Letters

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Total Force Means Total

I tried not to respond to *["Verbatim: Eternal Life, Found," January p. 56]* particularly the remarks of former Secretary of the Navy John H. Lehman regarding the bureaucracy of DOD. While his numbers are likely correct, the context in which they are presented falls short of conveying what contractors and DOD civilians bring to the table.

The supporting establishment (DOD civilians and contractors) forward deploy into harm's way along with the troops and perform tasks vital to the mission. Also consider that DOD manufactures virtually none of the end items required to defend America. Contractors do. Further, contractors provide vital services not otherwise available at a reasonable cost to our uniformed services. The US Navy does not build aircraft carriers, Northrop Grumman does. The US Air Force requires highly specialized tailored contractor support in producing the air tasking order critical to our troops in Afghanistan and elsewhere. The KC-46 is manufactured by Boeing, not USAF. Acquisition is being managed by DOD, USAF Active Duty personnel, and by DOD civilians. There is a US Navy civilian engineer and former Marine aviator (F-18) who is the program manager for digital close air support systems supporting the Navy and Marine Corps. He is one of a handful of Americans who can deliver this vital game-changing capability.

There are huge differences between efficient and effective DOD acquisitions. Immediately prior to the Battle of Midway (June 1942), the Navy supporting establishment rushed electric bomb fuses to the US Fleet in Pearl Harbor. The fuses had not been adequately tested and many malfunctioned, causing bombs to drop harmlessly into the Pacific. Aircrew were forced to find value in "drawing fire." The supporting establishment was efficient, but not effective, and the US nearly lost the Battle of Midway.

It is too easy to lament the bureaucracy and not recognize the vital role played by our supporting establishment, particularly when delivering high risk/high payoff capabilities. The Secretary's point is well-taken, but we ought not to apply a meat cleaver to systems and structures supporting deployed forces, be they uniformed, DOD civilian, or contractor. Sadly, there is a direct relationship between Americans interred in our national cemeteries (then and now) and unilateral decisions affecting our supporting establishment. Shall we be governed by a coherent national strategy and not incendiary sound bites?

Lt. Col. Tom Brannon,
USMC (Ret.)
Navarre, Fla.

Enlisted Airmen Fly, Too

Ms. Rebecca Grant did an excellent job framing the challenges of aircrew management, but she was incorrect about the career enlisted aviators (CEAs), who do not fall under the rated heading *["How Many Aircrew?" January, p. 42].* These 15,000 Total Force airmen are managed by a single career field manager (CFM), a chief master sergeant who is supported by a small staff. This team coordinates closely with majcom functional managers and Air Force rated managers to meet Air Force requirements. Needless to say, running the CEA force is challenging in the shadow of pilot-centric leadership.

CEAs face the same retention as rated officers, but they are a secondary consideration when developing the flying force. Granted, the time and money requirements to create pilots are much higher than enlisted aircrew. I get that. Still, developing and retaining an experienced enlisted force is just as important. Mission execution takes an entire flight crew outside of the single-seat platforms. Despite this, CEA management can be an afterthought. For example, although CEAs are involved across the full spectrum of AF missions, in 2011 an AF/A3 realignment placed them under the AF "Global Mobility" division despite their heavy, heavy presence in the CAF and SOF communities (AC-130s, AWACS, JSTARS, MC-12, RPAs, etc.). This means all CEA issues regardless of their nature must be vetted through a career MAF division chief—a time-consuming educational process. And there are other challenges.

Flying hours are allocated for rated officer training. CEAs utilize available seating on pilot sorties to create aircrew members across eight separate flying specialties. These range from boom operators to flight engineers and from special missions aviators to RPA sensor operators. Basically, each year when the Air Force sets pilot training, CEAs make do. This creates second- and third-order challenges. First, CEAs are limited to training seats "available"—not training seats "required to meet mission needs." This leads to systemic problems like one that developed over two decades beginning in the early 1990s. Too few mobility pilots were trained to create the parasitic hours necessary to recruit, train, and retain the loadmaster corps. Overall manning went below 80 percent in 2010—much worse in LD/HD platforms. Focus wasn't placed on surging loadmaster manning until CSAF took interest following unsupported MAF missions. The second problem is the dance that's generated between the CEA CFM and AF/A1 following the programmed flight training conference. A1 uses enlisted manpower modeling to forecast non-prior-service and retraining allocations, and these numbers are usually quite accurate. Still, available flight training isn't known until well after the enlisted initial skills quotas are published. This means the CEA CFM must annually ask for manpower corrections, either giving back training allocations or begging for more. This isn't always doable, and it still leaves the requirement piece unanswered. Every year the CFM builds a business case for manning, and every year the A1 divisions have done their best to assist, usually to the detriment of non-flying AFSCs.

Third, CEAs are "career" aviators, just as the name implies. Congress, AF policy, and AF instructions mandate that flying positions be filled by only the most-qualified individuals capable of sustaining a career in aviation service. This makes CEAs the proverbial

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round pegs in the enlisted development square holes. CEAs earn flight pay and special status because of their unique qualifications and abilities. The Air Force invests more in CEAs than most any other AFSC so they will be able to perform flight duties at anytime during their careers. It doesn't matter if the CEA is an airmen first class or a chief master sergeant. Flying qualifications must be maintained regardless of rank, just like the rated corps. CEAs support special duties when able, but the primary focus is flying aircraft—a sacrifice they gladly choose. This is frustrating when talks of stratifications, enlisted promotions, and special career incentives focus on duties outside of their primary skill sets.

Finally, CEAs are some of the most underutilized resources on majcom and air staffs. In response to a rated shortage in the early 2000s, AMC replaced dozens of rated officers with CEAs on the command's staff and at the Tanker Airlift Control Center at Scott AFB, Ill. These airmen have performed magnificently during arguably the highest opstempo in recent history. Can a CEA give an F-22 pilot a check ride? No. But that same CEA can plan airlift, inspect training and evaluation programs, flight information files, safety programs, and more. With all of this capability, I'm at a loss why majcoms beg for more and more rated staff every year, and either staff billets or cockpits go unfilled. I'm baffled why commands like AFSOC want to replace CEAs on AC-130s and MC-12s with rated officers—even though these airmen are more affordable, provide long-term sustainment and experience, and have excelled at these jobs since Vietnam. It doesn't make sense.

As Ms. Grant spells out, there are no easy answers for recruiting and retaining aircrew, so I certainly empathize with the Air Force rated managers. I worked with Mr. Ingram, Mr. Winslow, and Mr. Wigle in Air Force rated management for over two years. They are the absolute best, having to contend with four-star general officers on down, all in an attempt to quench the insatiable thirst for more rated. Trust me, I know the Air Force needs experienced pilots.

Still, flying crew-served aircraft is a collective effort. I'm writing this to recognize the CEA CFM team and those 15,000 airmen who take on this challenge. Overcoming obstacles are all in their day's work. They are unique warriors—strapped to ground-based enlisted programs while trying to function in a rated world. They are quiet professionals, focused on mission accomplishment. I love 'em all.

CMSgt. Douglas Massingill,
USAF (Ret.)
Hood River, Ore.

All's Well That Ends Well

I found "The Feeder Force" article quite interesting in that it closely paralleled my World War II experience, though not through the Civilian Pilot Training program *[January, p. 67].* Like Andrew Mungenast in the opening paragraph, as a youngster I was fascinated by airplanes. A neighbor boy and I rode our bicycles from east Nashville out to Berry Field and paid $5 to ride in a snazzy red open cockpit Waco biplane (without our parents' knowledge, of course). As soon as I graduated from high school in June 1943, I signed up for Army Air Forces' flight training. I was put in the reserves and scheduled to be called to Active Duty after I turned 18.

I went through basic training at Miami Beach in January 1944, qualified for pilot, bombardier, and navigator, and received my Aviation Cadet cap and insignia. But like the guys in the CPT program, my fellow cadets and I found the shift in the air war had reduced the need for more aircrews. They loaded a couple of hundred of us on a train and shipped us up to Moody Field, Ga. We were called "on-the-line trainees." Our training included things like KP and helping build a new firing range, which the German POWs on base refused to be involved in.

After about three months, they shipped us off to the College Training Detachment at Winthrop College, a girls' school in Rock Hill, S.C. As your article mentioned, we were to get 10 hours in a Piper Cub, but I broke a toe clowning around and missed the last three hours. As it turned out, this was all the aircrew training I would get.

After CTD, my group was shipped to Shaw Field, S.C., for more "on-the-line" training. Shaw provided basic flight training for both American and French cadets. I was assigned to the air inspector's office and spent my time mostly filing Air Force regulations. I did get to do a little flying, riding with a young lieutenant as he checked out BT-13s following periodic inspections.

In early 1945, an opening came available and I was sent to the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center for preflight training. Now I was getting somewhere, or so I thought. But after preflight, a group of us was sent across San Antonio to Randolph Field to be guinea pigs at the School of Aviation Medicine. After being probed by candidates for flight surgeon and swung in a gondola to test airsickness pills, another cadet and I were assigned as clerks for the transient officers' quarters. Shortly afterward the war ended and with it my hopes of becoming a pilot. I was discharged in November, started college in January, and pursued a commission in AFROTC.

Joining an Air National Guard unit after graduation, I attended Intelligence School at Lowry Air Force Base and served in the DI at 5th Air Force Headquarters during the Korean War. Despite the frustrations of my World War II experience, I wound up with a satisfying Air Force career, mostly in the ANG.

Lt. Col. Chester D. Campbell,
USAFR (Ret.)
Nashville, Tenn.

Last Round, OK, Folks?

Regarding Lt. Col. *[Catherine A. Newell's]* letter, "No Offense Taken. I Guess," January p. 7, me doth think that she protests too much. Lieutenant Colonel Newell wrote in response to Colonel Lupa's letter "No Offense Intended, Ladies," November 2013, p. 10. I read Colonel Lupa's letter, and I thought it very well-written.

Lieutenant Colonel Newell thinks it "unfortunate" that this is an emotional issue. Why is this unfortunate? I am an engineer by education, but I know we can't always ignore emotion, especially on such important issues. After all, these potential women combat personnel are our daughters, wives, and mothers; we shouldn't hope to solve it only with some scientific formula, as it is not nearly so neat and precise as lab work.

Beyond her much desired scientific research findings, can even she ignore thousands of years of recorded history—history that clearly shows women as primarily traditionally nonviolent, caring, loving?

That doesn't mean women can't, won't, or haven't fulfilled all roles as men do, to include direct combat, but that doesn't explain why women have largely by choice avoided direct combat in the military. It isn't solely because men aggressively denied millions of eager female volunteers these choice direct combat jobs up until recent decades. I don't know why, but it appears that women just did not typically choose to pursue them or think it was their appropriate role.

I agree with her that way too many young men are no longer qualified for, nor interested in, military service, and for that reason alone we may require more female military volunteers. (Is that an oxymoron—require and volunteer?) If it is mandated that women may participate in direct combat roles, then it follows that in the name of fairness 50 percent of those "high risk" positions must be filled by women to ensure the burden is carried equally by men and women. That is the only way they can have their cake and eat it, too.

Lieutenant Colonel Newell stated, "This isn't just an issue of fairness to women who have both the desire and the capability to perform in these positions." True, and therefore, for the sake of fairness this policy decision should cause us to immediately address another gross inequity in the system: male-only draft registration. The law must change to require all draft-age women, as well as men, to promptly

register for the draft—a necessary step, equal in importance to allowing them to participate in direct combat. The segue to that is then, in a rare national crisis or with lack of sufficient qualified volunteers, to require 50 percent of all draftees be women, and of those, require 50 percent representation in direct combat roles.

I served for 35 years and held positions from squadron command through wing command. I have flown with women aviators in trainers, tankers, and fighters from nearly the beginning of my career in 1977, and without a doubt many have performed admirably. Beyond flight ops, I have served with female service members in a variety of career fields, and in general they performed as well as men in those fields. Also, in all that time, with all that contact with female service members, I don't recall any sense that the vast majority had a passion to enter into direct combat roles, or that they thought women should be registered for or drafted into the military, and particularly into direct combat jobs. In fact, I have read that many female service members would be strongly opposed to being forced into direct combat roles, but then again so might some men. It is a case of being careful what a few ask for, as the many just might get it.

It now appears we no longer have a choice but to have women in direct combat roles, but it doesn't necessarily mean we should. Further research or testing "under a microscope" would likely not provide honest answers if we were to delay a decision further. However, career ambitions and promotions should not have been the only criteria, and it should not have been driven by the relatively small percentage of military women or soon to be recruits who want to be in direct combat roles, or have been decided by fiat by the politically correct leaders in our executive or legislative branches. Such an important step should have been determined following a loud and clear public debate on the overall pros and cons—which never happened. It is so much more than who can pick up a heavy box or who wants to do the job.

Lastly, beyond all the philosophical arguments and the unique physiological differences between the sexes, the ultimate bottom line is combat capability, and if the concerns of Colonel Lupa prove to be true, then we will all be disappointed.

Col. William T. Cahoon,
USAF (Ret.)
West Point, Ind.

Lieutenant Colonel Newell made this sweeping assessment of today's young males: "Finally, for those who are dead set against women in combat roles, let me point out that the pool of eligible male candidates is declining precipitously. If the statistics aren't bad enough for you, try to find a kid to help you with farm work. It's an uncommon teenage boy who is physically fit, can follow directions, can think for himself if necessary, is willing to work in uncomfortable conditions, and is in the least bit attentive to detail. Can you imagine a 19-year-old-male unashamed that a woman in her mid-30s can carry more and work harder, better, and longer? I've seen it, and the situation didn't make me feel proud of myself: It made me fear for the future of our nation."

So Lieutetant Colonel Newell has seen a 19-year-old male outperformed by a 30-something woman and from that she fears for the future of our nation? Based on what, her observations in a male vs. female hay bale tossing competition? Give me a break.

As much as Lieutenant Colonel Newell would like to think that our nation suffers from a shortage of physically, mentally, and motivationally challenged young males, she was apparently not present when we entered the Vietnam conflict with a population of young males that could arguably fit a similar description. But basic training tends to turn mush into mettle and delivers combat-ready individuals at the end of the training pipeline. A result, I suspect, that is more the case with the male population than with females—although I am not qualified state that definitively.

On the other hand, last year just 45 percent of female marines passed the new physical standard of completing three pull-ups—a result that was so embarrassing that it caused Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Amos to suspend full implementation of the new standard so trainers could "continue to gather data and ensure that female marines are provided with the best opportunity to succeed"—which really means that Marine brass need more time to configure a physical performance standard that will pass the smell test and allow champions of women serving in combat to claim that they got there under the same standards as their male counterparts.

Perhaps Lieutenant Colonel Newell is correct when she states, "Automatically disqualifying women from some or all of the positions in question might be a luxury we can no longer afford. This isn't just an issue of fairness to women who have both the desire and the capability to perform in these positions, it's a manpower issue"—operative word being "capability."

But opening all combat roles to women has never really been about fairness so much as it has been about being equal under the law, even if you can't do three pull-ups.

Frank G. Scafidi
Carmichael, Calif.

Air Force Association
1501 Lee Highway • Arlington, VA 22209-1198
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