Letters

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The Best We Ever Had

Your staff and the AFA members have really outdone yourselves with the March edition of the AFA magazine. I read every comment in the "Letters" section *[p. 6]* about Gen. Curtis E. LeMay, as well as the "SAC's Half Century" article *[March, p. 74]*. I agree with every one of the members comments. It appeared that the articles were all from the operations (flight crews') side. I am a 30-year retired aircraft maintenance (KC-97, KC-135, and B-52D, E, H, and G models) chief master sergeant with 22-plus years in SAC. Permit me to give you a little perspective from the maintenance side.

Gen. Curtis E. LeMay was the best thing that ever happened to the maintenance personnel of the Air Force. He was a people person. He set high standards himself and he expected high standards from his people. I went to SAC in 1954, 2nd Bomb Wing, 2nd Air Refueling Squadron, Hunter AFB, Savannah, Ga. I had just spent three years in MATS. After about a month, I asked myself: What had I gotten into? As my career turned out, it was the best move I ever made. SAC had a mission, and every member in SAC from the top down knew what that mission was and how to accomplish it. Each tanker had a crew chief and two assistant crew chiefs. In those days the crew chief and his crew did a lot of the unscheduled maintenance on his aircraft as well as the postflight and preflight inspections. General LeMay loved the crew chief system, and he supported the maintenance people 100 percent. LeMay directed his flight crews to always take care of their ground crews. When they did not, they heard about it from the squadron and wing commanders.

I was a crew chief on a KC-97G tanker in the 2nd ARF Sq. when SAC directed the 38th Air Division to conduct Operation Try Out, which was the forerunner of the SAC tanker/bomber alert force. Both the 308th BW and 2nd BW were the wings selected to do the exercise. I believe the 305th at MacDill Air Force Base was, also. The 2nd started out with three tankers on alert, and then went to six. The four classes of exercise were: Alfa, crews reported to the airplane, powered on, and contacted the command post; Bravo, same, only crews started all four engines; Coco, same, only crews taxied free flow to the runway; Romeo, same, only crews made a takeoff for actual mission.

On one of our Romeo exercises, General LeMay and his staff were on base to review and evaluate the exercise. When the planes started landing after their missions, and the crews went in for the maintenance/mission debriefing, General LeMay attended a couple of the debriefings. I had the distinct privilege of meeting the general at one of the debriefings. It was a great honor and privilege. The working hours of the SAC maintenance personnel were long, but it was very rewarding. The competition for consecutive on-time takeoffs between the crew chiefs was keen. There used to be a program in SAC called PRIDE: Professional Results In Daily Efforts. The maintenance people in SAC took great pride in their jobs and their responsibilities, and General LeMay saw to it that they were rewarded for their efforts.

Gen. Curtis E. LeMay was the best general officer the Air Force has ever had or will have. Only a few have come anywhere close to equaling his accomplishments.

CMSgt. Donald W. Grannan,
USAF (Ret.)
Benbrook, Tex.

I enjoyed reading John T. Correll's article, "SAC's Half Century," but the end of the article is misleading. It suggests that Air Force Global Strike Command was created in 2009 to take over some of the resources that had been traditionally the domain of Strategic Air Command, and that the two commands have "for obvious reasons" been compared with each other. It also suggests that SAC's history is over.

In reality, SAC is currently active. Air Force Global Strike Command *is* Strategic Air Command. In August 2009, Strategic Air Command was redesignated as Air Force Global Strike Command, and activated again. In actuality, SAC is back. Organizationally, there are not two commands but the same command. It could easily be redesignated back to its old name, Strategic Air Command, and be allowed to use its old emblem. Regardless of the new name and emblem, Strategic Air Command and Air Force Global Strike Command are the same organization.

Daniel L. Haulman
Air Force Historical Research Agency
Montgomery, Ala.

Regarding the statement "SAC became an all-jet strike force": No mention was made of the B-47 Stratojet which entered the SAC operational force in October 1951. Eventually 36 SAC wings had B-47s assigned. The B-47 was the backbone of the SAC force throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, with the last SAC B-47 being mustered out in December 1967. A total of 2,024 B-47s were built for the Cold War period.

Col. Perry R. Nuhn,
USAF (Ret.)
Okatie, S.C.

I rise to the defense of Gen. George C. Kenney.

Your gratuitous shots at General Kenney ("He was often absent pursuing

Do you have a comment about a current article in the magazine? Write to "Letters," *Air Force* Magazine, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209-1198. (E-mail: letters@afa.org.) Letters should be concise and timely. We cannot acknowledge receipt of letters. We reserve the right to condense letters. Letters without name and city/base and state are not acceptable. Photographs cannot be used or returned.—THE EDITORS

other interests" and "was ...shuffled off to Air University") were unfair and represent nothing more than the historical hostility towards this outstanding airman that the Air Force has always had.

The real "sin" of General Kenney was his absolute loyalty to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur during his years in SWPA. You should be ashamed of yourselves for besmirching this great American.

Gina C. Genochio
Doral, Fla.

■ *For additional perspective on Kenney, see "The Other Founding Father," in the September 1987 issue, and "The Genius of George Kenney," April 2002 issue.—THE EDITORS*

The Select 75 Percent

In reviewing the most recent major generals' promotion list, some very interesting, and perhaps troublesome, facts emerge *["Air Force World: Senior Staff Changes," March, p. 22]*. Of the 15 rated officers (all pilots and who will become our future senior USAF leaders), 11 were from the US Air Force Academy, for a selection rate of almost 75 percent. This compares to a USAFA commission rate of slightly over 22 percent. At a time when the senior USAF leadership has been subject to much turmoil in the last 15 to 20 years and has failed to exert much influence on national security affairs, these statistics are worthy of review.

This situation will only be exacerbated in the future by poor personnel decisions developed in the 1993-94 time period when it was decided to limit initial ROTC selection for pilot training to 100 per year, with the rest all going to USAFA graduates. While these initial ROTC numbers abated somewhat over time, the reality is that the vast majority of our future rated brigadier generals in the 2018 to 2020 time frame will most probably be USAFA graduates perpetuating perhaps a more parochial approach than a broader-based general officer cadre might achieve.

I'm not suggesting we select less qualified individuals simply to achieve some preordained ratios, but it is hard to fathom that 78 percent of our initial commissioned officers can only produce 25 percent of our rated general officers (at least as seen in this board). The analysis will probably reflect a higher percentage of academy graduates who attend pilot training than the other commissioning sources, but that is a subject for evaluation in its own light. I recognize this is a sensitive area for discussion and review, but our current leadership has a responsibility to ensure our future leaders are best able to serve this country and our Air Force,

and a more balanced general officer cadre may be part of that solution set.

Col. Quentin J. McGregor,
USAF (Ret.)
Truckee, Calif.

"Leaving No One Behind"

I totally disagree with the premise of your editorial in the March 2013 issue concerning the ongoing efforts of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) *["Editorial: Leaving No One Behind," p. 4].* I believe their mission to be unnecessary, mostly fruitless, and at a substantial cost to the taxpayer. To boast that their efforts last year resulted in finding two remains verges on the ludicrous. If I were an MIA during my Vietnam tour, I would not have expected my government to be combing the jungle 44 years later looking for my few remaining bone fragments. If that question had been asked of any other American in Vietnam before their last mission, I believe their answers would have been the same as mine.

To state that a new headquarters and laboratory for this operation are being constructed in Hawaii is morbid and bizarre. Then to advocate the construction of a museum for JPAC borders on being irrational. Our nation has much better use for the funds being expended on this effort of looking 45 to 50 years later for bone fragments in an "acidic" jungle terrain. I am certain it is excellent employment for all involved but a great waste, nonetheless.

Col. Lee R. Pitzer,
USAF (Ret.)
O'Fallon, Ill.

■ *JPAC has averaged approximately 80 identifications annually in recent years.—THE EDITORS*

Perhaps I'm the only one who sees the irony of the juxtaposition of the title—"Leaving No One Behind"—with the reality of more than 83,000 American service personnel—dating back to World War II—who remain missing in action (MIA). Lest this be interpreted as a critique of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC), it is not so intended. Just an acknowledgement of fiscal realities of our times. Even given funding for their expanded capabilities, at the rate of 200 identifications per year, it will require over 400 years to clear their backlog of unresolved cases.

Consequently, I'm pleased to know their efforts are being augmented by a number of civilian groups. Specifically, I am proud that one of our Sarasota-Manatee Chapter members—Bryan Moon—is involved in what is the largest and most successful of those efforts. Bryan—along with his son, Chris, and their families—founded the not-for-profit organization MIA Hunters specifically to locate American personnel missing from WW II. Pretty impressive when you recognize both Brian and Chris originally came from England. Over the period of 23 years they have conducted nearly 35 expeditions across the world—ranging from Romania and Italy to Papua New Guinea—and have located over 500 American servicemen.

Michael E. Richardson
Sarasota-Manatee Chapter
Sarasota, Fla.

Just Hang Loose

Your Kunsan photo spread in your March 2013 edition proved to be a fun trip down memory lane for me *["Remote and Ready at Kunsan," p. 52].* I was stationed at Kun' '97 to '98 and proud to serve in the Wolf Pack under a charismatic and up-and-coming wing commander (AKA "Wolf"), then-Col. Mark A. Welsh III. Suffice to say no one who served under the Wolf there is at all surprised how things turned out for him, and our Air Force is much better for it.

I offer a correction to the caption for your photo No. 3 on p. 59. What you identified as a Panton pilot's "push it up" salute is most probably just your run-of-the-mill "hang loose" sign. The "push it up" salute is accomplished by doing repeated two-armed push-up motions above the head, pushing towards the sky. It was a common pilot-to-controller acknowledgement as 35th

Fighter Squadron jets taxied past the control tower.

Col. Bill Malec,
USAF (Ret.)
O'Fallon, Ill.

No Retraction

Regarding the April 2013 *Air Force* Magazine "Letters: Gunnery School," retired Brig. Gen. Art Cornelius writes: The "lightweight H model seems to have its tail wheel stuck down" *[p. 8].* Unlike earlier and more familiar models of the P-51, the H was not equipped with a retractable tail wheel, a part of the lightweight program.

Maj. Gen. Ken Russell,
USAF (Ret.)
Mercer Island, Wash.

Halvorsen

The March 2013 issue's article on Col. Gail Halvorsen was truly moving *["Halvorsen," p. 64].* He saw a way to make the grim situation for the children a little more tolerable. Although perhaps minor in the total scheme of things that went on during this period, it provided lasting positive impressions of our military forces to citizens of a country that had been so devastated by the long war. It also shows that even one individual, by his or her actions, could create such a lasting effect. I suspect that this type of thing continues through the "off duty" actions of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines in the many places they serve. It makes me proud to have served.

Lt. Col. Frank D. Cooper,
USAF (Ret.)
Lincoln, Calif.

Thank you very much to Peter Grier for sharing the story of Col. Gail Halvorsen in his article, "Halvorsen." Colonel Halvorsen represents the hundreds of airmen who made the Berlin Airlift such a success. I have had the pleasure of meeting Colonel Halvorsen many times and he is truly a gentleman with a bright, kind, and giving personality. His willingness to please so many kids is a benchmark to all the aircrews that have supported humanitarian operations since. Although there has never been another "Candy Bomber," these crews realize the importance of their missions and the effect they have on so many people.

While living in Tampa, Fla., I got to meet one of the military supporters in the area and when talking to him he mentioned he was one of the first military dependents living in Munich, Germany, right after World War II. Even far from Berlin, the stories of the Candy Bomber were told in Munich, giving the people all throughout Germany reason to believe in the future and to stay optimistic.

Lastly, at the Floyd Bennett Field near John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, Mr. Timothy Chopp, founder and president of the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation (www.spiritoffreedom.org), and the members of the foundation are keeping the memory of the airlift alive by keeping a restored Douglas C-54E flying. Inside of this aircraft is a traveling museum informing many schoolkids and others about the airlift, as it is dedicated to preserving the memory and legacy of the greatest humanitarian/aviation event in history.

Lt. Col. Jon E. Incerpi,
USAF (Ret.)
Houston

I have been a faithful reader for years without comment. Suddenly, two articles in the March 2013 edition have evoked an urge to respond.

"Halvorsen" by Peter Grier was not the first of several pieces I have read about Col. Gail Halvorsen, the Candy Bomber. It was a pleasure to see another. He was an officer and a gentleman in every sense of the words. Colonel Halvorsen was my

squadron commander at Vandenberg Air Force Base's satellite tracking station in the late 1960s.

While I did not know him or see him at work in any of his other assignments, I am sure Peter Grier's complimentary observations were accurate and deserved. When I became a squadron commander myself during the last two of my Air Force years, I was able to use much that I had learned from Colonel Halvorsen.

"SAC's Half Century" by John T. Correll was a very interesting discussion of the command I was part of from 1955 to 1960. I was disappointed, however, to see no mention of one of SAC's smaller facets in which I served, the four strategic support squadrons which used C-124 Globemaster cargo aircraft to support its operations and other Air Force airlift needs.

Upon completing my training to be an aircraft navigator, I was assigned to one of the strategic support squadrons at El Paso, Tex. We ferried bombs to and from various SAC bases in this country for the B-47s, then the B-52s. We hauled all kinds of cargo, such as a load of food supplies to Thule and a Danish weather station at Nord, Greenland, and other things to bases in Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Europe, and Morocco.

Yes, our aircraft flew low and slowly and were not refueled inflight. No, we did not drop any bombs or even prepare to. But I believe the strategic support squadron helped make it possible for the bombers and tankers to be ready to do their things if the call came from Offutt.

Maj. William L. Umberson,
USAF (Ret.)
San Diego

Two More Spy Eyes

I read the subject article in the latest *Air Force* Magazine, dated March 2013,with much interest, but I did not see any reference to the 349th SRS or its sister squadron, the 350th *["Spy Eyes in the Sky," p. 32].* Although the article is primarily about the 1st Reconnaissance Squadron, I think your readers might be interested in knowing a little about the 100th SRW and its two squadrons (the 349th and the 350th). These two recon squadrons flew missions throughout the world and extensively during the conflict in Vietnam long before 1976. The U-2 platforms changed dramatically from the early 1960s to 1976 when the U-2s were moved to Beale. A whole lot was learned about high-altitude recon with multiple sensors from both the U-2 and DC-130 platforms during those earlier years.

Col. Frederick M. Banks,
USAF (Ret.)
Capitola, Calif.

The Syria Question

John Tirpak's article on what it would take to conduct an air campaign against that country could not [have been] timelier ("The Syria Question," March 2013) *[p. 26].* What is clear is that Syrian air defenses are much more formidable than those NATO dealt with in Libya and in many ways approach what the coalition faced in Iraq. In some ways, Syrian defenses may be better than those Iraq deployed due to the presence of advanced, mobile SAM systems such as the SA-10, -17, and -22. Readers may remember that Israel recently destroyed a Syrian convoy bound for Hezbollah in Lebanon that was allegedly transferring large numbers of SA-17s to the terrorist group. In addition, Syria has had decades to deploy its integrated air defense system and practice operating it against one of the best Air Forces in the world, Israel's.

It is easy to forget that against even a relatively weak adversary, it takes considerable resources to achieve air superiority, conduct hundreds of strikes on both fixed and mobile ground targets, and conduct continuing support missions such as ISR and combat search and rescue. To eliminate Libya's limited air defenses and dismantle its relatively primitive land forces, NATO took several months and employed nearly 200 aircraft, including B-2s and EA-18G electronic warfare aircraft, plus more than 100 land attack cruise missiles, both the armed MQ-9 Reaper and the high-altitude, long-endurance RQ-4 Global Hawk unmanned aerial systems, and the V-22 Osprey. It is easy to forget that every strike sortie requires several, sometimes many, other aircraft performing missions such as electronic warfare, suppression of enemy air defenses, combat air patrol, refueling, and search and rescue. Also, NATO forces rapidly ran out of precision munitions and apparently, given the comments quoted in the article by the US ambassador to NATO, have not refilled their magazines.

If the world is confronted with the Assad regime's clear use of chemical weapons, the United States and willing allies may have no choice but to intervene. Syria would not present the easy prey that was Libya. Moreover, a US-led coalition might not have the luxury of the multimonth buildup that preceded both conflicts with Iraq nor be able to take the time needed—several weeks according to the JCS Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey—to roll back Syrian air defenses. Intervention in Syria to prevent the proliferation and/or use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) could necessitate a massive and rapid air campaign across the expanse of Syrian territory. Establishing air superiority would only be the first step. The coalition would have to deploy land forces to establish control over Syria's extensive WMD stockpiles and provide continuous air support and resupply. Such an air campaign would unquestionably see the first appearance in combat of the F-22, along with hundreds of other aircraft, including strategic bombers, fighters, aerial refuelers, transports, manned and unmanned ISR platforms, and electronic warfare aircraft. Even with the advantages of numbers, geographic positioning, and precision weapons, the coalition is sure to suffer losses from Syrian air defenses.

Tirpak's article raises a larger concern, what I would describe as the country after Syria question. The proliferation of advanced military technologies means that the US is likely to face future air defense environments that are significantly more capable, hence deadlier, than those of Iraq, Libya, and Syria. In addition, prospective adversaries are seeking to employ so-called anti-access systems such as ballistic and anti-shipping cruise missiles to deny the US and its allies the use of close-in bases or naval deployments.

In addition, the ability of the US military to deal effectively with these future anti-access and area denial threats, particularly if it must be accomplished rapidly, is very much in doubt. Some of the older platforms will not remain effective in the face even of nearer-term air defenses without significant and costly modernization. As budget cuts require reductions in forces, it may be difficult to generate sufficient assets, particularly strike systems and precision weapons, with which to defeat an advanced air defense systems at acceptable cost. This makes it all the more important to transition to a fifth generation force.

At present, the US fleet of fifth generation aircraft is quite small. Moreover, it lacks the necessary advanced standoff weapons to allow this small force to be employed most effectively. It is imperative that the US military acquire the next generation of combat aircraft, particularly the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and a new long range strike system in sufficient numbers. In addition, the nation needs a long-range, stealthy unmanned ISR platform that can survive in defended airspace, the full complement of E/A-18 Growlers and new long-range, precision, air-delivered munitions. Such a force, even if numerically smaller than today's air fleet, would be able to deal with the problem of the country after Syria.

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