Meet me in San Antonio

AFCATCA Convention
Oct 2025

See pages 18-23

Inside:

HUMOR IN UNIFORM

'Put a good swing on the ball'

During my assignment to McClellan AFB our Communications Group (CG) sponsored a Little League team, and I volunteered to coach it. We had two of our players selected for the All-Star game at season's conclusion. Our second baseman, Tony Hruzek, was one of those chosen.

Whenever traveling to AFCC units I usually requested that the youngest airman in the work center give the mission of that center presentation. The best experience was 2044th CG. When I walked in, I was met by Tony Hruzek standing there terrified, and he blurted out, "Mister Reiff I didn't know it was you that I was briefing." I said, "Tony, remember the All-Star game and we told you to relax and put a good swing on the ball and you got a hit? This is just a repeat. Let's hear your briefing." After it was over, I shook his hand and let him know that he got another hit and a well-done. I nodded at his supervisors and coworkers who were laughing and clapping.

A few weeks later I received a thank you note from Tony's supervisor. They let me know that he was well on his way toward his five-level skill certification and that he had gently corrected the "Mister". **(By Ken Reiff)**

Briefing... 'all hell broke loose'

My briefing on the status of Air Training Command Computer Systems for the Commander's Conference was supposed to last for 15 Minutes. When I put up my first slide all heck broke loose!

The DCS Operations said, "I'm not giving up one more flying hour for computers" The DCS for Logistics said, "You darn old dinosaur. Don't you know the Air Force Academy is putting a desktop computer in every cadet room and connecting them with a local area network? Are you giving them a slide stick when they go to tech or flight school." The Technical Training Center Commander at Chanute AFB said, "We've got to get a handle on personal computers that our airmen are bringing into their work centers. They automate some of the processes, get PCS notice and take the computer with them. Those that remain don't know pencils work to fill out the forms. I had to banish those personal computers from the base." The Community College of the Air Force Director stated the folks at DCS Communications and Computers have done a wonderful job for us. We are in the process of automating our records and giving credit for Basic Military Training and Technical School. We have a direct link to airmen to encourage them to take online courses."

So, on and on it went until General Iosue cut off discussion after 45 minutes. He looked at me with one slide and the clicker in my hand. Laughing, "after all these years you still don't know how to give a briefing." Early the following week I received a note saying he wanted to see me. He let me know that it was the first presentation at the Commander's Conference on his watch that had meaningful discourse. He wanted to know if we had a plan to address the issues and how he could help. **(By Ken Reiff)**
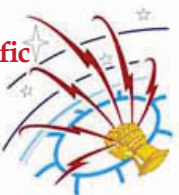

AF Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association

All those interested in supporting AF Communicators, Data Automation, Information/Cyber, Space Operations, Air Traffic Controllers, Air Field Managers, Maintenance, Engineering and Installation, Combat Comm, and related support personnel, veteran, active duty, Guard, Reserve, civilian and retired.

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If you're interested in becoming editor of the *Communicator*, please contact: manske5@charter.net

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From the Chairman and CEO

Thanks for your commitment and involvement

By Chad R. Raduege, Brig Gen, USAF Ret

2025 is off to a quick start! I'm delighted to share some updates and news from our Association. Our next AFCATCA Convention will be in San Antonio, TX, Oct 9-11, 2025. Details are included in this *Communicator* but I want to highlight several events.

On Thursday, we have an opportunity to see our future Airmen in action as they graduate from Basic Military Training. On Friday, you pick … our annual golf outing or a tour of the historic San Antonio River Walk, to include the Alamo.

On Saturday, we will hold our annual membership breakfast meeting, which will include expert updates on current Cyber and ATC activities.

Finally that evening, at our annual banquet, we will honor our Cyberspace Operations and Air Traffic Controller NCO and Senior NCO of the year award winners! I sincerely look forward to seeing and spending quality time with each of you.

On the business side, and because of our "Task Force" that we established to discuss the challenges we face as an Association – notably that our membership age is increasing, our revenue streams are decreasing, and fundraising efforts are stagnant – we've implemented some immediate changes. I've created two new AFCATCA Board of Director positions: 1) Total Force Advisor and 2) Development Officer. Col (Ret) Wade Rupper, a dear friend and superb Ohio guardsman, will be our Total Force Advisor – helping us connect active duty, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve units and people. Col (Ret) Linda McMahon, a longtime AFCATCA member and Hall of Famer, will be our Development Officer – helping us transform our thinking, as an association, to invest in the future via scholarships and donations.

We've also been rethinking the delivery of our *Communicator* magazine. My thanks to those of you that answered the survey; expect announcements soon.

Finally, to find community, despite the miles of separation, I've hosted two mini-socials – in Colorado Springs and Oklahoma City – to gather local AFCATCA members (or future members) to share stories and camaraderie. I also hosted our first-ever virtual "State of the Association" Address in February.

I'm immensely proud of OUR Association and humbled by the dedication of our AFCATCA Board of Directors. After a long search, we are pleased to welcome CMSgt (Ret) Jake Higginbotham as our Executive Secretary. Jake is a career communicator with assignments in Joint Special Operations, as Superintendent of the 38th Cyberspace Readiness Squadron and 688th Cyberspace Operations Group, as Command Chief of the 70th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing, and as a two-time Command Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL). He culminated his career in Hawaii as the PACAF A3/6 Functional Area Manager for the 1B/1D7 career field–Cyber Defense Operations. A special highlight for our ATC teammates, Jake had two tours with Air Control Squadrons, at Spangdahlem and Hill. In addition, we are thrilled to welcome CMSgt (Ret) Paul Williams to our Membership Chair, taking over for the brilliant Leslie McCormick. Paul is one of those amazing Total Force Airmen, a product of the Ohio Air National Guard. Both Jake and Paul embody everything AFCATCA strives for – humble and proven leadership, dedication to preserving our history, and focus on building a strong culture into the future.

Now in its 47th year, OUR amazing Association continues! May we remember those who have gone before, honor those of today, and hopefully inspire those of tomorrow. AFCATCA focuses on our Cyberspace and Air Traffic Controller professionals and today's modern battlefield needs our experience, leadership, involvement, and mentorship more than ever! Thank you for your ongoing involvement and commitment.

As always, my deepest thanks to all our *Communicator* contributors, along with a special thank you to Lori Manske, our Print Media Editor, for another remarkable publication.

Your Board of Directors and I welcome any comments and suggestions. Please feel free to email me at chadraduege@gmail.com. I'm hoping to see you in San Antonio this fall. Until then, take care and God bless!

Respectfully,

Chad Raduege

"Fellowship in the Company of Equals"

Perspective

Air Force Communications and Cyberspace:
Are We Making Progress?

By Harry D. Raduege, Jr, Lt Gen, USAF Ret

The Air Force Chief of Staff recently announced that the Air Force will now organize around "units of action" that will consist of 5 active-duty, 2 Reserve, and 8 Air National Guard bases. The 5 active duty bases are Little Rock, AR; Moody, GA; Mt. Home, ID; Seymour-Johnson, NC; and Shaw, SC. When required, they will deploy as a Deployable Combat Wing (DCW). In the Indo-Pacific area, combat focus is the primary mission with island-hopping as a possible reality.

However, based on an 8 percent top line budget cut directed by the Trump Administration and to avoid a peanut butter-type budget spread across multiple areas (like sometimes in the past), the Chief defined the top three Air Force missions as:

- Priority 1 (tie): Homeland Defense (Golden Dome, and U.S. borders)
- Priority 1 (tie): Strategic Deterrence (2/3 of the TRIAD along with the nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3))
- Priority 3: Power Projection (global reach and presence)

CSAF is optimistic and says that the Air Force is "winning". His message to the Congress has been adjusted from "One Air Force" to "More Air Force".

As our readers know, Lt Gen John Fairfield and I have written a number of articles for recent *Communicator* editions noting how a former Chief of Staff of the Air Force directed the closure of Air Force Communications Command (AFCC), how that has negatively impacted our Air Force, and recommending ways to "dig us out of the hole" that has reduced our C3 combat readiness and warfighting capability. AFCC, a critical Air Force MAJCOM, was reduced to a field operating activity (FOA), renamed frequently, and moved from the Air Staff and bounced around various MAJCOMs.

In my March 2023 *Communicator* article, I outlined what I thought were mistakes and misjudgments made within the "6-arenas"; e.g., A6, J6, and S6. Briefly,
- On the Air Staff, the A6 was placed "under" the A2 (Intelligence).
- In the Air Force MAJCOMs, the "6s" were placed under or alongside the 3s (Operations), or 2s (Intelligence), along with having "communications", "operations", and other warfighting terminology eliminated from their job titles.
- The "6-communities" lost their seats at the "warfighting tables".
- The original AFCS (1961-1979) and AFCC (1979-1991) MAJCOMs were reduced to FOAs: AFC4A (1991-1996), AFCA (1996-2009), AFNIC (2009-2019), and Cyberspace Capabilities Center (CCC, 2019-Present). These FOAs were constantly realigned under the Air Staff, Air Force Space Command, and Air Combat Command.

The former Secretary of the Air Force admitted that the Air Force has not appreciated the scale of effort required to modernize Command, Control, Communications, and Battle Management (C3BM) in a Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) context.

I appreciate that between General Fairfield and myself, our articles were placed in the hands of the former Secretary of the Air Force, the Department of the Air Force (DAF)/CIO, and the HAF/A2/A6. We heard that each appreciated the points that General Fairfield and I have been expressing.

Fortunately, I understand that new changes for the Air Force 6-communities have been made or are underway:

The Air Staff is separating the A2/A6 directorate, so that the A6 is returned to a higher status reporting directly to the CSAF (like before).

Several MAJCOMs have already renamed their A6 as "Cyberspace Operations and Warfighting Communications".

The CCC will now report directly to the DAF/CIO.

The 16th Air Force may also be realigned within the Air Force.

I hope that once again the Air Force is returning the "6-communities" to elevated positions, places at the table, and recognizing them for warfighting operations and support. It's unfortunate that so many years of reduced emphasis on cyberspace operations and warfighting communications had to take place before mistakes and misjudgments were recognized and corrected. Now, the challenge is for our much-reduced number of communications career professionals to build back the necessary expertise and influence to take on the challenges of providing proper cyberspace operations; warfighting communications; and command, control, and communications for our Air Force and the joint forces. under, Strategic Air Command, 1957-1964.

"... without communications, all I control is my desk ...." General T.S. Power, Commander, Strategic Air Command, 1957-1964.

"... souls on board ... zero"

The informative article (Air Traffic Control for Drones … Air Force Tests CLUE) in the November 2024 *Communicator* took me back to a different time and place when "drones" (AKA: unmanned aerial vehicles) were the new kids on the block. Unmanned aerial systems (formerly called UAVs) are all the rage across the military services now but back in the 1990s they were just coming into their own.

In 1999, I got to quite unexpectedly support UAVs while on deployment as the operations officer with a provisional operations squadron at Taszár Air Base in Hungary. Just by happenstance, the Air Force's initial Predator UAV unit, was a tenant. They were standing up a unit while on their first deployment of the Cessna-sized airframes since becoming operational.

UAVs were an aerial phenomenon and, in our ignorance, we at least initially tried to treat them just like any other flying customer. Our naive assumptions later caused a lot of confusion. Like the classic line from the Paul Newman movie, Cool Hand Luke, "What we have here is a failure to communicate." We were certainly guilty as charged.

Case in point: A Predator had departed the airfield earlier in the day on a typical 10–12-hour reconnaissance mission down south over the Balkan "box."

At the end of its loiter the UAV headed back to Taszár for recovery. The Predator's "pilot" was remotely controlling the UAV from an operations shelter situated just off our airfield. At some point he noted a problem with the performance of the Predator's single engine.

As the aircraft approached Taszár, the Predator pilot called the control tower on UHF radio to check in and advised them of the engine problem. An "in-flight emergency" was declared and controllers put their regular notification process in motion.

A key part of the notification process is "ringing out the crash phone" to alert critical support functions like crash-rescue, medics, and airfield management of the situation. Controllers ran their checklist to gather all the required info from the pilot before its time-sensitive transmission over the crash net.

One required checklist line item was "souls on board." That's airplane talk for how many people were on the aircraft. Being an unmanned system, the correct entry was "zero."

As it so happened, AF crash-rescue personnel that strategically positioned themselves at various locations on the airfield were relatively new to Taszár and had not experienced UAV operations.

When "... souls on board ... zero ..." came over the crash net radios their eyes must have gotten big as saucers. What they surmised was that the Predator crew had bailed out leaving the airplane pilotless. Consequently, they had no clue where to go to recover the crew members or respond to the inevitable aircraft crash site!

They must have thought themselves victims of a despicable prank when the Predator landed uneventfully and taxied off the runway.

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

Meet and greet…bare feet

The recent passing of former President Jimmy Carter brought to mind when we "met" in 1977 during his visit to Panama. He was there to sign the treaty that led to the U.S. giving the canal back to Panama. I was young Air Force staff sergeant stationed with the 1978th Comm Group.

As part of his visit, he addressed U.S. service members and their families that resided in the Canal Zone. An area was chosen adjacent to the Fort Clayton golf course. A temporary stage and bleachers were brought in, separated from the crowd by a cordoned area defined by rope stretched between 50-gallon drums.

I positioned myself at the top of the bleachers for this historical occasion, focused on capturing the event for posterity using my 35mm camera outfitted with a long lens. Under the blazing tropical sun, I was shirtless, clad in bib overalls, a ball cap and flip-flops. A U.S. Marine helicopter landed and the commander-in-chief and his entourage, which included the First Lady and the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Andrew Young, disembarked. They were amazingly not attired for the tropical heat.

As the speeches wound down, I left the bleachers and maneuvered toward the roped perimeter. I climbed atop one of the big drums to get an unobstructed view. I gleefully blasted away as the dignitaries left the stage. I thought they'd make a beeline back to the copter but instead they started down the roped crowd-line to meet and greet.

I continued to shoot as the VIPs spread out along the rope line. It wasn't until I could no longer get a clear focus on President Carter because he was too close that I realized he was heading towards me. As he passed below, I reached down across my flip-flop clad feet, shook his hand and wished him well. As Carter's cadre moved along, I remember thinking how glad I was that I'd washed my feet!

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

Modernizing the IT backbone:
Air Force's commitment to critical infrastructure

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AFNS) -- Air Force senior leaders from across the IT and acquisitions community emphasized the importance of investing in critical infrastructure and information systems across Air and Space Force installations. They highlighted the need for robust networks, information technology architecture and command and control (C2) systems at the base level as essential components to maintain combat readiness and resilience in an era of renewed threats from geopolitical adversaries.

Department of the Air Force Chief Information Officer (CIO), Venice Goodwine, articulated how outdated IT systems impact operational effectiveness, as failing to upgrade these systems leads to increased maintenance costs and system downtime – risks that impact daily operations and training.

"As CIO, my role includes advocating to modernize information technology at our Air and Space Force installations – enterprise systems that need to be able to communicate with each other. Strategic readiness hinges on systems that are both interoperable and secure. To do this, we need to constantly invest in upgrading our critical IT infrastructure," said Goodwine.

The consequences of underfunding these initiatives often go unnoticed, at least initially, but the need to consistently make these investments was essential, explained Goodwine. "Leaders might say, 'Oh, the network worked fine today; I was able to send emails, make phone calls, join a VTC and the planes still took off.' I understand that perspective and it can be challenging to convey the urgency. However, as technology advances, our adversaries are actively seeking vulnerabilities within our infrastructure and C2 systems. It's crucial to remain vigilant in our investments to ensure we are always ready to fight tonight."

Goodwine further emphasized that the Department's corporate decision for addressing these infrastructure needs was through the Base Infrastructure Modernization program, or BIM, an extension of the Department's successful Enterprise IT as a Service roll-out, which aims to provide specialized contract support for several functions currently found in base Communications Squadrons and units. "By contracting out non-military IT functions, we ensure that the new equipment is consistent with industry best practices and can be implemented more quickly than a piecemealed approach. Working with our acquisitions partners, BIM-provided systems provide baked-in cybersecurity features and adhere to a standardized risk framework," she said.

"As the Air Force and Space Force change the way they organize, train and equip, we want to give them the ability to free-up highly skilled cyberspace and IT-related military manpower at bases to perform inherently military tasks, like Cyber Ops or Warfighter Communications as part of a Deployable Combat Wing. The BIM 'as a service' model will focus on providing capabilities that do not necessarily need to be performed by military personnel, while allowing each command the option of prioritizing personnel for mission critical roles," said Glen Townsend, Senior Materiel Leader for the DAF's Enterprise IT and Data Transport Division within the Air Force Lifecycle Management Center.

Townsend stressed that BIM is not meant to be a cookie-cutter approach. "BIM is not a one-size fits all model. We fully expect that the size, location and mission of our installations will drive the

> *Bases will never truly be fully modernized, as we constantly need to make upgrades as technology advances and new standards come about.*

extent to which industry will be tasked to execute and/or augment existing airmen in operating the base area network." he said. "Decisions will be made based on their risk tolerance and specific mission needs."

Townsend and his team work together with the Department's Enterprise Information Technology Director, Dr. Keith Hardiman, and his staff. They collaborate to execute BIM on behalf of the Department's IT Enterprise, after receiving base prioritization from both the Air Force and Space Force.

"BIM refers to the comprehensive process of upgrading, modernizing and optimizing base area networks that reside at every Air and Space Force installation. Investing in BIM is key to creating base and network resiliency, which becomes increasingly important as we continue to posture ourselves for the newest geopolitical challenges our Nation faces," stated Hardiman.

Modernizing IT infrastructure is not merely about maintaining operational systems but includes ensuring the DAF is prepared for future conflicts. Although the uncertainties regarding the overall cost and timeline remain, they are outweighed by the strategic necessity of these upgrades, Hardiman explained.

"Our adversaries aren't waiting for us to get our act together – we have to move out now," he said. "Bases will never truly be fully modernized, as we constantly need to make upgrades as technology advances and new standards come about. BIM is a strategic initiative to keep forces agile and focused on core military functions, thereby enhancing our national security posture."

The Department's commitment to modernizing critical IT infrastructure through BIM underscores the strategic need to invest in and sustain resilient base networks and communications systems. By investing in these essential upgrades, the Air Force and Space Force ensure that Airmen and Guardians have the foundational digital tools they need to train and execute their missions.

The Origin of 'Taps'

Of all the military bugle calls, none is so easily recognized or more apt to render emotion than Taps. Up to the Civil War, the traditional call at day's end was a tune borrowed from the French called "Lights Out". In July of 1862, in the aftermath of the bloody Seven Days battles, hard on the loss of 600 men and wounded himself, Union General Daniel Adams Butterfield called the brigade bugler to his tent. He thought "Lights Out" was too formal and he wished to honor his men. Oliver Wilcox Norton, the bugler, tells the story, "...showing me some notes on a staff written in pencil on the back of an envelope, [he] asked me to sound them on my bugle. I did this several times, playing the music as written. He changed it somewhat, lengthening some notes and shortening others, but retaining the melody as he first gave it to me. After getting it to his satisfaction, he directed me to sound that call for Taps thereafter in place of the regulation call. The music was beautiful on that still summer night and was heard far beyond the limits of our Brigade. The next day, I was visited by several buglers from neighboring Brigades, asking for copies of the music, which I gladly furnished. The call was gradually taken up through the Army of the Potomac."

This more emotive and powerful "Taps" (.au format) was soon adopted throughout the military. In 1874, it was officially recognized by the U.S. Army. It became mandatory at military funeral ceremonies in 1891. There is something singularly beautiful and appropriate in the music of this wonderful call. Its strains are melancholy, yet full of rest and peace. Its echoes linger in the heart long after its tones have ceased to vibrate in the air.

-From an article by MSgt Jari A. Villanueva, USAF

Colonel-Maj Gen William Yost

By Ken Reiff
AFCATCA Historian

Maj Gen (ret) William Yost

Looking over Bill Malec's article about shirts in November 2024 *Communicator* I thought I might share my experience with a senior communicator, Colonel-Maj Gen William Yost. I'm sure others who worked with or for General Yost can add their stories about this remarkable gentleman.

The first time I met Colonel Yost was in late 1971 or early 1972. I was sitting in Mr. Robert Feik's (Technical Advisor to AFCS Command Section) outer office waiting to give him a briefing on my trip to the Pentagon to get funding for his favorite Automated Technical Control (ATEC) program.

He called me into his office and introduced me to Colonel Yost, who was getting an orientation at the headquarters before heading to Thailand to command the 1974th Communications Group. He informed the Colonel that I had been the program manager for Inside Plant and Outside Plant for the Pacific area for three years. Before I was called into Mr. Feik's office apparently, they had been discussing telephone switching systems in Southeast Asia (SEA). Colonel Yost was indicating that AFCS had made a significant mistake in deploying Stromberg Carlson XY switches rather than the new, computer-driven, Electronic Switching Systems (ESS). He asked me what I thought, and I replied that the decision to use the XY was the correct one. Also, I suggested that the Colonel was misinformed about the ESS. He asked where I worked, and I let him know; XPQ Requirements Directorate. "I will be by to see you later."

I waited well past 1800 hours and was getting ready to go home when Colonel Yost came through the door and greeted me with "OK, now tell me why I'm stupid" and sat down pretty much glaring at me. "No sir, I didn't say that. I indicated that you were not informed about the capability of the ESS." For your information, I recently graduated from the Air Force Institute of Technology Education with Industry and US Army Signal School, Communications-Electronics System Engineering Course. Two things, while there I had the opportunity to participate in cutover of an ESS1 at Trenton, NJ. Discussion with the engineers suggested problems with dust, humidity, and some power fluctuations caused malfunctions in the switch. Those environmental conditions were in SEA. Secondly, a couple of my Army classmates informed me the Army had tried an ESS at Vung Tao, Vietnam. It failed.

My predecessor, at PACOMMAREA, Fred Meier, had worked with the folks at Tinker AFB Air Logistics Center to establish a Five Year, Indirect Delivery Indirect Quantity contract for telephone switches in SEA. Stromberg-Carlson was the winner of the competition. The contract provided for 1,000-line basic package and expansion, 500-line increments. It included bench stock, test equipment, technical orders and a training switch for Sheppard AFB. The switch was rugged with super reliability for the SEA environment. As a result, each Air Base in Vietnam and Thailand was equipped, or to be equipped, with this switch.

Maintenance folks could be moved about when needed. The Communications Scheme Packages were easily written and standardized. We worked with the Pacific Air Forces to design and implement a standard building which included the switch, maintenance space, switchboard operations and a cable vault. My last assignment was to do a joint site survey in Vietnam and Thailand for a Tandem Switch which had also been awarded to Stromberg-Carlson. It should be installed at the selected locations now.

"I think you will have more problems with phone installers and switchboard operators than with switch maintenance. Sir, do you have any questions?" Colonel Yost stood up and said "No" and walked to the door. He turned and asked my name and left.

Forward two years. A Saturday morning and I was working in our basement building shelves. My son came down the stairs and said "Dad, some general is on the phone and wants to talk to you." I answered the phone and General Yost said, "get on the next aircraft and head to U-Tapao AB, Thailand, and fix that broken squadron. Stop in at Hawaii on your way and meet with me." I just said, "Yes, Sir" and he hung up. I called the personnel folks at AFCS headquarters to see what happened and what I should do. They informed me that the squadron had failed an Inspector General inspection very badly and the general was still thinking about whether he wanted me to travel there. They said they would keep in touch with me, but I should be prepared to go in about two weeks. I did that. Fortunately, we were living in an area where we had family and friends to help if needed. Two weeks later the call came through. General Yost's Executive Officer said he still wanted to see me in Hawaii. So off I headed.

When I arrived in Hawaii and was checking into quarters I had a note from the Exec indicating that I would be picked up next morning at 0630 for a meeting with General Yost at Wheeler AFB and that the meeting at 1300, at Hickam AFB, was still on. I wondered what the Wheeler meeting was about. In his outer office our friends, Frank and Barb Hasegawa, were also waiting in the outer office. They weren't aware of what the meeting was about either.

General Yost greeted us and informed both Frank and me that we had been selected for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. I didn't even know I was eligible. The general gave both of us silver oak leaves. When he gave me mine, he said, "Good Luck, I hope you can keep them!!" Guess he was referring to the task ahead. I met him again at 1300. He spent the time reviewing the inspection report, major findings and field memorandum. He did that with no notes. The only guidance he gave was that I had 30 days to get rid of trouble performers. After that, the unit was on my watch.

Together our team at U-Tapao worked hard and righted the ship. I am so proud of them. Reinspection five months later showed no new findings and the field memos had been mostly cleared, all except the RAPCON power shed. While we had tried to self help repair and paint, General Yost, during a visit to our unit, was not happy with that and let me know.

He also let me know that my return to the Dayton area would not happen as it was supposed to. I departed U-Tapao and headed for my next assignment at McClellan AFB, CA.

My experience with the General by no means was over. Story continues.

★

CYBERSPACE OPERATIONS AND SUPPORT

HALL OF FAME

Class of 2025

Col (Ret) Mike Black

Maj Gen (Ret) Phii Bracher

SES (Ret) Scott Jack

Brig Gen (Ret) Greg Touhill

Class of 2024

Lt Gen (ret) William "Bill" Bender

Spain "Woody" Hall, Jr.

Lt Col (ret) Vanessa Johnson

Col (ret) Lance Spencer

Col (ret) Hubert Walker

The Hall of Fame induction banquet and ceremony for the 2024 Hall of Fame Class was held on April 23, 2025, at the Boiling Club on Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, Washington, DC.

A Day of Darkness... Years of Light

1995 Oklahoma City Bombing: a 30-year Reflection

By Chad Raduege

April 19, 1995, began like any other spring morning in Oklahoma City. People were headed to work, dropping children off at daycare, grabbing coffee and chatting with coworkers. I was a Second Lieutenant, stationed with the 3rd Combat Communications Group, Tinker AFB, Okla.

That morning, I was in the middle of convoy commander training. At 9:02 AM that ordinary day shattered into horror.

A massive explosion tore through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in the heart of downtown. In a single, deafening instant, 168 lives were stolen, including 19 innocent children from the building's daycare center. More than 600 others were injured.

Windows shattered blocks away. Smoke filled the sky. The blast destroyed one-third of the nine-story building and damaged or destroyed more than 300 surrounding structures. The silence after the blast was surreal—then came cries for help.

I was there that day, along with over 900 personnel from Tinker AFB, to participate in rescue and recovery efforts. Our view was narrow and focused; the rest of the world saw a broader view from every TV screen: firefighters carrying ash-covered toddlers, dazed survivors stumbling from the wreckage, stunned faces streaked with tears and soot. It was a scene witnessed too many times since.

The rescue efforts were heroic. First

Courtesy Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

responders clawed through twisted metal and concrete with their bare hands. Ordinary people formed human chains to help pull survivors from the rubble. Doctors set up triage zones in the streets. The entire city came together with a kind of fierce compassion that tragedy often brings out.

In the days that followed, there was grief. There was anger and confusion. But there was also unity. Thousands came to mourn, to donate blood, to light candles. President Bill Clinton called the bombing an "act of evil," and for once, politics felt secondary to shared sorrow.

Our unit mourned A1C Cartney J. McRaven, a member of the 32nd Combat Communications Squadron. Just four days prior, she had married SrA Anthony McRaven. On the morning of the bombing, she visited the Social Security office in the Murrah Building to update her records with her new married name.

Cartney had recently returned from a six-month deployment to Haiti in support of Operation Uphold Democracy. She was a superb Airman, with a promising career ahead.

Today, the Oklahoma City National Memorial stands where the Murrah Building once did. It's hauntingly beautiful–168 empty chairs, one for each life lost; smaller chairs for the children. At night, they're softly lit, glowing like fragile stars on the ground. I've visited often and am moved each time.

This wasn't just a story about terrorism. It was a story about loss, about how quickly life can change – and about the strength that rises in the face of tragedy. During the 30th Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony, former President Clinton – visiting Oklahoma City for the eighth time – eloquently told of the embodiment of the resilience and unity that became known as the "Oklahoma Standard." The bombing scarred a city and shook a nation, but it also showed us that in our darkest time, we are capable of extraordinary compassion.
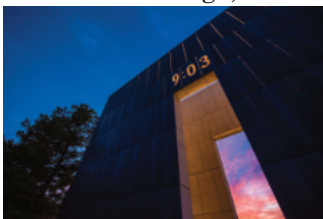
Air Force streamlines IT functions
CCC at Scott AFB aligned as FOA to AF CIO

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) -- The Department of the Air Force aligned Headquarters Cyberspace Capabilities Center at Scott AFB as a Field Operating Agency to the Office of the Department of the Air Force chief information officer Dec. 20 to streamline and consolidate information technology functions.

Follow-on actions will include realignment of functions from other organizations and future administrative changes.

"This is a significant step toward streamlining and consolidating Information Technology functions and ensuring unity of effort in IT service delivery across the Air Force and Space Force," said Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall. "By combining and aligning these functions to their authoritative owner, the IT enterprise will be able to produce capabilities in shorter, more rapid development cycles – ensuring requirements are expediently actioned and delivered to the Airmen and Guardians who need them."

Kendall also reiterated the importance of this change, particularly as the Department reoptimizes for Great Power Competition.

"The bifurcation of IT did not meet my intent to rapidly deliver capabilities based on the requirements provided by our people," Kendall said.

These changes are intended to more effectively organize, train and equip the IT enterprise and cyberspace domain.

"Our men and women are used to change, but we're especially excited about this opportunity to refocus our mission centered around service delivery for the enterprise. We can already see the synergies building between our team and the DAF CIO's staff," said Col. Chris Rubiano, Headquarters Cyberspace Capabilities Center commander. "We look forward to onboarding other Enterprise IT functions from across the Department and working with stakeholders to grow processes which help us best develop capabilities for both Airmen and Guardians."

As the Department of the Air Force has expanded to include the U.S. Space Force and the mantra of "One Department, two Services," the need to better represent that structure among IT stakeholders became clear.

"Many people don't realize how vast our office's statutory authority for IT is – there are many responsibilities that my office cannot delegate and that we are responsible for delivering and synchronizing across the Enterprise, which is inclusive of all IT – from business, to warfighting, to intelligence, to services of common concern," said Venice Goodwine, Air Force chief information officer. "I have a responsibility to the secretary, but also his staff and both services, to ensure their IT requirements are captured and developed in a way that is not only responsive but cost effective and interoperable with one another. We can do this through effective governance, and alignment of the Cyberspace Capabilities Center as a Field Operating Agency to my office will help reinforce adherence to the capability delivery process."

While Headquarters Cyberspace Capabilities Center is now a secretariat-aligned Field Operating Agency, it is expected to reach full operational capability by October 2025. There will be no movement of people with these changes, with a realignment of IT functions both to, and from, the center yet to come.

"We have some work to do to properly consolidate and align these functions, but I'm confident our team is up to the task. We're excited to get going, and we remain focused on delivering for those we support," Goodwine said.

" *We look forward to onboarding other Enterprise IT functions from the Department and working with stakeholders to grow processes which help us best develop capabilities for both Airmen and Guardians.*"

REAL ID
Compliance for Federal Installations

DAVIS-MONTHAN AFB, Ariz. -- Beginning May 7, 2025, federal installations began requiring all visitors seeking base access to possess a REAL ID in accordance with the REAL ID Act of 2005 and DODM5200.08v3.

Federal installations no longer accept non-marked state-issued identification cards after May 6, 2025. As mandated by the Department of Homeland Security, state-issued licenses and identification cards must include a REAL ID-compliant marking–star markings, "Enhanced" verbiage, etc.—indicating adherence to federal standards.

Enhanced Driver's Licenses issued by Washington, Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Vermont are also acceptable for federal purposes. Although most EDLs do not contain the REAL ID star marking, they meet DHS criteria for access.

To obtain a REAL ID, individuals must visit their state's driver licensing agency web site for documentation requirements. At a minimum, applicants must provide proof of full legal name, date of birth, Social Security number, two proofs of address and lawful status. States may impose additional requirements.

Minors under 18 are not required to present REAL ID-compliant credentials for travel or base access, but their accompanying adult must be compliant.

Common REAL ID-compliant credentials include U.S. passports, permanent resident cards and other identification approved under DODM5200.08v3.

Current Defense Biometric Identification System (DBIDS) badges are not impacted by this change. However, new or replacement DBIDS badges will only be issued upon presentation of REAL ID-compliant credentials.

Visitor Control Center badging personnel will confirm contractors' REAL ID compliance when they come to receive their DBIDS badge. Security Forces personnel will verify visitors' driver's licenses and identification cards to ensure REAL ID compliance is met.

Security Forces entry controllers will verify REAL ID compliance of visitors when verifying their credentials with Entry Authorization Lists.

For more information on REAL ID compliance and requirements, visit www.dhs.gov/real-id.

I came across the attached article that I wrote for the Keesler AFB newspaper circa 1986. Back then, I wrote it from the viewpoint of an active duty member. Now I read it as a retiree with a completely different perspective.

If I was going to title it today I would call it "The Military Cycle of Service". We all continue to contribute with whatever talents we have left in the tank.

– Col Robert Chaplin, USAF Ret

'Spirit of Keesler' is 'in the mix'

By Col. Robert M. Chaplin
2052nd Communications Group
Commander

The "Spirit of Keesler" is renowned throughout Air Training Command and the Air Force.

On numerous occasions I have seen the Keesler spirit in action. I saw it keep Keesler functioning during and after Hurricane Elena. I saw it "water the eyes" of the inspector general with a near-perfect performance.

This same spirit opens its heart each year to the needs of the Special Olympics. It brought forth the "super playgrounds" and hosted the Thunderbirds for an unprecedented third consecutive year.

I am honored to be a part of the Keesler spirit and have reflected many times upon its source. Actually, there are probably many sources, but I am only going to talk about one source here. Simply put, "it's not in the water — it's in the mix." I am talking about the mix of students, permanent party and retirees who make up the Keesler community.

Keesler's students provide the youthful ingredient. Airmen in the spring of their careers, they share with us their energy, enthusiasm and hopes for the future. As they pass in review on the parade grounds or just pass by on their way to and from classes, our future Air Force passes by. Their presence is a reminder of one's youth, of personal promises made, and of oaths taken and kept. Youthful enthusiasm means the difficult gets done immediately, while the impossible takes a little longer.

Investments in the future, reminders of one's past — Keesler's students are a vital part of the Keesler spirit.

Permanent party members, whether they are instructors, flight line personnel, staff or base support, are all charged to "Show the Way." They are the ones now responsible for the deciding and doing.

They are what the students see as a future career and what the retirees see as protectors of earlier sacrifices. They are testimonials to the fruits of dedication, professionalism and patriotism. They are the link between the past and the future. They are the now. If there is to be a future, they must plan for it. If the past is to be respected, they must honor it.

Showing, deciding and doing — Keesler's permanent party members are a vital part of the Keesler spirit.

Last, but certainly not least, are Keesler's retirees. They are the ones who made today's freedoms possible. Their counsel, judgment and experience are as good today as they were yesterday. Their decisions are better than today's; they have withstood the test of time.

As active members of the civilian community they champion the needs for a strong national defense. They are the fellowship in the chamber of commerce, the caring Red Cross volunteer and the concerned citizen who is still making life better for those who will follow. They are the ones who present and future Air Force members greet with a word of thanks.

Tempered by the stresses of an earlier time, they are the strengthening rods of the Keesler spirit. Keesler's retirees are a vital part of the Keesler spirit.

There you are, Keesler's and the Air Force's past, present and future. The Keesler mix — the Keesler spirit.

Sure there are other ways to arrive at an optimum mix. Civilian and military, operational and training, are a couple of other mixes that come to mind. For now, however, I will rest my case on the past, the present, and the future.

Observe the faces of the Keesler spirit as you go about your daily duties. You will observe everything that is great about our Air Force and our nation. You will observe the Keesler spirit. You will observe the pride of America.

AF Network Migration

By Michelle Hayworth, Brig Gen, USAF Ret

After the stand-down of the Air Force Communications Command, individual Major Commands (MAJCOMs) and local bases had the leeway to acquire and implement technology to best meet their mission needs.

Over time this patchwork of systems and networks led to standardization and security problems, high operational and maintenance costs, and a lack of enterprise situational awareness.

As the AF began to recognize the importance of cyberspace to mission accomplishment in the mid-2000s, it also realized it needed to address these issues. In response, the AF executed the largest network overhaul in history. The AF Network (AFNet) Migration collapsed the 13 MAJCOM unclassified networks, email, and directory services into a single, standardized, and centrally managed Active Directory structure under the control of the 24th Air Force commander.

When I took command of the 690th Network Support Group (690th NSG) in July 2011, the AFNet Migration had been under way for a couple of years. However, like most major projects it was behind schedule for various reasons. From my perspective there were three things we did to keep the migration moving forward.

The first was implementing AFNet Migration Readiness Reviews with each base before beginning migration activities. Under Maj Gen Suzanne Vautrinot's leadership as the 24th AF commander, we modeled the readiness reviews after space launch readiness reviews to ensure all systems and personnel were ready for a successful migration. This proved critical since this was the time the lead for migration activities transitioned from the Air Force Network Integration Center (AFNIC), responsible for planning and engineering, to the 690th NSG and its assigned squadrons, the 83rd Network Operations Squadron and the 561st Network Operations Squadron, responsible for network operations. In addition to AFNIC and 690th NSG units, each readiness review included representation from Air Force Space Command, our MAJCOM, local wing/group leadership, and base communications squadron leadership. Each organization briefed its readiness to proceed with migration execution and concluded with a go/no-go vote before final approval from the 24 AF commander. These readiness reviews significantly increased the likelihood of a successful base migration without major issues.

The second thing was implementing more structured interaction with AFNIC. This included weekly meetings and specific topic meetings as necessary to ensure all parties were up to date on progress and issue resolution. The AFNIC lead, Markus Rogers, and I had each other on speed dial and I greatly appreciated his partnership. As we learned from the challenges of each base migration, both AFNIC and the 690 NSG teams changed our approach accordingly. One result was improving mail migration rates from 2,500 per base per week to 10,000 per base per week and migrating eight bases concurrently.

The final thing was keeping our 690 NSG AFNet Migration Execution Lead, Major Greg Roberts, in place for five years with Detachment 3, 561st Network Operations Squadron located at Scott AFB, Illinois. This effort was too critical to the AF to bring in a new execution lead in the middle of the project. By leading the 690 NSG's migration execution team for the very first base to migrate to the last, his expertise and close partnership with the AFNIC team, also located at Scott AFB, was irreplaceable. He is one of the true unsung heroes of the AFNet Migration.

It was an honor to play a part in the AFNet Migration for my two years as the 690th NSG commander. I am so proud of the more than 200 military, civilian, and contractor personnel from AFNIC and the 690th NSG for their commitment to this monumental effort to make the AF network more resilient, flexible, and defensible.

(Gen Hayworth was formerly Director of Command, Control, Communications and Cyber (C4) Systems for U.S. Transportation Command, Scott AFB, Ill.)

This photo, taken in October 2020 inside Ludwig Heritage Hall, shows the AFNET Migration tile on the Timeline Wall (hence a significant event). Pictured are Lauren Knausenberger (then Air Force Chief Information Officer) and Brig Gen Chad Raduege (former Air Combat Command Director of Cyberspace and Information Dominance).
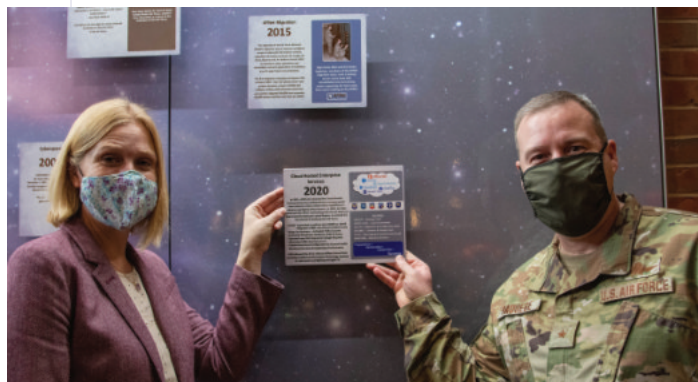
Airman Development Command announced

AURORA, Colo. -- The Air Force's senior civilian and military leaders unveiled sweeping plans for reshaping, refocusing, and reoptimizing the Air Force and Space Force to ensure continued supremacy in those domains while also better posturing the services to deter and, if necessary, prevail in an era of Great Power Competition.

Taken together, the changes made public Feb. 12 represent one of the most extensive recalibrations in recent history for the Air Force and Space Force.

The ADC's goal, true to name, will be to become the service's enterprise-wide integrator for Airman development, training and education. *(U.S. Air Force graphic)*

"We need these changes now…We are out of time to reoptimize our forces to meet the strategic challenges in a time of Great Power Competition," said Kendall. "We are going to turn this enterprise and point it directly at our biggest threat (China)."

Among the 24 key decisions Kendall announced was the decision to redesignate Air Education and Training Command as Airman Development Command (ADC). The ADC's goal, true to name, will be to become the service's enterprise-wide integrator for Airman development, training and education as part of the Air Force's efforts to reoptimize for Great Power Competition.

The consolidation and realignment will give ADC the authority to develop Airmen from the beginning to the end of their service in the Air Force.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen David Allvin will establish an implementation team to execute follow-on analysis and develop an implementation plan for the execution of the Air Force-wide reoptimization.

"The Air Force has a rich history of successfully reckoning with transformational change. Since its inception in 1947, it has consistently evolved by reorienting and "reoptimizing" itself to align with dynamically changing demands at key inflection points," said Allvin in a letter to the force, The Case for Change. "Today, a new key inflection point is upon us. We cannot afford to be complacent, holding on to outdated structures. The Air Force built for the previous era is no longer optimized for the current strategic landscape."

Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall's directive to reoptimize for great power competition is a major initiative that includes a comprehensive look at all aspects of how the Air Force organizes, trains, and equips the Air Force and Space Force.

"We owe it to our men and women in uniform to be as ready as we can be," Kendall said. "We're in a sprint to get better, but we're also in a marathon to stay the most competitive over time."

Representatives from AETC, Air Force Personnel Center, Headquarters Air Force, and select major commands met for a tabletop exercise at Maxwell AFB, Ala., to analyze the authorities, responsibilities and organizational structure required to optimize the Air Force's ability to develop Airmen.

Lead representatives at the exercise determined the creation of an ADC with the requisite authorities, and responsibilities will strengthen the required attributes to develop Airmen.

"Quite frankly, we haven't seen change like this since the early 1990s," Robinson said. "Just like then, today we are taking the initiative. To maintain the asymmetrical advantage, we must develop the right mix of Airmen and Guardians with the skills and competencies needed for high-end systems-of-systems combat roles and to ensure technical superiority. These changes help us streamline institutional force development responsibilities under one command, significantly improving the Air Force's ability to produce and retain mission ready Airmen for competition and conflict."

Stampede to Standards:
The 3rd Herd's Path to Excellence

By Brig Gen (ret) Buford "Randy" Witt
3rd CCG/CC Jan 1986-Jul 1988

"Randy, get in here!" Maj Gen Gerald Prather, Air Force Communications Command Commander, bellowed from his office at Scott AFB, IL.

It was a cold and windy day around the holiday season of 1985, and after eighteen months as his executive officer, I recognized that bellow—it meant big news, and usually not the good kind. I walked into his office, standing a little taller and stiffer than usual. "Yes, sir," I reported. "Randy, I am going to send you to Tinker AFB, OK, to take command of the 3rd Combat Communications Group."

My face went white, and my knees buckled. As a young Lieutenant and Captain Air Traffic Controller, I had seen two 2nd Mobile Communications Group commanders fired for failing readiness inspections. I had also seen quite a few commanders relieved of command while in the AFCC front office. I also knew that the 3rd Combat Communications Group, or 3rd Herd as it was affectionately known, was on tap for its own readiness inspection. All I could muster in response was a meek statement about my rank. "But sir, I am only a Lieutenant Colonel. That is a Colonel's job," I uttered. I had just come out on the promotion list to Colonel but wouldn't pin on the rank until a year later. "We'll take care of that," Gen Prather said.

What I came to learn amid packing up our house on Scott AFB and heading to Oklahoma was that Gen Robert Russ, the Tactical Air Command (TAC) Commander, had recently visited the unit and provided Maj Gen Prather with unflattering reports about its lack of discipline and the state of operations. With TAC as the unit's major customer, Maj Gen Prather felt he had to make a change.

In January of 1986, I took command of the 3rd Combat Communications Group as a recently frocked Colonel.

The unit was the largest communications group in the Air Force at the time ("Oldest, Biggest, Best!"). Its home at Tinker AFB was a vast compound full of mobile communications equipment, mobile air traffic control equipment, vehicles, tents, generators, and over 1,200 Airmen.

The first thing I needed to do was change the

Then Capt Randolph Witt, 407th Expeditionary Comm Sq, left, points out improvements in network server operations to his father, retired Brig Gen Randy Witt in 2006.

mascot of the unit. Since I was a young officer in the 2nd MOB, I had heard of the '3rd Herd,' so you can imagine my surprise when I arrived and was handed a patch with an owl to sew onto my Battle Dress Uniform. "I've never heard of a herd of owls before," I thought, and quickly went to work changing it.

Oklahoma, rich in cattle history, made the bull a fitting mascot—and adopting it was my first move toward reshaping the culture of the unit. But I didn't make that decision alone. I got the men involved in the process of naming the new mascot, and one particularly artistic Airman even drew a herd of stallions as a proposal. After some spirited debate, the bull won out—strong, grounded, and ready to charge. Not long after, a young lieutenant saw a massive bull statue, originally a bar logo, being taken down in town. He asked me if he could borrow a flatbed truck. When I asked what it was for, he just smiled and said, "It'll be a surprise." Sure enough, he hauled it back to the compound. That bull became a symbol of our new identity, traveling with the unit on exercises and even showing up at intramural competitions across the base, proudly representing the 3rd Herd.

Another step was instilling pride in our environment. We launched numerous self-help projects, tapping into the diverse skills of our Airmen to improve and personalize the facilities. Some of these improvements lasted long after I left in 1988. In fact, my son's first office in the 3rd Herd—some 15 years later—was a product of that effort.

Next on the list was discipline. The 3rd Herd's compound was sprawling, and equipment was scattered haphazardly across the area. One of the first fixes was simple but symbolic: I ordered trucks be parked in neat rows, like aircraft on a flightline, bringing order to chaos.

Beyond the physical environment, I knew the unit needed structural change. I worked closely with the Tactical Communications Division of TAC to break the group into smaller, more manageable pieces. This included standing up four Combat Communications Squadrons (and later, a Combat Communications Support Squadron), each focused on a core mission area: air traffic control, communications operations, maintenance, and logistics. Officers were assigned to lead each squadron, with specific equipment allocated for deployment. This gave leaders clear ownership,
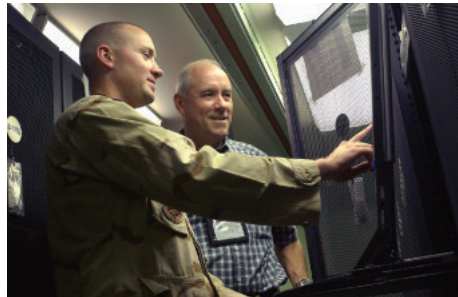
increased accountability, and allowed teams to specialize and excel in their areas of expertise.

Previously, NCOs often picked the same group of experienced Airmen for deployments—understandably relying on those they trusted most. But that limited the training and growth of others. So, we overhauled the way we trained and deployed. I directed them to start taking new personnel on rotations so we could build depth and readiness across the unit. Over time, this approach—combined with assigning permanent crews to specific equipment sets—created more cohesive, mission-ready teams and helped the 3rd stay prepared for any operation.

Another key piece of the culture shift came from a competition I helped create before even taking command. While serving at AFCC, I attended a readiness event among Engineering and Installation units. The format was stiff and uninspiring—but it sparked an idea. I believed a Combat Challenge between tactical communications units could be something far more meaningful: exciting, physically demanding, technically sharp, and above all, excellent training. The first Combat Challenge was held in 1986, and the 3rd Herd finished a strong second. We didn't stay there long. In 1987, when we hosted the event on our home turf at Tinker AFB, the 3rd Herd took first place. It became a symbol of how far the unit had come—from disorganized and demoralized to proud, prepared, and ready to lead the way in the combat comm community.

A major part of our cultural shift came through something as simple as running. We started conducting group runs—squadrons running in formation as part of physical training. It was a shift from individual PT tests, and it helped instill teamwork, pride, and unity. I still remember the sound of feet hitting pavement in unison—one team, one mission. Before long, the 3rd Herd was running with pride.

Despite initial grumbling from other wings—especially the AWACS wing—those group runs were a hit. The camaraderie among squadrons became tangible. When General Russ returned to see the changes for himself, we showcased our reorganized units in formation. The visit was a success. He returned to headquarters and reported that the 3rd Herd was not only back on track, but a sight to behold. He encouraged every general officer in TAC to visit.

The road to turning the 3rd Combat Comm Group around wasn't easy, but the results were clear. By the time I left command, the group had regained its operational readiness, and the morale had improved significantly. In 1988, the unit received an Outstanding rating on its Operational Readiness Inspection—an achievement that validated years of focused preparation and hard work. AFCC selected the 3rd Herd as the best large communications unit in the Air Force, a recognition that marked how far we had come. The 3rd had become a well-oiled machine, ready to tackle any challenge that came our way.

Looking back, I realize our success wasn't just about organizational charts or checklists—it was about rebuilding pride, discipline, and trust. That experience taught me leadership isn't about giving orders—it's about connection, inspiration, and being willing to roll up your sleeves alongside your people. The 3rd Herd didn't just get back on track—we became a model for excellence. And that transformation will always be one of the most meaningful chapters of my career.

None of this would have been possible without the outstanding team of officers, NCOs, and Airmen who embraced the vision. From the senior enlisted leaders who enforced standards with fairness and pride, to the junior Airmen who rolled up their sleeves to transform facilities and form cohesive teams, this was a collective effort every step of the way. I may have had the privilege of leading the charge, but it was their dedication, resilience, and belief in something better that truly turned the 3rd Herd around. I will never forget the spirit, the commitment, and the impact of those who made it possible. I remain forever grateful to have served alongside them. Anytime, Anywhere.

'Buford' was adopted as unofficial symbol of 3d Herd

The bull took on a life of its own long after my father left command. The unit named its mascot "Buford"—a nod to his given name,which he famously preferred not to use. In 1986, the group officially embraced the 3d Herd nickname, changed its patch, and adopted the bull as its unofficial symbol: "...an animal of strength with a tendency to charge and be in charge." The first Buford—the same 15-foot paper mâché bull

tactically acquired by a young lieutenant from a local bar—stood proudly until it was destroyed in a hailstorm in 1988. Years later, CMSgt David Dugan sculpted Buford II to take its place, and the unit dedicated it in 1994. Buford III eventually replaced it in 2007, and despite the unit's inactivation in 2013, Buford III still stands in the original 3rd Herd compound in front of the 35th Combat Comm Squadron building. For me, the 3rd Herd was never just a chapter in my father's career—it was the foundation of my own. I grew up hearing the stories, seeing the impact, and understanding what leadership looked like up close. Years later, I had the honor of being assigned to the very same unit, working in buildings shaped by his command. That assignment was a full-circle moment.

– Col Randolph "Randy" Witt
  32d CBCS, Sep 2004 – Jul 2006

Convention 2025

San Antonio

Oct 8-12, 2025

For AF Cyberspace, Communicators, Data Automation, Information. Space Operations, Air Traffic Controllers, Airfield Managers, Maintenance, Engineering and

Installation, Combat Comm, Combat Airfield Operations and related support personnel, Active Duty, Guard/Reserve, Civilian, and retired.

Hosts: Billy D. Davis and J. Akerson (Billyddavisjr73@gmail.com and Jeremy.akerson@proton.me)

Courtyard, San Antonio Sea World Westover Hills, 11605 State Hwy 151, San Antonio, TX, 78251

HOTEL RESERVATIONS:

Members must make their own hotel reservations by Aug 26. Book your $129/night group rate for the AF-CATCA Convention online at https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1729115429618&key-=GRP&guestreslink2=true or call the Front Desk at 1(800) 721-7033. The Group name is "AFCATCA" and the Group Code is "AFC". If you wish to cancel, please do by 11 PM on Aug 26, 2025, to avoid cancellation penalty equal to the first night's room and tax.

We are excited and honored to welcome you all to this year's annual convention in Military City USA, otherwise known as **San Antonio, Texas**. As the home of the USAF Basic Military Training, San Antonio stands as a symbol of dedication to excellence and service before self. We're especially excited to share the experience of attending a USAF Basic Training Graduation…an inspiring and memorable event that highlights the commitment of our nation's newest Airmen. It's a powerful reminder of the values that bring us together and the importance of the work we have done in the past and the work the USAF must do in the future to protect our great nation.

In addition, we've planned some enjoyable activities to help you unwind and connect. Don't miss our golf outing at Lackland AFB, Gateway Hills Golf Course…set against the backdrop of the Basic Military Training

Complex. It's a perfect way to relax, have fun, and network in a casual setting. If golf is not your preferred activity, we have arranged to take you on a special trip to downtown San Antonio. From the iconic River Walk and the historic Alamo to the vibrant local shops, art galleries

and incredible Tex-Mex cuisine, there's something for everyone to enjoy. And in-between all these activities, you can enjoy the company of those with shared similar backgrounds, enjoy listening or telling stories of "…way back when…" in our hospitality room while helping to highlight the Air Force's finest airmen in cyberspace and air traffic control with AF-level award recognition at our convention.

We hope this conference provides not only valuable insights and connections but also unforgettable moments. Welcome again…we're thrilled to have you with us!

Tours/events:

Thursday, October 9, 2025

0745-1130 USAF Basic Military Training Graduation and Parade

We will depart our convention hotel in a 56-passenger motor coach at 0745. The graduation ceremony will take place at 0900 on the legendary Parade Field, also known as the Airman's Arena, a sacred place for those who've marched its length. For USAF members, attending a BMT Graduation at Joint Base San Antonio–Lackland is both a powerful and emotional experience. The ceremony marks the transformation of civilians into Airmen, and it's a proud tradition steeped in discipline. You'll witness the Air Force's newest members stand tall as they complete their rigorous 7.5-week training. Surrounded by the American and Air Force flags flying proudly, the field is filled with families, friends, and fellow service members who gather to celebrate this milestone. Watching the flights pass in review, hearing the cadence of the march, and standing for the playing of the Air Force Song…it all brings back the spirit of service, the sense of unity, and deep pride in the blue we once wore. After graduation, the coach will pick up our group at 1100 from the parade field and return to the hotel at 1130.

1230-1345 Cyber Mission Brief
Location: Convention Hotel

The 688th and 67th Cyberspace Wings from Lackland AFB have volunteered to provide a mission briefing to our members at the hotel. This will begin soon after we return from the BMT Graduation. Members will have the option of purchasing a box lunch which will be delivered between 1145-1200 by the hotel staff. While members are finishing lunch, NCOs and junior officers from the 688th and 67th Cyber Wings will deliver their briefings in the hospitality suite.

Following the briefings, which should end around 1345, members will be released on their own time.

Box Lunch (order in advance): Includes Whole Fruit, Chips, Cookie and Bottle Water. **Cost: $21 per member**

Option 1: Turkey Croissant Sandwich--Flaky Croissant Sandwich with Shaved Turkey, Bacon, Sliced Swiss Cheese, Lettuce & Tomato.
Option 2: Grilled Chicken Sandwich with Cilantro-Honey Spread— Swiss Cheese, Lettuce and Sliced Tomato on Wheat Bread
Option 3: Ham, Turkey, Salami and Swiss Hoagie Bun—Sliced Ham, Turkey, Salami, Sliced Swiss Cheese, Tomato and Lettuce on a Hoagie Bun
Vegetarian Option is available on request

1400-1600   Board of Directors Meeting

Immediately following the Cyber Mission Brief, Brig Gen Chad Raduege invites the board members to convene at 1400-1600. All board members will be released NLT 1615 for the remainder of the day.

Tours/events (Contd):

Friday, October 10, 2025

0645 – 1230

Brig Gen Ivan Farman Golf Tournament

$40 per person
(Includes cart and green fees)
Distance from hotel is 15 minutes (10 miles)

- On the golf registration form, list the people you'd like to play with.
- We will use the Calloway Scoring System.
- The course has rental clubs.
- Prizes awarded for closest to pin and longest drive.
- Plan is to carpool to the course; let us know if you are willing to provide a carpool vehicle and drive, please mark that on the Golf Registration form.
-

The Gateway Hills Golf Course is the 18-hole course on Lackland AFB. This course boasts elevation changes over 200 acres with good conditions on the greens and fairways. The course features narrow tree-lined fairways and a meandering creek. The ninth hole presents a steep uphill challenge, while the 18th boasts an elevated green. Gateway Hills also offers a driving range, a bunker, a lob wedge practice green and two putting greens.

Friday, October 10, 2025

0930-1700

Downtown San Antonio, the Alamo

We will depart our convention hotel in a 56-passenger motor coach at 0930 and travel to Downtown San Antonio. For those intending to drive down, we would like to gather with those from the motor coach for a group photo at the Alamo.

Because we all have different interests and different amounts of stamina, the return to the hotel will be by individual ride share. When you are ready, come back to the convention hotel. The break room and a good story or two awaits you.

Saturday, October 11, 2025

0730 – 1030

Breakfast Buffet / Annual Business Meeting/ Missed Roll Call

Election of Officers (if required)

Seminar Presentations

ATC Chiefs' Panel (Billy Davis will facilitate)

Adjourn

Saturday afternoon: free time. You may wish to return for an extended visit to:

The Alamo. The famous battle took place in 1836 during the Texas Revolution. It's not just a museum, but a symbol of courage and sacrifice.

The River Walk. The scenic network of walkways along the San Antonio River is lined with restaurants, shops, and hotels. You can take a boat tour, enjoy outdoor dining and experience the heart of the city in a relaxed, beautiful setting.

Saturday, October 11, 2025

Saturday Night Banquet

Cash Bar, 5 PM – 6 PM

Dinner and General Meeting, 6 PM – 9 PM

Break Room, 9 PM – Midnight

Formal /Semi-formal attire:

Mess Dress, Tuxedo, or Dark Business Suit

Meal selection required on registration form.

The Break Room will be open from 1200 – 1600 on Saturday and will reopen after the annual banquet.

Sunday, October 12, 2025
Farewell!

MEMBER REGISTRATION FORM
YOUR REGISTRATION SHOULD BE MAILED NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 2, 2025
(COMPLETE THIS FORM EVEN IF YOU ARE ONLY GOING TO THE BANQUET)

Make hotel reservations for the Courtyard, San Antonio Sea World Westover Hills, 11605 State Hwy 151, San Antonio, TX, 78251, or call the Front Desk at 1(800) 721-7033, or online at **Book your group rate for AFCATCA** The Room Rate $129.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Member Last Name: _____ Member First Name: _____ Banquet Only _____
Spouse Last Name: _____ Spouse First Name: _____ Banquet Only _____
1st Guest Last Name: _____ 1st Guest First Name: ___ _____ Banquet Only _____
2nd Guest Last Name: _____ 2nd Guest First Name: _____ Banquet Only _____

If additional space needed for guests, add a separate page.

Who would you like to sit with: _____Only put names if you are sure they are attending the convention. If you list names of members who do not attend, you may lose preferred seating (8 seats per table). Register early, as the seating plan is difficult to keep changing and cannot be changed at the last minute.

Member Address: _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Email address: _____ Cell phone number _____ May we text you? Y/N ___
First convention: YES _____ NO _____ Mode of Travel: Air _____ Auto _____ RV _____ Other ____
# of rooms booked at hotel (including guests): Date of Arrival: 10/8/2025 ____ 10/9/2025 ____ 10/10/2025 ___ 10/11/2025_____ Other ____

Below find registration fee info and all dinner, golf, and tour costs. Enter the number of people who will be participating in each event and total that amount. Enter the grand total due for all events, including donation and the registration fee.

Registration Fee ………………………………Number of people _____ @$120 per person = $ _____
Banquet Only Fee** …………………………Number of people _____ @ $66 per person = $ _____
        ** For Members or Guests attending only the Banquet and who did not pay a registration fee

Thursday, October 9, 2025   0745-1130   Transport by 56-pax motor coach
    ♦ USAF BMT Graduation   Number____   @ $XX per person $ _____

Friday, October 10, 2025
    ♦ General Farman Golf Tournament at Lackland AFB (includes cart, green fee…transportation not included)
          0645 - 1230   Number____   @ $40 per player $_____

    ♦ Downtown San Antonio: the Alamo   Transport by 56-pax motor coach
          0930 bus departs hotel; Ride share return Number____   @ $XX per person $_____

Saturday, October 11, 2025
        Breakfast Buffet/Annual Business Meeting/Seminars   0730 - 1100
        On your own: Explore San Antonio, visit with friends in the break room. 1100-1600
        Cash Bar   1700 - 1800   Pay as You Go
        Annual Association Banquet (semi-formal)   1800 - 2100
        Break Room   2100 - Midnight

DONATIONS TO HELP DEFRAY THE COST OF THE CONVENTION   ………………………………………. $_____
                                                          GRAND TOTAL …… $_____
    ♦ ANNUAL BANQUET   ………….. MENU SELECTIONS (Indicate quantity for all attending banquet)
    BEEF _____ CHICKEN _____ VEGETARIAN _____ (or state dietary restrictions) _____
Make check payable to AF Cyberspace and ATC Association. Mail registration form with check to: Billy Davis, 11123 Kobort Canyon, Helotes, TX 78023   Cell (719) 337-3683. Email: billyddavisjr73@gmail.com

    Name & phone number of emergency contact while you are attending: _____

                                                          _____

Name Tag Form

How do you want your name to appear?
Member Name:_____

Spouse/Guest Name:_____

State of Residence_____   First Convention   Yes_____   No _____

Air Force Specialty: _____
 (Commander, Air Traffic Control, Crypto, Comm/Maint/Staff, Radio Maintenance, Power Pro, etc., or Other)

Ham Call Sign: _____   Comm Unit: _____   Command: _____

Bill Bethea
Crypto Maintenance
2044th CG/HQ DISA
Virginia

2025 GOLF REGISTRATION INFORMATION FORM

Your name: _____

Calloway Scoring System will be used.

Name of player(s) you would like to play with:
Name of Player: _____
Name of Player: _____
Name of Player: _____

Gateway Hills Golf Course, Lackland AFB, TX.
(210) 671-3466

Contact the course if you want to rent clubs.
Cost per player: $40 (includes green fee, cart). Lunch on your own.
Total amount of golfing fees goes on your convention registration form _____ number of players X **$40**
$_____

Prizes for closest to pin and longest drive.
Carpools will leave the hotel lobby at 0645. First tee time is approximately 0800.

Will you be willing to drive a carpool vehicle? Yes _____   No _____   Drive time is about 20 minutes from hotel.

Air Force Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association

Membership Application

MAIL TO:
Paul Williams, 7356 Detrick Jordan Pike
Springfield OH 45502

Membership dues are **$42.00** due every two years.

Life Memberships are **$150.00**

Renewal _____ New Membership_____ Life Membership _____

Donation_____

Amount enclosed: $_____
(Make check payable to "AF Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association")

PRINT CLEARLY – PLEASE COMPLETE ALL INFORMATION

Date: ___/___/___

First Name _____ MI ___

Last Name_____

Street Address _____

City_____ State_____ Zip _____

Phone Number (_____) _____-_____

e-Mail Address: _____

Year of Birth _____

Spouse's Name _____

Do you wish to have a copy of the Communicator mailed to you (it is available on the web):   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

How were you recruited: _____
(Members name, magazine, website, etc)

If you have any questions, contact Paul Williams at (937) 554-2347

AF CYBERSPACE AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL ASSOC

AFCATCA hat
$15

AFCATCA
blue golf
shirts $42

AFCATCA
challenge coin $14

Special order wood-carved plaque
See next page.

Name: _____   Date: _____

Email: _____   Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION		SIZE	TOTAL
____	**AFCATCA baseball cap (adjustable)**	@ $18 each	____	$____
____	**AFCATCA Blue Golf Shirts (unisex)** S M L XL	@ $42 each	____	$____
____	**AFCATCA Challenge Coin**	@ $14 each	____	$____

(Note: Price increases are due to postage increase and increase in costs to the association.)

Jackets will only be available by special order with a price of approximately $115 depending on the postage, and will be sent directly to the purchaser.

TOTAL OF ABOVE ITEMS: $_____

TOTAL WOOD PLAQUE ORDER ($40 each): $_____

Donation (Tax deductible within limits of law) Receipt: Yes___ No ___ $_____

GRAND TOTAL $_____

POSTAGE AND HANDLING ARE INCLUDED IN ALL PRICES.
MAKE CHECKS OUT TO 'AF CYBERSPACE & ATC ASSOC'
MAIL TO: Bill Cassatt, 1200 Homelife Plaza Apt D-3, Rolla, MO 65401
Phone 573-263-3334   clarkwcassatt@gmail.com

AACS, AFCS and AFCC Wood Carved Wall Plaques

Cost (including shipping): **$40 each**

Makes checks out to AF Cyberspace and ATC Association and mail to:

**William Cassatt
1200 Homelife Plaza Apt. D-3
Rolla, Missouri 65401**

These wood-carved plaques are special order and will take about 2-3 weeks for delivery.

Size: 10 ½ inches

Command: AACS_____   AFCS_____   AFCC _____   (Number of plaques)

Total cost $_____ (check attached)

HOW IT BEGAN

Many in this association saw air traffic control take a technological leap forward with the introduction of radar in the 1950s. Some saw air and ground radio stations transform from continuous wave Morse Code to radio telephone. Many witnessed the advent of the computer. They all helped the military increase the quantity and quality of communications, data automation, and air traffic control systems to meet changing needs.

Formerly called AACS Alumni Association (1977 to 2008), AACS stood for both the Army Airways Communications System and the Airways and Air Communications Service. Because missions were basically the same, the AACS Alumni Association expanded membership to include AFCS, AF Communications Command, AF Command, Control, Communications & Computer Agency, AF Communications Agency, Cyberspace Capabilities Center, AF Flight Standards Agency, and other major commands up to and including today's organizational structure.

On Sept 27, 2008, the AACS Alumni Association became AF Communicators and Air Traffic Controllers Association to reflect its membership.

On July 1, 2020, our association became the AF Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association, because communicators are now referred to as cyberspace operators.

TAX STATUS
The AF Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association is an IRS Code 501(c)3 organization. Donations to the Association are tax deductible when filing IRS Form 1040.

OUR HISTORY
The AACS Alumni Association was formed on Sept 30, 1977. Larry and Doris Camp were visiting Dux and Pearl LeDoux in Eunice, LA in 1976 when the subject of old military friends came up. Larry and Dux were assigned to the 5th AACS Wing in Europe. What began as an invite to a poker weekend in Columbus, OH (Larry and Dux were part of a London, England poker group for AACS detachment commanders) to be hosted by the Camps, turned out to be the first annual reunion.

The couples contacted old friends, who in turn contacted others, and so on. A large number of former AACS troops and spouses made their way to Columbus and the result would become known as the AACS Alumni Association. The title at that time was derived from Army Airways Communications System and Airways and Air Communications Service.

Individuals who were part of the first reunion had been assigned to AACS units before, during and after World War II, the Korean Conflict, and up to 1961 when AACS became a major command and was renamed the AF Communications Service (AFCS).

An annual convention is held in different cities each year. They usually begin on the last Thursday of September and end the following Sunday. The Association operates on membership dues and donations. Association dues are minimal: $42 every two years. Life memberships are $150.

The old blue original AACS logo was previously the official Association logo. In 2020, our Association introduced its new name, Air Force Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association, and its new logo.

WHAT'S IN A NAME
In 1938 the Army Airways Communications System (AACS) was formed. During World War II, for a short time it was renamed the Army Airways Communications Wing, and then the Air Communications Service, but that only lasted 9 months. When the clamor reached the halls of the Pentagon to retain the AACS designation, it was renamed the Airways and Air Communications Service (AACS) in 1946. This new designation was also a better fit due to the high volume of airplanes flying through U.S. and U.S.-Controlled airspace and the need to control airways.

In 1961 AACS was elevated to major air command status and was renamed the Air Force Communications Service (AFCS). This designation remained until 1979 when it was renamed Air Force Communications Command (AFCC).

Status of the unit changed from major command to a field operating agency on July 1, 1991, and redesignated as: Air Force Command, Control, Communications, and Computer Agency on May 28, 1993; Air Force Communications Agency on June 13, 1996. Status of the unit changed from a field operating agency of USAF to a subordinate unit of the Air Force Communications and Information Center on April 1, 1997. Status of unit changed from a subordinate unit of the Air Force Communications and Information Center to a field operating agency of the USAF on Oct 1, 2000. Status of unit changed from field operating agency of USAF to a subordinate unit of the Air Force Space Command on May 4, 2009. Redesignated as Air Force Network Integration Center on July 15, 2009. AFNIC was re-designated as the Headquarters Cyberspace Capabilities Center (CCC) on Nov 7, 2019, reporting to Air Combat Command.

Members: Check address label for date and/or year dues expire (number before your first name). If it's '25' dues expire Dec 2025. Next edition will not be mailed if dues have expired.

WHO WE ARE

Our association is comprised of about 1,000 members (Communicators, Data Automation, Cyber, Space Operations, Air Traffic Controllers, Air Field Managers, Maintenance, Engineering and Installation, combat communications, and related support personnel) who have served or are serving in any communications or air traffic control unit. This includes those who served in the U.S. Army Air Corps or hold or held a communications, data automation, information/cyber, air traffic control, maintenance, engineering and installation or related support skill set.

The term Communicators includes ALL operational, maintenance, administrative skills and other skills in the U.S. Army Air Corps and the U.S. Air Force (including Air National Guard and Reserve, veterans, active duty, civilian, and retired) communications, data automation, or air traffic control units.

We were formerly called the "AACS Alumni Association" from 1977 until Sept 27, 2008.

We changed our name to AF Communicators and Air Traffic Controllers Association because the Airways and Air Communications Service (AACS) was elevated to Major Air Command status and redesignated Air Force Communications Service in 1961.

We changed again July 1, 2020, to AF Cyberspace and Air Traffic Control Association. Throughout the Air Force, Cyber Warfare Operations has become the new career field title for what we have known as the communications career field. All Air Force members who traditionally were identified as communicators are now referred to as Cyberspace Operators.

MISSION

> To foster continued awareness of the Air Force communications, data automation, air traffic control and cyberspace missions previously accomplished by AACS, AFCS, AFCC, AFC4A, AFCA, AFNIC, CCC, AFFSA, other past and current commands (AFSPC, ACC, AMC, AFMC, etc.).

> To provide a forum for educational and humanitarian services, to renew and make new friendships, and to exchange ideas of common interest concerning people and activities associated with communications, cyber, and air traffic control.

> To fully support the goals and missions of the U.S. Air Force and to honor each year the ATC Enlisted Manager, Air Traffic Controller, Cyber Systems Senior NCO, and Cyber Systems NCO of the Year.

> To make charitable contributions to worthy veteran organizations or related causes.

> To manage our Association to be viable for those airmen/officers/civilians serving today.