a strength that we'll work through all the challenges.

So when you see Airmen sitting down and spending time with each other, connecting, that's where our strength really comes together.

Communication is important. It's information. But the connection is what's going to hold us together, it really is.

We come from a pretty broad background. You think about diversity. You've got to think about where everybody comes from. The boss kind of talked in some of the stories about where our Airmen come from. So let me play this quick video and I'll close it up with that.

[Video shown].

We really really need to celebrate our Airmen and our Air Force every day. It's pretty easy to get sidetracked because a lot of things will pop up that represent a very small percentage of those that serve and put this uniform on every day and can take a tremendous amount of your focus.

Let me ask our Outstanding Airmen to stand up for just a minute so I can kind of point them out to you. When you talk about great Airmen, when you talk about a legacy --

[Applause].

This is what we're proud of. Our core values are the very foundation and I know the Secretary will talk about this more. But this is what we all relate to, at the very fabric and foundation of who we are, our Airmen. They represent us every day, and 99 percent of the people that put this uniform on every day represent that. Our civilian Airmen, our contractors, they

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live up to this every day. We can't lose sight of the fact of all that good work that our Airmen are doing. We just can't lose sight of that because it's those people that give our Air Force the advantage.

Thanks so much, I appreciate it.

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