

CMSgt Richard Parsons, ACC
CMSgt Brian Hornback, AFGSC
CMSgt James Hotaling, ANG
CMSgt Andy Kaiser, AMC
CMSgt Cameron Kirksey, AFR
CMSgt Bill Turner, AFSOC

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CMSgt Parsons: Thank you, sir. I appreciate the introduction.

Good afternoon. I am Chief Master Sergeant Rick Parsons from Air Combat Command. It's a great opportunity to be with you here today, and I look forward to the dialogue.

I'd just tell you I've been in the job almost two years, taking the senior enlisted position at ACC. Our real focus is all about readiness right now. As you understand, everybody's dealing with sequestration, but I'd tell you as we continue to move forward it's about capability versus capacity and maintaining a ready force. My motto is the best thing we can do for our Airmen and their families is to make sure they're ready so that they can go into combat and return home safely.

With that I'll turn it over to Chief Master Sergeant Brian Hornback.

CMSgt Hornback: I'm Chief Master Sergeant Brian Hornback from Air Force Global Strike Command.

On behalf of General Kowalski and the 28,000 professionals that provide nuclear deterrence and global strike operations 24x7 for the nation, we look forward to hearing from you and sharing some of our thoughts.

Much like ACC, we at Global Strike are focused on readiness. We've got forces around the world both supporting the current fight and doing some forward regional deterrence operations in the Pacific while maintaining a 24x7 alert force with our ICBMs. Part of that, to make sure those forces are ready is the resiliency piece. We have part of our force that's not often understood out there, and we have to continually try to talk that message out and work with, and they have a very demanding mission, a very unforgiving mission. So that's high on our scopes as we work it out through Air Force Global Strike Command.

With that, I'll hand it on to my National Guard partner, Chief James Hotaling.

CMSgt Hotaling: Thanks, Chief.

Good afternoon, on behalf of the over 91,000 enlisted members of your Air National Guard, I'm Jim Hotaling, the Command Chief for the ANG. We touch every one of the commands so it's a very interesting part of being in this component, one of three components of our Air Force.

I look forward to talking to you and answering all of your questions.

Our main three focus points are understanding the profession of arms -- making sure that we have, although our status may be different, our standards will always be the same in the Air National Guard; the health of our force; and then telling the story. We have a great story, being Airmen in our Air Force and we want to make sure that the public and the American citizens understand that.

CMSgt Kaiser: Good afternoon. I am Chief Andy Kaiser, the Command Chief for Air Mobility Command. I've been privileged to serve in this role for a little over two years now, and serving with General Paul Selva is just a joy.

We're very familiar with the three main mission sets within our Air Force -- global vigilance, global reach and global power. And of course when you think of global reach, that is -- I don't want to say that's Air Mobility Command because it's very fitting and proper that I'm sitting in between two wonderful colleagues of mine -- Chief Jim Hotaling and Chief Cameron Kirksey -- because we really are the mobility air forces. We cannot do what we do within the air mobility world were it not for our Reserve and Guard partners. So I'm really glad to be sandwiched between these two champions here.

When you look specifically within mobility air forces of course we do airlift, we do air refueling, so we have a connection to that global power as well. You don't have global power without air-to-air refueling capability. Then of course aeromedical evacuation. And in past years here at AFA you have heard just amazing stories of aeromedical crews, and if you see some wounded warriors in your midst today, they were probably touched by an aeromedical evacuation crew. So we take great pride in the opportunity to serve America and to serve our fellow Airmen within the mobility air forces.

CMSgt Kirksey: I'm Chief Cameron Kirksey, Air Force Reserve Command Command Chief. I've been on the job for about three months now so I'm still drinking through a fire hose. But on

behalf of Lieutenant General Jackson, the 70,000 men and women of the Air Force Reserve Command and over 56,000 enlisted, we bring a certain dynamic, distinct warfighting capability to all of the commands in our Air Force.

Just as Chief Hotaling stated, we're out there in every MAJCOM, we train to the same standards. And we're here to provide each MAJCOM with the capability, the surge capability that we definitely need to carry our fight forward.

CMSgt Turner: He everyone, thanks for coming out today. I'm Chief Bill Turner from Air Force Special Operations Command. My boss is here so I won't say anything on his behalf because he may kick me out of here, but he's got a question or four for us. But thanks to all you guys for coming out here.

We appreciate it. Chief Athena Cody is back there with us too. So we'll get some great questions.

Our mission is to find the enemy, fix the enemy, and finish the enemy. Wherever they are. We do that in every combatant command across the globe. We do it with small teams. We are the smallest major command with 18,000 folks, but they are lethal.

With that, we'll take your questions.

Moderator: I'm not seeing exactly a plethora of questions here, but let me start off, high in everybody's mind is the sequester and how that's impacting the force. What do you see down on the flight line and in the trenches regarding how folks understand, their level of understanding about why the Air Force is forced to take some of the steps that we have, about the furloughs, about people going non-mission-ready. If each of you could kind of address how that has impacted your particular command. And talk the morale issue if you would, as well.

CMSgt Parsons: Yes, sir. I think as senior leaders it's a little tougher for us because we see the things we want to do for our force and the things we've done for our force in the past, but to be honest with you, at the tactical level as you walk the flight line for myself and obviously my colleagues will speak from their view, but most of our Airmen understand that they have a mission to do and they have a purpose and they understand that their purpose is very important to the national security of our nation. So for the most part at the grassroots level they still have a lot to do and they're very busy and focused on the mission at hand.

I will tell you that we've had to turn off some of our training courses. We've had to cut back on some of our FTU and some of that production. I think those are the areas where they start to understand the impact and the unknown is starting to cause some fear and trepidation among them in the sense that where will we be in the future? Will I have the opportunity to get the same training that my peers before me had the opportunity to get? My challenge to them is, the answer will probably be no. But how do we overcome that now?

Because we're a great force and we're great Airmen and very innovative, they're already starting to go down that path. They're creating local training procedures, local training postures, and they're trying to overcome some of the formal training that's been used with some local training operations.

I know there's a lot more to say on that topic, but I think my colleagues will probably touch on further details.

CMSgt Hornback: For Global Strike it was a little confusion, I would say, at the grassroots level. We saw our partners in the Combat Air Forces standing down organizations, standing down flying organizations, but yet the nuclear deterrence operation was still one hundred percent funded. So the nation and our Air Force put its money where its mouth was as far as nuclear operations.

But as you kind of move through the different echelons, some of the commanders were working through some significant challenges with O&M, and what it has done is opened up a clearer dialogue for our Airmen to actually do some of those innovations that Chief Parsons was talking about. How can they make their unit better? Challenge some of the old norms out there of what we've done, what we've always done, and start looking into the guidance and regulation that drives that.

Is it written in law, in stone? Did this come down from the mountain written in stone or is this something we can change to get better, get cheaper, be more effective while being efficient? We are seeing a lot of innovations coming out from our Airmen at the lowest levels. It's just an outstanding thing. When you think about Airmen today, and you wonder if they're on that same strategic level of thought process, it makes me proud to say they are. They understand their role and they're contributing to the outcome of the mission as far as saying we can actually afford to not do this.

CMSgt Hotaling: I think one of the most important things that we faced is making sure that we tell the truth to our Airmen. We

need to make sure that we do not create false hope in what's going on. They appreciate the truth. So we've just worked very hard to make that strategic communications message all the way down.

Chief Parsons is spot on. We need to make sure that the folks that are out on the flight line, they can only handle what's in their sphere of influence which is really doing their job. That's what we want to focus them on. Concentrate on their job, be the best Airmen that you can be. But at the same time, communicate with them. Be very open and up front to where our Air Force is and our nation is today. They appreciate the truth. So we focus a little bit on that.

In the Air National Guard of course we have a unique circumstance with our technician force which is almost half of the full-time force. With the furloughs, we had to work through that because our technician force, they wear the uniform every day. They feel that was a breach of trust with the military and the nation that they were furloughed for those days. It was communicating to them that this wasn't an Air Force problem, that this was a national problem that caused this furlough. So that was our biggest struggle was just strategically communicating the furlough issue.

CMSgt Kaiser: Really good points by my colleagues up to this point. Within Air Mobility Command and again when you hear AMC you really think mobility air forces. I can't emphasize that enough. But we did see a reduction in our flying hours. More sim time as opposed to actual cockpit time. Not Draconian, but it was noticeable. Thank goodness for the technology and the capability that our simulators bring today. And in the future we see more sim time but more additional capability, trying to do a better job -- not that we're doing a horrible job now -- but trying to increase the capability of networking different sims together in different locations, all flying the same mission yet carrying out a lot of different training requirements. I think that trend is going to continue and it's a smart way to go on that, so it's a very innovative thing.

We are fortunate within the MAF that when you look at the number of takeoffs and landings within a mobility aircraft today, it's been reduced. I'd say the batting average today is probably somewhere between 650 and 700 takeoffs and landings for mobility aircraft around the world. That is down from about 900 to 950 that we had at the peak of the surge period in Afghanistan just a few years ago, so the timing helped us in that regard.

When you look at morale, again, significant impact on our civilian Airmen, and we do believe that they are Airmen as well. When you take away days from them, in essence unpaid leave, significant impact there. We just really hope and pray we don't see a revisit of that in the future.

We do see our enlisted airmen kind of wondering what does the future bring? Whether it be, we're hearing things about possible changes to retirement programs and what other types of personnel policies that are in place today that might change in the future? So that's always looming in the back of Airmen's minds as well. But you know, we continue to see them taking great pride and innovations. Every time General Selva and I go out and do a base visit somewhere, typically we will be in some type of phase dock or some industrial work area and we're being briefed on the number of man hours, the number of reduction of days that it has taken to keep a plane, go through a maintenance cycle and get it back out on the line. So that innovation that we pride ourselves in as Airmen, we see that continuing. That's very important.

I think the important point from an enlisted perspective here is that as we go forward and we're going to have Continuing Resolution, sequester, all this stuff, there will always be a place -- I think we would be unanimous here in saying there will always be a place for an enlisted Airman in our Air Force who is an exceptional performer, a sharp Airman who was willing to do whatever, wherever and whenever. That might be in their core AFSC or it might be in another AFSC or it might be in some special duty. We will always have room for that type of Airman.

So if we have Airmen who are not willing to do those, well, who knows? Their future is tenuous I believe.

CMSgt Kirksey: From the part-time force from Reserve Command I echo Chief Hotaling's sentiments exactly. Understanding that from the part time force we don't go through the PCS cycles as often, every two to three years. Typically we have members that have been around 20, 25-plus years. When you have to tell a guy or gal that works right next to you that hey, you're going to take a 20 percent pay reduction, that hurts and you feel for those guys. And to Chief Hornback's standpoint, we find a way to overcome. We always do. We always have. The thing about it is, when you don't communicate that message. You leave it to their devices to figure it out. In large part they're going to do it. They're going to get the job done. But it's our job as senior leaders to make sure that hey guys, calm the waters, we're going to give you the news just as we know it. Better days are going to come. But we're all going to go through this together. From

a leadership perspective it's our job to make sure that we're out front leading that message.

So from the Reserve Command it is definitely heartfelt. Our men and women that keep the light on for us 28 days a month, it's an impact. And where some of those guys and gals have the opportunity to kind of convert statuses, if you will, from a Reserve technician and use the military for their backup, a lot of our civilian brothers and sisters can't do that. So again, this is where the family concept comes in to where we have to reach out and put our arms around them and make sure that we're taking care of our own as well.

CMSgt Turner: For our part in AFSOC, we've got, at the tactical level, at the point of impact where Airmen are out on the flight line turning wrenches, launching aircraft, and the air crew in the back executing the mission, the Battlefield Airmen out on the battlefield, nothing has changed for us. Nothing has changed in the previous two or three decades. They're still out there getting after the mission. But what people don't understand is, we're an Air Force major command, AFSOC is, and we report to the Air Staff through administrative processes. But operationally we have a different boss and that's the United States Special Operations Command. We're the air component to that command.

Our flying hours are all paid for through SOCOM, but we are impacted by sequestration just the same as everyone else is through running the base. We've got Canon Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field that we have to manage and run, and we run that through a very small portfolio of dollars from the Air Force. We're less than one percent of the Air Force's budget and we try to manage two bases and run a range with those dollars. So there is going to be impact. There will be significant impact to family programs, to Airmen programs, to the installation, how we run the installation, there will be impacts there. But at the macro level, strategically, we will use this and leverage this as an opportunity to take a look at everything we've got, one to end, and make sure that we're aligned correctly to execute the mission that we've been tasked to do. So we will leverage this opportunity and use it to our advantage to produce as much combat capability as we can for the combatant commands.

Moderator: One short follow-up on the sequester issue specifically having to do with the furloughs and probably the Guard and Reserves are most highly impacted by this.

My understanding is for example at the depots they found that rather than trying to peanut butter spread the cuts or the furloughs across the work week that they would just stand down

the logistics center for a day and then be at full production for the rest of it. How did that work on the flight line and in the normal wings? Did you peanut butter spread it or did you lump them?

CMSgt Hotaling: Each commander was allowed to do what he does best, which is command. So I really can't speak as a whole for the Air National Guard because each organization actually handled it differently. But it was more a peanut butter spread I would say than just a pure stand-down. That way we were able to keep the mission flying at all times.

CMSGT Kirksey: I echo that same message from the Reserve Command. We offered the opportunity for one of two days so we could kind of plan accordingly and base our staff on the offset of the other day.

Overall, we did lose some productivity, no doubt about it, but the efficiencies that we're seeing as a result of that, I'm not so sure that's a good thing or a bad thing, because at the end of the day that may work against us. But we did use those two days to make sure that we were actually getting the mission critical assets out on the flight line up and ready to go.

Moderator: I've got a personnel question here, a professional development question. How do you feel we're doing with the new development special duty selection process? What potential issues do you foresee? Good and bad. There's a follow-on here about what's the intent and key elements of the new in development EPR? How has that changed the enlisted promotion system?

CMSGT Turner: Those are multiple questions. And they're hard questions. I'll talk to the first part and I think we'll all kind of weigh in on this.

Developmental special duties. You guys have all seen it, right? Every career field's going to be hit with a bogey or a quota that they're going to have to pony up to these ten different Air Force specialties. At the end of the day this is the first iteration, we're just moving through this first iteration and there are going to be hiccups and speed bumps. Everybody knows that.

The first time you do something if you try to grade yourself at an A you're going to fail, so you've got to get somewhere in the middle. So we'll get to the C-C+ range, my boss likes to use this analogy all the time. And then we're going to work ourselves to an A. We're going to get better as this iteration moves forward.

For the initial launch, and what we're trying to do is to improve the leadership capability of the Airmen who are out there executing at the point of impact that are leading Airmen. So at BMT, so MTIs, recruiters, different special duties. There are ten of them and they're all listed out and you can look at them, but at the end of the day we're trying to improve the leadership capacity and capability of our Airmen who are out there who we ask so much of. We're going to get better as time goes on, so we're not going to get it exactly right this first initial go at it, so be patient with us and help us out and help us improve the process.

But at the end of the day this is going to strengthen and bolster our Air Force for the better.

CMSGT Kirksey: For the Reserve Command we've always been the supporter. Not saying we're going to take the lead as far as DSD policies, but we're definitely going to execute as well as our active duty brothers and sisters. We definitely want to see the play book so that we can understand how we complement best. From the Reserves, we're actually looking at different applications of that, trying to jump out in front of it, if you will, making sure that we're supplying the best product from the field perspective.

I think it's going to do wonders for our Airmen based on our enlisted population. They're better than I was when I came in. We owe them that. So when we start kind of raising the bar, promoting only the best of the best, I think we'll have a stronger force for it.

CMSGT Kaiser: I'm going to do a little group participation. It's real easy. Would you please repeat after me. Airmen first; specialists second. That's the key for developmental special duty right there.

There are, you take Airmen, and some of them think of themselves as Airmen. I think a lot more Airmen think of themselves as, fill in whatever AFSC that they do. So what we are asking Airmen to do, not fill in your AFSC, is to fill a critical need within our Air Force when it comes to special duty. If it really is a special duty, if that word special really means something, then maybe we ought to man that particular special duty to a manning level commensurate with that title, special duty.

So there are ten eight series special duty indicators, plus many many more T prefix, tech school instructor positions, across all AFSCs, literally in the thousands, that we are going to be asking Airmen to fill. So we have asked commanders, beginning at

squadron commander all the way up, vetted through ultimately us, our MAJCOM Command Chief offices, to identify the absolute best of the best Airmen, not technicians, Airmen to fill these critically needed special duties. I'll just give an example.

For many years the first sergeant special duty has been somewhere between 80 to 90 percent manned. So when's the last time we had commander billets manned at 80 percent? Yeah, that doesn't happen, right? So we believe, and this is just one example. We believe, in this case for a first sergeant, if it's really that important then maybe we should, if there's an existing 8F billet, maybe we should man it at 100 percent. That's what we're doing for developmental special duties.

So we're going to be asking literally thousands of Airmen to step out of perhaps their comfort zone in their core AFSC for a number of years and to fulfill these special duties, and it will be an honor to be nominated. I think it's important to remember that probably the majority of Airmen who are nominated probably will not actually be selected because of the formula that we're using, we're actually asking for many more Airmen to be nominated to establish a really good bull pen of eligible Airmen than we will actually ask to serve in that particular special duty, at least initially. But it will be an honor for an Airman, at least that should be their reaction, that wow, I've been nominated for this particular type of developmental special duty.

So if they do actually get selected for that assignment, they fulfill that special duty, they do an extremely great job, then they return back to their core AFSC a much better Airman. That's the key here.

Sir, you had mentioned the enlisted evaluation system. It's really pre-decisional on where we're at on that. Suffice it to say that we do anticipate some, I'll say significant changes if what we have proposed actually gets approved to the enlisted evaluation system. More to come on that. Thank you.

CMSGT Hotaling: In the Air National Guard the assignment system is completely different than the other components. What I concentrate on really is the first D in this DSD, and it's developmental. To make sure, what I promised Chief Cody is that on the Air National Guard we'll create the policy for those developmental special duty positions to be the same in the Air National Guard and it's the art of managing a stagnant organization. That's what you have in the Air National Guard. So that will be the focus.

We've got about eight out of the ten of the AFSCs in the Air National Guard and we will use those for developmental leadership opportunities. That will be the focus for us.

CMSGT Hornback: I'm pretty good at quotes but not at who said them. So don't kill me on this, but to be good is to change; to be outstanding is to change often.

We've hit a point in our Air Force where I've heard senior leaders for all, as long as I can go back and remember, that have said the assignment system doesn't work. So if we're going to tilt at a windmill, we're going to start taking chips off that corner, that's where we start.

We've said these certain duties are important. We said they're special. But we have had an assignment system and functional management that has blocked that. For any change to really take effect, it has to be significant and sometimes emotional and violent, so that's where we're going with this. And when those things happen, glass is broken and there are some unintended's that come. We'll get through it. We will always do, we'll figure it out.

But at the end of the day if we say something's special, then we have to treat it as such. We identified ten areas where Airmen lead Airmen, touch Airmen, mentor Airmen, and develop that next level of leadership. So we have to treat that differently. Once we get through this we'll make some other changes. Then we'll start to address maybe the bigger stuff, the assignment process. The functional management of our Air Force. Because at the end of the day we have a great assignment system for about 685,000 people. As we get smaller as an active duty force we're going to have to change it. It's going to have to change. And you don't eat an elephant in one bite, you eat at one bite at a time to get there. That's what we're starting to do. This is what we're going to tilt at for a while, and it's going to be rough, but at the end of the day it's going to be right for our Air Force because we are one thing we can be very sure in our Air Force. We are the first to change. We're innovative and we will change very quickly and we come out better on the back side every time.

The same thing with this enlisted evaluation system. Is it going to be emotional? You bet. Is there going to be some change? You bet. Is it going to be different? For a little while. Hopefully we get it right. But you know what? We'll change it again. We'll change it again. We will evolve as our Airmen evolve. That's what we do.

CMSGT Parsons: I'd just wrap up, they said pretty much everything I'd say. I'd just, the word developmental is a big deal here. I understand that in these jobs if we pick you we are developing you, but that's not where you need to focus. Developmental special duties is about who we select to develop our future leaders.

So when we look out there and we screen you and put you on a list, you need to understand what we're saying. We're saying that we are banking our future leaders on you, and we've picked you to build our future. That's why DSD is the right thing to do.

It's also about opportunity. I would tell you most of us in this room with that extra star, most were like me. I'm not real sure that I'm the guy you want doing that. I'm not -- Someone walked in and said guess what, I put you on the list. And we thought, well surely I won't get hired, it will be okay. Then we got hired. Then we realized that there's a great big Air Force out there that we had no idea existed and we learned that it was the best thing we could have ever done and we could have experienced. That is what's going to happen to our Airmen that get out here and do these DSDs.

As far as the evaluation system, get ready. We can't really get into the details because we don't know what it's going to look like on the other end. It's very premature. But I will promise you this. It has the potential to be the biggest single change we've ever had in the enlisted corps since back when the Chief was running things.

Moderator: Actually that's a good segue into the next question. Any time we get this level of experience in one panel I think a lot of folks are interested in what you personally see as the most significant steps in your personal and professional development that helped you deal with the challenges that you have as a Command Chief Master Sergeant.

CMSgt Turner: The things you have to do is you have to avail yourself to opportunity. The right people around you.

When I was at the squadron level people always came in and said hey, what's next for me? How are you going to take care of me? How are you going to develop me?

Here's what you need to do. Take care of your people; you take care of the Airmen that I've entrusted you with; and then we'll watch you and we will continue to groom, mentor and develop you into the leader that we need you to be; and opportunities will

come your way. You just have to avail yourself to those opportunities.

And you're going to learn along the way. You don't go into any new job with all the knowledge that you need to execute smoothly. You're going to learn along the way. It's called what? Experience, right? You gain experience through trials and tribulations. And you don't always get it right. But what you can hope for is at the end of the day, and I know hope's not a strategy. Brian will tell you that. But you want to hope that you don't leave any broken glass or damage any Airmen along the way. So if your heart is in the right place and your passion is purposeful, you will be fine. Trust me. You just have to step out on the ledge and your team will be there to help lift you up and move you along.

You have to have faith in your leadership that they're doing the right thing and avail yourself to opportunity.

CMSGT Kirksey: I'll start out by saying two words. Servant leadership. Each one of us in this room throughout the Air Force at every level are leaders within our own right. The thing about leaders is that you don't know it. If someone has to walk up to you and tell you oh, by the way, you're the leader, how do we know that? Have you been tested?

Servant leadership is simply at the level you are, taking care of others.

To be successful as a leader you have to step out. There's an analogy and I'm not, like Chief Hornback, I'm not one of the guys who can remember it, but back in the good old days, as we once phrased it, there was a phrase about a turtle. A turtle will never move forward unless he sticks his neck out. That's been my life-long phrase forever about taking care of others. Servant leadership and not being afraid to step out.

CMSGT Kaiser: Great words of wisdom. I think I'm living proof of the old adage that a broken clock is right twice a day, and so things happen. [Laughter].

I think when I look back early in my role as a command chief back at the wing level when I was selected to first serve at the wing level, the wing commander who nominated me for command chief possibilities said, Andy, just be yourself. And I think that's a good adage to live by.

Let me caveat that, though. Don't ever quite be satisfied with yourself. Always stay hungry. Always have a thirst for

continuing to improve as a person, as a spouse if you're married, as a parent if you have children, as an Airman, and then as a whatever rank that you are in whatever role that you currently have or that you're moving into. Never quite be satisfied. Don't ever think that you have arrived. Always ask yourself and ask those that you hold in close counsel, what are some things that you see, it kind of gets to that 360 review that we're starting to bring on-line which I think is very valuable. What are some things that you see in me that could be enhanced? What are some things that maybe I need to stop doing? What are some things I need to start doing? Those types of things. But never making it about yourself.

So there's that tension there. You want to improve as a person in all those roles -- as an Airman, as a Chief, whatever. But I think the way you do that is you never make yourself the predominant focus of your activities. It is always, just as my fellow Chiefs have said, it is always about others.

So when the team improves, when you're doing everything that you can to help maximize their potential, then I believe that you're going to be successful because you're part of the ride at that point.

CMSGT Hotaling: For the Airmen out here I say one of the professional development notes that you should take down, and it's a common theme that we've been talking about so far. There's a great book by John Maxwell called 360 Degree Leadership. When you read that it's what we've all been talking about. You can make a change no matter where you sit. No matter where you sit, you are powerful. And you're a great American Airman. We all are in this room. So that book kind of talks you through a lot of that stuff. That's a great thing for your professional development.

For myself, one of the greatest quotes that I tell people about now was produced by my current boss, Lieutenant General Clarke. He told me once, never say no to yourself. Never say no to yourself. Make someone else say no if they have to. But you should always believe in who you are. You should be proud of what you've done. Let your actions speak for you. Never say no to yourself. I just think that's great words of wisdom.

CMSGT Hornback: One of the challenges that I think you face a lot of times as a human, let alone a human wearing the cloth of the country, is saying yes. If you're a parent or if you have parents, what's the number one thing they always say, it's the easiest thing that comes off our lips, it's no. And oftentimes we limit ourselves because that's the easiest thing. Yes comes

CMSAF Forum - AFA - 9/16/13

with something of me on the other side of it. I have to commit once I say yes.

What always amazes me, and I work through that as I move through the Command Chief realm, is selling people on the yes.

We all said yes when we started this journey and we were unsure of what on the other side of yes meant. When we raised our hands and took either the oath of office or the oath of enlistment there was an expectation that none of us were 100 percent sure of, but we were sure excited to say yes.

That seems to change over time, so that's one challenge that I face as a Command Chief, is selling people that it's okay to say yes. It is okay to say yes.

One of the other things, and I'll share it, if you want to write this down I'll give credit to my boss because I know where those quotes come from because that's kind of important to know when your boss says something. We have this discussion a lot of times. We hear Airmen of all ranks start to out-complain. So I challenge you. I challenge you to take a piece of paper tonight and I challenge you to write down everything that pisses you off. Everything. And then let it cool, drink a glass of wine or whatever the beverage of choice is. Come back to that list and start scratching out what you don't control.

At the top of that list, write To Do. Now you have something to do. Now you have goals. Now you have something that will make your life a little bit easier because I learned this about 20 years ago from a great buck sergeant in our Air Force. If you don't control it, don't waste your energy, waste your time on it. If you have an opportunity to influence a decision-maker over something, then influence the decision-maker. If you are in charge but can't influence, you mitigate. If none of those are there, don't worry about it. Do your job.

CMSGT Parsons: To wrap it up I'll just say probably the thing that has driven me most in my life is it's not the fear of failure, it's the fear that I'd have to look at myself in the mirror and say I didn't put forth the effort.

I think once you get over the fear of failure, you will find that you will take whatever opportunity you have and you'll do the best you can with it, and then I would tell you for me, I can go back regardless of what I've accomplished or anything that's happened to me, it's really based off the fact that I had credible leaders that I could trust.

I told you a minute ago I had a great commander that walked in and said hey, I just nominated you for the Command Chief list. In my mind, I'm going to go throw up because they might pick me, you know? [Laughter]. But I trusted him. He told me you can go do this and you'll do it in your own way and you'll make some mistakes but you'll be all right. And because I trusted him, he was a credible leader, I stepped out and certainly have made my mistakes, but there are some successes sprinkled in there as well. But the bottom line is I can look at myself in the mirror and say I've given it all I had.

Moderator: You probably can't have too many discussions these days particularly about people without bringing up the issue of the sexual assault dealings that we have today. Given that the huge majority of sexual assaults occur among our 18-25 year olds and among the enlisted corps, has the NCO Corps failed? Or is it a wider problem? If so, how do we fix it?

I'll kind of parenthetically add on that, Congress is involved, DoD is involved. Usually when we're told to react, it's not unusual to see an over-reaction. Do you feel like there's a danger of that? How are you addressing this with your troops?

CMSgt Parsons: A difficult topic to talk about because there's a lot of variables. Inevitably when you talk in public you rarely have the chance to get down to the true meaning of your words. This is one of those where you have to be careful what the audience leads with.

The bottom line is this. There's absolutely no place for it in our world. Not just in our service. No one should be treated with that level of disrespect when they're out there.

To the piece of the question about enlisted and what's -- I'd just caveat that one. Understand that there's a larger number of enlisted people in the Air Force, number one; and they are a much younger audience than the officers. So keep that in mind when you think about numbers. I would tell you that's a terrible comparison to make when we're out there dealing with the issue.

The bottom line is, one is too many. But I will tell you this. I think at some point we have to get beyond the political sensitivity of the matter and we have to in the right place and time talk about the true details of each of these categories that sexual assault falls in. There's a vast number of categories of sexual assaults. Everything from the all-out assault, physical assault and rape of someone, to the date rape piece. None of them acceptable, but each of them I think we have to tackle from

a different leadership, education and approach as we go down that path.

I'm afraid, my only fear is until we stop letting the political sensitivity drive our action, we will not get to the real root cause of the problem or the fix to the issue.

CMSGT Hornback: You asked a follow-on to that, as to whether it's too much from Congress or if our NCO Corps has failed.

I would say while we are a cross-section of the population, there's a different expectation of us. So yeah, I would expect that the lawmakers that organize an Army have a say. And as a leader who's been in charge with leading America's sons and daughters, I expect to be held to a higher standard, so I think that's just about right. And I think now that we're having these dialogues we're getting there. But we've got a long road to go.

As far as our NCO Corps falling down, no. We've got a lot of work to do with our NCO Corps and I say that because as an institution we removed responsibility and accountability from them over the years. We haven't taught them how to be the intrusive leaders that these Chiefs and the Chiefs that are sitting in the audience had when a buck sergeant knew everything about you and was comfortable knowing everything about you. We took that away as an institution in a lot of ways by well-meaning people with good intentions, and we're getting it back. You see it with the TA form, now supervisors are involved in approval processes. We have to get a little bit more in that. Empower, coach, lead and mentor our NCOs that it's okay to be intrusive.

On top of that, we have to get to this point, and I love seeing it now in our exchanges and BXs and it's silly. But Under Armor has it right. Under Armor absolutely has it right. So when you see an Air Force shirt in the BX and it says "Established in 1947, Protect This House", that's what we have to get to.

When I talk with the Airmen across Global Strike Command and I say okay, my daughter is coming in the Air Force. I'd like for her to take an Airman. Who would you recommend and when they start to laugh and I go there's the problem. You know the Airman sitting next to you that you would trust with your mother, brother, sister or anybody, and you know the ones you wouldn't. Why do you allow them to wear the same uniform you do? We have to protect this house. We have got a long road to hoe for that one. And when we get to that point and we see each other as brothers and sisters, it will then be eradicated. But we have got a very long ways to go, both working through political

correctness, sensitivities, and empowering leaders at all levels. We've still got a lot of work to do.

CMSGT Hotaling: The same themes, actually. Some of the things we've got to think about from a Citizen Airman point of view. You think of it like community policing. Everybody, we talk about bystander intervention and all that. Everybody is a part of this problem. Every single person has the solution to this problem. That's what we have to keep talking about. We have to keep talking about it is your team mate. It is your wingman. It is the person that is to your left and to your right of you and you must take care of them, and to create that community.

We are a community. We say it. We protect the house. That's exactly right. We just have to keep talking about that. It's critically important.

The biggest thing, one of the things that we talk about is important on the leadership side, this isn't just a sexual assault, sexual harassment thing. This is child abuse, this is drug addiction, this is everything. This is protecting Airmen. Protecting Airmen from all of these things and making sure that we're connected with each other so that we can start to see the signs and symptoms and that we can correct them. That's the thing that we need to concentrate on.

CMSGT Kaiser: Clearly my brothers on the left and the right have loads of wisdom.

There's not a simple answer. I think a lot of us like to emphasize the theme of caring. If you really care about somebody, what are you going to do? That is going to manifest itself in many many different ways. It's going to insist on them to produce their absolute best because you know that at the end of the day more opportunities are going to come their way when you insist on high standards. If you really care about an individual you're going to get into their chili, back to what Chief Hornback and others have said. You're going to get into their chili to the point where you are that intrusive leader. Ah, man, Sergeant, why are you getting my business so much? The answer is, because I care enough about you to do that.

It's no different than for those of us who are parents, and when Debby and I were raising our children, it's like Dad, why do you? I say it's in the job description D-A-D. I care enough about you that I'm going to address this now.

It's about dignity and respect. If you really, really care about somebody then you are going to treat that other person and that

group of people with the utmost of dignity and respect. It doesn't matter what their role is. It doesn't matter how many stripes, what their rank, it doesn't matter if they're doing a menial task and that's their station in life. Because they are infinitely valuable. They are unique creations. And they deserve the utmost of dignity and respect. When we get that understanding to a broader level and we're growing in that realm, I think we have seen in the aftermath of the sexual assault issues that have been identified, when we continue to grow in that mindset that all of us are valuable, regardless of what their contribution is because they're a human being. Then I think we will see ourselves turning the tide. I think that tide is already turning.

CMSGT Kirksey: I echo that same message. With the military being less than one percent of the population, it's kind of easy to put the spotlight on us. But to Chief Hornback's point, we're that small subset of the population and it all reverts back to respect. How do we get it? How do we lose it?

Trust is a derivative of character and competence. As we all alluded to, we have the best and the brightest in the United States Air Force and we'll continue that. The more that senior leaders can get out front and make sure that we empower our young Airmen to know and to educate them, that that is not right, that there are consequences, I think that will be the first step into eradicating this. They will figure it out. They will get to the bottom of it as they do with everything else that has been confronted with. But at the end of the day it's about that loyalty and unity as well.

So for us as leaders, we get out in front of them, make sure they understand what the consequences are, make sure they understand that we are behind them, that we do support them. They will figure it out.

CMSGT Turner: I don't know what you add to all the great advice and the great words of wisdom. It's all the same. At the end of the day it is about trust and dignity and treating our people with respect and taking care of the team. And exercising leadership at the lowest levels, both on the NCO side of the house and on the officer leadership side of the house. And not abdicating our leadership responsibility.

I ask large audiences all the time, are you tired of hearing about this? There is a sense of fatigue out there about it, but until we fix it we're going to keep talking about it. We have to teach our young NCOs and our Airmen how to talk about it to where it's meaningful and how we can turn the tide on this thing.

At the policy and guidance level we have stood up an office tucked in under the Vice Chief of Staff that's headed up by a two star. But they're not going to fix it for us. They're going to give us the policy and the guidance to go out there and execute and the resources to do what we need to do. But at the end of the day the point of impact, it takes leaders to step forward and do something about it. When there's something going on in an organization that's not good, people know about it. People just have to engage. Take it out of idle and push the power up and do something about it.

So leadership matters, and eyeball to eyeball leadership matters. Get involved in what's going on in the lives of your Airmen and the lives of the team mates that are around you and find out where you can help them. But at the end of the day it's about making sure that we treat our people with dignity and respect. And we've got to change the culture in all things. It's not just sexual assault. It's all the things that Chief Hotaling talked about. It's all that stuff. You wrap it up and we do have an issue and it's ours to solve.

Moderator: Gentlemen, thank you very much. I realize I'm a poor substitute for Chief Cody, but I certainly appreciate the thoughtful answers you gave today. It's been very valuable. I'm sure everybody appreciates it. Again, thank you for being here this evening.

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