



## Air Force Association

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### AFA's Mission

*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.*

### It's Not All About the Cash Money

I read with interest your take on military pay and benefits [*"Editorial: Pay and Benefits and National Security," March, p. 4*].

The reason most people choose to stay in the service varies. Pay is just one. I think our military is paid well today. But I thought I was being paid well from 1976 to 1995 when I took early retirement at the rank of E-7 at 19 years, one month, and 25 days. I do not know where the concept of military pay having to be equal to civilian pay came from. We were always told that the reason for the lower pay was we had free medical, BAS, and BAQ not taxed, and we did not have to pay anything for retirement benefits.

I looked at the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Committee's report on retirement value for an E-7 under the current system: \$201,000 and blended \$248,649. I have been retired for 20 years and have collected \$306,925 as of December 2014. So I do not know what hat they pulled the numbers from. But it is not based on the real world, and I know an E-7 retiring today will be getting a much bigger monthly check than I do—about \$270 more per month. \$529,680 in 20 years, not even figuring COLA increases. Maybe now is the time to require retirement contributions and limited COLA increases for the first 20 years. Once you look at the numbers, I have always thought that there should be something for the people who serve at least 10 years.

MSgt. Jeff L. Surratt,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Great Falls, Mont.

### Missing Mackay

In reading the article on the C-130 in the February 2015 magazine [*"Airpower Classics: C-130 Hercules," p. 92*], I noticed an omission under the Mackay

Trophy section: AC-130 crew awarded the trophy for 1992 was omitted. This crew was intercepted over international airspace by Peruvian aircraft, strafed three times, and managed to find an airfield to land. Unfortunately, one member perished, and six others were wounded in the incident.

As a member of that crew, please add us to the list, as we remember the C-130 as a wonderful workhorse, able to withstand great amounts of damage and still fly under austere conditions.

MSgt. Raymond A. Fisher,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Papillion, Neb.

The C-130 Hercules is indeed an "Airpower Classic" and has participated in numerous roles, as the article stated. The article listed the AC, EC, KC, and MC, but in my humble opinion, failed to mention its very valuable role as a DC-130. During the Vietnam War, the DC-130 flew hundreds of missions, launching and monitoring drones that would fly over North Vietnam, providing valuable photographic intelligence used to plan targets and to determine the results of the strike missions. They also provided locations of various types of defensive systems used by the North Vietnamese. Drones launched by DC-

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130s were also used to drop various items over North Vietnam to assist in the psychological warfare program. We in SAC intelligence considered the DC-130 and the drone program to be an extremely important contributor to our operations in SEA.

Col. Edward E. Mutch,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Bellevue, Neb.

### Rocks Vs. Raptor

Let me get this straight: We launched air strikes against an enemy whose primary air defense was throwing rocks. This took place in a country whose government had announced that they would not interfere and had no incentive to interfere, as we were doing them a favor ["With the Raptors Over Syria," February, p. 26].

Though Syria has air defenses more sophisticated than ISIS, in the unlikely event that they would launch fighters, surely the Eagle and the Super Hornet are more than capable of dealing with such an eventuality.

Let us not forget that Syria is a Russian client and, presumably, has Russians on the ground and is more than willing to share any intelligence they may gather.

With all the foregoing in mind, we still decided to trot out the F-22. The upside here, in my opinion, was zero, and the downside was the possibility that our enemies and potential enemies gained some valuable information about our most frontline aircraft.

Well, at least you all got some nifty photos for the February cover.

Not, overall, our finest moment.

Richard A. Holt  
San Antonio

### USAF Is USAF Is USAF

I read in the February issue that 12 MC-12 Liberty aircraft were excess to the mission and being transferred to the Special Operations Command ["Aperture: Other Budget Fallout," p. 12].

This confuses me. Special Operations Command is not a military service. My Special Forces neighbor is a soldier of the US Army, assigned to Special Forces Command. Aren't all the components of that command part of one of the services? Will not the MC-12s being transferred have USAF markings and be flown and maintained by airmen like the AC-130s and V-22s?

Perhaps it would be more accurate to write that the budget of Special Operations Command will provide funding, but the aircraft will be USAF aircraft and the personnel will continue to be airmen of USAF. Or do I have this wrong?

MSgt. Bill Brockman,  
ANG (Ret.)  
Atlanta

■ *It is true the MC-12s would have been operated by AFSOC airmen. The fact that the aircraft would have been transferred, more accurately, via USSOCOM, is pertinent because the command planned to shuffle and redistribute two fleets. Of the 51 MC-12Ws in service—41 Project Liberty aircraft belong to Air Combat Command, and 10 Javaman aircraft are assigned to SOCOM. SOCOM planned to split ACC's aircraft between AFSOC and the Army and pass its Javamen—currently Army operated—to AFSOC. In the end, Congress froze and finally barred the transferring all but 13 of the aircraft, which will go to the Air National Guard to stand up a special operations mission in Oklahoma.—THE EDITORS*

### Dogs For All

As an Air Force veteran and lifetime dog lover, I really appreciated your article (February 2015, p. 62) about dogs helping our troops in combat and at home ["Airman's Best Friend"].

There are thousands of wounded warriors awaiting service/therapy dogs across our country, so I challenge the military community to support organizations training these animals, including my favorite charity, freedom-servedogs.org.

David L. Fourman  
Centennial, Colo.

As a dog handler at Altus AFB (11th CDS), 1966-67, at Binh Thuy, RVN (632nd SPS), 1967-68, I appreciated

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The World's Sixth Sense



very much the excellent photo spread in the February *Air Force Magazine* issue. It brought a smile to my face and, truth be told, a tear to my eyes as well. My time with the K-9 branch is among the most cherished memories I have. I'm still in daily (or nearly so) contact with a dozen or so of the handlers I served with in Vietnam. We are lifelong friends, with poignant memories and unbreakable bonds.

I read somewhere that military working dogs in Vietnam were responsible for keeping as many as 10,000 names off the Vietnam Memorial Wall. There is no doubt in my mind that our loyal, beloved four-footed friends kept many of us alive—me especially. How incredibly sad that only a handful ever got to come home.

Del Schulze  
Delaware, Ohio

**Yours, Mine**

Just a correction on a picture caption on p. 40, regarding Northrop Grumman's Gulfstream demonstrator [*"The JSTARS Recap," February, p. 36*]. The aircraft pictured is actually a Gulfstream G650, tail #N683GD, not the Northrop Grumman demonstrator, which is a former Gulfstream GV flight-test airplane, serial No. 501. 501 was the first GV classic built (not a G550 and lacks the modern PlaneView flight deck of the G550 among other improvements) and was an Experimental Flight Test airplane supporting NG in a highly modified configuration as their ISR technology demonstrator. NG recently purchased a/c 501 from Gulfstream and will continue using it as a technology demonstrator.

Wish I could send you a picture, but that's now company proprietary to NG.  
Lt. Col. Dale Colter,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Savannah, Ga.

**Closing Mildenhall Is a Mistake**

The planned closure of RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk, UK, must be the result of unfounded/incorrect information fed to the Air Force leadership [*"Air Force World: European Base Consolidation," March, p. 15*].

The United States, and particularly the Air Force, has over the last many years found consistent full support of the UK government in every contingency. This cannot be said of Germany and its various administrations over the years. History since 1986 provides enough proof of this. Additionally, Germany is well-known for its very restrictive low-level areas and stringent noise-abatement rules and regulations. The 352nd SOG will not enjoy the freedom

of the low-level training areas found in Britain, and this may well affect the preparedness level of this very important unit. The 100th ARW regularly supports aircraft transiting the North Sea, and supporting such missions out of Germany instead of the UK will certainly increase the cost of each supporting flight. Furthermore, the close proximity of RAF Mildenhall to another USAF base, namely RAF Lakenheath presently flying F-15s and soon to be augmented/replaced by F-35s, has always made a lot of financial sense to have two very important bases situated just a few miles away from each other. Moreover, while the weather in Great Britain is not always desirable, the weather in Germany is much worse, which may also interfere with the number of missions generated, especially when mostly required during a conflict.

The above are just a few reasons why shutting down RAF Mildenhall is not a good idea. Previous BRACs have turned out to be a failure when it comes to cost-effectiveness, and the closure of RAF Mildenhall will prove to be, without doubt, not just a financial mistake but, equally important, a tactical mistake, both politically as well as geographically.

One hopes that the current Air Force leadership will look deeper into the consequences of abandoning RAF Mildenhall and spreading all three wings/squadrons to different locations in Germany.

Joe Ciliberti  
Valletta, Malta

**An A-10 Solution**

As a former civilian Air Force historian, I believe Air Force history offers a solution to the A-10 debate: Transfer them from ACC (or ACC-gained) to AFSOC [*"Letters: Time for Reflection," February, p. 7*]. Commit US Special Operations Command budget—which is one of the few areas of the Defense Department to maintain or grow its funding—to their operation.

AFSOC's roots are in the air commandos who flew P-51s and B-25s in close air support of the British Chindits in Burma. In Southeast Asia, air commandos flew aircraft also deemed obsolete at the time: Skyraiders and A-26s. While I tend to agree with the assertion that the A-10 is less survivable in a modern A2/AD conflict, it is the perfect instrument for counterinsurgency (COIN) or low-intensity conflicts of the sort with which AFSOC is involved. The current air war against ISIS has many parallels to the secret air war in Laos in which the air commandos took part.

AFSOC is also the home of the AC-130 fleet. Since Grenada, AC-130s have flown many sorties that are not

classic "special operations" missions. The A-10 could similarly be called on to assist "Big Army" when needed.

In this way, AFSOC could maintain the "low and slow" A-10—just as the air commandos did their piston-engined fleet in the 1960s—and apply it to their unique mission set as well as having it on call for conventional forces.

Chris Husing  
Santa Clara, Calif.

**Falcon Vs. Viper**

I see you frequently referring to F-16s as "Vipers." The actual name of the F-16 is and has been the "Fighting Falcon."

Just in the interest of journalistic accuracy.

Lt. Col. Addison Thompson,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Santa Barbara, Calif.

■ *The F-16's official name is the Fighting Falcon, but the aircraft is almost universally referred to by its nickname, the Viper.*—THE EDITORS

**Keeping Secrets About Agent Orange**

As a Life Member of AFA and an ardent reader of *Air Force Magazine*, I do not normally find any glaring omissions in articles written by John T. Correll, whom I very much admire. However, on p. 54 of the January 2015 edition of *Air Force Magazine*, Mr. Correll writes that: "In recent years, the Agent Orange issue has transcended Vietnam. The significant use of herbicides around US bases in Thailand was disclosed by a Freedom of Information Act case in 2010."

Mr. Correll's article totally omits any mention of the country of Laos. On June 8, 2010, my organization, the Airborne Battlefield Command Control Center (ABCCC) Association, wrote a letter to the VA, informing the VA of the use of Agent Orange in Laos during the Vietnam War.

As a direct result of our June 8, 2010, letter to the VA, the ABCCC Association received a Sept. 13, 2010, letter from the VA stating the following: "Regarding your reference to Laos, DOD has acknowledged aerial spraying of tactical herbicides along the Laotian-Vietnam border to reveal enemy activity on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Any veteran providing evidence of service in this area of Laos would qualify for an acknowledgment of exposure on a direct-facts-found basis."

Of course, the war in Laos was always "top secret," and absolutely no mention of Laos will ever be found written on any USAF flight orders or PCS orders or TDY orders. So how can a veteran provide the evidence requested by the VA?

CMSgt. Ken Witkin,  
USAF (Ret.)  
Fort Washington, Md.