

■ Air Force Names New Top Enlisted Leader

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein announced on Nov. 16 that CMSgt. Kaleth O. Wright will serve as the 18th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, taking over from CMSAF James A. Cody in February.

Wright joined the Air Force in 1989 and has most recently served as the command chief master sergeant of US Air Forces in Europe at Ramstein AB, Germany.

In 2014, he deployed to Afghanistan as command chief master sergeant of the 9th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force-Afghanistan in Kabul.

Wright is the second African-American top enlisted leader for the service and the first since CMSAF Thomas N. Barnes held the position from 1973 to 1977. Goldfein announced Cody's retirement in September at AFA's Air, Space & Cyber Conference.



■ Silver Star Awarded for Valor in Afghanistan

Retired Air Force SSgt. Benjamin D. Hutchins received a Silver Star for his heroism in Afghanistan seven years earlier. The ceremony was at Fort Bragg, N.C., on Nov. 4, the *Fayetteville Observer* reported.

Hutchins, at the time an airman first class, risked his life in November 2009 by jumping into the Bala Murghab River in Afghanistan while under enemy fire in an attempt to save two soldiers who had fallen in.

According to the Silver Star citation, "Airman Hutchins, despite the onslaught of enemy fire, refused to leave the two soldiers and persisted in his recovery attempt until American forces arrived to repel the enemy and assist with the recovery." Hutchins is credited with helping friendly forces overwhelm the enemy stronghold.

He was medically retired in 2014 from wounds received in combat in 2012 and lives in Fayetteville, N.C., where he operates a construction business, according to the *Observer*.



USAF photo by Ann. Miranda A. Loera

■ Combat Controller Receives Silver Star

On Nov. 16, Air Force SSgt. Keaton Thiem received the Silver Star during a ceremony at JB Lewis-McChord, Wash. During an intense 14-hour battle on Feb. 22, 2016, in Afghanistan, Thiem, a combat controller with the 22nd Special Tactics Squadron, ventured into enemy fire to rescue four teammates and directed 22 aircraft to deliver 3,000 pounds of bombs.

"It's hard to say the fear goes away, because it's definitely nerve-wracking," Thiem said at the ceremony. "Having the weight of the situation on your shoulders, disregard for yourself takes over and you do what you have to do to make sure the rest of the team gets out of there."

Three Special Forces soldiers also received Silver Stars for their actions in the same fight. "What means the most is when my teammates on the Army side reach out and congratulate me because they were there with me," Thiem said. "I don't even have words to explain what I feel when some of them tell me I saved their lives. ... It's humbling."



USAF photo by SrA. Ryan Conroy

■ Boeing Receives Contract for F-15 Upgrade

The Air Force has awarded Boeing a \$478.8 million contract to develop the Eagle Passive/Active Warning Survivability System (EPAWSS) electronics upgrade for the F-15 Eagle fighter aircraft.

In October 2015, Boeing received a \$4 billion technology maturation and risk reduction contract to develop new self-defense and electronic warfare systems for the F-15 fleet. With this follow-on award, the program enters the engineering, manufacturing, and development phase for work on the F-15C and F-15E variants, according to Boeing. The work is expected to be completed in 2020 and is part of a series of upgrades intended to keep the F-15 operational through the 2030s and into the 2040s.



USAF photo by SSgt. Matthew B. Fredericks

■ Vietnam-Era Defense Secretary Dies at 94

Melvin R. Laird, Defense Secretary under President Richard M. Nixon from January 1969 to January 1973, died at Fort Myers, Fla., Nov. 15 at age 94.

Laird was the architect of the all-volunteer US military, as well as the policy of "Vietnamization." Under that approach, the Nixon administration reduced US forces in Southeast Asia and shifted the main responsibility for fighting North Vietnam to the Saigon government. Laird's advocacy for prisoners of war held by North Vietnam was largely credited for their return. He played an important role in nuclear arms control. Laird also oversaw development of two Air Force fighters still in service today.

Laird was born in Nebraska and served as a Navy officer in World War II, wounded in action while serving on the destroyer USS *Maddox*.

After the war, Laird, 23, was elected to fill the seat in the Wisconsin senate left vacant by his father's death. At 29, he was elected to the House and served nine terms there, specializing in health issues and military affairs and serving as a highly influential member of the Appropriations Committee. He was responsible for expanding the capabilities of the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). On defense matters, he frequently voiced the opinion that military superiority was the "best insurance" against attack.

Laird was Nixon's second choice to be Secretary of Defense (after Sen. Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson, a Democrat from Washington, declined) and the first serving member of Congress to be elevated to the post. He supervised the reduction of US forces from 550,000 to about 69,000 in Southeast Asia during his tenure and urged Nixon to negotiate an end to the war. He believed the money would be better spent on building up the nation's nuclear deterrent and general-purpose forces.

Laird coined the term and process of Vietnamization. It gave Nixon an out from the war under Nixon's sobriquet, "Peace With Honor."

He opposed Nixon's desire to keep secret a 1969 bombing campaign and then a ground incursion in Cambodia. He correctly predicted it would turn the public even more against the war when revealed.



Laird overhauled the military draft starting in 1969, eliminating the deferment policy that excused young men from service if they attended college. He created the lottery system, then shifted from the draft to call-ups of the Guard and Reserve to flesh out military forces overseas. Just before the end of his tenure in 1973, he announced the end of the draft and the beginning of the all-volunteer force. Laird supported the program that led to the F-16

and the one that led to the A-10 attack jet.

Though Nixon and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger preferred to decouple the issue of POWs from peace talks, Laird was a vocal supporter of the prisoners, publicizing their brutal treatment at the hands of the North Vietnamese. Conditions for the POWs improved after Laird held a news conference about their plight, and they were repatriated in 1973.

As SecDef, Laird allowed service Secretaries great autonomy in running their departments and he was well-regarded on Capitol Hill. He was considered instrumental in bringing about the 1972 SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) agreement with the Soviet Union, having convinced the Soviets that the US would, if necessary, outspend and outbuild them in nuclear arms.

After leaving the Pentagon, Laird succeeded John D. Ehrlichman as Nixon's domestic advisor and in that capacity urged Nixon to choose Gerald R. Ford as the replacement for Vice President Spiro T. Agnew after Agnew was forced to resign in a bribery scandal. Laird left the Nixon administration in early 1974.

Though offered senior positions in the White House when Ford became President, Laird remained in the private sector, serving as a member of the boards of *Reader's Digest* and Martin Marietta, a defense contractor, and as chairman of the board of Communications Satellite Corp. (COMSAT).

President Ford presented Laird with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1974.

■ USAF Releases Draft RFP for Huey Replacement

The Air Force on Dec. 2 released a draft request for proposal (RFP) to replace its UH-1N fleet, looking to buy 84 new helicopters to patrol missile fields. The draft RFP called for responses by Dec. 16. The Air Force has said it will have a "full and open" competition for the new helicopters. Air Force Materiel Command held its second Industry Day Dec. 12 to 13 to solicit input from contractors.

The service previously held an Industry Day in September, with representatives from Bell Helicopter, Airbus, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Sikorsky, and GE Aviation, among others, attending. A contract is expected to be awarded in Fiscal 2018. The service wants off-the-shelf replacements that could be delivered quickly after the award is issued.



USAF photo by A1C Brandon Valle

■ Could Nighthawks Be Used as Red Air?

Air Combat Command has not ruled out bringing some retired F-117 Nighthawks out of flyable storage to serve as Red Air targets or adversaries for fifth generation F-22s and F-35s, ACC chief Gen. Herbert J. "Hawk" Carlisle told reporters at the Defense IQ International Fighter conference in London.

"I can't really go into specifics," Carlisle said, "but it makes sense if you think about it being out there." The F-117s are "the only other stealth" platform available for the job, he said, noting that flying F-22s or F-35s against each other is "counterproductive." In other symposia, Carlisle and several USAF leaders have said such engagements would provide poor training and waste precious flying hours for the two jets, already in short supply.

Carlisle said that in his younger days, "you'd go out and fly F-15s against F-15s," but the Red Air pilots would restrain themselves from using their full capabilities and use enemy tactics. "Today, doing that in the F-22 is not only zero training, it's a little bit negative training" because the engagement would be a quick and almost effortless victory for the F-22.



USAF photo by SSgt. Aaron D. Allmon II

At an AFA Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies program last June, then-Maj. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigian (now a lieutenant general), the F-35 Integration Office director at the time, said if F-22 pilots don't emerge from a practice battle "sweating," having taken on maybe more fighters than they could deal with, the engagement offered no value.

—Angus Batey

■ Lockheed Martin Receives \$7.2 Billion for F-35 Lot 10

The Department of Defense awarded Lockheed Martin a contract for Lot 10 of F-35 production, not including engines, on Nov. 23. The undefinitized contract is for 90 aircraft and has a ceiling of \$7.2 billion.

The F-35 Joint Program Office said the new contract demonstrates DOD's confidence in the F-35 program, but that troubled negotiations between the government and Lockheed Martin had not yet been resolved.

"With a complex production line and a dynamic supply chain, it was important to obligate funds," said JPO spokesman Joe DellaVedova, "so that no major delays would be seen in production. We are confident the finer terms of the LRIP 10 [Low Rate Initial Production Lot 10] contract will be settled over the next few months."

Lot 10 will produce 44 F-35As for the Air Force, nine F-35Bs for the Marine Corps, and two F-35Cs for the Navy by



Lockheed Martin photo by Darin Russell

March 2020. First deliveries of Lot 10 aircraft will be in the first quarter of 2018. The contract also includes 35 aircraft produced for non-DOD customers and foreign military sales.



400,000

By the Numbers

The number of accounts Twitter has suspended for ISIS-related material in 2016, according to the State Department.

US Central Command Operations: Freedom's Sentinel and Inherent Resolve

Casualties

By Dec. 16, a total of 33 Americans had died in Operation Freedom's Sentinel (Afghanistan), and 32 Americans had died in Operation Inherent Resolve (Iraq and Syria).

The total includes 62 troops and three Department of Defense civilians. Of these deaths, 29 were killed in action with the enemy while 36 died in noncombat incidents.

There have been 145 troops wounded in action during OFS and 21 troops in OIR.

US Aircraft in Afghanistan Have Busiest Month

US aircraft in Afghanistan had their busiest month of the year in October, dropping 205 bombs on Taliban and ISIS targets. The October tally brings the total for 2016 to 1,180, already 233 more than for all of 2015, according to Air Force statistics released Nov. 25.

Of the 4,500 total sorties flown by US aircraft, at least one weapon was dropped during 552 of those sorties—up from about 141 from 2015. The increase has coincided with more authorities to target both the Taliban and ISIS, as announced by the Obama administration in late 2015.

The number of weapons dropped in Afghanistan in October is just one-tenth of the overall effort in Iraq and Syria, where US and coalition aircraft dropped 3,038 weapons that month. Coalition aircraft in Operation Inherent Resolve have already eclipsed last year's number of sorties with at least one weapon released, with 9,958 flown by October in 2016 compared to 9,912 in all of 2015.

Carlisle Expects F-35 To Join Anti-ISIS Fight

Air Combat Command boss Gen. Herbert J. "Hawk" Carlisle said he has "absolutely no doubt" the F-35 will be deployed for Operation Inherent Resolve. Speaking Nov. 16 during the Defense IQ International Fighter conference in London, Carlisle emphasized that the stealth fighter's data fusion and ISR capabilities could be key attributes in the anti-ISIS fight.

"When you look at Iraq and Syria today, what's going on on the ground, the players that are in the airspace—it's like nothing we've fought before," he said. "It's incredibly complex. Airplanes like an F-22 or an F-35, because of the situational awareness that they provide, the information they relay, the real-time sensor suites they have, their ability to do things in airspace that other airplanes cannot do, makes them incredibly valuable in the fight. I see a very big place for the F-35 in that fight."

—Angus Batey

The Fight for Raqqa Is Underway

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) began its advance toward Raqqa, Syria, on Nov. 6. "The effort to isolate, and ultimately liberate, Raqqa marks the next step in our coalition campaign plan," said Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter in a statement released the same day. "As in Mosul, the fight will not be easy and there is hard work ahead, but it is necessary to end the fiction of [ISIS's] caliphate and disrupt the group's ability to carry out terror attacks against the United States, our allies, and our partners."

Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said on Nov. 7 the SDF had "encountered resistance" so far, but they continue to receive support from coalition air strikes. He said the Syrian campaign will look different from the fight to retake Mosul, Iraq, because the United States does not have any "formal government forces or conventional military operating in Syria."

Iraqi Forces Find Mass Graves on Approach to Mosul

Iraqi forces on their approach into the ISIS-held city of Mosul discovered a mass grave containing about 100 bodies, another sign of the bloody rule the group has exerted over the country's second-largest city. The grave, found in an agricultural town, contained decapitated bodies, and Iraqi forensic experts did not know if they were security forces or civilians, according to the BBC.

Two more mass graves were found later that month.

Iraqi forces faced a tough fight as they worked to move farther inside the city, and ISIS on Nov. 8 fought back by abducting almost 300 former Iraqi Security Forces members and forcing 1,500 families to retreat with them, the United Nations reported, according to Reuters.

CENTCOM Releases Civilian Casualty Figures

Twenty-four US air strikes in Iraq and Syria may have killed 64 civilians and injured another eight, US Central Command announced on Nov. 9. The strikes took place between Nov. 20, 2015, and Sept. 10, 2016, and were intended for ISIS targets such as weapons storage facilities, fighting positions, headquarters buildings, and weapons systems.

In several of the strikes, CENTCOM said civilians had entered the target area after weapons were released. "It's a key tenant of the counter-[ISIS] air campaign that we do not want to add to the tragedy of the situation by inflicting additional suffering," Col. John J. Thomas, a CENTCOM spokesman, said in a news release. "Sometimes civilians bear the brunt of military action, but we do all we can to minimize those occurrences even at the cost of sometimes missing the chance to strike valid targets in real time."

The Department of Defense also announced on Dec. 1 that three air strikes in the month of October possibly resulted in civilian casualties in Iraq and Syria. As of mid-December it was still investigating those claims.

Planning for the Long Term in Iraq

Iraqi and US officials are planning for the next five years of security in that country, confident in the progress made against ISIS, the top uniformed officer said during a visit to Baghdad. Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a troop talk Nov. 9 that Iraqi military leaders want to work with the US for a plan of operations over the long term.

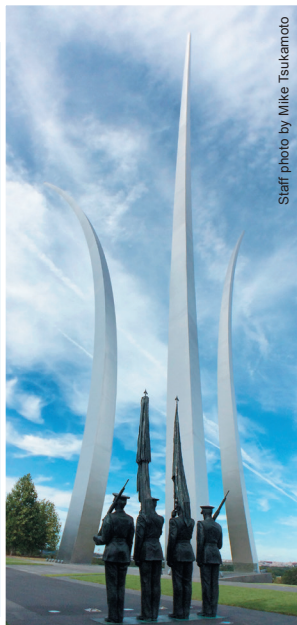
"Last year we were talking about the next five days with uncertainty," Dunford said according to a DOD news release on the visit. "Now they are confident enough to talk about what they will do when [ISIS] is defeated to make sure they have security here in Iraq that is worth the sacrifice that marines, soldiers, airmen, sailors [have] made over the years."

■ Air Force Memorial's 10th Anniversary

AFA commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Air Force Memorial on Oct. 14 in Arlington, Va., with a distinguished group of guests. Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James and Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David L. Goldfein, among others, offered remarks at a ceremony led by television journalist and former airman Bob Schieffer.

The program featured a video message from former President George W. Bush, who had led the 2006 ceremony dedicating the memorial; a performance by "American Idol" alumna Melinda Doolittle; and a poetry reading by "Good Morning, Vietnam" radio personality Adrian Cronauer.

Schieffer called the memorial "a reminder of what is right about America, that Americans are



Staff photo by Mike Tsukamoto

a great and good people." Goldfein said the three arching spires of the memorial were built to commemorate "those who sacrificed everything so we can experience freedom." AFA President Larry O. Spencer offered a tribute to the Tuskegee Airmen, three of whom were in attendance. James was named an honorary Tuskegee Airman and received an iconic red jacket from the group.

In her remarks, James addressed the future of the Air Force, suggesting the memorial represents "the three domains in which we operate—air, space, and cyberspace." In his video statement, Bush said the memorial cost \$53 million to build and had received over two million visitors in its first 10 years.



USAF photo by A1C Emily A. Kenney

■ Holloman To House Interim F-16 Training Squadrons

The Air Force announced on Nov. 17 that Holloman AFB, N.M., is the preferred interim location for two new squadrons devoted to training F-16 pilots. The squadrons will be activated "to increase fighter pilot production as part of an effort to address a critical fighter pilot shortage," according to the Air Force.

Forty-five F-16s are slated to arrive from Hill AFB, Utah, to begin training this summer, and more instructor pilots and maintainers will be added to Holloman's manning.

The Air Force is evaluating 34 installations to select permanent homes for the squadrons. Candidate bases, to be identified early this year, must be in the continental US, must already have a fighter mission, and must have a runway at least 8,000 feet long.

■ US, Philippines Relations Begin to Thaw

After months of open criticism of the US by Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte and threats to withdraw military cooperation, the relationship between the two nations may be returning to normal.

On Nov. 7, the Philippines' defense minister walked back some recent claims by Duterte regarding US military relations, saying exercises would just be scaled back instead of completely canceled. Defense Minister Delfin Lorenzana said joint military options will become less combat-focused, and the already signed Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement would stay in place, Reuters reported. The Philippine government said the number of exercises would fall from more than a dozen to six or seven.

After the US presidential election on Nov. 8, Duterte struck a newly conciliatory tone toward the United States in a speech delivered to a Filipino audience Nov. 9 during a visit to Malaysia. "I would like to congratulate Mr. Donald Trump. Long live," Duterte said, according to Reuters. "I don't want to quarrel anymore, because Trump has won."



USAF photo by Capt. Mark Lazane