

## Uniform opinions

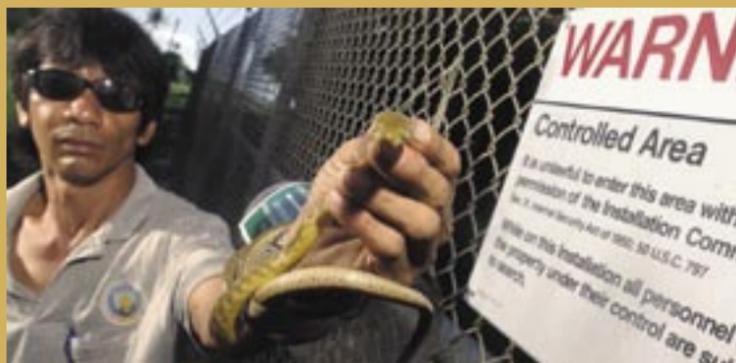
I'm left speechless after reading "An expert opinion" ["AirMail," April 2004]. Specifically, the comment that "only about 3 percent of today's Airmen are in jobs that require camouflage protection ... camouflage for them isn't a requirement."

That's exactly the attitude that's going to be our downfall. I have troops participating in convoy operations on the other side of the globe. Two weeks ago they considered themselves career desk jockeys. Now they're learning terms like "battle rattle," and the term desk jockey is a distant memory as it becomes obsolete for the rest of the Air Force.

Don't tell troops their uniforms don't "need" to be the best they can be. We are military professionals and warriors. We represent those who have gone before us. Our troops deserve nothing less than the best equipment, training and support that money can buy, period.

*name withheld by request*

I'd like to respond to the "Blue-D-U" AirMail comment. I'm a K-9 handler who's wear testing the new uniform, and I had my own speculations about looking like the Cookie Monster running through the woods.



## No serpents here

I served two years at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, and I'm confident that the snakes feared in your article ["Keeping the Serpent at Bay," March 2004] would quickly come up against a native of the Hawaiian islands — the mongoose. The mongoose does a nice job of keeping any creepy crawlers at bay. In a one-on-one matchup, my money's on the mongoose!

*retired Maj. John Barlow  
via e-mail*

Believe it or not, troops wearing the current battle dress uniform during exercises have been spotted before me while hiding in the shadows at night. I train in tactical areas every day, and the uniform works well.

I think this uniform is an excellent idea. People are simply afraid of change. My father said people reacted the same way when they switched from the greens to the BDUs.

I thought I'd hate this uniform, but it's 10 times more comfortable and easier to maintain. It also blends in nicely during night operations.

*Staff Sgt. Richard Nelson  
Langley Air Force Base, Va.*

## Fitness standards

In reference to your question in "What's your opinion?" ["AirMail," March 2004], I'm still curious as to where the new fitness standards came from.

My main concern is with the sit-ups. Performing 55 sit-ups in 60 seconds creates an excessive amount of stress on the lower back. Aren't back injuries one of the leading injuries in the military? Aren't they also the leading disability benefit during retirement?

The Air Force could prevent these injuries by allowing us to perform the

exercise correctly. No strain would be introduced to the spine if we were given two minutes to complete the exercise, and the test could then determine stamina and endurance.

Shouldn't we rethink the standards we've jumped to by reviewing actual training programs that have been established for many more years than ours? Or should we wait and see what happens with the new training policy?

*Staff Sgt. Robert Lindeman  
Osan Air Base, Korea*

I think the fitness test is a good idea, but I don't believe more people will make fitness part of their lifestyle because of it. Very few people did so during the ergometry years.

In fact, since there is no pass or fail, all a person has to do is show some improvement from one test to the next. That can be done in several ways without actually increasing fitness, i.e., lose weight, do one more push-up or sit-up, or sit in a sauna to reduce the waistline.

Also, it's ridiculous to think my squadron will be allowed time off during the duty day to go exercise. All we hear about is operations tempo, long hours and burnout. Many of us work well over 40 hours a week just to meet the demands of the daily workload, so to think we'll be encouraged to go exercise during that time is foolish.

*Master Sgt. Harold Lay  
Scott Air Force Base, Ill.*

The new fitness standards are a great idea, but they need to be reviewed and modified.

For example, the abdominal circumference measurement should be adjusted for height. It's unreasonable to expect an Airman who's 6 feet 9 inches to conform to the same measurement standard as one who's 5 feet 9 inches.

Also, measuring women in the same spot as the men (at the top of the hip bones) isn't an accurate indicator of a woman's fitness. I'm 20 years old, 5 feet 6 inches tall, weigh 125 pounds and have a 28-inch waist. However, in accordance with the new standards, my abdominal measurement is 31 inches. This takes five points off my fitness score, and I can't reduce my

measurement because the width of my bones determines it, not excess weight.

*Airman 1st Class Andrea Trusty  
Hill Air Force Base, Utah*

The new fitness standards are long overdue. Most people are taking them seriously and hitting the pavement. Our little track is crowded now. That's good and bad since I hate running with all those people tripping over one another.

The impact will be what top leaders are hoping for — a more fit force. However, some people are still making excuses and trying to avoid testing with profiles, etc. I'm curious to see how those who aren't physically fit measure against the standard of eventual discharge from active duty.

*Maj. Patty O'Donnell  
Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.*

I think the new fitness standards our leadership imposed on us is a step in the right direction, but the standards still don't have much bite to them. People who don't comply get mandatory fitness training and still have plenty of time to get their 75 points with no repercussions.

If you haven't noticed, there are still a large number of Airmen walking during mandatory running days. Most Airmen don't take it seriously. If the point is to make us lean, mean, fighting machines, why not add 10 to 20 pull-ups to the requirement and make the total score part of a person's promotion test score! That'll get Airmen to take fitness more seriously while they're on the track and in the weight room. It'll also do a lot for our military image.

*Master Sgt. Andre' Lange  
Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas*

## What's your opinion

In October, the Air Force will begin its fifth Air and Space Expeditionary Force cycle since 1998, and a lot has changed over the years. The AEF was designed to improve predictability and stability for Airmen.

If you could do one thing to improve the AEF, what would that be?

## Meet the Staff

by Master Sgt. Lance Cheung



Second Lt. Chuck Widener is a 12-year veteran from Indianapolis, Ind., whose previous assignments include Missouri, Mississippi, Oklahoma and a three-year stint as the Air Education and Training Command newspaper consultant at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. As assistant editor, he writes and edits features while managing content for the Airman's World department. If you have a news story with a human interest element, give him a call at (210) 925-7757 or DSN 945-7757, or drop him an email at charles.widener@afnews.af.mil.

## In search of news and information

Get the latest news and information about your busy Air Force quickly and easily.

■ **Air Force Link:** www.af.mil — Airman magazine, Air Force Print News, Air Force Radio News, Air Force TV News, fact sheets, biographies, artwork, and links to other Air Force and Department of Defense news.

■ **Electronic mail subscriptions:** www.af.mil, then follow the "Subscribe" link at the top of the page — Free e-mail subscriptions to news and information products.

■ **Air Force Radio News:** 1-877-AF-RADIO (237-2346), DSN 945-5918 — five-minute, weekday program providing latest Air Force news. Available to more than 1,700 commercial radio stations via satellite. Also available on Air Force Link at www.af.mil, then follow the "Radio" link at the top of the page.

■ **Air Force Television News:** 30-minute biweekly television program covering news and policy issues available with closed captioning. Shown at commander's calls, on public access cable channels and on the American Forces Radio and Television Service. Also available on Air Force Link at www.af.mil, then follow the "TV" link at the top of the page.

■ **Air Force Print News:** www.af.mil/news — The Air Force news wire service providing Air Force and Department of Defense news and information, with daily updates from around the world.

■ **Airman:** www.af.mil/news/airman — Feature and information magazine. Unit subscriptions: afnspub@afnews.af.mil.

The Best of Jake

"JAKE" SCHOFFER



"I don't know; he looked safe to me — what do you think?"