

**"Air Commandos"**

**Lieutenant General Eric Fiel**

**Brigadier General Timothy Leahy**

**Brigadier General Marshall Webb**

**Brigadier General Eric G. Weller**

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**Lieutenant General Fiel:** Good afternoon. Thank you for coming to the Air Commando panel. It's been my pleasure over the last 15 months to represent all the Air Commandos in the United States Air Force. My name is Eric Fiel. [Inaudible] last June of '11, I think. So it's been about a year and a half.

I have a very short video. It's about four minutes long. And I've got three slides. I want to kind of walk you through to kind of give you an idea of who we are and where we're going. Then I want to stop and offer time for you to ask us some questions.

To my right is Brigadier General Tim Leahy. If you look at his job on his card there as well, he is the new A3, Director of Operations for AFSOC. He came in about mid-August.

Then Brad Webb who is now the Chief Programmer and Planner of the A5-8. He's been there about a month and a half.

Then Eric Weller. Congratulations to Eric Weller. If you don't know, he was just nominated for his second star a couple of weeks ago. He's the advisor -- [Applause]. He's advisor to Admiral McRaven. You might know him in a previous life, he was the Commander of the 193<sup>rd</sup> SOU up at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

If we can run the video really quick.

[Video shown].

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** If you didn't recognize the voice, that's Master Sergeant of the Air Force Band. If you went to the dinner last night for the 12 Outstanding Airmen, when they performed that, I think it might have been the last song before the Air Force song. So that song was written actually for the special tactics guys. It was written by the Air Force Band and is now, I'm sure, a number one hit [inaudible].

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What I'm going to do, I think I've got about two slides. I just want to give you a vector of where we are right now and where we're going to go, then what the priorities are for me for the next fiscal year, and then I'll just open it up for questions if that's okay.

If you look at the left hand of the slide there, it shows you all the different tools we have to solve the problem. We've had the same tools for the past 30, 40, 45 years. It's caused us some friction and frustration over the many years. A lot of that is there are a lot of similar airplanes, different MDSes. It causes some problems in maintenance because each version has its own unique maintenance issues with it.

The same thing with training. We've never really resourced our training regimen. We've always struggled with that. We're kind of different than the conventional Air Force where there are lots of numbers, and it's caused us problems. We have two training venues right now. One's at Kirtland and one's at Hurlburt. The population at each one of the training sites is small.

So with all the different types of airplanes, and it might be kind of hard to see, but the first one is the MC-130ENP, then the MC-130H. We've got three versions of gunships. We've got a U, we've got an H and we've got a Whiskey. Then we have U-28s. Then our RPAs, C-22s, VC-12s, and then some other non-standard airplanes all the way down through some Guard and Reserve resources.

We've worked over the past three or four years to start air fleetings, for lack of a better term.

If you look at the right side of the slide what you'll see us look at over the next several years, we're going to have the same 94 airplanes we've always had. What's that mean? We're going to 57 MC-130J penetrating tankers. So what I did instead of recapping the Combat Shadow or recapping the Combat Talon II, what I thought of doing is recapping the Talon I. It's a penetrating tanker, but with the J model it gives us a clean carbon mark. So every one of the 57 J models will have ECM and [inaudible] radar. We're in the midst right now of an accelerated terrain TF radar for the J model. I don't know the exact timeframe. The airplane's going to deploy to Afghanistan probably sometime in the spring time. It's going to pick up a normal rotation. The first rotation it will not have a terrain [fog] radar, so we're probably looking at 18 months to two years.

But the goal is to have big squadrons which in the past we've always struggled. In the states we've had big sized squadrons but overseas we usually have like four Talon II's or

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five Shadows. Now you'll see us start standing up at Mildenhall with 12. My goal after talking with Admiral McRaven is to make all four of our ops groups the same. We have an ops group at Kadina, one at Mildenhall, one at Cannon and one at Hurlburt. We've struggled in the past. We've always responded to any kind of [inaudible]. We've always sent our deployed forces from the States, so if something happened around the world and we had to go west, it just takes a long time to get out to the Pacific; and the same thing if you've got to get into Europe or down into Africa.

So we went through the basing process and you'll see us start standing up larger squadrons. So instead of having four Talons or four Shadows there will be 12 MC-130J [inaudible] which will be full penetrating tankers, the CM. Be able to do a whole host of things.

The airplane, the J model, is absolutely fabulous. I think we're just scratching at the edge of what that's actually going to be able to do for us. We're still kind of working through that. The lessons we've learned over the past 30 years, when the [union] forces come out and they want to start adding all these things to the airplane, we have a tendency to kind of overload [inaudible]. So we've got a governor, and actually the governors meet to make sure we don't go past that.

We've always struggled with gunships, too. We never had enough and they were always in the States. At the end of this we'll have 37 ACJs. The first ones should start rolling down the mod line about this time next year.

What we're doing right now with the MC-130W, we turned that into a gunship. We're using that as our risk mitigation platform. So we put a position strike package on it. We made a decision about two years ago to turn a mobility platform into a gunship. We took it to Eglin. Thirty days later it was already shooting guided munitions. Current configuration of the Whiskey, it's got a 30mm Bushmaster. You can see one. There's one on the floor downstairs. It's got two sizzles in back which are basically navigators, and three gunners. And ten precision-guided munitions sitting on the back door. They're laser guided or GPS guided.

We just got done testing small diameter bombs. The airplanes in Afghanistan have four small diameter bombs under each wing. We're working on trying to make that laser guided. Right now it's GPS guided. Next month we'll be testing Hellfire on the gunships. After that, we're in the middle of testing a light weight 105. We wanted a small gun, a big gun, and then a whole host of precision munitions.

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My task was to make sure the union forces don't come out and over [gross] the airplane. The current airplanes that do not get gas in four hours, they land. That's your only option.

So we're looking at seven hours on the Whiskey and when the J model comes if we can get past seven that's absolutely fabulous.

The Whiskey's got high def sensors on it so it will [pure fleted] with high def sensors. The Whiskey right now is flying during the day. It's always been one of those things, gunships don't fly during the day, so we've got them flying around the clock. Eventually we'll have 37 of them. Five will be dedicated trainers and the rest will be [pure fleted]. We're trying to make it light enough so we can carry any kind of munition any one of the services have.

The U-28s. We bought this airplane as a PC-12 that we modified into manned ISR. We made a decision in November of '05 and July of '06 it was flying combat missions in Iraq. That fast. We thought we were only going to use five I think, sir, was the original number. Obviously it was one of the best performing ISR platforms on the battlefield so we're up to 22 now, plus some slicks. But I just got approval the other day to turn all our PC-12s into U-28s so the fleet size will be 37. We'll start modifying them I think next quarter. The intent right now is to have three squadrons -- two at Hurlburt, one at Cannon. Then if we can kind of split that up later on and push some overseas on a permanent basis we'll work through that process. We've still got some work to do on that. But you'll see a pure fleet of U-28s, and the PC-12s that we had at [NSAS] will be converted.

The next airplane is the MQ-1s and MQ-9s. We have all we're going to buy. We're trying to decide now, work with the Air Force and with SOCOM, to see if we should recap the MQ-1s to be [pure fleted] MQ-9s. So no decision on that yet. We're still working through the process.

CV-22s. We have 24 now. We'll buy our last three in FY14. We have them at Kirtland. We have a squadron at Cannon. We have a squadron at Hurlburt. This time next year we'll land the first two ship CV-22 package to Mildenhall. We had to delay it a year because we had a continuing requirement in Afghanistan for a five-ship formation. It's still there. So really that was our Mildenhall standup. So we just delayed it a year. We're going to grow, that squadron's going to be ten. So what you'll see in the 352<sup>nd</sup> OG will have 12 penetrating tankers and 10 CV-22s. We're going to try to mirror -- that same mirror will be at Hurlburt and Cannon. And over the next year we'll work the basing for PACOM as well. There's still more work to do on that.

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But the goal is to have all props the same so you can respond to any contingency around the globe with notification plus 12 hours of being [inaudible].

If you don't know what the C-146 is, that was just renamed by the Air Force. It's the Dornier 328. We bought 37 non-standard aviation assets over the last several years. Ten PC-12s, ten M-28s and 17 Dorniers. What they provide is more or less [inaudible] airlift for Army Special Forces or Navy Special Forces throughout the GCC environment. These airplanes were designed to be forward postured at all times and just rotate the crews. There are currently PC-12s in every combatant command, there's usually two. We're going to be pulling them back over the next several months so we can convert them into E-28s. The Dorniers or the C-146 is just making its way to the theater right now. They operate out of Homestead, in Qatar, there's one or two in Africa, and one out in the Pacific. The intent is to get two to three each GCC. Again, they'll be there forever, we'll just rotate the crews. It is the, believe it or not, the fastest airplane we have. Even though it's a twin engine it goes about 300 knots. It's there to carry some small limited cargo, but most pax.

The M-28. I went to Admiral McRaven last year, then went up to the Hill. We had ten M-28s at Cannon and we had an Aviation Fit program of record to buy 16, eight fixed wing platforms. And with the budget crunches and trying to figure out a way that I can convert PC-12s to U-28s. I went to Admiral McRaven then went up to Congress to see if I could dual-role M-28. So you'll see us move ten airplanes from Cannon to Duke during FY13, and then buy six more. The intent was to save on the ten that already had dual-role and then roll that money into the U-28. So now our U-28 program, right now anyway, is fully funded.

What you'll see at Duke. Right now they fly the Talon I. Three airplanes will go to the boneyard by the end of the month and there's going to be four left. We had 14 of them and it's one of those airplanes that served us well over the last 48 years, Mr. [inaudible] sitting there as a Talon I navigator, and it's kind of sad to see one's on a stick at the air park at Hurlburt; one soon to be on a stick at the air park at Cannon. So it's been a pretty awesome airplane.

You'll see, Duke Field will transition to a regular warfare wing. The intent is to provide resources so they can do fixed wing mobility, fixed wing strike, and then eventually hopefully ISR. Put the combat aviation advisory packages together to go out and satisfy GCC requirements. So that's all going to start happening next month. You'll see the 919<sup>th</sup> through the 711th Special Operations Squadron partner with the 6<sup>th</sup> SOS which is our standing fixed squadron. More or less quadruple in size. You'll

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see us put aviation packages together for fixed wing, but also there will be combat service and combat service support advisors, in com, in medical, in safety, and a whole host of different things from survival to combat control.

The last one which is kind of exciting for me is, and Eric can probably further expand on it, but the 193<sup>rd</sup> has been a pretty good partner for us for many many years. They've got seven airplanes. Three of them are hard-wired to do PsyOp, now we call them MISO. Through their own ingenuity they've worked very hard with Warner Robbins to be able to de-mod the airplanes themselves. What that meant to us is that we could go in and start working on a roll-on/roll-off PsyOp/MISO capability. But if it's not needed we could use them for SOF requirements. They are now [inaudible] qualified, they're aircraft qualified, we're working on heavy equipment. They've just done an absolutely fabulous job. Now we're working on whether or not we expand that role into other things like ISR.

One of the things we've found is that if you're going to use U-28s, it's got about five, maybe six hours. If you're going to use RPAs under weather, it causes a problem. But if you use a 130 like they've used, we were using the EC-130s in Sigonella during the Libya contingency we were seeing they were getting eight, nine hours on station. So we can use that to our advantage. So we're looking at roll-on/roll-off ISR capability as well. Whether it's going to be an FMP ball or a high spec drone or a [GMT higher] or what not.

Next slide.

These are priorities. In this fiscal year, we're going to continue with our recap on both AC and MC-130s. The program of record right now for the MCs is 37 airplanes. We've got nine of them right now. We basically get about one every five to six weeks. The AC-130Js, the recap number right now is eight. That will start next summer. We will be moving CV-22s to EUCOM, as I said. It will be a two-ship package, land there sometime this time next year. The U-28, the memo was signed by the Secretary on Friday, maybe yesterday. So now we've got approval plus reprogram to convert all the PC-12s to U-28s. The AC-130 Whiskey has been just a show boat for us with innovation.

It is absolutely amazing what young Airmen have been able to do. [Hondo Gertz] down at SOCOM has been partnering with AFMC and he's established GHOST teams. The G is for Gertz. It's Gertz's High Octane Support Team. He goes up and gets captains and lieutenants, acquisition guys up at Wright-Patterson, brings them down to Eglin and stands up acquisition task forces. They've been doing just absolutely fabulous stuff for us. From the time they say go until the time we send them down field has

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really been months. We've never been able to do that before. It has literally been months. It took them about 45 days to put precision-guided munitions on the back ramp of that airplane before they tested it. 30mm gun took about ten months. Now they're already working on a light weight 105. They've tested small diameter bombs, like I was saying. It's purely amazing what they've been able to do.

And then aviation [fit]. That is basically us going out and working with the TSOCS and being able to build partnership [inaudible] capacity.

I think there's just one more slide. No, just questions.

I'll pause there and open it up for any questions you may have.

**Question:** For the aviation event that's going on at [inaudible] and switch [inaudible]. I guess it's a pilot program with the same instructor, same high flying with [inaudible] training center [inaudible] is that shifting [inaudible].

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** It will be [inaudible]. We're moving the rotor wing fit piece from AFSOC to [USASOC]. We just don't have the capability to generate helicopter pilots because we don't have helicopters. So we're going to focus purely on unfixed wing. And they will have 16 M-28s. So it's just qualification in the M-28s. We'll still do combat aviation advisor team, like we've always done for the [inaudible]. There will be language and culture training, but they're going to focus on flying the M-28.

**Question:** For General Webb. There's a pretty famous picture of you sitting in the President's chair. [Laughter]. Could you share what was going on in the room at the moment that picture was taken? And, what it was like to be there for that important event?

**Brigadier General Webb:** No, sir. [Laughter].

Honestly, I would tell you that at the moment, I have no idea what was happening at the moment that picture was taken. I was vaguely aware that there was even a camera in the room, to be honest with you. But obviously, while I don't want to divert the briefing off of the AFSOC face of this, clearly I was there to ensure that the White House had information flow for the operation and that was essentially what my job was. I can tell you that, using the sports analogy of being in the zone, that's what it was kind of like. I distinctly remember going I should be freaking out right about now, and I was completely calm. But

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it was absolutely to be an information conduit so that the audience in the White House understood what was happening.

**Question:** Sir, looking beyond the FYDP, so outside of the next five years, what do you see might be next for AFSOC in terms of challenges for sustaining Air Force contributions in special ops?

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** Weapon systems or --

**Question:** Maybe capabilities. Like the role of cyber, are you going to leave that to the big Air Force --

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** Yes. What I find interesting, we've done a very very good job of resourcing the current fight. But there are things that we are missing. One you can help us in is ISR. Everybody loves ISR. But outside of previously Balad and Bagram, we owned the airspace. Next time somebody else might get a vote. The ability to put a, my opinion, to put an RPA down anywhere on the planet is not as easy as putting an airplane down. We're putting RPAs into the Horn of Africa, it took two years. Or if you fly some, out of Sigonella, the other country gets a vote on whether or not there armed. So it does cause a problem.

We are never with FMVs. The next time it might not be high, hot and dusty. It could be cold, wet and rainy. It could be a triple canopy jungle and an FMV won't work. Or the [hyper spectral] or GMTI or LIDAR. What we can't afford is... one of the problems is whenever we go downstairs they show us a new sensor, but it has to be married to an airplane. I can't buy the airplane because we just don't have that money again. But if it could be as easy as twisting a ball off and sticking another ball on and then the system knows that it's not an FMV sensor it's a hyper spectral, then the sensor operator can go to town.

If we can have chameleon sensors that pop up and pop down, that would really help us. But it's been kind of interesting watching this whole ISR phenomenon. There is value to having a manned ISR platform. Clearly, being able to have that guy talk to the ground force commander when you're going on-target. It's completely different than flying an RPA and doing a find and fix when you get to the [finish] department.

Other than that, it would be kind of interesting to see what happens in the budget environment, what the new magic is going to be. So we're still working on that. Also [inaudible], what's the new magic that we can bring to the fight that will keep us special? Whatever it is, the first SOF tube is always the most important, and people are more important -- You want to know what's special about us? It's the folks. They're better than

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anybody else. They have a tendency to do things a lot faster and solve problems.

So when the President asks us, can you do this? The answer is yes, sir. We can. This is how we're going to do it.

We've all grown up SOF. I know the same guys for the last 30 years both in the Army and the Navy, just like many of you. That's really the strength. It doesn't matter what the piece of equipment is. It's the strength in how we know each other and how we trust each other. It's just a little bit different.

I don't know if that answers your question.

**Question:** Sir, at the Pentagon if you read the AFA Magazine there's an awful lot of emphasis on anti-access area denial, A2AD. What's the future of AFSOC in the A2AD environment? Especially when we consider the last time this emphasis happened in the mid 1970s we pretty much took it in the shorts.

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** What I've learned over the last 30 years is we don't do single mission penetrator ops. I can't think of one time, I'm sure somebody out in the audience can think there's one time we did this. But I can't think of one lone penetrator mission. What I can think of is integrated air operations. Everybody's got to work together. Nobody can afford to have the only [METL] tasks. I have to rely on the big Air Force. I have to rely on the big Army and the Navy to be able to do these things. They've got to soften up the air defense network enough for us to go in there or we're -- If you've got a low, slow-flying airplane or one flying up at 10,000 feet, a left hand turn at 180 knots. I could shoot it down. So we have to rely on being integrated into the ATO. We've proved that over the last 11 years and it works just fine. So if it is an anti-access or area denial, there are certain ways you can get in and certain ways you can get out, but it's going to be the conventional forces that are going to soften up whatever the threat system is so we can operate.

I'm not that concerned. What I'm concerned is if we were to pull away and not be integrated. There was a time when we did not integrate well into the AOC. One of the last things I just did a couple of months ago is if you go to any AOC, we used to be [at a] SOLE, which is the Special Ops Liaison Element. Always TDY. I changed it. I put permanent authorizations in each one of the AOCs so there is always an O6 in the AOC, whatever the AOC is, it depends on the number. I think the highest one is five or six. That doesn't mean that we wouldn't increase that. The intent is that guy goes to work there every single day and that AOC Director, that CAOC Director knows him by his first name plus all the guys on his team. Does that answer your question?

**Question:** You mentioned that the next contingency may not be hot and dusty. Mr. Reed this morning was taking about the need to start rethinking the systems that have been optimized for the CENTCOM environment. How does that play into the aircraft modifications that you're doing right now or in the near future, when do you start seeing those changes taking place?

**Brigadier General Webb:** If I heard the full question it was as we look beyond CENTCOM how the recapitalization and modifications of the aircraft play into that. Does that essentially capture it?

I think our story to tell and you've heard this already echoed through Secretary Reed, you heard it through the Chief of Staff in his briefing today, this afternoon or this morning. For us at AFSOC it dovetails beautifully with the Air Force story and also SOCOM. To me it's about adaptability and agility.

So as we look to modify these airframes in the strike, in the specialized mobility, in the ISR, we've got to build in the adaptability and the agility to adapt to the different environments, because you're absolutely right, it's not always going to be in the wide open desert, flat, southern Afghanistan model necessarily. So there are and we are working closely with partners throughout to have discussions on what are the right types of sensors, what are the right types of systems for a mobility platform to be on, what are the right types of munitions, ordnance, weaponeering that can be adaptable to the many different airframes to be able to be sustained in a different environment other than just the desert.

That's from an A5 and 8 machine kind of perspective. I would tell you probably from the 3 side as well. He's looking at it from a manned perspective. That's part of that Air Commando ethos of having that adaptability and agility piece as well. So that is absolutely the focus that we have to have for A5 and 8.

**Question:** Sir, given what you just explained about SOF truths as well as the challenge of maintaining relationships, how do you see challenges in the future of working inside the Air Force personnel system to retain SOF expertise for the long term, especially with the increased relevance of ISR, cyber, and communications specialists in our Air Force.

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** From an Air Group perspective I don't think that's going to be an issue. It's more from the combat support and combat service support. One of the things we're trying, I think General [Wooster] started this, and that was, I think it was termed. We found out in CV-22 since there are no CV-22 maintainers out in the field, that once you get them

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to a three level, a five level, a seven level, they'll get peeled off to be an avionics technician in 316. So special experience identifiers didn't work. So we went back to the Air Force, we just continued what you started, sir, and being able to lockdown is probably the wrong term to use, but I'll just use it for an example. Lock that individual into that weapon system.

Some people are concerned that that means I only can go to these places. But we've been working with the A1 and the A4, and everyone else is kind of, the other MAJCOMs are coming on line. They'll get an experienced F-35 person or an F-22 person or somebody who's familiar with the way you operate your com or your intel. [Ted] is another example. Once you get that guy trained in your TTPs is kind of hard to let that skill set go.

So we've been working with the A1 to see if we could maintain those and give them a MAJCOM identifier, for lack of a better term, for that specific skill set.

Some of the things I think we'll be successful in, like maintenance. I think there is value in that and we're still working through that. Some of the other enablers might be kind of difficult. Ted, ISR I think is one thing. It's the Com, it's the dagger teams and your security police and all those other things. If we get too specialized yo won't get cross pull of fresh ideas. So I think there's good and bad.

**Question:** We're under tremendous personnel pressures throughout the Air Force. There are new looks at education, phasing and timing for professional development. The SOF community has always had a pretty powerful education center at the Naval Post Graduate School. What is your take coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan with the kind of new strategic direction, what is your take about the level of education about the SOF community, both in service and joint theater?

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** Two things. First, Admiral McRaven has given us the task to be the most educated force within ten years. That's officer and enlisted. He wants us to take full use of service education schools, which we will. We have now the joint --

**Voice:** Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy.

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** The Special Operations Forces Senior Enlisted Academy which for a senior NCO in SOF you get full senior PME credit from the services. But it is a challenge. Navy Post Graduate School is a perfect example. When our DT Team met this time last year the money crunch problems caused the Air Force to pull out of that. So we went to SOCOM and said how are the other components doing that? Well, we're paying for it.

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Would you pay for the Air Force? They said sure. And it's not huge numbers, it's four or five folks. Multiply that by the three other components. So there are 20 or 30 guys down there as well. But Admiral McRaven, I think all the components up here, both for officer, enlisted and the civilian work force, they get further in education. And not just for education but in your specialty. But there are still challenges. There are always going to be challenges. That's one of the easiest things to cut. I know all the services are working through that. But we're going to take on the challenge as Admiral McRaven said. It's just how do you work education into it when you've got a very very high OpTempo? We've got folks in the U-28s that have been deployed 20 times. Those guys in special tactics, 25 or 30 times. There's no end in sight.

When we came out of Iraq we just went other places. So if and when we come out of Afghanistan, we'll just go other places. It is a tough challenge.

**Question:** With everybody in a different positions worried about different things the question across the board, what's the one thing that keeps you up at night that maybe someone else could help you out with? And with a different perspective from each one of you, if you could try to answer that.

**Brigadier General Weller:** Quite frankly the thing that keeps me up at night is the budget, as it were, and the potential reductions. The message that I try to get out to our people, which is we've got to continue to show everybody that we can field, the professional units and individuals, that we can be as accessible as any other organization and most importantly, that we can be relevant to the needs of the command, whether it's AFSOC, SOCOM, or the United States Air Force. That's kind of what keeps me up at night.

**Brigadier General Webb:** My answer would probably fall more in Tim Leahy's lane so I'm not going to steal his thunder, but clearly in the first SOF truth about the human element of everything we're trying to do given the constraints that we're under would fall in that category.

From the programming aspect, we have an ambitious program. Obviously we have a fiscal environment that's not necessarily conducive to the demand signal that we have for SOF, but I think that we're already having pretty darn good communications about what, and if we're not then we certainly need to continue the dialogue on what is the story for AFSOC, what is the vision for AFSOC, what are those particular roles of those of you that support all of us everywhere to ensure that we're getting the best fielded equipment on the battlefield for the warfighter.

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**Brigadier General Leahy:** Brad sort of let on what my real concern is. It's concerning mostly the resiliency of the people. We have asked a lot of our people. They have performed Herculean efforts. But as we look at the tempo, whether you measure it as OpsTempo or more accurately as PersTempo, we are continuing to ask that they go again and again and again. After 11 years of combat that's taken a toll on them, it's taken a toll on their families.

At the same time, we've almost recapitalized the entire fleet. We've taken those MC-130 Whiskeys and we turned them into the AC-130 Whiskeys. We've [inaudible] CV-22s, [ANSAV], U-28s, RPAs, J models. So we're trying to bring on iron, grow crew force, mature that crew force, as we're pushing it into combat. And sustain that force and keep that pipeline up and going and continue to produce more through it. So we're asking a lot of those people that are at the experienced end of AFSOC to help grow the next generation as they're fighting the current fight, and then maintaining some sort of balance and resiliency in their life.

So it's looking at that resilience of our people. What's that doing to our experience level? How do we maintain that experience level given we only have a finite amount of iron and that iron is always demanded for. So the iron is always forward, there's less airplanes home to generate that next group going out the door and to keep that training base continuing to roll. And how does that affect our combat readiness in the long run?

So it's a continual look at the resilience of our people and getting that balance between the right combat power forward and how we continue to grow them in the rear and sustain them in the rear. And make sure they're paying attention to their families. Because humans are our most important thing to us. If we break them, could we break their family, then we'll lose them. Then our training goes further and further into the hole.

So it's maintaining that critical balance, as General Fiel said. We are not sticking our head in the sand.

After Afghanistan, they'll be somewhere else. It just doesn't matter. We know we're going to continue to be asked to perform at a level that is above and beyond, so that's my number one concern.

**Lieutenant General Fiel:** I personally agree with Tim on two things. One is we need to grow the force really quick and [inaudible] experience. For the last year we have been working really really hard to make sure that we had the right policies, the right procedures in place, we had the right leadership, and

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make sure that we were flying safe airplanes and executing the mission.

The thing that bothers me the most is just what all three of them said, and that's the first one. We spend a lot of money taking care of our airplanes. A lot of money. It doesn't matter who you are or what airplane you are. It is millions and millions of dollars. We don't do the same for the people. Even though we say humans are more important than people [sic] we don't spend the same amount of money and time.

We started noticing a lot of folks, they're still motivated to go but they're just -- If you get hurt, we have a very good system to cure you physically. As medical capability kind of went from active duty to contract. It started causing us a problem with our special tactics guys. These were the guys that were getting banged up the most. It doesn't mean other folks weren't getting hurt. But the time when you get them back to 100 percent was growing. So we looked at ways to bring it down to a more manageable level to get them back on the battlefield.

So we went to the Air Force, we went to SOCOM, we started putting the physical therapist, flight docs, nurses, inside the squadron so you didn't have that wait time trying to get [inaudible]. People asked, why did you do that? Well, these are special people. They're outside the wire all the time. We can't train one fast enough so we've got to be able to repair them.

But the thing we were missing the most is, a [backup] checkup. We over the many years had never come to grips with sending somebody over to psych. It was usually a command directed thing, and the first thing you did was lost your clearance and that's [inaudible] get you out of the squadron. But these past 11 years, this country has done some phenomenal things and it's been the only time in our history that we've been at war for 11 years with an all-volunteer force. Every one of you have been affected by it in some form or fashion. You cannot not be affected. And folks that go over there constantly, whether you're air crew, whether you're ops, whether you're maintenance, whether you're support, whether you're special tactics, inside the wire, outside the wire, you were affected. We still don't have a full grasp on things with mental health, whether it's TBI or something similar.

So we started increasing the number of chaplains. I remember when I was in a squadron when I first started, we had a squadron chaplain assigned to our squadron. They disappeared. Now it's one chaplain for every five squadrons. So we converted the billets and we're putting chaplains back into actual squadrons.

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You can go to a chapel and have that face to face counsel, but it's not the same as them being in your squadron. You just have that close personal trust and confidence. We're doing the same thing with flight docs. Some of the specialties are available in the Air Force, so we've converted billets. Other ones aren't, so we went to put some guys on contract to do the same thing -- go after mental health. And it is okay to say that I've got a problem.

If you haven't seen him already, he's been on Fox News, but Command Sergeant Major Farris who is the Command Sergeant Major for Admiral McRaven down at SOCOM. He's been in combat probably since 1990. He had some issues. He went to see the boss. I know Tim's heard his speech more than I have, but I know he went in to see the boss and said hey boss, I've got a problem. Go see psych. Between him and his wife, Lisa. They've been going around to every SOCOM organization and doing multiple engagements with as much face population as they can. To say hey, it is okay to say you have a problem. If you have a problem internal to yourself it's going to affect your marriage, it's going to affect your kids, and the most important thing that we feel is, we've got to be able to put you all back together and make sure that your marriage is intact and your kids. We have not put a lot of resources against this compared to what we spend on our airplanes. It is amazing how many times we wash them, how many times we fix them, but we don't do the same for our people.

We see a lot of stress being put on families. We work a lot with the civic leaders to see what can you do to help the family members when guys are deployed? You see the community around Hurlburt and Cannon, at Mildenhall and Kadina as well as the other SOCOM organizations really starting to jell to provide that support. Because it is a high rate of OpTempo. Because it does affect you mentally. There's a lot of stress. And you guys go through it every day. How do you get after that? How do you detect traumatic brain injury?

We had one guy, I know General [Wooster] knows him, he goes by Wild Bill Anderson. He was in a helicopter crash. He has severe injuries. He's working his way through and so is his wife. We got him the right medical attention, but it just takes time. It's a hard thing, kind of combat.

That's what keeps me up at night.

**Moderator:** A fantastic presentation for the group. We thank you for all your service and the wonderful capability you provide. Thank you.

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