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Voiceover:

Airmen and Guardians, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome AFA's Chairman of the Board, the 14th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Gerald Murray.

Gerald Murray:

Thank you. Thank you. It is so great to see such a grand audience and I will tell you the excitement as I walked the hallways here, the selfies and all the groups taking pictures and all and just the excitement around here, it is so wonderful to see. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like you to know that we are here to talk about Airmen. Airmen yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Before we get started and being able to introduce the next, a great leader that we have, I want to share a short clip from a wonderful video our Air & Space Force Magazine team put together from the Mitchell Institute interview with Vietnam Ace and AFA Central Oklahoma, Garrity chapter member, Colonel Charles B. DeBellevue, which I got to closer to right that time in my southern accent. DeBellevue. Please roll the clip.

Colonel Charles B. DeBellevue:

Once we got started going into Hanoi every day, we took losses. I will tell you that the first day we, first day a linebacker on the 10th of May. They recalled the squad in the Wing and we were sitting in Intel. And it's about 4:30 in the morning and nobody knows what's going on. The curtains, the briefing boards are covered. Finally, Colonel Gabriel, Wing Commander walks in and sits down and they pull the curtains right on the board and pointed to Hanoi and said, Gentlemen, target today is downtown. You could hear a pin drop on the carpet. You could smell the fear. Nobody had ever been. At the end of the briefing, Gabriel gets up and says, guys, because in those days we just had guys flying for us, he said guys, we've been waiting for this for a long time. Let's do a good job. Take a look at the guy sitting next to you. So you and your buddy looking at each other and he says, he might not be coming back and you go, damn, can I have your stereo gear.

And matter of fact, we didn't lose anybody that day. It did wonders for a morale. So when we took losses in the future, yeah, it was bad. We always showed up at the bar. The bar was the watering hole, the main meeting place after flying, and we'd always toast those that didn't come back, knowing that tomorrow was just another day.

Gerald Murray:

The ladies and gentlemen, throughout our 75 year history, brave Airmen like Colonel DeBellevue, Medal of Honor recipient, John Levitow, who also served in the conflict of Vietnam, who sacrificed and almost sacrificed his life to be able to save his air crew and his heroic effort during that timeframe. These Airman, these two are just an example of those that have made us the success we are today. Today, more than 75% of our brave Airmen also are in the enlisted force. That's why it's so critical to develop that force to be stronger leaders who are capable of taking on the many threats that are facing our nation. There's no one better to walk us through now, how we get there than there is from our own 19th Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, JoAnne Bass. Joe, please.

CMSAF JoAnne S. Bass:

So it was going to be DMX. But I thought that some heads, especially in the front row might actually explode. So by the way, to the folks in the sound booth, if we're going to key music to our Airmen that

we highlight, let's keep it with this theme. May maybe some DMX, but it has to be the clean version. So y'all, to my PA, help him out, help him out.

All right, so hello AFA. It is so exciting to see all the faces in the audience this week. It is so exciting to celebrate our Air Force's 75th birthday. To Mr. Secretary, Madam Under, General Brown, my boss, Mrs. Brown, General Raymond, Ms. Molly, to my wingman and teammate, Chief Towberman, to all of you all, thank you so much for allowing me to share this stage with you, more importantly for allowing me to share life with you as we serve together. And I very much appreciate you all, always giving me the opportunity to be last, to be the last keynote, when all the good content is taken. And when I mean good content, I mean the Secretary Reinstated STAP, my boss kicked it off with, we've been here before and we'll do it again. The CSO rolled out the Space Force song and then Toby taught us all and signed us up all off on how to actually sing the song.

So it's always rough being last, but a big thank you as you've heard throughout the week to AFA for making this week possible and all the work that you do to educate, advocate and support our Airmen and Guardians. Y'all give them a hand clap. A special thanks to my wingman SIM staff, number 14, Gerald Murray, for his years of dedicated service to our Air Force, but also to AFA as the Chairman of the Board. To my other wingman, who I've told is in the House, [inaudible 00:06:35], stand up teammate. Such a rock star. I'd love to say that I taught you. So we served together back in the 24th special tactic squad when I was a young senior Airman. He was a young staff sergeant and sometimes we'd walk in the halls together and just shake our heads and yeah, thank the good Lord. So anyway, it's great to see you. It's great to see you.

To our industry partners that are here, to our community leaders and our civic leaders that are here, thank you so much for the work that you do. We cannot be the air force that we need to be without your support. It takes a whole of nation approach. Your work, your service, and your love for our air force, our space force, our Airmen and our Guardians and our family is needed, now more than ever. And to the real MVPs that are here, our Airmen and Guardians, y'all give them a hand clap. I have never seen a AFA this big before.

Thanks for taking the time to be here at one of the largest professional development events and venues that we have in our Air Force. A huge shout out again, as I mentioned on the panel to our family members that are joining us today. So time does fly. On August 14th, I celebrated our second anniversary of serving in this position with Team 19. And I definitely could not have done it without my team. I also couldn't have done it without the partnership and the friendship of your Air Force Senior Enlisted Leader Council, the AFSELC, and my teammate. So to our major command Command Chiefs and our Senior Enlisted Leaders who are doing the work in the Pentagon to make stuff happen, I'd love for y'all to stand up. I'm going to owe them beer later.

But anyway, this is a cohort of leaders that truly inspires me daily. I don't tell them that often. We do a whole lot of cussing and discussing, which is what happens when you have a room full of people who care and are committed to make our Air Force better. So for the past two years, we have remained focused on you. We've remained focused on our people, our readiness and our culture. And those who know me, I have a serious bias for action. That said, let me highlight some of the things that we've been working on this past year since I last spoke at AFA.

Before I do, it's only fitting to do a quick recap of the great work done last August with Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome. Which, by the way, I mentioned it AFSA last month, but it's worth noting again because of all the goodness from those operations. We talk a lot about the importance of strengthening our alliances and our partnerships as well as joint interoperability. But sometimes we forget the importance of MAGCOM interoperability and I can't think of a better example than OAR and

OAW. So last August, Airmen from across our Air Force when above and beyond the call of duty without a complete playbook by the way, and executed the largest NEO in history.

Let me first give a shot out to the Personnel Recovery Task Force within ACC. It was his task force who held aircraft on alert for 864 hours. This very small team of less than 200 people over a 53 day period ultimately ushered in the complete joint tactical exfield from Afghanistan. It was also a team of special tactics Airmen from AFSOC who established control of HKIA after civilian air traffic controllers abandoned the field. Our Airmen maintained security of the airfield by directing fires and ISR aircraft while simultaneously tracking friendly movements in and around the airfield, controlling 285 aircraft.

It was AMC Airmen who flew in the first C-17 out of Kabul. And it was on this flight, Reach 871, where the now famous photo of a child covered in an OCP blouse was taken. Airman Baron's uniform is now housed in our Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson. AFSEN Airman then received C-17s and C-130s around the clock, welcoming more than 60,000 evacuees within a month. You safe Airmen turned Ramstein into a safe haven for 35,000 afghans, earning the installation, the nickname of the Global Gateway. All in all, their efforts encompass 1.5 million meals, 1.2 million water bottles, 33,000 vaccines, 552 tents, go CE and 38 newborn babies.

I spent a lot of time on that flight line at Ramstein. As Afghan evacuees made their journey into the US, they were cared for by a community of Airmen, joint partners, interagency teammates, and of course our amazing local communities. To include Airman from AETC who transformed Holloman Air Force Base, where you at, who transformed Holloman into a temporary location for more than 7,000 evacuees once they arrived the United States.

And when I got a chance to visit Taskforce Holloman last October, I met the brother, sister Airman Duo, Senior Airman Peel and Senior Airman Camille. They were both deployed to Holloman, in fact, volunteered to be there, to support our Afghan guests. They understood the impact that their experience and that their language would have in support of Operation Allies Welcome. They themselves came to the US in 2009 as refugees from Iraq. They were there helping men, women and children who were in the same situation they were in, that they once found themselves in 13 years ago.

When I think of one team, one fight, Mr. Secretary, I think of how Airman from across the Air Force, every single major command, came together to cause effects greater than themselves and their respective parts. That is interoperability and that is integrated by design. And it is that integration as well as how we present forces that my boss talked about on Monday. When it comes to presenting forces and the readiness of our Airmen, I'd like to highlight an example coming from the 27th SOW.

Airman there are doing incredible things with this concept that they call mission sustainment teams. Mission sustainment teams are small groups of individuals selected from the wing, who train and become proficient in areas outside of their normal career fields. The teams are built from the ground up through months of focused training, instilling a sense of family and camaraderie. Why does any of this matter? Because with the limited resourced environment, the mission sustainment teams give AFSOC the ability to enable the larger joint force with unique capabilities that we are going to need, to be able to get after the high end fight. Canon is showing us how to capitalize on multi capable Airmen, at least the mindset piece. They are leading the way in creating what they call multifunctional Airmen, prepared to assess, respond, and fight adversarial threats anytime and any place.

Another aspect of readiness is our resiliency. And when it comes to resiliency, I've seen a whole lot of goodness coming from the force. During a recent trip to RAF Lakenheath, I heard about their squadron level resiliency teams. They're comprised of master resiliency trainers, resiliency trainer assistants, volunteer victim advocates and torch bearers. These Airmen have the training and the resources already to help guide, coach and listen and to be there for their fellow wingmen. And what I love most about this concept is that these Airmen wear designated patch that identifies them as MRTs, RTAs, VBAs and

torch bearers, so that everybody in that unit knows who they are and we of course are capitalizing on the support from our very own Airmen. And that is a great example of Airmen supporting Airmen within our spectrum of resilience.

Here's another example of how we're getting after resiliency across the Department of the Air Force. We established a Fortify the Force initiative team, which by the way is a grassroots effort led by Airmen, Guardians, family members, civilians, veterans, retirees, all in an effort to fortify our force. This team is championed by myself and Chief Toberman and is getting after a whole lot of initiatives that impact you and I, our Airmen and our Guardians and their family members. And in fact, right now, they're kicking off a sprint to crowdsource ideas to help with mental health, enterprise wide solutions, policy changes, and fostering a connected force. If you have ideas, folks, we actually want to know them. Please, please reach out to the Fortify the Force Initiative team. In fact, if you are a member of FI, I'm going to ask you to stand up right now. Can we get the lights? All right, I see some over here.

To the FIT team, thank you for what you are doing. We know you have full-time jobs, but you care so much about our force. I hope to see more of this kind of goodness across our air force, whether it's Airmen supporting Airman, in the flight, at the flight section or squadron level, or helping with solutions that help drive policy or cultural changes that make us a better force. We need it and we need all of it.

When it comes to some of the other things that we've been focused on this year, let me tell you, we've been pretty focused on leadership development. You've heard all of our senior leaders talk about our most competitive advantage being our people. To that end, we cannot take you for granted. When it came to leadership development, we started with a strategy and when we presented that strategy to my boss, he quickly shared that he loved everything about it, but a strategy doesn't mean anything unless you apply some action. And so overnight, our strategy became an action plan.

And so this spring we published the very first Enlisted Force Development Action Plan. This action plan has 28 objectives, with the first one focusing on our threat environment, specifically ensuring that every Airman understands what strategic competition is and what is at stake. We are at an inflection point in history, where every single one of our Airmen and Guardians needs to know their role and their purpose in our force, and especially for our Airmen, how we get after delivering air power. And that's where the blueprint comes in. Something every supervisor and Airman should be tracking. This blueprint gives us much needed force development tools and resources to guide us from the very first day we join the Air Force until the day we take this uniform off. In fact, I wish I had a blueprint when I was a young NCO. What I did have and how many of y'all out there had this, a blue or brown book?

And so I have to just give a big shout out to the team who work those updates. We now have an updated blue and brown book and a big thanks to AETC for printing out over 100,000 copies to ensure that every Airman who comes into basic military training and every Airman who's entering into any of our PME centers gets a copy of them. And I think y'all probably saw some tables out here with some blue and brown books.

All right, y'all. Now for those of y'all who have your phones, pull your phones out because another thing that I wish I had to make me a better joint minded Airman CIAC is this purple book. And we just released it today. Right, boss? I think if you look, my boss's signature's in there. But anyway, check that Q... Like this isn't even out. I don't even think you can Google it, but that QR code right there will take you to the purple book that we have, the first service and the only service, who has a book to help us become a better joint minded service member.

In addition to some of these foundational documents, we also did a complete re-look at PME and we're making some of those changes this fall. Big thanks to our air university team, the Barn Center, and all the Airmen that have been part of the teams to help define what the future of education needs to look like. These will be big wins across the force. And speaking of winning, I think there might be too many

general officers in here that even know what that is. So General Brown, I actually submitted my eval to you, but I think it's somewhere lost or stuck in the ethernet. I don't know. I was having some issues with my computer.

So how many y'all are having those fixed my computer issues? So in all seriousness, y'all are acting all dignified right now, you know you have a whole lot to say about fix my computer. But in all seriousness, we all realize that we have a whole lot of work to do on some fronts. That said, we have dedicated leaders who are well aware of these IT and these system challenges and they are very committed to getting after this, especially our CIO. Just last week in General Miller, the A1 Miller, we have three Millers, lieutenant General Miller, announced some much needed updates and improvements to my eval and they're going to be coming this fall. She also announced that narrative 1206s will start at October and that narrative evals will start with our colonels and our chiefs. We will start field testing digital WAPS and finally bring promotion testing into the 21st century.

For those who don't know what I mean, what I mean is 80% of your force still takes a number two pencil into promotion test every year. And so big thanks to the A1 and AFPC teams for getting ready to roll out. And something else that we are rolling out today, in fact, is some changes to assignments. From the enlisted assignment working group. And by the way, they're going to benefit the whole of Air Force. So a big thanks to General Dunn and our AFPC teams for their efforts to get these wins to our Airmen. A big kudos, by the way, to our Airmen who were part of that working group, who came from across our Air Force to look at assignment policies to dissect that 571 page AFI, to identify and make recommendations that will make assignments better for all of us.

So we're rolling out changes on assignment priority code for our MTIs, MTLs and our recruiters. We're going to remove time on station requirements for expedited transfers and we're also including acquitted Airmen into expedited transfers. For our Airmen, returning from deployment, you will not have a report no later than date, within 120 days from the date that you return. And another one that I'm pretty excited about is we're going to have an assignment swap policy.

And there's a whole lot more coming, but I knew this would get on media and I'd get the details wrong. So there's more coming. How we develop and retain our Airmen is paramount to winning our future fight. Our strategic competitors are deterred by strong NCO core and even more so when we come together with our allies and partners, that is our competitive strategic advantage. In fact, last month I hosted a senior enlisted leader International summit here in DC with a 60 Nations as well as NATO for a whole week. This was one of the largest Department of the Air Force international gatherings where we had the opportunity to share experiences, develop, learn, and collaborate with one another. And we spent a whole lot of time talking about the importance of developing our NCO core. The work that we did will be a huge force multiplier in the years to come, with impacts across our globe. The one thing we all agreed on is that wars of the future will not look like wars of the past. Future conflict will look very different, spanning across multiple domains, air, land, sea, space, cyber and information.

And if I can just pause really quick to talk about the information domain. It's something that I don't think we've talk enough about when it comes to the information domain, we can no longer be passive observers. It is a battle space and our adversaries are weaponizing information at speed, scale and scope. They are able to leverage social media, digital media, and the information environment to directly impact the people, readiness and the culture of our Air Force. In my article published through Air University, A New Kind Of War, I speak about the challenges associated with information warfare. In fact, if you got a hold of the 1950 copy of the KGB Manual of Disinformation, you would see this quote right here.

The Russian disinformation model has remained relatively unchanged for more than a century. Why? Because it keeps working. And meanwhile, China, our pacing challenge, has been watching and learning.

Social media has a huge impact on information warfare and the need for digital and social media literacy has never been greater. And that is whether it's in grade school and most certainly throughout the military. This impacts all of us, folks. A generation of American sons and daughters who will enter our Air Force spend nearly, on average, four hours a day on platforms. And I'm being pretty generous. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube. And don't get me started on TikTok. I know. There's a whole bunch of people who don't want to hear what I have to say about TikTok, so I'm not to include my own kiddos.

But the adversaries know this and they are taking full advantage. Information warfare threatens to disrupt our way of life and to some degree, our will to fight as a unified nation. And every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that we are ready, alert, and aware of the tactics of the adversaries. They don't care if you're at home or at work. The information domain is ever present. The Airmen today and into the future have got to be critical thinkers who are collectively focused so that our Air Force can be what it needs to be when our nation calls on us.

As your fellow Airmen, what I remain encouraged about though is that no matter the challenges that may come our way, they can never compete with you. In fact, the most lethal and advanced weapon systems that we have would simply be a static display if it wasn't for you. But we can never ever take that for granted. We have to maintain that advantage and we can't assume that good enough today will be good enough for tomorrow. As we look at the force that we need, we need to recognize that today and especially into the future, that we are in a race for talent. We have to change our modality of thinking to attract, recruit and retain the best that America has to offer.

Because let me tell you folks, our Airmen today have choice. Whether it's our generation or the generations to come, the question is have we set the conditions where people actually want to continue to serve? Like General Walter shared on Monday, those serving today are part of the most talented, educated, and innovative force in history. This year alone, nearly 1000 enlisted Airmen joined our Air Force with a degree, adding to the more than 33,000 of our enlisted Airmen who have bachelor's degrees and more than 6,000 with masters. And oh by the way, 68 with PhDs. And three of those PhDs are from Airmen First Classes.

And while we're on the topic of education, let me give a huge shout out to the Puerto Rico Air National Guard. 57% of Puerto Rico Air National Guard Airmen have college degrees, 164 associates degrees, 393 bachelor's degrees, 90 masters degrees, eight doctorate degrees, not including the professional officers in the medical group with doctorate degrees. And of the Airmen who hold the doctorate degrees, seven of their eight are enlisted. That's incredible. And what's more incredible is those Puerto Rico Air National Guard Airmen are mobilized right now in response to Hurricane Fiona. Otherwise a few of them would be with us today. Y'all give Puerto Rico Air National Guard and all of our guardsmen a big hand clap.

This is the kind of talent that we have and this is the kind of talent that we have to retain. And oh, by the way, this is the kind of talent that we have to attract. Speaking of talent, let me also highlight some of the amazing talent within our Air Force that we don't always get to see, but we all get to benefit from. Talent like Staff Sergeant Derek Jimenez, a defender stationed right here at Joint Base Andrews. When our leaders were shaping the new brown books, he had the courage as a senior Airman, to stand up in a room full of chiefs and say, Airmen are not going to read this. He advised that people would read two pages in and say it looks too much like a AFI. So he helped design the brown books that we are using today. Sergeant Jimenez, are you out there? Where you at? Come on up here. Y'all give him a big round of applause.

So you were pretty instrumental in this brown book, so I'd love to give you my first copy where myself and General Brown signed it. So thank you so much. Thanks for this and it'll be my honor to give you my coin as well. Thank you. So thank you. Very cool. All right, brother. Thanks for doing this. We'll take a

picture. So show our brown book. Awesome. Thanks Sergeant Jiminez. I hope they read more than two pages.

So our Airmen today, they're paying attention folks. They're going to hold us accountable. In fact, Airmen like First Sergeant Desiree Holmes from PACAF, who last month during the AFSA conference stood up in a room full of about 300 of her fellow first sergeants and asked Team 19 where we were on a few of the things that we promised to get after the year before. She went line by line to remind me of what I said we were going to get after. And I was happy to share that we actually made progress on a whole lot of those things. Big thanks to AETC and A1. And I appreciated her holding me accountable. So General Willsback, Chief Wolf, a shout out to both of you for developing Airmen and PACAF and having a shirt like her. I was impressed and I know that Sergeant Holmes isn't the only Airman out there listening and taking notes. So to all of you, keep holding us accountable.

That accountability is what we need to ensure that we are developing the Air Force that our nation needs. These are just a few examples of the amazing talent and the amazing Airmen that we have within our Air Force. If only we get to know our Airmen and mostly empower them. So while we are the world's greatest air force, if you are waiting for a solution to come out of the Pentagon, you might be waiting a long time. Do not wait on us. When we talk about the culture that we need, the time is now. Help collaborate in your units now. Find better ways now. Problem solve now. Innovate now. And get to know your Airmen now. If you can't get across the finish line the first time, don't quit.

Things change, opportunities arise, stay persistent. The late Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, number six, James McCoy once said, he heard many people say that the Air Force and its Airmen of today are not the same as they used to be. So to that, he responded, well, it's not supposed to be like it used to be. It's not supposed to be like when we were serving because they are better. And so he's right, wingmen, we are better and we will be better because it's folks like you who are at the helm.

I don't know when the next conflict will arise or the next humanitarian disaster might occur. But I do know one thing. Whenever our nation calls, Airmen will respond. It is because of you that Americans sleep well at night and will continue to do so for generations to come. These are challenging times where our adversaries are watching and they seek to outpace us at every turn. And we cannot let them. We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to our pacing threats, any more than we can overlook the challenges that we face within our own service. The call to serve has never been stronger and our role as United States Airman is more than just a job. It is a commitment to duty and our nation is indeed counting on every single one of you. So happy 75th anniversary wingmen. It is an honor to serve alongside of you. God bless our Air Force and God bless the United States of America.

Gerald Murray:

Chief Bass, my goodness, I am so honored to be able to present to you the 75th anniversary coin in wishing the Air Force a happy birthday. Ladies and gentlemen, I and Chief Bass, everyone, every Airman, everyone on this stage, I mean everyone in this audience, and I certainly as a predecessor, am so proud that you are leading our force today. That you are the 19th Chief Master of the Air Force, that you are the top senior enlisted leader of the United States Air Force. We could not be better served whatsoever. The announcements that you made today and what the team is getting after, as you say, to be able to do, are nothing less than historic today. Thank you so much. Ladies and gentlemen, the 19th, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.



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