

From the article “New Directions in Air and Space Power”

By Adam J. Hebert, Senior Editor

Gen. John P. Jumper

The Air Force needs to change its culture and some long-established career paths to fully exploit its new combat wing organization, said Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff.

To make this new concept of operations work, one of the first things the service must do is ensure it has the right individuals in charge of maintaining aircraft. "The two hardest things we do in our Air Force [are to] fly and fix airplanes," Jumper said. There is a well-established flying career path that young pilots can follow to reach leadership positions, he said, but there is no similar path for those who fix airplanes--the maintainers.

Jumper explained that the service expects its operations group and squadron commanders to be "the epitome of leadership in the air." They should be the best pilots.

"When I fire an ops group commander or a squadron commander, it is probably going to be for an infraction in the air, and that is where he better have his office," he said.

However, there are no such obvious role models for maintainers. Young maintenance officers who look up the leadership chain today, Jumper said, see a logistics group commander, a person who stopped maintaining airplanes to get the other qualifications needed to hold the logistics group position.

Jumper said he wants those who fly and those who fix airplanes to have the same experience factor. "I want the ops group commander to spend his 24 years learning how to fight in the air," he said. The same applies to maintenance officers. No one, said Jumper, will be as good at commanding a maintenance group as the person who spent 24 years in maintenance.