

## Long Time Coming

The editorial "Silent Leadership—At a Cost" (July, p. 4) highlights a problem peculiar to the United States Air Force. It might be useful to spend some time thinking about the roots of that problem—and then even more time thinking through the most costly consequences.

The roots of the problem lie in the failure to clearly define the roles and missions of the services, beginning with the compromise of Key West and carried through every revisit of the issue since. Since no clear boundaries have been established, the services appear to be in competition with one another like different department stores, as opposed to being recognized as specialists in various means of modern warfare. Then, the existing problem was only exacerbated by that aspect of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols legislation that exalted "jointness" as the pinnacle of military excellence. Over time, the symphony began to be more important than the excellence of any of the players—and solos are strictly discouraged!

Why is this not such a problem for the other services? When have you heard the Chief of Staff of the Army or the Commandant of the Marine Corps asked, "What does your service bring to the joint fight?" We have learned to assume that the "joint fight" is the "boots on the ground fight," deserving and requiring support from air and naval forces. Routinely, the Air Force is being defined (and defining itself) in terms of "what it brings to the joint fight." The Navy, relying on centuries of mankind's reliance on naval forces and the Air Force's unwillingness to exploit the vulnerabilities

of surface and subsurface combatants, simply ignores the "jointness" dictum and presses on.

This is not the Air Force's problem. It is the nation's problem. It is past time to recognize and exploit the primacy of airpower. It is not doctrine; it is physics. If the Army and the Navy were to war against each other, the likely outcome would be a stalemate over one beach or another—unless one of them had the support of the United States Air Force. In the end, none of the services actually fights the war—they envision, develop, nurture, cultivate, and provide specialized capabilities to joint force commanders. The mission of the United States Air Force is not to "Fly, Fight, and Win." The mission of the United States Air Force should be to: "Ensure the fullest exploitation of air, space, and cyberspace in pursuit of national security interests." Were that in the forefront of every airman's mind—as opposed to "bringing airpower to the joint fight"—we would be finding better ways to bring airpower directly to bear on national security problems. We might have been able, for example, to prevent ISIS from graduating from junior varsity to major adversary status.

Finally, I take issue with one line in [Adam] Hebert's otherwise excellent editorial. In the second to the last paragraph he states, "No service should fight alone." Acknowledging that services do not actually fight, I would argue that anytime we can bring airpower to bear directly on national security problems without placing our sons and daughters in harm's way, we should be anxious to do so.

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in today's wars. Here are three actions that could help:

Reinvigorate the declassification process. A good place to start is a mass declassification review and release of the annual histories of the operational commands, something which is long overdue. Command histories are the institutional memory of the Air Force and a good place to start telling the Air Force story. Of course, some facts must still remain classified, but those are fewer and fewer as time goes by. Keeping 25- to 70-year-old Cold War-era secrets locked in the archives doesn't help tell the story and reinforces the impression of an organization that is senile, and one symptom of senility is the inability to retrieve data from memory. Now is the time to air out some of the vaults before institutional rigor mortis and dementia set in.

Provide more personnel and resources to the Air Force Historical Research Agency. AFHRA should be the premier institution where anyone can learn what his great service has contributed—in both war and peace. It is a true national treasure, a rich resource of documents and collections that should be widely available for historians and researchers, especially airpower advocates. But AFHRA is undermanned, and it is difficult to access its holdings, very few of which are online and many of which still need declassification review despite their age. Allocation of a modest amount of additional personnel and resources would generate benefits far out of proportion to cost.

Be more forthcoming with both Congress and the American people. Lack of

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—The Editors

Thank you for firing a public salvo on what I hope is no longer an institutionally taboo topic: the inability of the Air Force to effectively tell its story as it seems to have trouble standing up for itself. Bringing this deficiency out into the open is long overdue. Your list of reasons why it is frequently difficult to learn about Air Force wartime contributions is a good synopsis of the causes of the problem, but it is important to note this deficiency extends further back in Air Force history, and the steps needed to overcome it involved more than just publicizing efforts

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candor doesn't do anyone any favors, especially in an era where trying to control information often fails. The ongoing A-10 saga is a good example where being secretive does not reflect favorably because, rightly or wrongly, the Air Force comes across as having a "we know everything and you're not smart enough to" attitude. An uninformed observer can be forgiven for believing the Air Force either doesn't know what it is doing or is trying to pull a fast one. Hoarding information is no longer a path to power. It is a path to irrelevance and does not garner public support. A shift from a top-down industrial age mindset to an information age approach would help a great deal. (This point deserves further elaboration, but suffice it to say, a change in orientation is essential to reconstruct and solidify an understanding of the Air Force that has faded from the public memory as the World War II and Desert Storm experience are now largely in the history books. The good news is leadership with the right outlook can make this happen without having to spend any money.

The Air Force must be able to tell its story to get more resources and smarter decisions from Congress. In this day and age, that means the American people must know the Air Force story so they can offer more support for the Air Force to which political leaders, in

turn, should respond. The Air Force has a great story to tell, so let's tell it.

Lt. Col. Allan G. Johnson,  
 USAF (Ret.)  
 Fairfield, Calif.

Hooray for Mr. Hebert and his editorial. I have for most of my career and retirement cringed at the lack of good PR in the Air Force. For one, I am sick of hearing about SEAL Team 6 and the vaunted Tomahawks. The average American Joe is probably thinking, and who can blame him, that we really don't need an Air Force; the Navy can do it all. The Air Force (and the nation) is paying a high price for our non-PR "culture"—few joint commands, serious shortage of funds and manpower, aging inventory. I'm all for joint operations, but it doesn't take a military genius to realize that in our modern technological world, where speed and reach are the principal ingredients for successful combat, the Air Force should be the service of choice—first to be called and in command. We are an open and democratic society. The people matter, and they are going to be swayed by what they hear (or don't hear). It is past time for us to start doing some public bragging and doing it loud, clear, and often.

Col. Mike Sexton,  
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## SENIOR STAFF CHANGES

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**NOMINATION: To be Brigadier General:** Deanna M. **Burt**.

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## Murder, Not Combat

In regard to the article "Airpower at the Bay of Pigs" (July, p. 62), although it provides an excellent overview of this historical event and the role that airpower played in it, I would like to address the matter of the circumstances surrounding the death of Thomas "Pete" Ray.

The simplistic statement that Ray "survived the crash but [was] killed in a shootout on the ground" suggests that this was the end of that part of

the story. However, over a period of many years, additional information was obtained that would reveal that this was just the beginning of a quest for final justice.

In 1979, Ray's remains were returned from Cuba. An autopsy revealed that he had sustained multiple gunshot wounds, the majority of which were believed to have been survivable if he had received appropriate medical treatment. Also present was a fatal gunshot wound of the head. At the

time of this examination, the circumstances surrounding Ray's death were unknown.

Information later obtained from eyewitnesses indicated that following the initial engagement with Cuban militiamen, Ray was taken to the field dispensary near Castro's headquarters. The wounded Ray was then confronted by the physician in charge of the medical facility and summarily executed by him, thereby providing an explanation for the contact gunshot wound to the head.

In 2004, the Cuban government was successfully prosecuted under a federal anti-terrorism statute, which was the culmination of a 30-year quest by Ray's daughter, Janet Ray Weininger, to have her father's remains returned and the true story of his death finally told.

Interestingly, one of the postmortem findings can be related to the statement by a CIA representative—"Cannot attach sufficient importance to fact that American crews must not fall into enemy hands"—was obviously in Ray's mind as he engaged Castro's soldiers in the gun battle, during which a projectile entered his outstretched right arm as he returned their fire.

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## SENIOR STAFF CHANGES CONTINUED

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