



FIELD NOTES

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HEROES IN HISTORY

On August 16, 2017, in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, Tech. Sgt. Daniel Keller embodied extraordinary courage and leadership under fire. Serving as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller during Operation FREEDOM'S SENTINEL, Keller and his team engaged in a 15-hour battle against 350 ISIS fighters. Midway through the fight, an improvised explosive device exploded, killing four and wounding 31, including Keller. Dazed but determined, he took charge coordinating precision airstrikes, returning fire, and halting a close-range enemy assault less than 150 meters away. Despite his injuries, Keller orchestrated the evacuation of 13 critically wounded to a helicopter landing zone under enemy fire. While moving the wounded, the enemy mounted a coordinated attack from three sides. Keller stood his ground, directing suppressive fire allowing friendly forces to break contact and make it to safety. His actions helped save 130 personnel and inflicted an estimated 50 enemy casualties. For his valor and selfless devotion, Tech. Sgt. Daniel Keller received the Air Force Cross, America's second-highest award for heroism in combat. His actions stand as a testament to the Air Force core values.

LEADERS IN THE FIELD

Returning to Our Roots: Engaging Leadership and the Warrior Ethos - For the Enlisted Corps

Kathleen "Katie" McCool, CMSgt, USAF
Command Chief Master Sergeant, Pacific Air Forces

As we strive to infuse a stronger Warrior Ethos throughout the enlisted corps, it's crucial to revisit the fundamentals, the bedrock upon which our Airmen are built – mentorship. We all remember the simple, yet impactful, discipline of maintaining a wall-locker and the correlation to developing an eye for detail. Or the requirement for clear and direct communication when addressing a MTI, reminding us that simple and direct is often the best way to disseminate information. They may not have felt like it at the time, but these are all examples of face-to-face mentorship at work.

These seemingly small details are deeply ingrained, reminding us of our values and standards. They underscore the importance of repetition and reinforcement. Why not build upon this foundation? Why not reignite the spirit of "Roll Call" or "Airman's Time" – call it what you will; but embrace the power of engaged leadership at all levels.

It's about meeting junior enlisted personnel where they are and delivering vital information in the most effective format possible: face-to-face communication and genuine mentorship.



Social media has become a dominant force in the lives of our society and military. Social media made the world much smaller and connected. While it serves several purposes – offering an outlet to vent frustrations, providing comedic relief amidst the challenges of service, and occasionally elevating concerns leaders may have overlooked – it does not and should not replace the vital role of the NCO. NCOs serve as the face of our organizations to the junior enlisted force and offer the ability to answer clarifying questions and the expertise to translate decisions into tangible impacts, all while providing institutional context. For all the benefits social media offers, there are trade-offs to its accessibility. It lacks nuance, personal connection, and the opportunity for real-time dialogue fostering genuine understanding and trust.

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To cultivate a resilient and lethal force, the enlisted corps must practice engaged leadership. Senior Enlisted Leaders must demonstrate and extend this focus throughout all enlisted tiers. We must actively engage with Airmen, providing mentorship, guidance, open communication, and mutual respect. Be present, listen, and understand the challenges our Airmen face; not through PowerPoints or emails, but through direct engagement. By returning to these fundamentals, we build a stronger, more resilient, and more effective fighting force grounded in the principles that began our careers.

It's time to reconnect with our junior enlisted personnel, face-to-face, and reaffirm the values that make us the world's greatest fighting force. Lead, engage, and demonstrate Warrior Ethos.



KNOW YOUR ENEMY



The Party Rules Everything

If you remember nothing else about China, remember this: the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) controls everything. This isn't a political party like the Republicans or Democrats, it isn't a party within a system; it IS the system. In China, the Party decides, the "government" simply implements those decisions. Senior military and government officials are senior Party officials. They make all important decisions, plans, and policies, in their Party role, and then execute those plans via their role in the PLA or the PRC government. But make no mistake, the CCP is an organization that dominates every aspect of governance, from village councils to the national leadership.

When people step out of line, the Party reminds them who is in control. Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba and worth \$48 billion, criticized Xi Jinping's financial policies. The Party immediately canceled his company's \$34.5 billion initial public offering—the largest in history—just days before launch. He is not the only CEO to face consequences for criticism of the Party. The message is clear: no one, regardless of wealth or influence, challenges the Party. It is a Party-State system meant to serve the CCP, its leaders, and its world vision, and they feel the Party must be the leading institution across all levels and aspects of society.

The CCP's Organization Department controls every major position in China's government and economy. They choose who leads national companies, state-owned enterprises, academic and research leadership, and all government positions. Party organizations exist alongside every government entity and within every significant organization in China. The Party makes the decisions, and the government or "private" organizations around the country act on those decisions.

Unlike democratic nations where power is distributed, China operates as a unified system under Party control. This gives them advantages in long-term planning, and it allows the Party and the PLA to leverage "commercial" companies, universities, and research labs to find "partners" across the world and bring back knowledge and technology to China. All to make the Party, and the Party's Army (the PLA) stronger.



General Allvin Announces Retirement

The 23rd U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David Allvin announced plans to retire effective on or about Nov. 1, 2025. He has served as the Chief of Staff since November 2, 2023, and prior to that as the Air Force Vice Chief of Staff since November 2020. Allvin is an Air Force Academy graduate and command pilot with over 4,600 flying hours who has led with distinction throughout his 39-year career. He will continue to serve as Chief of Staff until a replacement is confirmed which will allow time for a smooth leadership transition. A formal retirement ceremony with full honors will occur later this fall.

SSgt Promotion Release

The Air Force selected 15,894 Senior Airmen for promotion to Staff Sergeant out of 47,007 eligible for a selection rate of 33.81 percent in the 25E5 promotion cycle. This is the largest promotion percentage increase since 2001.

Collaborative Combat Aircraft, YFQ-42A takes to the air for flight testing

The U.S. Air Force achieved a significant milestone in its Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program with the successful flight of the YFQ-42A prototype. This achievement marks a shift towards rapid development and acquisition of uncrewed aircraft designed to operate alongside fifth and sixth-generation manned fighters. The CCA initiative aims to deliver modular, semi-autonomous aircraft that enhance combat capabilities through human-machine teaming and open-system architectures, with a competitive production decision expected in fiscal year 2026.



AIR FORCE UPDATES



Doctrine Update

The LeMay Center, in partnership with Air Force Global Strike Command, rolled out two major updates to our Air Force Doctrine lineup: [AFDP 3-02, Strategic Attack](#) and [AFDP 3-72, Nuclear Operations](#).

These publications modernize our doctrine to address today's evolving global threats while supporting integrated deterrence and long-range precision strike capabilities. AFDP 3-02, Strategic Attack, sharpens our approach to Strategic Attack, with fresh guidance on operating in contested environments and integrating air, cyber, and space. Think smarter, more agile planning and targeting. AFDP 3-72, Nuclear Operations, updates our foundation for Nuclear Operations, laying out how the Air Force contributes to the broader nuclear enterprise. It doubles down on our commitment to deterrence as a credible, ready force.

Language Certification Assessment Bonus (LCAB) for Military Members

The Air Force launched the LCAB. The LCAB provides a one-time, lump-sum incentive to Airmen who are not otherwise eligible for a monthly Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB) and have not previously taken the Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) or the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI).

This incentive targets Airmen with language capabilities aligned with Department of the Air Force (DAF) Strategic Languages. Airmen submitted 76 applications within 24 hours of program launch, 28 of which potentially fill some talent management gaps in the Language-Designated Positions pipeline. This effort aims to match global pacing challenges so the Air Force can continue to be ready for future mission requirements.

More information can be found [here](#).

TRIP REPORTS



332 AEW

The 332 AEW is executing the mission in the middle of a dynamic regional situation. Despite the challenges they face, their leaders are empowering Airmen to innovate at the speed of the operational environment, and Airmen like A1C Bryce Evans are rising to the occasion. Evans was a vital asset to four named operations and multiple aircraft reconfigurations. From acquiring new base defense skills in theater to learning how to operate a new water treatment system on the fly, it is clear the 332 AEW team is committed to completing the mission.



378 AEW

378 AEW Airmen are focused on integrating the lessons learned while providing critical support during the 12 Day War into their daily operations. Their maintainers enabled 400 sorties with over 2000 flight hours, and 378 AEW Airmen supported an additional 1500 sorties across the AOR. Tech. Sgt. Michael Garrett stepped up and coordinated to receive and account for 8.1 million gallons of JP-8 during the conflict and liaised with the Royal Saudi Air Force and Saudi Aramco to sustain 126 combat aircraft. From base defense to airfield operations, Garrett and his Wingmen are working hard to execute above and beyond the impressive bar they have already set.





379 AEW

The 379 AEW is the largest and most diverse wing within AFCENT and serves as the regional epicenter of power projection. The Airmen here are hyper-focused on implementing lessons learned from the 12 Day War and how they can maximize operational effectiveness. Afterward, SrA Odessa Vanzelf, a Religious Affairs Airman, stepped up to help manage emergency interventions for her fellow Airmen and was instrumental in bringing stability back to the base. Like Vanzelf, the Airmen of the 379 AEW know any day could be the day, and are ready to execute anytime, anywhere.



386 AEW

The Airmen and joint partners out at THE ROCK are realizing the critical impact of their many firsts in setting up for and executing operations during this historic deployment. These firsts include the first deployment for many of their junior Airmen. They continuously emphasized how they had to quickly transition their mindset from enablers to warfighters as conflict erupted across the AOR. Airmen like Tech. Sgt. Matthew Plizga epitomized this shift. During the 12 Day War, Plizga's Counter Small Unmanned Aerial System section safeguarded over 5,000 joint coalition personnel, keeping the 386 AEW safe from aerial threats. This keeps the wing focused on tactical airlift and low-density, high-demand mission requirements, ACE operations, and implementing lessons learned from the 12 Day War. The reality of conflict is hitting home with the 386 AEW, and they are embracing our debrief culture to continue improving in a dynamic environment.



39 ABW

Poised at a geostrategic nexus, Team Incirlik ensures immediate response, adaptive operations, and combat power projection into both CENTCOM and EUCOM. Airmen like A1C Gaffney Hargis understand how to leverage existing capabilities to get the job done. Gaffney took ownership of the critical dig permit program, capturing 1,432 NATO shared assets and establishing joint procedures with the Turkish Air Force to execute 33 projects. This mission-focused mindset was evident across the base as Airmen on Incirlik are dedicated to delivering capability and capacity to war fighters and national decision makers.



QUESTIONS FROM THE FIELD

Some locations do not have enough uniform inventory in stock to help Airmen. What is being done to help alleviate this issue?

We understand and share your frustration. The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) owns the supply chain; the Air Force is not the only customer. Money currently is not the constraint here. DLA is limited by law on how they source materials and who can manufacture them. We continue to see a downward trend in allowable producers. All the services, along with DLA are working to try and address these challenges. These are hard problems. Your concerns are not falling on deaf ears, our goal is an achievable supply chain model that will alleviate frustration and impact to our Airmen.





Is there an update on tour stabilization for assignments to Korea?

The Air Force is adopting a 3-2-1 model for individuals PCSing to Korea. The updated model is now 3 years for accompanied tours, 2 years for unaccompanied tours, and 1 year if dependents cannot be supported. This new 3-2-1 model applies to assignment notifications issued on/after July 25, 2025. Current tours do not require an extension and do not fall under the new 3-2-1 model. More information is available on MyFSS.

You recently talked about attributes our Airmen need in the future, things like Tactical Combat Casualty Care and airfield management, are there places doing this already?

There are! One place is Ramstein. The CASPER program builds on the Agile Combat Employment concept, and Airmen undergo a six-month, self-paced training course covering various Air Force Specialty Codes such as Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape, aeromedical evacuation basics, loadmaster basics, drop zone certification, port operations, and C-130J Super Hercules aircraft egress. At Little Rock, they have the Warrior Airman Readiness Center. The WAR center is dedicated to improving the combat readiness of our Airmen. Students receive the necessary training to not only be armed for the peer-to-peer conflict expected in the future, but also the refinement of skills needed to prepare for current deployment taskings. Lastly, Hill AFB has a Ready Airman Training Course where Airmen train on tactical and kinetic elements. The training culminates in a major field training exercise at the Base Operations Readiness Training Area that serves to test participants on the skills they have learned.





NOTE TO AIRMEN

Last month, we wrapped up REFORPAC, the largest Department-Level Exercise in decades. It was a valuable opportunity to hone our skills at speed and scale with the joint force and our allies and partners in real-world conditions.

With over 350 joint and coalition aircraft and more than 12,000 personnel spread across 3,000 miles and 50 locations, the logistical complexities alone were staggering. It was a powerful demonstration of the exceptional capabilities of our Airmen.

Witnessing their efforts firsthand reaffirmed a basic truth: our Airmen are the bedrock upon which our mission success is built. Despite the exercise's complexity and the many challenges involved, our Airmen consistently rose to the occasion, demonstrating an unparalleled ability to adapt, innovate, and get the mission done.

The intensity of these exercises, while crucial for maintaining our readiness and lethality, also underscores a critical responsibility we all share: the commitment to the well-being of our Airmen. We ask a great deal of them: high ops tempos, demanding exercises like REFORPAC, and global crises like the 12 Day War can all take their toll. These environments remind us we must focus on mission effectiveness while also staying aware of the resilience of our fellow Wingmen as these stressors accumulate. September may be National Suicide Prevention Month, but the commitment to the resilience of our Airmen is 24/7/365.

This is why fostering a culture of proactive support is so important. Our Airmen must know resources are readily available to help them navigate the challenges they face, both personal and professional. Our Airmen are often best positioned to recognize when a teammate is struggling, withdrawing, or exhibiting unusual behavior. Educating them to ask the hard questions, to offer a listening ear, and to connect their fellow Airmen with available resources is a vital component of our support system.

We are a team. We rely on each other to complete the mission, and just as importantly, we must rely on each other to get through the tough times. Whether it's noticing a colleague's withdrawn behavior or a concerning response during a conversation, taking the time to connect, ask TOUGH questions, and show genuine care can be lifesaving.

Remember – help is available. Please take a look at the following resources to learn more about how to support not just your Wingmen, but your family, friends, and yourself as well:

<https://www.resilience.af.mil/Resilience/>

<https://www.resilience.af.mil/suicide-prevention-program/>

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/suicide-prevention/>

Fight's on!

CMSAF Dave Flosi