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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.

Check This Out, Congress

I read with some interest your June *Air Force Magazine* article "Enemies for Hire" [p. 42]. I particularly noted the statement on p. 45, attributed to Airborne Tactical Advantage Co. (ATAC), that "using ATAC aircraft [to provide dissimilar aircraft combat training-DACT] saved \$16,000 per flight hour, over the course of 19,000 sorties." Assuming one-and-a-half hours per sortie, those 19,000 sorties amount to 28,500 hours. At a savings of \$16,000 per flight hour, the total saving amounts to \$456,000,000—a truly spectacular sum! We might also assume that this was just for Navy DACT, since the referenced paragraph discusses specifically, and only, Navy F/A-18 DACT savings. I wonder how Air Force DACT stacks up?

Of course, the cited numbers are probably over the lifetime of Navy DACT, which we aren't privy to from said article. But if we assume that ATAC has been providing Navy DACT for its entire lifetime—20 years, per the article—then we can divide that spectacular savings by 20, and the average savings per year is only a paltry \$22,800,000. Congressmen, take note!

Maj. John A. Triplett,
USAF (Ret.)
Morgan, Utah

Let Enlisted Lead

My take-away after reading June's article "The New NCO Way" [p. 26] several times is that perhaps some have forgotten, or were not aware, that enlisted people have long been staffing positions previously held not only by company grade, but also field grade officers. When I attended the SNCOA, Class 81-C, it was commanded by a colonel, and subordinate directors were field grade officers. Regardless, the academy was at risk of having its doors shut because of a lack of academic

rigor and instructional vigor. Among other things, there were low academic standards and poor instructional practices. Additionally, there was a lack of professionalism and decorum on the part of some instructors and a general lack of discipline among not only the student body but also the instructional cadre. That's when CMSgt. Bobby G. Renfroe replaced the colonel, and senior NCOs replaced the company and field grade officers. Chief Renfroe was the right person, at the right time. His leadership directly resulted in improved academic standards, enhanced instructional programs, personal and professional discipline, and a keen sense of camaraderie and esprit de corps. I mean no disrespect to officer personnel, but I believe all can agree that the SNCOA has thrived under enlisted leadership.

When then-CSAF Gen. Merrill "Tony" McPeak disclosed plans for a major reorganization—reshaping combat units and cutting management staffs in major commands and at the Pentagon (see "McPeak's Plan," *Air Force Magazine*, February 1991 [p. 18])—his initiative was not lost on the PME senior NCO corps who envisioned how enlisted PME could be streamlined and flattened to improve the instructional programs at

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the USAF leadership schools, NCO academies, and the Senior NCO Academy. The Center for Professional Military Education (CEPME), now known as the Barnes Center for Enlisted Education, was the strategic vision of enlisted personnel who developed the concept and design to eliminate duplication of effort, reduce manpower, improve instruction, and reduce costs. It has also been a tremendous success.

If it were not for an influential chief who lacked the vision to appreciate the capabilities of the enlisted corps, the Barnes Center for Enlisted Education would today be led by a chief instead of a colonel. Unfortunately, this shortsighted chief convinced senior officer leadership that enlisted members were not capable of assuming the responsibility. Nonetheless, the decision was made to staff the vice commandant position of the Barnes Center with a chief. Having served as the CEPME/CV during its creation and stand-up, I believe it continues to be the only USAF organization with an officer (colonel) serving as the commander and a chief as the vice. At that time, the Air Staff provided waivers so that I could fully assume the duties as the vice, a practice that could easily be utilized in the future.

Without disparaging the previous or current fine officer leaders of [USAF], it is time to reconsider appointing a chief to be the next leader of the Barnes Center. Without question, there are capable chiefs who have the education, experience, and leadership skills to accept this important and symbolic responsibility.

There is value in selected enlisted people assuming greater authority and responsibility because they are able and willing—emphasis on authority. Responsibility without authority would be an impossible task to accept. My hope is that if this comes to fruition, selection will be solely based on USAF needs and the individual's formal education, qualifications, experience, and readiness. My fear is that some will be selected by extraneous variables that are politically correct or are based on cronyism or favoritism. This would be a losing proposition. Thanks to the CSAF and CMSAF for having this vision.

CMSgt. Nace J. Macaluso,
USAF (Ret.)
Wetumpka, Ala.

I think the Air Force is on to something good, as outlined in Marc V. Schanz's article, except that I question replacing some company grade officer billets with senior NCOs. He talked as to how company grade officers will go to a senior NCO and ask advice about a decision. These are times when the more senior and experienced NCO can teach the young officer. The young officers need

that mentoring by senior NCOs so they understand the enlisted perspective. Yes, it will save money, but I believe it will also harm the development of field grade officers.

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

I always enjoy the impressive photographs that accompany your articles and serve to highlight the personnel and equipment that make up our Air Force. They say a picture is worth a thousand words and I fully agree with that.

I took special note of the photo of the young technical sergeant that was included in "The New NCO Way" article. This sharp-looking ABU-clad NCO lost points with me when I noticed that she wasn't wearing her occupational badge. Granted, it is an optional (but highly encouraged) wear item, but to me it is a key part of each airman's unique professional identity.

If memory serves it was former CSAF Gen. Merrill McPeak who felt so strongly about occupational badges that he ensured one was made available for every career field in the Air Force. Previous to that only folks with aeronautical ratings or in select career fields like ATC, security forces, and others were so blessed. I wonder what this NCO would say to General McPeak, who felt it important enough to create badges for all those that had been previously left out?

Badges are not just given away; they're earned and should be displayed proudly for all to see and admire. I don't know how it is in other career fields but in the ATC business I've often seen pinning ceremonies where the badge is formally awarded in front of peers. It's a very proud moment in a young controller's career. As it should be!

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

Put Up or Shut Up

After reading your June editorial, I was sorry to see that the editor of *Air Force Magazine* produced an article based on little facts but a lot of arrogance when he accused A-10 supporters of suffering from parochialism [*Editorial: All Parochialism Is Local*, p. 4]. It is a travesty that you represent the total Air Force, yet you are siding with the politicians and not keeping our armed forces prepared to fight future battles.

Your editorial had the premise that the real reason why people were defending keeping the A-10 in the Air Force close air support (CAS) inventory was that of local parochialism to defend not just the aircraft but Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. The editorial does not

address the current and near future of the tactical requirements of ground commanders for CAS. As the editor in chief, you owe your readers more substantial arguments than the three underdeveloped statements you used to support your position.

I found your "spurious" argument the one that hit closest to home. My son-in-law served two combat tours as a Marine infantry platoon commander in Afghanistan. He had personal experiences with both the F-16 and the A-10 in close combat situations. While he valued the time to target, the F-16's speed and time on target did not allow for creative options. One comment he made was that the sound and fury of the A-10 Gatling gun had a powerful positive effect on his unit's morale. He wondered how it sounded to the enemy. I think you need to survey more field commanders as to how they saw the effectiveness of the A-10 vs. the F-16 or the F-15. Currently there is a B-1 bombing incident being investigated for possible fratricide. While it is true that the B-1 can carry a railroad car full of bombs, the altitude and the lack of target visualization make it a tough choice for a CAS assignment.

I thought your cost argument was not developed. The Reaper is cost-effective—unless you are an Afghan or Pakistani politician who has continued to report the loss of civilians to include women and children or a weapons controller confronting a jammed signal. Yes, you are right, the A-10 is low and slow and just maybe there is a little parochialism among some of the Air Force leadership against it not being sleek and fast.

While I respect General Welsh's leadership, I found him drinking the F-35 Kool-Aid when he made the all-encompassing statement, "Nobody likes it." Here is where the politico budget drives the choice away from supporting the American fighting man in order to save the F-35. Sorry, there is a time for the military to stand up and fight for what is needed. Let me remind the reader that the F-35 can carry 182 or 220 25 mm rounds depending whether they are internal or external pods. The A-10 carries the GAU-8, which contains 1,350 30 mm rounds. The A-10 is far from being a budgetary snafu. You did not prove that and your article smacked of supporting the political wants, needs, and desires versus that of the military. You did not support the tools that are needed for CAS by the American fighting corps.

Lt. Col. James Slagle,
USAF (Ret.)
Tucson, Ariz.

■ Gen. Mark A. Welsh III was not criticizing the A-10 when he said, "Nobody

likes it.” The quote was a reflection of the fact that USAF leadership does not like the decision to kill the A-10 but feels financially forced into it.—THE EDITORS

While several points in your June editorial, “All Parochialism Is Local,” have merit, numerous others are guilty of the same parochialism for which you indict others. This letter seeks to challenge your interpretation of the three espoused arguments supporters of the A-10 purportedly use to defend keeping the aircraft in the Air Force inventory.

The first argument states ground troops “love the A-10” for the trivial reason they can “see it in action during close air support runs.” This argument is too simplistic and in error. Ground troops are not just excited spectators; rather, their admiration of the A-10 is based in their knowledge of A-10 capabilities reinforced by real-world experiences as A-10 pilots employed various weapons to provide the needed support whether the enemy is hundreds of meters away or a mere hundred feet away. While other Air Force aircraft can, and do, perform CAS, often the situation may restrict their ability to provide the requisite support. The support a B-1B provides diminishes rapidly as the distance between enemy and friendly forces decreases due to the proximity of the bomb blast/fragmentation. In addition, the JTAC must be able to provide precise coordinates while under fire and weather often prohibits effective TGP operations, and so on. A-10 attack pilots train tirelessly to employ a wide variety of ordnance under any conditions to include visual employment, under the weather, and danger close. As well, while flying higher and faster may make aircraft less vulnerable to ground threats (terrain and threat dependent), these characteristics can simultaneously make it exponentially more difficult to support the ground forces (weather obscuration, target and friendly identification, etc.). Finally, you claim the F-16 has been the primary CAS platform in Afghanistan without providing any supporting documentation, references, or qualifications. Are you stating the F-16 has flown the most sorties? Does this claim include NATO nations flying the F-16 (a dubious inclusion since no other nation has the A-10 and provide whatever type airframe they possess)? What is your basis for this claim? The claim may well be true, but we must qualify our claims to maintain credibility of our arguments.

The second argument attempts to take aim at cost-effectiveness. The standard means to evaluate cost is “cost per flight hour.” Using the Air Force’s FY14

USAF Amended Budget Estimates, dated May 2013, OCO Exhibit OP-20 Analysis of Flying Hours Program, the A-10 is the least expensive manned combat aircraft to operate per flying hour. While it is true the unmanned MQ-9 is cheaper to operate per hour, it is also a much less capable CAS platform (more truthfully, it is an armed ISR platform which can perform CAS if the situation allows). As well, you use a logic all your own in stating the B-1B is the most efficient due to its large weapons payload. This is only true if all CAS engagements could be solved with JDAMs and the B-1B employed its

entire payload. Conversely, if it returns without employing, it could as easily be declared the least efficient, as the B-1B is one of the most expensive aircraft to fly per flying hour. As well, due to its deployed location, the B-1B costs US taxpayers an exorbitant amount of money merely to transit back and forth to the AOR. By any logical standard, the B-1B is nowhere near the “top of the effectiveness equation” as is asserted in the editorial.

The final argument indirectly derides the capability of the A-10 and attempts to place its expansive capabilities into a narrow paradigm. The logic subse-

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quently sidetracks into a historic litany of outdated military equipment to include battleships, the SR-71, and even the horse cavalry. Where the analogy fails is that the examples provided were all replaced by equipment that performs the same mission at a greater level and more efficiently. Current Air Force leadership has stated that the A-10 is the best close air support asset in the inventory, and while the F-35 and other manned and unmanned aircraft can “do” CAS, it will not be at the exemplary level at which the A-10 performs the mission. The attempt to pigeonhole the wide-ranging capabilities of the A-10 hints at a lack of knowledge and/or understanding of the A-10 [and] its pilots and a similar failure to appreciate the dynamics of ground engagements. (I would also add that, in my opinion, the A-10’s ability to perform the combat search and rescue mission as well as forward air controller will exceed the ability of the F-35 or other current fighter airframes for the foreseeable future.)

Tough decisions due to budgetary constraints are a fact that is understood by all airmen. Therefore, all arguments pushed forth to fortify our institutional position must be logical, nonemotional, backed by facts, and fortified by an acknowledgement of accepted risk and/or mission degradation. This letter is not to be construed as a rebuttal to Air Force leadership regarding the divestment of the A-10; rather, it is a call for us to adhere to our core values—in particular, integrity in all our arguments and metrics we put forth to support those arguments. For if we use logical fallacies, appear to provide “cherry-picked” statistics, or use false analogies, we will immeasurably reduce our credibility and influence as an armed service. In addition, “Excellence In All We Do” must be at the forefront for whichever platforms eventually perform the CAS mission. [Speaking] as both an A-10 pilot and as a father of an infantry officer, CAS performed “adequately” or “reasonably well” does not meet the excellent level of CAS expected to protect our airmen and joint/coalition partners.

Lt. Col. Scott Hoffman,
USAF
Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

■ *Air Forces Central data shows that A-10s have flown 19 percent of CAS missions in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2006, while F-16s have flown 33 percent of CAS missions. For Afghanistan alone, since 2006 the A-10 has flown 24 percent of CAS sorties while F-16s have flown 18 percent. The B-1B, F-15E, and Navy F/A-18s have also contributed double-digit percentages of CAS sorties in Afghanistan.—THE EDITORS*

The editorial by Adam J. Hebert repeated the message pushed by the CSAF, General Welsh, for getting rid of the A-10. He did this so well he could have been using the general’s talking papers. In the editorial, Mr. Hebert also accused the Arizona congressional delegation of being “parochial” for wanting to save the A-10 and, by extension, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. It appears that Mr. Hebert (and *Air Force Magazine*) is being parochial by parroting the views of the CSAF, pushing his “wants” (more F-35s), and not looking at the bigger question of what is close air support (CAS) and what it is not. The argument that has been put forward by the CSAF is that we have

many types of airframes (F-16, F-15E, and B-1) that can conduct CAS operations. The precision guided munitions (PGMs) that have greatly proliferated in the past 10 to 15 years allow these aircraft to be employed somewhat close to friendlies. When asked if they were as good as the A-10, General Welsh admitted that though they may not be as good as the A-10, they were “good enough” for the Army. “Good enough” sadly, was not in fact good enough for five Special Forces soldiers and one Afghan soldier killed by “friendly fire.” For reasons unknown at this time, these troops were killed by precision munitions dropped on their position by a USAF B-1 flying at high altitude. This was termed



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a CAS mission, but dropping a JDAM from 40,000 feet is not CAS. Though this mission may have been planned in near proximity to friendlies, in the end, it was just a bomb dropped on a set of coordinates where someone thought the enemy troops were—and hopefully ours weren't.

With true CAS, the attacking pilot is in a position, i.e., close enough to see where the good guys and bad guys are. In conjunction with the JTAC, this pilot and his wingman then have the ability to adjust weapons delivery with respect to the fluid battlefield situation in order to kill the bad guys and not the good guys. Lastly, as good as PGMs are, they have no place in a troops in contact or danger close situation. In these scenarios, the A-10s with their GAU-8 gun is the only real option (at night, AC-130s work nicely). I repeat, dropping a JDAM from 40,000 feet is not CAS. This remains the prime argument for saving the A-10 and points to the fact that some at high levels in the Air Force have forgotten what CAS really is and what it isn't.

Lt. Col. Thomas E. Rodgers,
USAF (Ret.)
Colleyville, Texas

The question shouldn't be, "Do other platforms perform CAS?" The question should be, "Do other platforms perform CAS as well as the A-10?"

B-1? Really?

CMSgt. Greg Wetzel,
USAF (Ret.)
Warsaw, Mo.

Wrong Exit

In the June magazine article on "Museums and Money" [p. 36], your information on the Strategic Air and Space Museum in the caption for the photo on p. 40 states that the museum is located adjacent to Offutt AFB, Neb. The museum is actually located off Interstate 80 at exit 426 near Ashland, Neb.

MSgt. Robert E. Chason,
USAF (Ret.)
Bellevue, Neb.

Let's Not Count On Putin's Good Will

While I am thrilled by USAF's "Space Launch Renaissance" [June, p. 20], there is one serious problem. All of the Atlas V rockets use Russian-produced engines with more launches currently scheduled than there are engines in the inventory (38 launches scheduled, 16 engines on hand). Time to quit dancing with the devil and look for investment in domestic sources if we want to have any leverage with Putin & Co.

Sean M. Mallory
Edinboro, Pa.

Gen. Benjamin Davis, Peacemaker

I enjoyed the article [*"The Tuskegee Airfields," June p. 60*]. I read it several times. I wish you had written a little bit more about Ben Davis [as a] general.

In April 1968 while stationed at Mactan Air Base in the Philippines, I met Lt. Gen. Benjamin Davis Jr. At the time, he was the 13th Air Force commander at Clark Air Base. I was the finance officer at Mactan. General Davis was visiting Mactan to smooth over a political flap with a Philippine senator.

The senator's plane was delayed in landing at Mactan because one of our C-130s had a mechanical difficulty and was coming from in-country. The combat support group met with General Davis to discuss the situation. General Davis picked me out because I was the only lieutenant at the meeting—I was wearing my father's brass and lieutenant's bars.

I did not know until 40 years later that Captain Davis and his fellow airmen had been escorting the B-17 in 1943, 1944, and 1945 in the North African and Sicily, Italy, theaters.

Bill Humphries
Houston

The Book on Gates

I resisted commenting on John Tirpak's excellent article in the March edition on "Gates Versus the Air Force" [p. 54] until I had read Gates' book in its entirety, which I have now done. The book is an extremely well-written, detailed account of all the major national security decisions made during Gates' four-plus-year tenure as SecDef, with a strong focus on wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The book is far more balanced in its treatment of presidential decision-making than the news media suggested. Gates comes across as a dedicated, brilliant, but narcissistic, public-servant executive whose focus was on the wars, the care of the troops, on eliminating "unnecessary" programs, and on improving the Pentagon's efficiency. And the book clearly shows how his biases influenced his decision-making, especially in matters related to the Air Force, as Tirpak pointed out.

But more importantly, in my view, the book shows that Gates embraced the basic military strategy of "invade, occupy, stabilize, and democratize" without question, when even a cursory review of military history shows this strategy has always failed in the long term and that any successes would come at a high price and be temporary. His focus was on tactics like how many troops to surge at what rate and the rate of withdrawal. He does not seem to recognize that a counterinsurgency fought by occupying troops is doomed to failure no matter

how good the tactics are because in the end, an occupying force can never win the "hearts and minds" of the people.

At the time he completed writing the book, Gates still thought that the troop surge in Iraq had succeeded and was succeeding in Afghanistan. I wonder, as he watches both countries now being destroyed by sectarian violence, civil war, and terrorism, whether he asks himself if there might have been a better strategy. The book suggests that he is probably not asking the question but instead would blame our failures in Iraq and Afghanistan on not staying the course and withdrawing too soon. The irony of this is that if Gates would address the better-strategy question, I believe it would lead him to far more reliance on precision strike by the Air Force in support of counterinsurgency fought by government security forces, not US forces.

Brig. Gen. Raymond A. Shulstad,
USAF (Ret.)
Tampa, Fla.

Can You Hear the Echoes?

Recently, nearly 1,200 Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings members, all Air Force Association members as well, assembled in Washington, D.C., for our 66th annual National Conclave. Many AFA chapters and individual AFA members around the country, along with the AFA national staff, contributed funds or other support to make this event a tremendous success. Thank you!

If you ever doubt the impact you have in supporting Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings as members of AFA, I suggest you visit the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum where you will be able to hear the echoes of 1,200 cadets and college students chanting "U-S-A" in unison. Or take a moment to walk into the great ballroom at the Wardman Park Hotel, where you will find the echoes of 1,200 of our youngest AFA members singing all verses of the Air Force song, following an address by the Chief. Or stroll through the reception area at the same hotel where you will feel the energy of every conclave attendee as the Chief stood for nearly two hours with them until 1,000 pictures were taken and 1,200 hands were shaken. You made this happen!

Every AFA member helped make this year's conclave a lifelong memory for some of America's very best and brightest. As executive director of Arnold Air Society and Silver Wings, I am truly grateful for your support. Thank you!

Brig. Gen. Daniel P. Woodward,
USAF (Ret.)
Granite Bay, Calif.