

Presenters: Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James and Air Force Global Strike Command (AFGSC) Commander Lt. Gen. Stephen Wilson

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Defense Department Press Briefing by Senior Air Force Officials on Results of the AFGSC Commander Directed Investigation into Allegations of Compromised Test Materials, and an Update on the Force Improvement Program in the Pentagon Briefing Room

SECRETARY DEBORAH LEE JAMES: Good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for joining us today.

General Wilson and I promised you periodic updates about our very important nuclear mission. The cheating incident at Malmstrom Air Force Base and our efforts to address these matters, and hence we're grateful that you came and spent some time with us this afternoon.

Now, if you think back and recall, during our last briefing in January, General Wilson and I told you that there were 92 crew members who were under investigation for some level of involvement in a test compromise at Malmstrom Air Force Base. This was either they had participated in cheating or they knew something about it without reporting it.

Also recall back in January that General Wilson launched a Commander Directed Investigation and Force Improvement Program to get to the bottom of the situation and to recommend needed improvements. Further, the Secretary of Defense ordered that we provide him a plan within 60 days containing a way forward.

Finally, recall that when we provided our last update, I offered you all seven, what I called my observations from my recent visit to the missile bases. So what I'd like to do now is run through these briefly and then weave in some of the top-level actions and updates for you and then I'll yield to General Wilson, who will provide you with some more details.

So, first of all, as I said back in January, and indeed as we've confirmed through these subsequent investigations, we do have some systemic issues in our missile community. So, indeed, there are cultural issues here. I certainly picked up on spotty morale and micromanagement issues at all of the bases, and so did those who participated in our follow-on reviews. So this is what led me back then to call for a holistic plan, going forward, to address this community and some of these issues. Not simply a plan to address the cheating alone.

Indeed, the Commander Directed Investigation and Force Improvement Program does have a number of recommendations to address the overall climate within the community and issues of -- just in recognition of how important the nuclear mission is to our national security.

Second, back then in January, I certainly felt that the testing and training environment was unhealthy. The drive to always score 100 percent on exams when 90 percent was the standard, and the use of these scores in some cases as the sole differentiator on who got promoted and who didn't just seemed inappropriate to me.

And as you'll hear in a few moments, we will be changing rather dramatically how we conduct testing and training going forward, while at all times, keeping the standards and evaluation criteria appropriately high for those who are involved with nuclear matters.

Third, I told you that there would be accountability, both for the missileers involved as well as for leaders. So, first, on leaders. Nine officers in leadership positions at Malmstrom were recommended for removal. One officer submitted his resignation and will retire. So, this is a total of 10 leaders in all. None of these leaders were directly involved in a test compromise, but the Commander Directed Investigation indicated that they failed to provide adequate oversight of their crew force.

Now, on the missileers. The investigation ultimately grew to 100 officers that were implicated and being investigated as part of the compromise. Of the 100, nine actually were not substantiated and will be returned to duty as soon as practicable. Again, General Wilson is going to give you more details on all of this shortly.

The fourth, given that this indeed was a major failure in integrity, the fourth thing that I talked about back in January was how I thought we needed to reinvigorate our core values across the Air Force. And certainly, Secretary Hagel also called upon each of us in the services to double down in this effort, and as you know, he just appointed a new official, Admiral Peg Klein to coordinate with all of us on this important matter.

So, our Air Force core values, which are *Integrity First*, *Service Before Self*, and *Excellence In All We Do*, these have to guide us in everything that we do on and off duty, at home, in the office, and on the battlefield. And integrity means living a life of personal integrity, but it also means taking action when you see something in your environment that's not right. If it's in your unit, if it's among your peers, your subordinates, and your superiors alike, your duty is to act.

Now, with all of this as a backdrop, General Welsh, Chief Cody and I launched an Air Force-wide initiative about two weeks ago to reinvigorate our core values across the force. The key components of this will include such things as a stand down wingman day, to focus every Airman on the importance of our core values, evaluating the current curriculum at our formal education and training venues, to ensure that our Airmen receive

core values throughout their career, not just in the beginning, and also launching a core values resource center on the Air Force portal to provide commanders and senior NCOs the tools that they need to reinforce values with our Airmen at the unit level.

Finally, I had a fifth, sixth, and seventh observation back in January, and these had to do with incentives, do we or do we not need incentives, professional development, and what I called, "other investments." And basically, my thinking on this was that we say that this is an important mission, and yet do we in fact put enough of our money where our mouth is when it comes to resource decisions, and do the missileers have career paths and adequate mentorship and leadership training which are commensurate with the importance of this mission? These are all the questions that were on my mind.

Now, the bottom line here is we're going to need a little bit more time to fully flesh-out these areas. But for now, I can report to you that in fiscal year 2014, we have \$19 million funded for some of the areas within the Force Improvement Program, including launch control center refurbishment and infrastructure repairs. Furthermore, the 20th Air Force has identified an additional \$3 million for quality of life requirements.

And in our fiscal 2015 budget, we've requested \$455 million to sustain our minuteman squadrons, ICBM helicopter support, and some critical communications areas.

Finally, we've identified \$154 million in other requirements associated with our Force Improvement Program, including readiness, training and improvements to launch control facilities, to just name a few of the areas.

And what I can tell you is that as we execute our funding in 2014, we're going to seek to rearrange as much as possible to fund these important programs. In other words, we're not going to wait. We're going to move forward.

Moreover, General Wilson has established several quick-look action teams that will be developing specific recommendations on these other areas I mentioned, like incentives and accolades and what do we do about professional development. He will report back to the Chief and me with their recommendations by the end of April.

Now, I did brief Secretary Hagel on this plan earlier in the week. And he is confident that we're on the right track to improve support to our nuclear forces and ensure the trust and confidence in this vital mission.

Before I turn it over to General Wilson, I want to reinforce with you that our Air Force nuclear deterrence mission is critical to national security and it's very strong. And the reviews that we just conducted confirm this. Overall, I continue to have great confidence in this mission, as does the secretary of defense, in the way this mission is being performed. And I also have great confidence in Team Malmstrom.

For over 50 years, our nuclear professionals have faithfully stood watch over America. And as in the past, today's nuclear Airmen continue that legacy, taking great pride in their work and performing superbly under difficult conditions.

So the issues that we have before us today are tough and they didn't come overnight. They've been years in the making. They're not going to get solved overnight. While we have made progress in certain areas in recent years, there is more work to be done. And I am sure that we will get there because we're going to provide the persistent focus and the persistent leadership that this deserves. And getting this right for people, as far as I'm concerned, is the number one goal and it is critical for our efforts going forward, and we're committed to getting it right for the people.

So with that, I will turn it over to General Wilson.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEPHEN WILSON: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

I'd like to take a few moments to update you on the outcome of a Commander Directed Investigation that I ordered, the actions we're taking to hold our people accountable, and more importantly how Global Strike Command is using this opportunity to move forward and improve this enterprise.

As many of you are aware, the Office of Special Investigations discovered this compromise of monthly proficiency testing while investigating several Air Force officers for alleged drug activity. That investigation happened to include three missileers from Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana.

While investigating those missileers' personal cell phones as part of the drug investigation, OSI agents found test material on them. This sparked a new investigation that implicated officers for sending, receiving, requesting or having knowledge of compromised testing material.

To be more specific, investigators found that four officers were at the center of a ring where test material was shared through text and/or pictures.

Q: (inaudible) four?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Four.

When we briefed this issue in January, initial evidence pointed to the test compromise taking place during August-September of 2013. As the OSI investigation continued, forensic analysis of the crewmembers' cell phones showed potential cheating going as far back as November of 2011 and as recently as November of 2013.

Furthermore, OSI analysis found that one of the texts included a photograph of a classified test answer. I can't give you any additional information for security reasons, but

I can assure you that at no time did this compromise of test material ever put the safety or security of the nuclear deterrent force at risk.

On 27 January, I assigned Lieutenant General Mike Holmes, the vice commander of Air Education and Training Command, to conduct the Commander Directed Investigation. General Holmes and his team visited all three missile wings, as well as the wing at Vandenberg Air Force Base which does our schoolhouse training. They reviewed the testing, the training and the evaluation of our combat crew members.

Additionally, I asked General Holmes to look at the leadership environment and the oversight of the crew force. His Commander Directed Investigation results provided four far-reaching recommendations in the following areas: Reforming organizational culture, empowering crew commanders, improving the quality and purpose of training, and, lastly, reforming testing and evaluation.

Based on the CDI, we can say that across 20th Air Force, leadership's focus on perfection led commanders to micro manage their people. They sought to ensure that the zero-defect standard was met by personally monitoring and directing daily operations, imposing an unrelenting testing and inspections with the goal of eliminating all human error.

This approach is unrealistic, given the ICBM mission is built around redundancy through weapon system design, standardized procedures and teamwork.

We also know that leaders placed too much emphasis on monthly test scores. Although the required passing score is 90 percent, crew members felt pressure to score 100 percent on each and every test.

Leaders lost sight of the fact that execution in the field is more important than what happens in the classroom. These were all bright officers. And, as we've said before, none of these needed the information to pass the test. They felt compelled to cheat to get a perfect score.

Now, Global Strike Command strives for a culture of excellence and compliance. However, in the ICBM environment, there's been an unhealthy, overemphasis on perfection and a marked fear of failure, which kept Airmen from identifying their weaknesses and working to correct them.

Nuclear Airmen perceive that any error will receive high-level attention, derail advancement and could potentially end their career.

The constant oversight, inspection and testing regimen alienated subordinates, and a lack of midlevel officers in the squadron contributed to a gap between squadron leaders and missile crews.

The development of experienced midlevel leaders is critical to ensuring accountability, closing communication gaps, and striking a better balance between mission and people.

So, leadership and professional development must be present and alive in all squadrons at all levels. It is vitally important to empower crew commanders by providing leadership opportunities and making them responsible for developing the skills and knowledge of the crews.

Our review of the training, testing and evaluation procedures identified that the separation between training and evaluation that facilitates a healthy and productive training environment was lost.

As a result, we're gonna place greater emphasis on, one, how we train, and, two, field evaluations that better assess crew performance in the operational environment. This will allow us to de-emphasize the significance of scoring 100 percent on classroom tests while ensuring our crew force remains ready to perform their mission.

Let me briefly discuss accountability. Secretary James and I have said from the beginning that Airmen at all levels will be held accountable for their actions or inactions that allowed this to happen.

We briefed you in January that 92 Airmen were involved in this compromise. That number has changed, as have the details of who was involved and at what levels.

Allow me to walk through the evolution of those numbers and where they stand today.

General Holmes and his team reviewed 88 of 98 cases that were transferred from the OSI. Evidence substantiated cheating in 79 of those 88 cases. It showed various levels of involvement from officers who sent, received, solicited test material, or those who simply had knowledge about it but failed to report it.

Allegations against nine officers were found to be unsubstantiated.

Now, you will find these numbers that I just mentioned in the CDI report, which you will have access to today.

Even after the CDI concluded the report and the report was established, investigative work still continued. Cases continued to transition between OSI and command authority based on what -- or who was involved and at what level.

Today the number of individuals involved stands at 100 with 91 falling under command authority. OSI still maintains jurisdiction over nine cases. Eight of the nine

are from the mishandling of classified information, and three of the nine are also under investigation for illegal drug activity.

At the conclusion of this briefing, we're gonna provide you a test compromise overview chart, which will reflect the current numbers and the categories of all involved.

Now, as commanders, we take responsibility for the Airmen in our our charge. We are responsible for ensuring they're trained, ready and able to do the mission. We take care of the people, so that they can accomplish the mission.

Commanders are also responsible when our people fall short. Colonel Robert Stanley, the commander of the 341st missile wing, has taken responsibility for this failure. This morning, Major General Jack Weinstein, the commander of 20th Air Force, accepted Colonel Stanley's resignation. Colonel Stanley has served the nation and the Air Force with great honor and distinction for the past 25 years. He relinquished command this morning, and he will retire in the coming weeks.

General Weinstein also relieved nine leaders from the group and squadron level. He removed Colonel Mark Schuler, the 341st operations group commander, for loss of confidence in his leadership ability. He also removed the group deputy commander from that position.

General Weinstein also removed four squadron commanders. The commanders of the 10th, 12th, and 490th Missile Squadron, and the commander of the 341st Operational Support Squadron. General Weinstein also removed the directors of operation from the 341st Operational Support Squadron and the 10th Missile Squadron.

Finally, the group's standardization and evaluation officer was removed. None of these people were directly involved in test compromise, however they all failed adequate leadership, supervision, and oversight of the crew force.

Colonel Tom Wilcox has taken command of the 341st Missile Wing as of this morning. He is a career nuclear security force leader. He joins the 341st from the Global Strike Command staff, where he previously led our security forces division. Tom previously served as the interim security force group commander at Malmstrom, from August to November of this year, and he's absolutely the right manager to move Team Malmstrom forward.

Disciplinary action is also being taken against the officers who have substantiated cheating from the investigation. Details of those actions were released after all the members have been served, and they're being served today. After completion of these actions a determination will be made on the officers as to whether they return to alert duty. The officers who had unsubstantiated allegations will be retrained, recertified, and return to duty.

This brings us up to an important point. While all this has been going on, the 341st Missile Wing has continued to perform its mission uninterrupted. 20th Air Force augmented Malmstrom with crews from Minot and F.E. Warren Air Force Bases, and we'll continue to monitor the health of the crew force and as well as fielding the majority of our graduates from Vandenberg Air Force Base to Malmstrom. We expect Malmstrom to be up to full strength within three months.

We briefly talk about the Force Improvement Program. While we're watching the health of Malmstrom, we're using this test compromise as an opportunity to make significant and important improvements across the whole enterprise. We launched the Force Improvement Program in February. This effort was modeled after the Navy program to address a wide range of issues.

The Force Improvement team included a diverse 69-person working group comprised of Airmen from operations, maintenance, security force, mission support, and helicopter career fields from our missile wings. It also included members from outside the ICBM community: people like Navy submariners, and B-2 and B-52 crew members. The purpose of the Force Improvement Program was to create an aggressive, action-oriented, field-influenced program with the goal of making substantial and lasting changes to the ICBM mission. This program allowed Airmen working at the grassroots level to identify the challenges and enable them to make proposal actions directly to me.

The team collected nearly 2,000 surveys in the field, leadership, and families, and interviewed 835 people on how we can make things better in the field. We combine these inputs with the results of the Commander Directed Investigation to develop a list of nearly 400 action items that I can act on. And as I said before, I'm ready to implement as many of those items that I can and those that I can't, I'm bringing forward to the Headquarters Air Force to be able to fix.

Now, there's over 25,000 people in Air Force Global Strike Command. I want to focus on the 99.5 percent of our Airmen who do this important mission with excellence every single day, and they deter our adversaries as well as assure our friends. They not only abide by but they live our core values. We believe the changes we're going to institute will insure that all of our people live up to our high standards.

Let me close by saying the execution of the ICBM mission has gone largely unchanged since its first missileers first started pulling alert in 1959. We're not just putting a fresh coat of paint on this, on these problems. We're taking bold action. There will be extensive changes to the way we build, teach, train, develop, and lead our crew force. The changes we are making will be a turning point for the ICBM community that will improve both the mission, as well as our Airmen, while strengthening our core values.

Our nation demands and deserves the higher standards of accountability from the force entrusted with the most powerful weapons on the planet. We are committed to living up to those standards.

Thank you very much.

Q: Madam Secretary, Bob Burns, with AP. You both mentioned Lieutenant General Holmes having reviewed training and testing at all the ICBM-based process (inaudible). Did he specifically ask individuals whether they had cheated on any of the testing in the past and, if he didn't, how do you -- how can you be sure that it's -- didn't happen elsewhere?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Let me take that.

So, when I -- when I -- General Holmes went out to each of the bases, he talked to the leadership at every base, so for the wing commanders, group commanders, squadron commanders, the chiefs, the supervisors, as well as specific focus groups. So, missile crew commanders as well as the deputies.

I also gave out information to list positively what we call PDI, potentially disqualifying information, to every crew member. He went where the investigation took him. So, when he looked at the evidence, he pulled on that string and it didn't lead outside of Malmstrom Air Force Base.

Q: So, the answer is no, he didn't specifically ask people whether they'd cheated at the other bases? How can you be sure that it didn't happen?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Bob, he asked specific questions to focus groups. I asked every crew member, did they have potentially disqualifying information, and again, we went where the -- where the information went, and we found no evidence that it existed outside of Malmstrom.

Q: I think confusion exists on your potentially disqualifying information. What do you mean when you say that?

LT. GEN. WILSON: That's their responsibility under PRP. We asked them specifically, are they aware of any test compromise or material that had been passed that would be potentially disqualifying information? We asked each crew member in the ICBM community that.

Q: So you did actually (inaudible) at all the bases?

Q: None of them said they have it.

LT. GEN. WILSON: None of that. We found none of that except at Malmstrom.

Q: Dave Martin with CBS. You said again today you remain confident in the ability of even the Malmstrom wing to carry out its mission, but you just fired nine of the leaders. How can you be confident when you have a leadership in which you obviously didn't have confidence in because you fired them?

SEC. JAMES: Well of course, I -- I didn't fire them. They were removed by 20th Air Force, but I have confidence as General Wilson said, the vast majority of people are doing a good job, and they're performing superbly across the missile community. There are of course new leaders now that are in place at Malmstrom, and the leadership at Global Strike selected this team and I have confidence in them.

Q: And the nine officers, what proportion of the officers in leadership positions at Malmstrom does that represent?

LT. GEN. WILSON: We removed the -- the I can't give you a specific number. But I'll tell you that the group, as well as each of the four squadrons, the operational support squadron and the three tactical squadrons, that leadership was removed, as well as many of the operations officers, two of the three operations officers in tactical squadron, as well as the operational support squadron, so across the wing there's -- there's 200 missileers, as a rough order of merit, so we've removed nine of them.

It's a significant portion of leadership at Malmstrom, to be short.

Q: Basically the whole chain of command, isn't it?

LT. GEN. WILSON: It is, David. Yeah.

I'll also tell you though, the folks that we've gone out across the Air Force, the people we put in place bring with them a great skillset. Training, one of the areas, as well as core knowledge of the mission area, and we've looked outside, for example, one of the group commanders came in from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, so he's an expert on the mission as well as evaluations.

We've brought another expert from was it -- who's an expert on trainer as well as having a deep ICBM background. So everyone of the leaders that we've put in place was hand-picked to take Team Malmstrom forward.

Q: Tom Bowman with NPR. Just a clarification. These 10 officers, are they all colonels? How many...

LT. GEN. WILSON: Colonels and lieutenant colonels, one of which was a major.

Q: And the 79 officers implicated in some way. What will be the punishment for them? What is a reprimand?

LT. GEN. WILSON: So, we have the full range of punishment. We'll have everything from letters of counseling, letters of admonishment, letters of reprimand, what we call non-judicial punishment or Article 15 action, up to and including court-martial.

Q: And the question is you talk about the perfection of the test. You don't have to get 100 anymore. You're going to focus on training and then field exercises.

LT. GEN. WILSON: Right.

Q: But they still will be taking those tests. You're just say to them, "don't worry, you don't have to get 100 anymore."

LT. GEN. WILSON: Right. So, 90 percent. Currently the 90 percent is a passing grade, and so it's a pass or fail on the test and we're not keeping score.

Q: Not keeping score at all?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Other than pass or fail.

Q: Because of the team test like the Navy...

(CROSSTALK)

LT. GEN. WILSON: That's one of the areas we're looking at.

Q: And the field exercise, you're going to focus more on that than you have in the past?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Right.

SEC. JAMES: Yes, please?

Q: Michael Hoffman with Military.com

Six years ago, there were similar announcements going with firing and wholesale changes being promised within the nuclear community. Six years, now, another major problem has come up. I guess my question is: Why does it take major problems to come up within the nuclear world for these changes? Why did the Air Force fail to be proactive in identifying these problems before major problems come up?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Well, I think we, you know, this enterprise is something that all of us who are in it take very seriously every day. And we're looking to make sure it's the best as it can be. What we've all identified is that we've had systemic problems, I would say, in the -- on this "perfection is the standard" culture.

And so, what we're trying to get through is that we have flawless execution in the field through teamwork, but this "perfection is the standard" that made people micromanage folks; that didn't empower them. And that's part of the culture that we're going after right now to be able to fix.

So, our Force Improvement Program is getting after what you -- part of what you just described is this "how do I change the culture" and "how do I change it for the better," to make it where we've got commanders in the field that recognize the error and they can be empowered to be able to fix it and move forward.

Q: Doesn't the perfection -- it sounds almost like an excuse. You're providing them an excuse for -- I mean, cheating is one of the highest problems within the honor code. Obviously, you guys feel that way because you're pushing for those core values. I mean, it seems like for you to still have confidence, even though, you know, a significant chunk of the missileers are cheating, seems to be major problem.

LT. GEN. WILSON: I'm going to go back and say there's 25,000 in Global Strike Command; 99.5 percent of them every day do their job with excellence, with confidence, with pride in what they do. What we've identified is a very small percentage of folks who did not live up to our core values.

Q: A large percentage of the missileers within the Air Force, though. Correct?

LT. GEN. WILSON: It is a significant portion, certainly at Malmstrom Air Force Base. It is. Now, again, what I think you'll find is that at the root of this, that there was a few, handful of people that were at the crux of this problem. And this -- this belief that I'm going to help somebody, when in fact they breached their integrity. And that's the thing that the Secretary and I have talked about. We're going to hold people accountable at all levels, so from the youngest Airman here to the people in charge, to ensure that that climate exists that we allow our people to do the job the way they should.

SEC. JAMES: If I could also add, again, there are those who apparently actively cheated, and then there was another group who knew something about it, but said nothing. If one person -- if one person had spoken up, this could have been very different. And so that's why we are really focusing on what integrity means. It means the individual acting with integrity; that it means seeing something in your environment that's not right, your job is to speak up.

And we're making a big point of emphasizing that.

Q: General, just a point of clarification here. You said, I believe, that this went on for a period of two years. I mean, so it's obviously multiple tests. Is that -- is that fair?

LT. GEN. WILSON: That's correct.

Q: And is it all of the tests that the missileers were given each month?

LT. GEN. WILSON: No, what -- you know, again what we found is we found a varying range. You'll find of those 79, there was a few of them who did it one time. There was a few of them who may have done it many times. So, as we give you the results of the CDI to look through, we -- we -- we can tie together the web of who, what, where, why and how they did this. And there were some who -- who only knew about it, but didn't say anything.

Q: Can I just return quickly to Bob's question? I mean, it does sort of strain credulity to think if this is a cultural systemic problem, that something similar isn't going or wasn't going on at the other -- at the other wings. Did you, beyond asking missileers whether they had any compromising information, did you do any forensic analysis to test whether that might be the case?

LT. GEN. WILSON: What I would say is that everybody -- you know, we went where the evidence took us. In this case, we found that the crux of it, there was four individuals. Three of those individuals were also involved in illegal drug activity, potentially illegal drug activity. If we would have removed those, then this incident probably would have never have happened.

(CROSSTALK)

LT. GEN. WILSON: So if those individuals would have been at some other base, we might have been talking about this at another base. But those individuals at the crux of it were the heart of it, and three of them were involved in illegal drug use.

Q: But, just to -- my question, there wasn't any further investigation beyond the questioning of the missileers?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Well, everybody has rights, and so, to be able to do that, if they would have found information on a phone that linked to another base, we would have followed that lead. It didn't lead there.

Helene?

Q: Oh, excuse me. Helene Cooper, with New York Times.

I think what we're all having trouble following is that it feels like there was a level of probe at Malmstrom that there was not at the other bases, and I think that's what we're all circling around, particularly given that so many people have talked about this culture of cheating that's been in place for years.

If that's the case, but yet you say there are only, you know, if you'd moved those four people who were at Malmstrom out of the -- the equation, we wouldn't be having this conversation to begin with.

That's just, those two are two halves that are hard to put together and understand. I'm still having trouble with figuring out why. What's the deal with Malmstrom?

LT. GEN. WILSON: What I'm saying is these four people -- these four people who are also, say, enabled by today's cell phone technology, so I can take a cell phone and I can text answers and I send it out to a group of people, which is what -- in essence, what happened.

(OFF-MIKE)

LT. GEN. WILSON: What's that?

Q: Have they been dismissed (inaudible)?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Those four people are, three are still under OSI investigation, one of them is not, and we're taking command action on that individual.

Q: He's being dismissed?

LT. GEN. WILSON: We're taking disciplinary action on that person, yes.

Colin?

Q: Colin Clark, Breaking Defense.

I was taking this as (inaudible), Madam Secretary, but what are you going to do over the next three to five years to ensure that the people doing this mission know that you are really committed to this mission, and that it matters?

Because that seems to be, from what we hear when we chat with people, a major problem at these bases. I mean, it's -- it's not thrilling duty. It's important, but it's not thrilling. And there's a sense among a lot of people, I think, that given the -- how long it's taken to do repairs, that sort of thing, that there's not a lot of interest.

SEC. JAMES: So, Colin, I would say, just from my perspective, from the period of time that I have as being part of Air Force, I intend to bring to it persistent focus, persistent leadership, periodic visits, meeting with commanders, asking how things are done, going to meet with members of the missile crews and the other members of the team. So that's what I intend to do.

And, in addition, you heard, we're redirecting some resources quickly. We're gonna take a little bit more time, look at some other issues like professional development, which I think is terribly important, that people see a path to rise through the ranks so that it will be in fact and in perception viewed as a good job.

So these are the things that I intend to bring with the help of General Wilson and his Global Strike team.

Q: And can you give us a couple of examples of how you're going to -- I can't remember the exact phrase you guys used, but changing the evaluation process? You're gonna use simulators more...

LT. GEN. WILSON: Certainly. Let me give you as an example. So, today, a missile crew member takes three tests a month. Each of them has about 30 questions on that test. Then they take what they call a MPT, mission procedural trainer.

However, those have all evolved into evaluations. A air crew member takes a monthly test and his test is called Bold Face. It's something that they have to be able to, no matter how stressful the situation the middle of the night, the best bad situation, they have to remember this, Missile crew members don't have that. So we're gonna develop what we call Bold Face for missile crew members.

And in most every flying weapons system, you get issued what we call a master question file. And it's a series of questions on the important things to operate that weapons system. What are the notes and warnings and cautions that I should be familiar with to be able to do it?

The crew members are tested quarterly on those. So that's a model we also think we could follow.

A flying crew member is evaluated on a 17-month cycle. As part of that evaluation, there's typically an open book and a closed book test, and there's typically an emergency procedure simulator and then they go do the mission.

We're gonna do that same model, where we -- where we give line crew members to a 17-month time period. They'll do an open book and a closed book test. They'll do a mission procedural trainer. And then we'll go observe them as they do their combat mission in the field and see how they do. And then from that, we'll give them an evaluation.

We think that is a much more healthy way of doing it. We've been doing it in the aviation business for many years and we'll -- we'll morph the ICBM community into that model.

Q: Isn't that limited by the fact that you can't actually launch a missile? I mean, how can you do it in the field?

LT. GEN. WILSON: There's lots of things that happen in the field. And the decisions and judgments that a crew member must make every day to keep it healthy. And so, you can evaluate that.

But you can do that in the emergency procedures part in the simulator. And we'll -- we'll see how they can react to that. And that's part of what we do (inaudible)

Please?

Q: Hi, Brian Everstine, Air Force Times.

On the quick look action teams, could you talk about what examples or incentives you'd look at. Is there a time line? And when you went out and talked to these Airmen, what did they want?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Let me give a couple example.

It's -- some of it is as simple as they want to be recognized by wearing a badge that says I'm a missile maintenance technician, a master technician, all the way up to some type of pay.

So we're looking at a variety of nuclear deterrent ops servicemember, things like that. So I've got a big list of incentives that they talked about in the field. We've got a team looking at -- specifically at that. We're gonna bring recommendations back to the chief and secretary in a few weeks and say here's the -- here's the part that we think provides the most bang for the buck and we can get after.

Q: Luis Martinez at ABC News.

What precisely are these officers, the senior officers, being disciplined for? For not having caught on that there was cheating under their command or for fostering a climate that I would assume has probably been going on for a long time that they probably inherited from their predecessors?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Well, they're -- specifically for loss of confidence in their leadership ability to provide leadership, oversight and supervisory role that they should have done, monitoring their crew force.

So, if I'm an operations commander, I ought to know what my crews are doing. I ought to -- I know enough detail of what they're doing every single day, and they weren't.

They weren't aware that this was going on in any way, shape or form, and we think they should have been aware.

Q: So you're saying they're being disciplined precisely for not having caught on to cheating?

LT. GEN. WILSON: We're saying that we're gonna hold them accountable for the people that worked for them, and specifically they failed to provide the leadership, oversight or supervisory role for the members in their squadron of which a large majority, in every squadron.

We're going to give you a breakdown, again, by squadron, by rank, by position involved in this.

Q: What about the micromanaging that you seem to be saying is systemic in the -- in the force? Are you also being critical of them for that?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Well, there's a difference between micromanagement and there's a difference between knowing what's going on in your squadron. (inaudible), the leadership by walking around. So I need to know what's going on in my squadron, but I don't need to be directing the individual actions of everybody every day.

Q: Right, but you said earlier that the micromanagement is what led to the creation of this cultural need to be perfect.

LT. GEN. WILSON: Right. Right.

Q: So, therefore, aren't you saying that the micromanagement of the force is what they're being disciplined for?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Well, let me give you an example. So at a launch facility today, a decision that normally a lieutenant or captain should be able to make isn't being done until he calls up and asks his squadron commander or his group commander for permission to do something.

We have -- we have people that won't make a decision until they get approval from a higher headquarters. We think that that -- that whole paradigm needs to be changed, and we're pushing the level of responsibility and accountability down to the crew commander in the field.

However, a squadron commander who is in charge of many people needs to be able to know what's going on in the squadron and provide the environment that fosters a healthier relationship, and in this case we don't think it was happening.

Q: Is it safe to say that all nine, their careers are over?

LT. GEN. WILSON: All nine of them are being reassigned. They're coming either my staff or the 20th headquarter staff or to different staff positions.

Q: Their career is over.

LT. GEN. WILSON: They have been removed from command. They will -- they can continue to serve.

Q: Madam Secretary?

SEC. JAMES: (inaudible)

Q: Can you just give me a sense of the range of disciplinary action you're looking at for those who were implicated and did, indeed, either passively or actively...

(CROSSTALK)

LT. GEN. WILSON: The range is, from the least, a letter of counseling through letters of admonishment, letters of reprimand, to nonjudicial punishment, which is called an Article 15, up to including court-martials.

Q: Jon Harper with Stars and Stripes.

Was Colonel Stanley asked to resign or did he offer resignation on his own volition?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Colonel Stanley offered his resignation.

Q: When did he -- what did he -- did you say that the resignation was accepted today, but did he offer it today or when this was first found out?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Both.

Q: Some would say that by allowing Colonel Stanley to resign, that you're sending kind of a mixed message about accountability -- sort of neutral on whether he was responsible or not. I wonder if you could address that?

And a similar question about Major General Carey, who I know has been -- was removed from command of the 20th Air Force last year. But he was -- he was in charge during a large portion of this period of time.

Are you considering any further action against him? I know he's still on the staff at Space Command. Will he be allowed to retire as a two-star general?

SEC. JAMES: So, I'll talk to Major General Carey, and if you would do the other one, General Wilson.

So with respect to General Carey, as you remember, Bob, he was removed from command. He was reassigned and he's been on the staff under the Space Commander General Shelton. My understanding is he has asked to retire and there will be an officer grade determination made on him. And there's a system, of course. Eventually, that will come to me for a judgment. I have not seen the paperwork yet and when I get it, I will act upon it and deal with it.

LT. GEN. WILSON: In reference to Colonel Stanley, everybody who knows Colonel Stanley would say he has served with great honor and distinction. He was also the wing commander where this incident happened. The Command Directed Investigation singled out the operations group commander and the squadron commanders for failing to provide the proper leadership, oversight and supervision.

Colonel Stanley, as the leader of the wing, accepted responsibility for the actions because all those people work for him. And so he said, "It's -- it is my job and my duty to uphold this, and I did not live up to that." And so he elected to resign.

SEC. JAMES: Please.

Q: The selection of a security forces Airman -- officer, I should say -- to take over the 341st, is that -- was that decided specifically to not have a missileer take over at 341st? Or could you explain how that was decided?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Yeah, well, I think anybody who knows Colonel John Wilcox would tell you he is the right leader. He's already been out at Malmstrom. He spent four months out there earlier this year after their inspection to bring the security forces group up to the right level. So he's exactly the right leader at the right time to lead the wing. He's known throughout Malmstrom and beloved like Colonel Stanley was.

Q: General, just one small point. You said these nine officers can continue to serve. You also said that some may face courts-martial.

LT. GEN. WILSON: No, let me make (inaudible). For the 79 officers involved in the cheating, so the lieutenants and the captains, will have the range of punishment, everything from letters of admonishment and counseling, up to and including courts-martial. None of the nine leaders who were removed -- some of them are getting letters of admonishment; a few of them are getting letters of reprimand. But they will be allowed to continue to serve if they elect to.

Q: So they only get nonjudicial punishment -- those nine officers?

LT. GEN. WILSON: Administrative punishment, yes.

SEC. JAMES: OK. Thank you.

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