

Let's Ask Them

[In reference to "Editorial: Questions for the Candidates," May, p. 2]: I recommend posing those questions to each candidate and asking for their written responses, which would then be published in *Air Force Magazine*.

MSGt. Boyd A. Hemphill Jr.,
USAF (Ret.)
Montgomery, Ala.

The Draft

In the article on the history of the draft, contributing editor John T. Correll writes, "Young men are required to register with their draft boards within 30 days of turning 18" [*"When the Draft Calls Ended," April, p. 68*].

Draft boards are no longer in existence. We do maintain local boards that are activated in a national draft to adjudicate appeals—however, young men now register online at www.sss.gov, or they can pick up a registration card at the post office, or they can register by telephone (if they have received a pin number from SSS).

Pat Schuback
Public Affairs Specialist
Selective Service System
National Headquarters, Public
and Intergovernmental Affairs
Arlington, Va.

John T. Correll's notion that the creation of the All Volunteer Force (AVF) was a return to a historic tradition of service is valid to a point.

However, not until the current conflict has the AVF been tested in terms of sustaining a force engaged in long-term combat operations.

With the end of World War II in 1945, America found herself at the dawn of the Cold War. In fact, an argument could be made that the seeds of the Cold War were sown before the end of World War II during the Yalta Conference and later at Potsdam.

The Cold War drove American foreign and defense policy for the better part of 46 years. As a result, the need to garrison huge numbers of troops on European soil as a deterrent to Soviet aggression became a resource-draining reality.

The draft which was in place from 1940 to 1973 (with the exception of a brief period from 1947 to 1948) was critical to supplying the manpower needed not only for the face-off with the Soviets, but also during the Korean and Vietnam Wars. While the fairness of the draft was certainly an issue, its primary mission of supplying sufficient numbers of men for military service cannot be dismissed.

It is possible, then, to disagree with Correll and suggest that the draft, and not some tradition of national service, was responsible for keeping the military—in particular the Army—sufficiently staffed during the long Cold War. Since the draft was in place, it is impossible to know whether or not sufficient numbers of personnel would have volunteered to enlist without the urgency of a "hot" war providing the motivation.

Although it got off to a shaky start, the AVF did establish itself and has served the nation well through several conflicts, most notably the first Gulf War in 1991. But that is not the case with Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, collectively known as the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

This is not to say that the service member is in any way less capable, but that not until the GWOT has the AVF been tested—particularly ground combat units—in the kind of sustained conflict they have been experiencing since October 2001.

To attain combat ready status, the AVF relies heavily on Guard and Re-

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Robert S. Dudney

Editorial

afmag@afa.org

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Walter J. Boyne, Bruce D. Callander,
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afmag@afa.org

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Media Research Editor

Chequita Wood

Advertising

bturner@afa.org

Director of Advertising

William Turner

1501 Lee Highway

Arlington, Va., 22209-1198

Tel: 703/247-5820

Telefax: 703/247-5855

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serve forces. This "Total Force" concept also permitted the post-Soviet draw-down of active forces while providing more meaningful and integral roles for the Guard and Reserve. However, the Guard and Reserve were never intended to be front-line battle forces for the duration they are experiencing in the GWOT.

The impact of multiple activations and long deployments will undoubtedly come to light as research and analysis of the GWOT's impact on the nation is conducted. But for now, it is clear that families and local communities are strained by the absence of their "citizen soldiers," many of whom hold critical positions in their civilian lives.

Moreover, more than one Pentagon official and high-ranking military officer has made public statements describing the erosion of the force as a result of the GWOT. Our ability to sustain the current operations tempo is causing military planners to involuntarily extend combat deployments, shorten the time between deployments, and involuntarily extend service obligations under Stop-Loss authorizations. And when the President makes comments that suggest yet another front in the GWOT—with Iran—military planners must be quietly apoplectic.

At a hearing before the Senate Armed Services personnel subcommittee on Jan. 31, 2008, Brig. Gen. Suzanne M. Vautrinot, commander of Air Force Recruiting Service, had this to say: "The propensity for young Americans to serve their country, coupled with a drop in key influencers—such as teachers, coaches, and family members—recommending service, is at its lowest point in 35 years. Moreover, nearly three-quarters of America's youth do not meet eligibility standards to serve in our nation's military." This is hardly an assessment that supports imagery of duty, honor, and country.

A tenet of the AVF was the filter through which volunteers could be screened, meaning no more recruits would be allowed to serve if they were ever convicted of certain crimes. That's not a bad policy. But recruits aren't signing up these days in numbers needed to meet recruiting goals, so the Pentagon has been quietly granting waivers to allow recruits with felony convictions to serve.

In 2007, 511 recruits with prior felony convictions were allowed to enlist in the Army; 350 in the Marines; 42 in the Navy. There were none in the Air Force. This may not be a significant factor but it is an indicator of just how slim the pickings are getting when you do not have a draft but you do have a prolonged shooting war on two fronts.

Finally, in dismissing Rep. Charles B. Rangel's (D-N.Y.) 2003 effort to return to the draft, Correll says, "The circumstances under which the nation would accept a revival of conscription after a hiatus of 35 years are unknown. What is clear, however, is that recent circumstances have not been sufficient." Maybe, but the mere mention of a draft in political circles only a few short years ago would have been unthinkable.

But the strain under which the services are struggling could spark a few more members of Congress to take another look at the draft—especially when the Administration continues to poke Iran in its political eye.

How ironic that the Vietnam War, our nation's last protracted war, caused the demise of the draft, and our only long-term war since, the Global War on Terrorism, may give rise to its return.

Frank G. Scafidi
Sacramento, Calif.

In 1952, Hq. USAF unexpectedly extended all earlier (1948) enlistee terms in Germany from three to the four years we others had signed up for just before Korea started in 1950.

No problem for most, but not for my friend—a buck sergeant (not yet A1C)—who was clearing our 6910th Security Service Group in Darmstadt, Germany, for his discharge back to Texas. In the process, he visited the NCO Club once too often and proceeded to tell everyone there, including our first sergeant, "where to go."

He departed our base by train for Bremerhaven on his way home aboard the USS *Alexander M. Patch*. Unfortunately, the extension caught up with him there before the ship sailed, and he was ordered to return for another wonderful year with us.

Guess who was waiting for him at the post gate? Yes, sir, and my friend drew nearly every detail imaginable that last year.

USAF may not have drafted anyone that year, but there are always alternatives!

Col. Samuel Morthland,
USAF (Ret.)
Houston

Why Airmen Don't Command

I want to join the furor about "Why Airmen Don't Command" [*March, p. 46*]. It used to be that the main qualifications for success as an officer were to be able to ride a horse, know the manual of the saber, and be a good ballroom dancer. In today's Air Force, flying a plane has about the same relevance to leadership as riding a horse. Scorning paperwork by going out and flipping switches and turning knobs in an air-

plane is often just a way for an officer to escape from command responsibilities. You can't correlate being a good pilot (combat or peacetime) with being a good leader, but some keep trying to do that. And as an instructor pilot giving proficiency checks for many years, I found that having high rank did not correlate well with being a good pilot. Wearing a pilot's badge is about image, not competence as a leader.

Lorrin C. Peterson
Kerrville, Tex.

Extra Duty Is Your Duty

I was quite taken aback by the letter [*"Letters: Ground Force Taskings," p. 11*] by CMSgt. Ken Witkin, USAF (Ret.), in the May 2008 issue. As a retired USAF master sergeant (first sergeant), I find it offensive that Chief Master Sergeant Witkin believes that just because he was an aircrew member, he was above doing additional duties. As an aircrew member, radio operator on C-47 and C-54 aircraft in Goose Bay, Labrador, in 1948-49, I was required to pull "KP" kitchen police [duty] on several occasions. I at no time felt that I was better than anyone else.

MSgt. Jimmie W. Greene,
USAF (Ret.)
Parkers Lake, Ky.

Still Best: Chief

If I may respond to "A Study in Stripes," "Letters," May 2008 [*p. 12*]: I can attest to the pride in my voice when I was able to answer the telephone, "Sergeant Schmidt speaking," but then, I cannot agree with Colonel Edwards regarding the time periods of the changes in rank structure, titles, and rank. I enlisted in April 1951. Three months later, according to Special Order 9, July 11, 1951, I was promoted to private first class (single AF chevron). On April 19, 1952, Special Order 7 promoted me to airman second class (two AF chevrons). I was not called corporal; it was airman.

A year had passed, rank had changed, and the Army designations did not exist in USAF anymore. I fail to see how the colonel could still be a corporal after [completing] basic training and tech school, [first] as a student [and then] as an instructor at the school at Lowry Air Force Base.

On Oct. 9, 1952, Special Order 129 promoted me to A1C, airman first class, [with] three chevrons, at Headquarters, Caribbean Air Command, Albrook AFB, Canal Zone. I was not called sergeant. It was airman.

Better yet was when you got called chief.

CMSgt. John E. Schmidt Jr.,
USAF (Ret.)
Tallahassee, Fla.



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Letters

What's That Airplane?

I believe that the caption for the photograph on p. 114 of the current Almanac issue [May 2008] is incorrect. The referenced aircraft is a WC-130H from the 403rd Reserve Wing, Keesler AFB, Miss. I was assigned to Headquarters, Air Weather Service from 1972 to 1974. During that time, I participated in the transfer of 14 HC-130H aircraft from Air Rescue Service to Air Weather Service. It is my recollection that 65-0977 was the first aircraft to cycle through WRAMA for modification to the weather reconnaissance configuration.

MSGt. William E. Alt,
USAF (Ret.)
Indianapolis

Tanker Concerns

[Regarding the tanker competition, "Air Force World: Boeing Protests KC-X Award, Northrop Calls it 'Fair,'" May, p. 20]: I am an American citizen first and a loyal Air Force alumnus second. Loyalty, however, does not translate into blind acquiescence. While the need for replacement tankers is recognized, I do not understand why the Air Force

would contract with a government-subsidized European consortium to replace the venerable KC-135, clearly at the expense of American economic and national security interests. The entire tanker acquisition process has been tainted from the start. I thought at the time that leasing tanker aircraft from Boeing was a dumb idea, and there is no doubt that senior Air Force managers and Boeing executives were jointly responsible, largely because of inadequate oversight, political manipulation, greed, and what appears to have been unadulterated arrogance.

It is my personal view that Boeing is now paying an extraordinarily high price for their collusion in the discredited KC-767 lease proposal. It seems as though the Air Force went out of its way to ensure that Boeing was not awarded the contract. Given the recent—and embarrassing—negative publicity to which the Air Force has been subjected, largely as a result of its own ineptitude, it seems apparent to me that the entire acquisition and contracting processes must be overhauled.

Notwithstanding the red faces produced by the entire tanker acquisition

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fiasco, we need to procure an American-designed and -built aircraft for a wide variety of reasons. With regard to the unholy alliance that now exists between EADS and Northrop Grumman, the latter is hardly more than a front organization for EADS and essentially functions as the European company's lackey in the United States, carrying out its master's bidding. Northrop Grumman's shameful profit motive trumps our country's national interest. I shudder at the thought of what might happen in the future, should EADS-Northrop Grumman ultimately win the contract battle and build the 179 tankers. My impression is that EADS, while trumpeting its multinational composition, is clearly dominated by European nations in general and France in particular. Must we be reminded that France—and several other European nations to a lesser degree—have manifested a not-so-subtle anti-American tone in recent decades? I believe that various European governments, particularly the French, would not hesitate to exert influence on any American policy with which they disagree. For example, what would happen to logistics support for Airbus 330 tankers if the French took strong exception to a future American government decision to engage in a particular combat operation or full-scale war and decided to implement a parts embargo on the USAF tanker fleet of Airbus 330s to express their disapproval?

There are other issues that I find very troubling. Foremost among these issues is the shameful and brazen practice in which EADS is subsidized by various European governments to subdue the competition. This clearly gave the European consortium an unfair advantage. It is no secret that EADS would like to eliminate Boeing from the scene and displace that company as the world's foremost commercial aircraft manufacturer. Finally, Northrop Grumman claims that the Airbus 330 tanker will be built in the southeastern United States. What this really means is that component parts will be manufactured in Europe and shipped to the United States for assembly. It will take years to construct the necessary physical plant, whereas Boeing has already produced and sold KC-767 tankers to Italy and Japan! We need replacement aircraft now, and Boeing stands as the recognized expert in aerial refueling. Certainly, the best example is the venerable KC-135, an aircraft that has stood the test of time. We need to stop the Europeanization of the United States Air Force. Our national interest is at stake.

CMSgt. Robert D. Hudson,
USAF (Ret.)
Sheridan, Wyo.

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Classics

Here are three comments on your excellent portrait of the F-101 [*"Airpower Classics, F/RF-101 Voodoo," May, p. 168*]:

I think there were 16 DFCs awarded to pilots of the 363rd TRW for their part in the Cuban Missile Crisis. But I could be wrong about that.

There were no A Model 101s at MacDill. In fact, I don't think the 363rd had any. I'm pretty sure about that.

Add to your paragraph about Famous (RF-101C) Fliers, Lt. Col. (then Capt.) Clyde B. East, World War II ace with 12 victories. [And] Lt. Col. Ed Atterbury, shot down over North Vietnam, captured, escaped, recaptured and killed.

I have framed that page and hung it on the wall in my den.

SMSgt. Joe Hodder,
USAF (Ret.)
Westfield, Mass.