

2015 Air and Space Conference

Enlisted Force Update With

Chief Master Sergeant James Cody
Chief Master Sergeant Of The Air Force

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MODERATOR: Well, good morning. I would think you would think this would be a flashback, but it's not. Good morning. Thank you all for joining us here this morning.

The mission of the United States Air Force Association is to support a strong Air Force and its airmen. I invite you now to turn your attention to the screens to watch a short video.

[Video playing]

SPEAKER: Again, welcome. AFA is dedicated to the well-being of you and your families while you're serving and long after you've departed the service. I encourage all of you -- your families, friends, and supporters -- to become members. Please visit our booth or talk to one of our AFA staff members about many membership options available to

you.

It's an honor to be back on stage to introduce the next speaker. The thing I miss most about being the Chief Master Sergeant in the Air Force is the hours spent with you, our airmen. Chief Cody has the honor to do that now. He spends hours upon hours with airmen serving around the globe. When you do that you realize just how special our airmen truly are. Chief Cody knows that very well and this morning he's going to talk about you, our airmen.

Please welcome to the stage the Chief Master Sergeant of the United States Air Force and a great supporter of AFA, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Jim Cody.

CHIEF CODY: Thank you. Well, good morning, everybody. General Welsh, Ms. Welsh, thanks so much for being here. It's certainly good to see you, General Spencer. I see lots of our senior leaders from the Air Force here today, so thanks for joining us. I'm so glad today is today and not yesterday, boss, where I would normally have to follow you. I

know General Hayden had that great honor, so I appreciate the fact that I get to be today. Let me really ask my wife, Athena, to stand up real quick here before I get into this. She loves this as much as you can expect, but it's important that I acknowledge Athena because we've been doing this together for a long time. She certainly is an incredible airman herself. More than 26 years in uniform, she continues to serve and connect with our families in a very meaningful and purposeful way. I certainly wouldn't be half the man that I am without her. She kind of says this a lot to me -- two heads, one brain. So if I thought really good of myself, I'd say oh, she's really listening to what I have to say. But really what she's telling me when she says that is "Shut up and listen." Unfortunately, I hear that more than I would like to, but nonetheless we're a team and we have been for almost 30 years. So I feel really blessed.

So I am going to talk to you this morning about that legacy. The boss talked about the legacy.

You've seen it throughout the time here at AFA. But I'm going to talk about the legacy of the more 7 million enlisted men and women in our Air Force and how proud I am of them and how proud each and every one of us should be. Our nation is.

You know, this is a profession of arms.

Next slide.

[Video playing]

CHIEF CODY: So we have this commitment, America's Air Force, a profession of arms. And we understand in our chosen profession that it is a higher calling with higher standards to defend our nation and win our wars. Understanding as the boss said yesterday that respect is absolutely essential in all facets of its meaning to our success as an Air Force. We all take an oath. It is really is a constant reminder of the gravity of that commitment to our nation. We live by core values that guide us in everything that we do. We adhere to a code of conduct. And we have a creed that kind of allows us to think and act as one as an Air Force. And those

are more than mere words in a little blue book. They actually are the commitment that each and every one of us as airmen is dedicated to.

So let me tell you about who we are and that's not a question, right? It's not who are we, it's who we are as an enlisted force. We are certainly the most educated, most experienced, most capable force the world has ever known. And when you think about the most educated in the 68 years that we have been around, when you think about how 94 percent of our airmen, our enlisted airmen, have some college. And when you look at the undergraduate degrees, the advanced degrees, the Ph.Ds. that our airmen possess, when you think about what we're doing with professional military education to advance at using technology and methodology, it is at the cutting edge of how you deliver education to advance a force. When you think about the fact that we have enlisted folks graduating weapons school now, when you think about the fact that we have airmen graduating the Air War College, that is one educated enlisted force. And I

promise you, 68 years ago when they were talking about the enlisted force, they weren't talking about that. But they certainly had a commitment for us to be where we are today, and we certainly are here today because of them.

And General Welsh talked about this yesterday. When you think about the most experienced force, 80 percent of the airmen in our Air Force have known nothing but that 25 years of combat operations. And that completely shapes the force in a much different way, certainly than the time when I came in the Air Force, Cold War-type era. It's a dramatically different force with a dramatically different impact on each and every one of those airmen. Look at the level of engagement that we are still operating in today and I would share with you if you thought we were busy a year ago, do the math. We're about 17,000 less airmen in our Air Force this year than we were last year. And if you do the math, our level of engagement is about 5,000 less in certain areas than they were last year at this very same time. If you do

the math, that means we have about 12,000 less airmen doing more stuff globally. So a huge impact, but you can't do that if you're not educated. You can't do that if you don't have the dedicated, committed airmen and families that are doing this. And I tell you, that education and that experience that we have turns into absolute capability. And how we leverage our airmen today is unprecedented in the history our force.

Think about what they do today and the advanced opportunities. We have enlisted airmen as fellows, as legislative liaisons operating on the Hill with our senior civilian leadership of our country, influencing and helping to tell our Air Force story and what we need to do. We're training better than we ever have in the future. When you think about how we have enlisted airmen embedded in industry, learning from industry, and will bring that back to our Air Force and make us a more capable and better Air Force. It's just phenomenal. They're part of the acquisition teams for every one of our major weapons systems.

They actually sit as part of that acquisition team and shape and influence what they will be for the future Air Force.

And when you talk about innovation -- and I know General Spencer is hugely in this -- when you think about what our airmen are doing, certainly under his leadership and drive while he was still wearing the uniform, enabled them and empowered them to do this. We have about 5,600 ideas out there, innovative ideas. We've already saved \$37 million, which will lead to billions of dollars overtime as we continue to leverage our force in the way that we are.

So there's no question that our Air Force looks different because of the legacy and the commitment of those that came before us and we have to carry that forward, but we are a pretty phenomenal Air Force and really an exceptionally professional enlisted force and that goes to our professionalism.

And when you think about how professional our force is and what they do, it really is much more than being the great technicians that our airmen start

out as and they are as we continue to develop them into the leaders that they need to be for their nation, for their fellow airmen. You have to think about how the wingman concept goes into that and how the development of the force goes into that and how it's our responsibility to individually develop ourselves and develop others, and our airmen take that responsibility seriously and do it every day. How we leverage that into the future is essential, using things like MyVector, connecting with our airmen, giving honest and meaningful feedback utilizing the ACA. These things are all essential to our professional force because if it's just about getting the job done, you can do it a lot different than we do it. It's a lot more than that. It's a lot more than that in our chosen profession.

And when you have people that are professional like this, capable like we just talked about, and really look at those demographics, how capable they are, what you get is you get some really proud airmen. And Chief Roy kind of mentioned this,

this is one of probably the -- this is the best thing about this job and that is spending time with airmen. There's a lot of great things about being the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, but there's nothing, nothing better than spending time with airmen.

And this slide should build, but it's not, it should build with a lot of different airmen there that are doing different things out there. But when you think about the pride that our airmen have in what they do -- when you get that little ding thing, it tells you that things aren't good -- you can't help but when you spend time with our airmen and ask them about what they do and see it on their faces. So there's no place you can go in our Air Force that if you don't spend about 13 seconds with an airman and give him an opportunity to talk to you that they're going to talk to you about how proud about what they're doing and you can see it on their smiling faces. And really we were supposed to have this slide that came up and just looped all these smiling faces. It would have been awesome. It might come around, I'm

not sure. We checked this thing at least 22 times, 23 was the kicker I guess. Here we go. So when you look at these airmen -- I've met every single one of these airmen and as General Welsh would tell you, each and every one of them has a phenomenally unique story. But you can see it on their faces that they're proud to be airmen. They're proud to be professional airmen, and they know the significance of what they do for their nation every day, committed to doing it, will continue to do it into the future. And they are why we will remain the world's greatest Air Force. There's just not a question about it. But when you take a professional force that's proud of what they do, you know what you get? You get performers, and I can't tell you how many -- you have heard General Welsh talk about this -- it really doesn't matter how we do a lot of things if we don't perform. If we don't perform for our nation, all the other stuff really doesn't matter. It does matter on our force because we do create performers, professional airmen, that get the job done for us every day.

Let me talk to you about just a couple of them because they're pretty phenomenal. So some of you might recognize that man there on the left, certainly our Secretary of Defense, Secretary Carter. This is when he was actually the Under Secretary of Defense. But many of you might not recognize Tech. Sgt. Monique Maldonado who actually worked in the Under Secretary's Office at the time as one of his support staff. A pretty phenomenal airman, but maybe you just don't know how phenomenal, though. So she'd been in our Air Force about 13 years, a single mom serving, certainly sharp. So Monique just recently finished her Ph.D., just a few weeks ago to be honest with you, maybe a couple of months now from the last time I talked to her. I actually had the opportunity to sit down with her in my office. I had met her actually when she worked for the Under, but recently got to sit down and chat with her. So pretty impressive, right? Tech Sergeant, 13 years, Ph.D., working for the Under Secretary of Defense. I mean I'm pretty sure she was pretty busy in that office

given everything that we'd expect her to do, making a big difference. So what's really interesting is what she did her Ph.D. on. So she did on national security in reference to the F-35. Now that's impressive. I can't speak to this well because I certainly don't have a Ph.D., but if you're going for a Ph.D. there's a process. You'll go through this and there's variations that can happen. It doesn't happen very often. It will come back and give you some feedback. You've got to research. There's a process. Only the first time through, within 15 minutes of her giving her dissertation they brought her back in that room and they rewarded her. That's how impressive this young lady is. That's capability.

[Break in audio]

SPEAKER: It looks like we seem to be having some problems with the audio there, so as soon as we get that corrected we'll turn it back over. In the meantime let's take a look at the sum of what the Space Command brings to the fight as we go to the Maui Space Surveillance Complex in Hawaii.

[Video playing]

CHIEF MASTER CODY: (in progress) experience that they've had on these weapons systems and they make adjustments like this, and that's what you get with a professional force. So we should be real proud of them beyond just being professional. We heard some great stories yesterday by the Chief, I mean stories that just tug at your heartstrings, right? Captain [Wise], Sgt. [Sheridan], [Airman Stone]. I mean these are just heroes in their own right for everything they've done for our Air Force. But those other airmen are heroes. They're making a difference every day in our Air Force. They're special.

Airman Vasquez here, he's an F-15 crew chief out of Mountain Home. He's sitting there. You've got to kind of wonder, what's he doing right there? He's actually kind of sporting his scar there and what took place there is he's up there in the nose gear of the F-15, working on an actuator that he had to replace. He's on the ladder and he starts to lose his footing as he's coming down. I'll let him tell the rest of

his story.

[Video playing]

CHIEF CODY: This is our Air Force. These are our airmen. This is what they do and how can you not be extremely proud? So despite the challenges that we might face when you look to the future, and we have a lot of challenges that we're going to have to overcome, there just is no question in my mind and I know there's no question in the Chief's mind or the Secretary's mind that we're going to overcome all of those challenges. We'll continue to advance the force into the future.

You know, our airmen contend with all of this, right? So you look at the day-to-day business of fighting and winning our nation's wars and globally engage at unprecedented levels and then we assume they can balance all of these things in their lives. This is what a professional airman looks like. These are the things that are going on when you're part of a profession of arms, and they're getting through it. It just doesn't happen, it just doesn't happen.

You've got to have great airmen. You've got to have great families, loved ones supporting them, commitment.

And you've got to have strong leaders. I'm going to ask the Command Chiefs to join me up here on stage because senior enlisted leaders represent all of our enlisted airmen in our Air Force. And I promise you, without their strong, committed, dedicated leadership, we wouldn't be the Air Force that we are today. We just wouldn't be it. This group is phenomenal. I can't tell you how proud I am and humbled I am to serve beside each and every one of them. And the things that they're doing every day to develop our airmen, to move our force into the future, are unprecedented. It's unprecedented because there were times in the history of our Air Force that they weren't empowered the way that they are today -- to lead, to influence, to shape -- and that is manifested in what they do every day and what you see in our airmen. So let me play this video real quick.

[Video playing]

CHIEF CODY: So I don't think this airman, this leader, really needs any introduction obviously. But every organization needs a heartbeat that drives the pulse of every one of us and that's our Chief of Staff. That's this man. There isn't an airman out there that cares more about our airmen, their families, or our Air Force. Nobody more committed to carrying that legacy forward into the future, ensuring that we're propelling into the future. We have been blessed, blessed to be under your leadership, boss, unbelievably so, unbelievably so. We would not nearly be who we are without you, no better airman.

So if I could ask you to please join us up here on stage? So Chief, on behalf of the nearly 400,000 enlisted men and women, we'd like you to accept this invitation to be the recipient, the tenth recipient, of the Air Force Order of the Sword, the highest level of recognition that can be afforded by the enlisted force. So I would ask the Chief actually and Mrs. Welsh to come up here and allow all of our airmen to come up and congratulate you, sir.

Everybody, please, come on up. Let's form a line. I mean that really is the end of the presentation. It just doesn't get any better than that.

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