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AFA's Mission

Our mission is to promote a dominant United States Air Force and a strong national defense and to honor airmen and our Air Force heritage. To accomplish this, we:

Educate the public on the critical need for unmatched aerospace power and a technically superior workforce to ensure US national security.

Advocate for aerospace power and STEM education.

Support the Total Air Force family and promote aerospace education.

On the Backs of Airmen

Your editorial titled "Pay and Benefits and National Security" addresses some issues in the macro sense but overlooks a simple fact [*Editorial, "March, p. 4*]. Current pay and benefits encourage individuals who join the military to stay in and make the military a career. However, the current system is very expensive. With the Department of Defense faced with sequestration and other budget measures, the only other places left to cut are operational expenses. Just like in a civilian business, the most costly aspect of US military operations is personnel.

The report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (the commission) is not designed to benefit the average airman. It is an attempt to find money to buy stuff and pay for flying hours by shifting the costs of services and benefits to the airman and retirees. Using the current pay and benefits proposals from the commission, one should look at the impact on a young airman and his/her family. Granted the numbers that I am using are estimates but probably typical, and the general impact is fairly accurate.

For an E-5 staff sergeant who is married with two children, over eight years' service, residing in CONUS, and his/her spouse is not working, the following numbers apply. Before taxes, his/her base pay would be \$2,951.40 a month, with a BAS of \$367.92 and BAH of \$889.20, giving a monthly income of about \$4,208.52. Assuming that the staff sergeant is living in base housing, losing BAH, and taking out federal income taxes, and his/her monthly take-home would be about \$2,952.15.

Following the commission's recommendations, take out an additional five percent of base pay for a 401(k), which equates to \$147.57. Plus, take away the commissary subsidies—according to the USDA, the average cost of food for a family of four will run approximately \$1,037.50 a month—and that leaves him/her with \$1,767.07 in spendable income. Now they have to address other commission recommendations such as health care costs.

A midrange health care plan, as proposed by the commission, would leave the staff sergeant with an annual

deductible between \$500 to \$3,000. So if anyone in the family would get quite sick, this is a bill that would have to be paid before the insurance coverage would begin. Individuals will need to create a significant contingency health care fund, even before they could begin saving for other contingencies, such as an automobile malfunction or replacement. With the loss of commissary subsidies, the impact on MWR would be quite significant. If the staff sergeant had to use base day care, the costs would be driven to the national average of \$972 per month per child.

Also to make things worse, two other proposals have taken effect or are being considered. The presidential budget proposes to cap base pay at one percent below CPI through 2020 and to reduce BAH by four percent, requiring military personnel to suck up the difference. If all of these proposals are implemented, the staff sergeant and family would be unable to make ends meet. To say the commission's proposals are beneficial to the average airmen would be hiding the realities of the situation.

Col. Talbot N. Vivian,
USAF (Ret.)
Norfolk, Va.

C'mon, Now

How does it happen that the Air Force just now realizes it needs additional experienced maintainers in order to support new F-35s, and that these must be achieved by reducing the A-10 fleet [*"Aperture: The Case of the Missing Maintainers," March p. 11*]?

Presumably, plans should have been established years ago for properly sup-

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porting new F-35s. For how long have these plans envisioned retiring the A-10 to fill those needs?

It seems to me that either the A-10 retirement has been envisioned for years, or that the need for more F-35 maintainers is an excuse invented to provide another leg of support to Air Force plans to retire the A-10.

Time and again the Air Force has wanted to retire the A-10s, and this seems like another go-around which will try to apply any rationale.

If I were a ground soldier, I would certainly wonder at the apparent insignificance the Air Force assigns to achieving their most effective support in close combat situations.

Maj. Richard M. Floyd,
USAF (Ret.)
Rome, N.Y.

I'm confused. First, we were told that the only reason the USAF had to retire the A-10 was simply because of a lack of money. (We really don't want to, but we just don't have a choice.) That didn't work, so it was claimed that the ole Hog just isn't survivable in a fight against "peer adversaries." (Wasn't that same argument used back in 1990 just before Saddam invaded Kuwait?) Now, suddenly it's been discovered that by not retiring the A-10, IOC for the F-35 is being jeopardized. Holy smokes! How did that happen? Where did all the crew chiefs go and why did nobody notice until just now? How about a little honesty (I know, extremely rare within The Beltway), or at least a consistent sob story?

The truth is that this is just one of many problems caused because the Speaker of the House apparently believed that DOD represents 50 percent of the budget and allowed our liberal President to snooker him into levying 50 percent of the sequestration cuts out of the 20 percent of the budget that he absolutely hates. The truth may hurt, but somebody has to say it.

Maj. Jim Rotramel,
USAF (Ret.)
Lexington Park, Md.

Teach the Children Well

A very good and informative article on the Air Force Operation Rolling Thunder [*"How Rolling Thunder Began," March, p. 68*]. It is a shame that that article is not in the curriculum of all the high schools in the United States. Unfortunately way too many of the younger generation today, and some of the older generation, have never heard of the Vietnam War, and that is not our fault, it is our educational leaders' fault.

The article is very well-written and to the point. In my 30 years in the Air Force, 23-plus were in Strategic Air Command (SAC).

I remember when Rolling Thunder started, and in fact was on several tanker task forces (KC-135) operations to SEA in support of those missions like Rolling Thunder, Coronet East/West, Young Tiger, etc. I was the maintenance supervisor on the missions.

John T. Correll is absolutely right on the target selections. What a wrong decision for the Pentagon to make the target selections. That decision did not only affect Rolling Thunder, it affected the success of several other missions in the Vietnam war as well. I really enjoyed my times on the tanker task forces supporting the fighters. I would have anywhere from three tankers to 12 tankers, depending on the mission. What a great group of airmen—both flight crews and especially the maintenance

people. Outstanding dedication and determination to do their job because they, just like the Rolling Thunder, Young Tiger, Arc Light, and Linebacker crews, knew what the mission was.

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

John Correll's fine article on Operation Rolling Thunder was a real memory jogger. It reminded me of the Air War College paper I authored, "Rolling Thunder: Carrots and Sticks Approach to an Air Campaign," to meet graduation requirements. It was pretty unremarkable in the eyes of the faculty, but it had a rather unique aspect that made it special, if only to me.

In an effort to humanize what I felt at

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the time was otherwise a pretty bland historical perspective, I solicited first-person accounts on Operation Rolling Thunder from two who had experienced it firsthand, my father-in-law and grandfather-in-law.

My grandfather-in-law was Lt. Gen. Joe Moore, the 2nd Air Division commander and later 7th Air Force commander. When asked whether ORT airpower was constrained, he replied, "Targets were selected by Washington. Number of planes, numbers and types of bombs, and times for attacks were all directed by Washington. No weather delays were allowed, and no alternative targets authorized."

LBJ once crowed, "They can't even bomb an outhouse without my approval." General Moore added, "And that was the truth!"

His son, also Joe Moore, echoed his father's sentiments. "Lil' Joe" was a major and an F-4 pilot who flew with Robin Olds and the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing "Wolfpack" out of Ubon Royal Thai Air Base. He arrived in June 1967 and flew 135 combat missions during his tour. He opined that "the limits of our airpower were our civilian masters who attempted to control every aspect of the combat. We had the military strength and capability to bring NVN to its knees at any time, even to the end, had LBJ, and later Nixon, told us to win."

A typical fighter pilot, he added, "We were unabashedly patriotic. If they had not paid us, we would have paid them to do what we loved to do."

Unfortunately both General Joe Moores ("Lil' Joe" went on to attain the rank of major general) are gone now; the younger died from ALS in 2001 and the elder died in 2006 at age 92.

I fondly recall being mesmerized by the elder's war stories told across the kitchen table at his residence in San Antonio. His Vietnam experiences were only one chapter in his illustrious career.

General Moore and Gen. [William] Westmoreland went way back. Both hailed from Spartanburg, S.C. They attended high school and were members of Boy Scout Troop 5 at the First Baptist Church. Imagine these two Eagle Scouts-in-the-making, earning merit badges, working on their Eagle project, and undoubtedly dreaming about their futures.

Both wanted to be pilots, at least partially inspired by the visit of Charles Lindbergh, flying the *Spirit of St. Louis*, to their hometown after his epic solo flight. "Westy" couldn't pass the eye exam, so he ended up in artillery after graduating from West Point. General Moore took a more circuitous route to the cockpit and his military career through the Army Air Corps Flying Cadet program. That just

shows that there's more than one way to reach the top.

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

Get Serious

Are the Secretary of Defense and the USAF Chief of Staff really serious about costs? Seems not [*"Air Force World: Four-Seven Dash-8 for Air Force One," March, p. 13, and "Verbatim: Good Luck," March, p. 12*].

The Cold War is over! We do not need to replace the 747-200 command centers with the 747-8—especially since the current VC-25s are now VIP jets. Taxpayers will now have to foot the bill of \$5 billion or more to keep the proposed three 747-8s flying, starting in 2017.

Along the same lines, the over 10,000 military and civilians at Joint Base Andrews, 89th Airlift Wing, could be downsized if 80 percent of the base is contracted out to civilian companies. Military pilots should not be used for all those VIP flights by Congress and bureaucrats.

Capt. David Chigos,
USN (Ret.)
San Diego

Wrong Hat

As I read "Forged in One Furnace" in the February issue of *Air Force Magazine*, I was pleased to see that the Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard have joined together to train officers [*p. 70*]. We have been training airmen for decades that way. This is a giant step forward toward being a Total Force. The skills needed to be an officer and lead are no different in any of the components of the Air Force.

Back in 1967, I was in the first class going through OTS that had an expanded curriculum from eight to 10 weeks. It would seem like there should be more to teach today and more time needed to forge the next generation of leaders. The Army and Navy have a 12-week OCS. Are we missing out on something?

On p. 72, we see the OTs passing in review. What a shame to see them in flight caps. The "service hat," AKA "wheel hat," is a symbol of the military. You'll note the reviewing officers are wearing them. The flight cap is for daily ease and convenience. It is not for formal military ceremonies.

Col. Don Hengesh,
USAF (Ret.)
Petoskey, Mich.

Twenty-five and Done

Thanks for your article [*"Twenty-seven Minutes Over Ploesti," February, p. 74*]. For many years, I had read brief summaries, but none with so much detail. Specifically, I was always curious about

the chances of the B-24 over the B-17 in accomplishing the mission. You certainly answered that question.

I am now 70 years old and try constantly to understand the steps my father was taking in July 1943 with the 97th Bomb Group, also in North Africa. Which airfield his squadron was flying from, I still haven't learned.

I have a box of mementos, from his graduation certificate from Mather Air Force Base to the American flag presented to me by the Rhode Island Air National Guard. Your article helped to paint a picture of why he was only required to do 25 missions in his B-17.

William T. Humphries
Houston

Prize Monkey

I enjoyed the January article "Back in Black," describing the New Jersey and DC ANG F-16 deployment to Australia. The "Letters" section in the March issue, which gave more accounts of F-16s deploying to Australia, brought back some fond memories.

In May 1982, I assumed command of the 35 TFS (F-16s) at Kunsan, South Korea, and a couple of months later I was tasked to attend the Sandgroper 1982 exercise planning conference in Sydney, Australia. This was to be a maritime training exercise, and I convinced the planning committee that the F-16 had the legs to fly the maritime mission, find and attack the ships, and then fly DACT on the way back to the base.

In December 1982, I took seven F-16s from the 35 TFS and deployed to RAAF Base Pearce near Perth, Australia. Other fighters in this exercise were RAAF Mirages and A-4s and USN A-4s. We had the good fortune to glean invaluable instruction from the RAAF and USN A-4 pilots who flew these missions on a regular basis.

After the attack on the ships was complete, we would fight our way back to base, flying DACT against the Mirages and A-4s. The entire exercise was very enlightening and enjoyable with the RAAF personnel being most gracious hosts. Another bonus for this deployment was escaping the frigid November weather at the Kun.

The senior USAF officer for Sandgroper 1982 was Col. Tony Cushenberry, 13th Air Force deputy commander for operations, with Col. Mike Rhodes, 8th TFW (Kunsan) DO as his assistant. The highlight of this exercise for me was giving Colonel Cushenberry a DACT ride in the Viper. He had been one of the old heads in my squadron, the 335th, at Seymour Johnson in 1967, and was instrumental in teaching us young bucks what flying fighters was all about. For those of you

who know Colonel Cushenberry (“the Crusher”), you will appreciate this: When we landed, he said that he wouldn’t trade that ride for a “prize monkey.”

Lt. Col. Bob Lowery,
USAF (Ret.)
Aldrich, Mo.

It was a real pleasure to read the letter from Col. Pat Miller [*Letters: Vipers Down Under, March, p. 6*] updating some of the history of the 35th Fighter Bomber Squadron. I was elated because it was the first time I have seen any reference to my squadron since I left Korea in 1953.

From June 1952 into January 1953, I was assigned to the 35th FBS at K-13, Suwon, South Korea. It was, of course, during the shooting war, and we were flying the F-80C Shooting Star as part of the 9th Fighter-Bomber Wing. We occupied the east side of K-13, while the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing occupied the west side with F-86s.

The Shooting Star was a really good plane to fly for the kind of close support and interdiction missions we were performing. It was strong (you couldn’t pull the wings off) and mechanically reliable. In 100 missions, my only malfunction was the loss of a generator. I got a free drop for the bombs, turned off everything electrical, returned to K-13 on the tips and fuselage tank, turned the battery and command radio back on, and made a normal landing.

We had no trouble with MiGs at that time. They were too fast to get a shot off at us, and if they slowed down, we could outturn them. So they left us alone. The F-86s kept them busy up north, while we got our job done farther south.

If he was at home or in his office, I got the commanding general of the North Korean Army because I put two 1,000-pound bombs right through the roof of his home and headquarters building. But since the North Koreans never released casualty information, I never learned whether or not I got him.

Life in the Black Panther Squadron wasn’t really all that bad. We lived in Quonset huts, had a large latrine building with johns, sinks, and showers. There was a good mess hall and a boisterous officers club. The food must have been good; I gained about 10 pounds. Though we got shot at on almost every mission, I was only hit twice and know of only two losses during my seven-month hitch.

The combat got exciting on occasion, but was exactly what I wanted to be doing. My idols as a teenager were the fighter pilots of World War II, and now I was one. I believe I would have volunteered for another 25 missions, but I was racing the stork. And would you believe it? Even though I was flying jets, the stork won.

Now, at age 85, I’m still alive and kicking and playing golf three times a week.

And I only use the golf ball with the Black Panther logo.

Anyway, thank you, Colonel Miller, for your update on the 35th FBS. I hope this letter fills in some of its earlier history.

Lt. Col. Alfred J. D’Amario,
USAF (Ret.)
Hudson, Fla.

The Long War

Your monthly sidebar titled “The War on Terrorism” clearly needs new nomenclature [*Air Force World, March, p. 19*]. Terrorism is a tactic, not an adversary. Labeling our current combat efforts as a “War on Terrorism” is like calling World War II a “War Against Blitzkrieg” or labeling World War I as “Operations to Defeat Trench Warfare.”

I understand the tendency to not call attention to the primary shared attribute of today’s diverse enemies, i.e., an ancient, warped version of Islam. There is no sense in providing quotes that can be posted on the other team’s locker room bulletin board. More importantly, attaching the Muslim label to current adversaries would needlessly, and understandably, inflame passions among the much larger community of nonradical Muslims.

If a politically correct moniker cannot be devised, perhaps you should label this column simply “Combat Operations.” Personally, I prefer “The Long War” as it has been long and it will be longer yet.

Lt. Col. Nelson E. Cobleigh,
USAF (Ret.)
Paso Robles, Calif.

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