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AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE  
AIR UNIVERSITY

FROM 35,000 FT:  
GETTING AIR FORCE SQUADRON COMMANDERS TO ALTITUDE  
AMID A RESOURCE CONSTRAINED ENVIRONMENT

By  
Major Ryan F. Dannemann

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Instructor: Dr. Marcia Ledlow

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DISCLAIMER</b> .....	ii
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	iii
<b>TABLE OF FIGURES</b> .....	v
<b>PREFACE</b> .....	vi
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	viii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>PROBLEM BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE</b> .....	4
<b>Today’s Resource Constrained Environment</b> .....	5
Additional Constraints: The VUCA Environment .....	9
<b>EXPECTATIONS OF THE SQUADRON COMMANDER</b> .....	10
<b>Commander Conduct</b> .....	10
<b>Commander’s Duties and Responsibilities</b> .....	11
Execute the Mission.....	11
Lead People .....	12
Manage Resources .....	12
Improve the Unit.....	13
<b>AIR FORCE SQUADRON COMMANDER PERFORMANCE DATA</b> .....	13
<b>The Air Force Inspection System: CCIP and UEI</b> .....	13
CCIP Data.....	16
UEI Data .....	18
<b>Complaints Resolution Data</b> .....	21
<b>Total Force Climate Survey</b> .....	24
<b>AIR FORCE SQUADRON COMMANDER PREPARATION</b> .....	26
<b>Professional Military Education</b> .....	27
Squadron Officer School .....	28
Air Command and Staff College .....	29
<b>On-the-Job Training and Mentorship</b> .....	33
<b>Squadron Commander Course</b> .....	33
<b>ALTERNATE WORLD DEVELOPMENT</b> .....	34
<b>Alternate World Assumptions</b> .....	35

<b>Alternate World Scenario Diagram</b> .....	36
<b>Alternate World One: “Embrace the SUCK!”</b> .....	37
<b>Alternate World Two: “HOO-YA!”</b> .....	37
<b>Alternate World Three: “That is all...?”</b> .....	37
<b>Alternate World Four: “Hurry up and wait!”</b> .....	38
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	38
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	41
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	47
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	47
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	49



## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Total Force Over Time .....	5
Figure 2: Mobility Aircraft Over Time .....	6
Figure 3: Bombers Over Time .....	7
Figure 4: Fighters Over Time .....	8
Figure 5: UEI and CCIP Major Graded Areas.....	15
Figure 6: CCIP Deficiencies by MGA, Per Year.....	16
Figure 7: CCIP Deficiencies By MGA, By Severity .....	17
Figure 8: UEI Deficiencies By MGA, Per Year .....	18
Figure 9: UEI Deficiencies By MGA, By Severity .....	19
Figure 10: Historical/Projected IG Contacts-Per Calendar Year .....	22
Figure 11: SAF/IGQ Caseloads .....	23
Figure 12: Reprisal/Restriction Caseload Illustration.....	24
Figure 13: Extracted 2015 Air Force Climate Survey Results .....	26
Figure 14: Professional Military Education.....	28
Figure 15: SOS In-Residence Syllabus .....	29
Figure 16: SOS Non-Residence Syllabus .....	29
Figure 17: ACSC In-Residence Master's Program .....	30
Figure 18: ACSC Online Master's Program Syllabus.....	31
Figure 19: ACSC Distance Learning Syllabus .....	32
Figure 20: Alternate World Diagram.....	36

## PREFACE

Having been an Air Force airlift pilot now for more than a decade, I have had the opportunity to span the globe from a panoramic window seat located somewhere around thirty-five thousand feet. Cruising at this altitude has allowed me and those I have shared the cockpit with, to soak in and appreciate the majestic beauty of the world as we pass over and around it. It has also created hours upon hours of time that we as aircrew get to fill by discussing and coming up with the solutions to fix the problems of the world.

Oftentimes, these world-fixing ocean crossing conversations are just an effective way to stay awake. Sometimes though, the opportunity to strategically think about our lives and our organizations while being far removed from the world below at our perch up in the sky, allow for some very constructive moments. It was not uncommon to come up with a new idea or two, and take them back to the squadron and implement them.

My most memorable occasion of this type was a C-5 flight from Incirlik, Turkey to Ramstein, Germany when we carried General Duncan J. McNabb, who at the time was the Commander of AMC (Air Mobility Command). I remember General McNabb traveling with roughly a team of about a dozen, and shortly after reaching cruise altitude he came up alone into the cockpit with a pen and a pad of paper. He first thanked us for the ride up to Ramstein, and then proceeded to share with us that his team only tells him how great things are in the Air Force. He explained to us that he knew the Air Force had things that needed improvement, and he was sure that we could tell him what some of those areas were. He was right, and our crew was ready to help him fill his notepad.

Our flying squadron and crews had spent years trying to push troubling issues up the chain of command, but the issues just seemed to disappear as they left our span of control. This time, the chain of command had been removed, and we had the full attention of the AMC Commander. Our crew shared stories and experiences over the course of the several hour flight, and General McNabb took notes and asked questions. I vividly remember three topics that had been frustrating our crews over the last few years, and we finally had the audience that could do something about it. Regarding these topics we just didn't complain, we had the *solutions* ready as well. What felt even better than venting these frustrations to an attentive four star general, was that several months later our identified problems had been addressed *with* the solutions we had given General McNabb somewhere near thirty-five thousand feet.

I am still flying missions, but have spent the bulk of my time during the last few years working in both the inspections and complaints sections of our wing Inspector General Office. General Goldfein's recent charge to revitalize the squadrons has been well communicated throughout the Air Force, and I wonder if the answers and ideas by individuals at the wing level will survive the levels of bureaucracy and make it to General Goldfein's desk. As I have worked and researched this paper, I have often thought about that flight with General McNabb. I have written it imagining now, that General Goldfein is aboard our flight with notepad and pen in hand, and is ready to go.



## ABSTRACT

As resources and operation tempos continue to constrain the Department of Defense and more specifically, the United States Air Force, more and more pressure is put upon squadron commanders to fulfill the duties and responsibilities demanded of them. Through the lens of the data provided by the Air Force Inspection System, the Inspector General Complaints Resolution Program, and the Total Force Climate Survey, this paper sought to understand what the Air Force could be improving upon, to elevate squadron commander performance to meet the demands of leading in today's resource constrained environment.

The expectations of an Air Force squadron commander are well laid out, as is the method of evaluating the performance of the squadron commander by means of the Air Force Inspection System. This research determined that the data collected by the Inspector General and the Total Force Climate Survey, highlight areas where squadron commanders have the greatest room for improvement. Using the Scenario Methodology, this paper recommends that these highlighted areas of improvement must be utilized as desired learning objectives to drive Air University owned Professional Military Education curriculum. This curriculum must be tailored to better prepare future United States Air Force officers for the duties and responsibilities that come with command.

## INTRODUCTION

Imagine for a moment that the sun has just set, and a C-17 has just departed Dover Air Force Base in route for Germany. The air is smooth and the pilots have just leveled off at 35,000 feet, and settled in for a nighttime, eastbound ocean crossing. On board this particular flight among the rows of palletized cargo, is the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. To pass the hours and in an attempt to constructively use the time, the Chief of Staff decides to climb up into the cockpit to pick the brains of the pilots on a project of his involving the improvement of the Air Force Squadron. The aircraft commander being a member of the wing Inspector General office, has much to offer having analyzed extensively the data collected by the Inspector General. The following analysis and presentation of ideas may have sounded something like what follows here.

The United States Air Force is asking their squadron commanders to lead in a fast-paced, resource constrained environment. Operations tempos remain high amid decades marked by the steady decline of Air Force personnel.<sup>1</sup> “Doing more with less is a fact of existence in the Air Force.”<sup>2</sup> As Chief of Staff, General Goldfein has stated: “the squadron is the beating heart of the United States Air Force; our most essential team. We succeed or fail in our missions at the squadron-level because that is where we develop, train, and build Airmen.”<sup>3</sup>

Command at the squadron-level has been examined before. In 2003, Lt Col (now Major General) Timothy M. Zadalis and Lt Col Billy Ray Shrader researched and concluded that “Air Force character and leadership training is failing to meet the needs of the force. Nowhere is that more evident than at the squadron commander level.”<sup>4</sup> Today, data collected from the Inspector General and the Air Force Inspection System (AFIS) as well as the Total Force Climate Survey,

may also be indicating that squadron-level performance is not operating at the level expected. Even though Air Force personnel numbers continued to decline through 2016, reports of reprisal and restriction continue to climb.<sup>5</sup> The Major Graded Area (MGA) found most deficient during Air Force Inspections is under the category, Leading People.<sup>6</sup> AFIS also reports that the top issue from Airmen to IG Group Sessions is that “manning concerns exceed all other resource related issues” by more than 50%.<sup>7</sup>

As operations tempos increase and the resources available decrease, added pressure is put upon squadron commanders to perform. General Goldfein addresses this significant point in his 2001 book when he writes that “as a leader, you must inspire your people to accomplish more than management rules would suggest is *possible*. You, along with every other commander in the USAF, will have fewer than the optimum number of personnel and resources needed to accomplish your mission—that is a fact of life.”<sup>8</sup> In 2016, Goldfein goes on to state that “our own AFIs state that ‘squadrons are the basic, building block organizations in the Air Force, providing a specific operational or support capability.’ I have always believed this to be true and so I am convinced it’s where we need to start.”<sup>9</sup> His combined points separated by fifteen years generate an interesting question: If years of focus and vast amounts of work have been prepared to guide the squadron commander in this demanding environment, then why as General Goldfein puts it, is the squadron-level *still* the place where we need to start? Goldfein’s reference to the squadron-level as a starting point appears to politely imply that the conclusions made by Zadalis and Shrader still exist today, and are being further validated as data from AFIS continues to trickle in.

The expectations and responsibilities of the squadron commander are well defined in the Air Force Instruction (AFI) 1-2, *Commander’s Responsibilities*, as is additional guidance

available to steer them.<sup>10</sup> Under Commander's Duties and Responsibilities, AFI 1-2 lays out the expectation of commanders to Execute the Mission, Lead People, Manage Resources, and Improve the Unit.<sup>11</sup> It is exactly these four categories that make up the Major Graded Areas utilized by AFIS to measure the performance of Air Force organizations and their leaders.<sup>12</sup> Evidence suggests that a gap has existed between what the Air Force expects of their squadron commanders, and what squadron commanders have been able to achieve as illustrated by the conclusions of Zadalis, Shrader, Goldfein, and now the findings of the Air Force Inspection System. The Air Force Inspector General, Lt Gen Rock, has acknowledged Gen Goldfein's charge by asking: "how can the inspection enterprise help our squadrons?"<sup>13</sup> This research will attempt to explore how the Air Force can shrink the gap between squadron commander expectations and performance. The closure of this gap is essential if squadron commanders are to be equipped to perform in a fast-paced, resource constrained environment where the operations tempo continues to climb.

This paper will utilize a Scenario planning methodology as explained by Peter Schwartz.<sup>14</sup> The Scenario method will create four possible alternate worlds so that long-term plans can be created to best equip Air Force squadron commanders in a variety of future environments. Commanders need to be prepared to perform at high levels not only in today's resource constrained environment, but in any volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment (VUCA).<sup>15</sup> These alternate worlds will be created by overlaying the driving forces of resources and operations tempo on a scale of high to low. This effort will take a number of assumptions into account so that a variety of alternative solutions can be proposed, thus resulting in sound recommendations useful to the Air Force squadron commander in any plausible future world.

## PROBLEM BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

It is no secret that leadership is not easy. It is not even easily defined, which by default, must make it even harder to teach and/or evaluate. What is undeniable though, is that leadership is important regardless of the type of organization. Leadership may easily be the difference between success and failure, and the Department of Defense (DoD) is no exception. The United States Air Force as part of the larger DoD, exists to win our nations wars and “the single most important element of success in war is leadership.”<sup>16</sup> The burden of leadership in the Air Force is put upon the shoulders of those who command the squadrons. “The squadron commander is essential to accomplishing the mission of the United States Air Force.”<sup>17</sup>

The importance of command at the squadron level is not the result of a new study, or epiphany. It is much like the countless volumes of work that document the study of leadership. “Biographies, books, and articles detailing every aspect of leaders’ personal traits, leadership styles, the impact of context, and the challenges leaders faced fill the shelves at bookstores and libraries around the globe.”<sup>18</sup> See Appendix A examples relating to command of a squadron.

This research effort is not an attempt to consolidate advice or create another handbook that would only add *more* pages to a an already overwhelming pile that is intended for the current, or soon-to-be leader of the squadron as they assume the responsibilities that come with command. This work will look through the lens of the Inspector General at how a squadron commander is developed and evaluated, and provide recommendations not to the squadron commander, but to the Air Force on how it can better equip commanders on how to operate not only in a resource constrained environment, but in any VUCA environment.

## Today's Resource Constrained Environment

Today's Air Force operates in a resource constrained environment, and there is no shortage of articles, journals, charts, or tables to substantiate the claim. Taking a look back through the decades at the quantity of personnel and aircraft, it is not hard to see the trending decline. Since 1960, the number of personnel in the Air Force has decreased steadily (Figure 1), and a similar trend for bombers, fighters, and mobility aircraft has existed since 1980 (Figures 2-4). Additional charts and tables continue to paint this trending decline, but such illustrations fail to reveal possibly a more comprehensive and appropriate level of resource allocation.

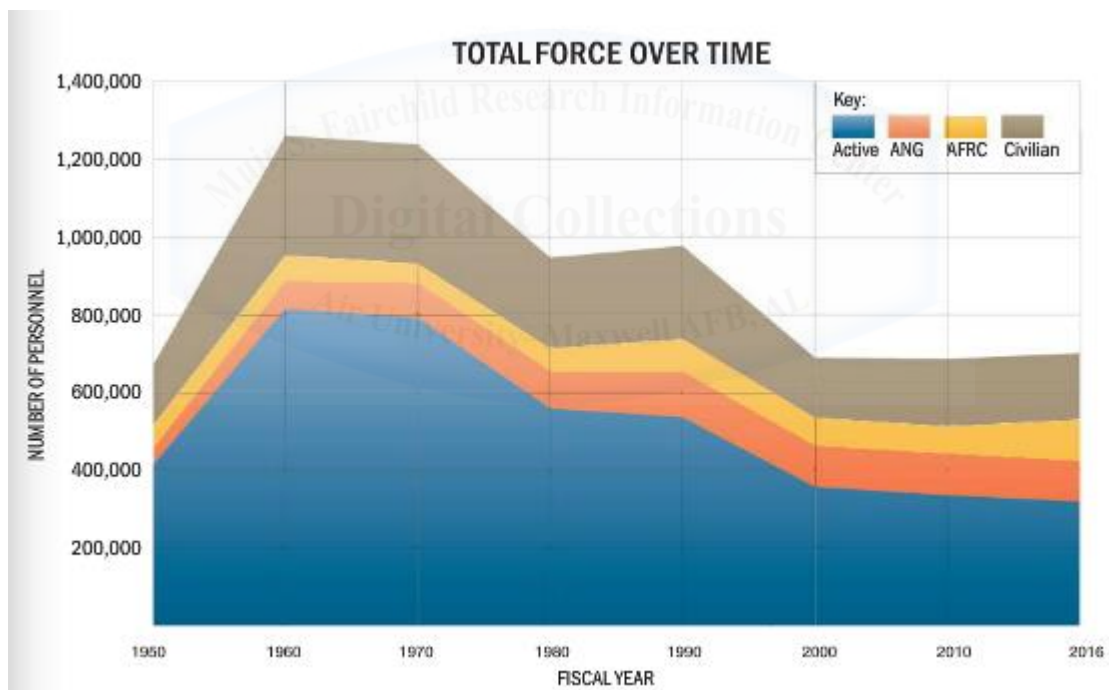


Figure 1: Total Force Over Time<sup>19</sup>

Air Force leaders articulate that the Air Force is as busy as ever and the decline in resources is not the product of a decline in operational tempo. The "USAF is 'too small for what the nation expects of it,' Air Force Secretary nominee Heather A. Wilson told lawmakers at her

confirmation hearing in March.”<sup>20</sup> To further illustrate, Air Mobility Command (AMC) has been surging since 1990.

The command’s expeditionary airmen are deployed to 77 locations around the world-building and sustaining airfields, supporting flying operations, and assisting local governments and suffering populations.... An AMC aircraft takes off for a mission once every 2.8 minutes, around the clock, every day. The command does this with fewer airmen than it had in 1990, 2001, or even 2011-with an aircraft inventory that is getting ever smaller and older.<sup>21</sup>

AMC Commander General Carlton D. Everhart II told reporters in April of 2017 that “between Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2016, AMC’s tanker fleet-the KC-135s and KC-10s-overflow their program flying hours by 237 percent and 178 percent, respectively.”<sup>22</sup> General Everhart went on to say that “the demand on Air Mobility Command is excessive, and I don’t see that stopping.”<sup>23</sup>

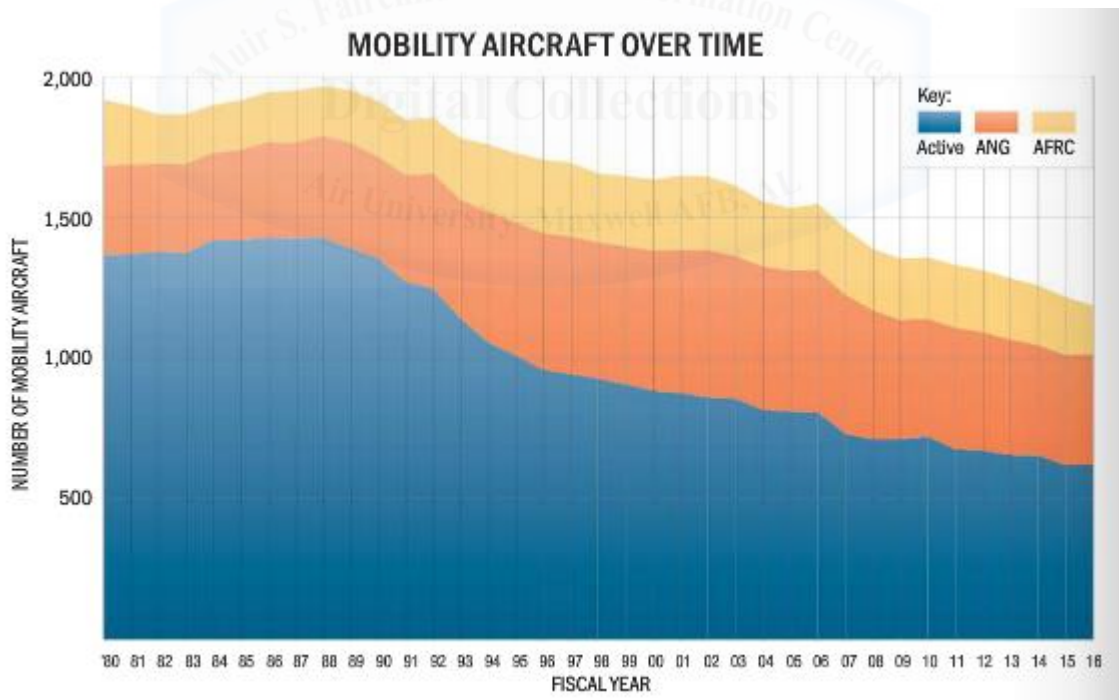
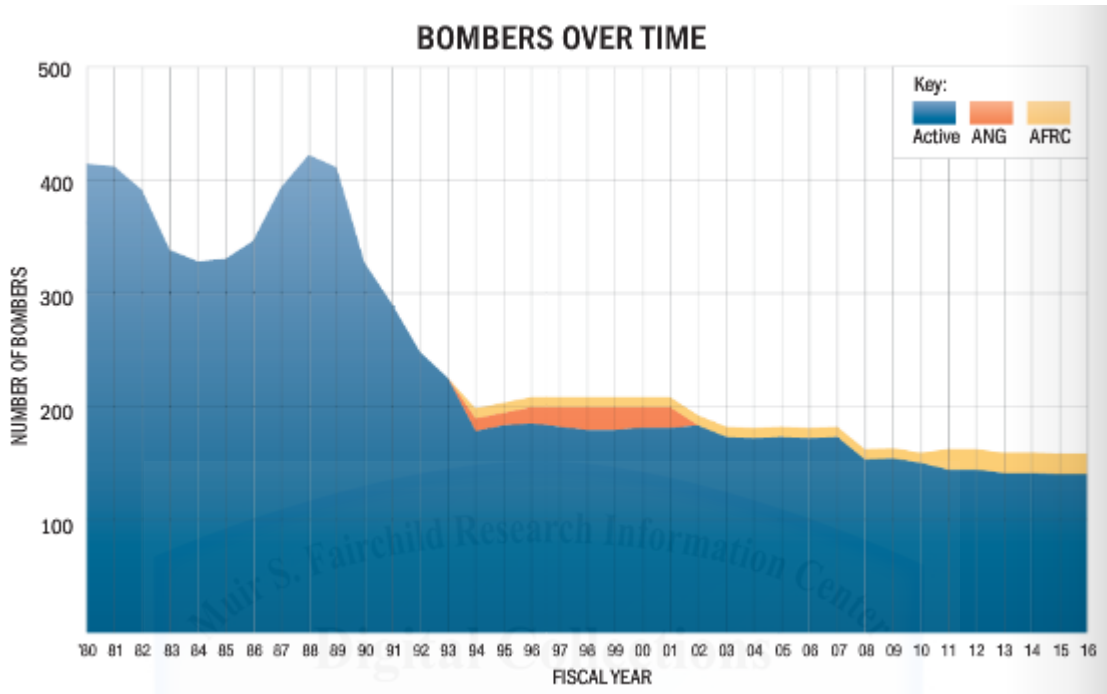


Figure 2: Mobility Aircraft Over Time<sup>24</sup>

The Chief of Staff of the Air Force has addressed this resource issue to the command level by communicating to leaders that they will never have the optimum number of resources or

people to get the job done.<sup>25</sup> He goes on to say that “doing more with less is a fact of existence in the Air Force. Your challenge as a commander is to do the very best you can with what you have.”<sup>26</sup>

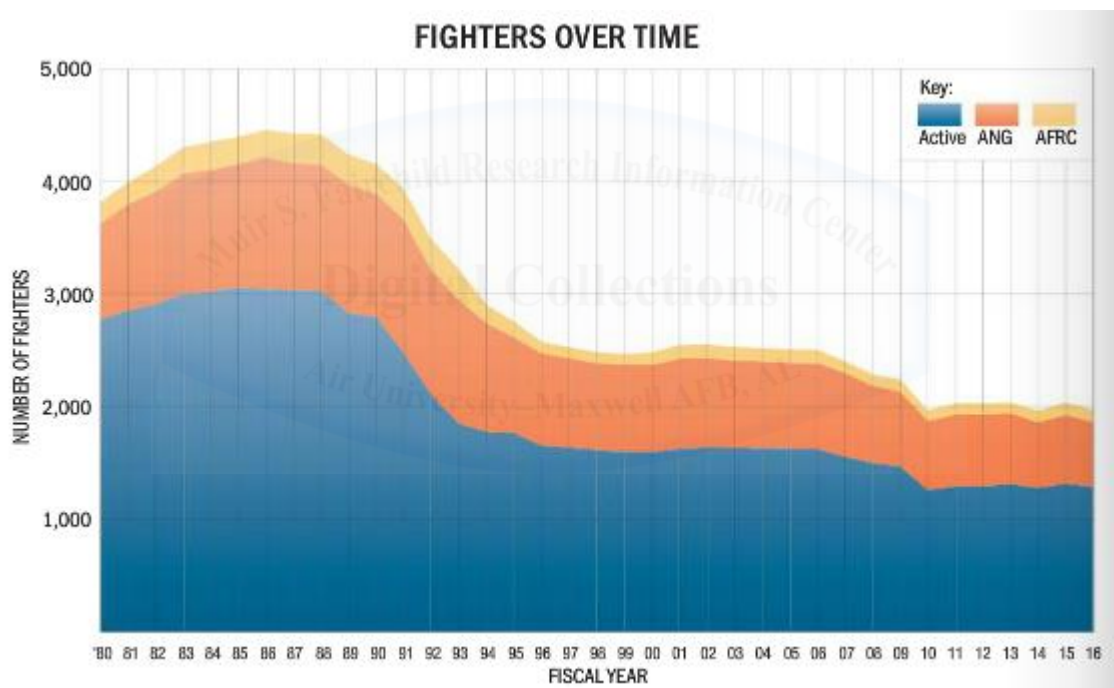


**Figure 3: Bombers Over Time<sup>27</sup>**

This constrained or resource-limited environment does not put things in a positive light, but it is not necessarily indicating mission failure either. Just last year in 2016, General Goldfein indicates as to why:

Squadrons have been asked to bear the brunt of an incredible deployment tempo and manpower shortages which have had a direct impact on readiness in our warfighting missions. In my experience, readiness and morale are inextricably linked. Walk the line at Bagram AB or Al Udeid AB where units are fully manned and readiness is high and you’ll find morale is equally high. Visit one of our CONUS main operating bases and you’ll often find manning hovering between 60-70% with many key supervisors and leaders deployed or dual-hatted, remaining Airmen working overtime, and units managing parts and equipment shortages. On top of this, our squadron commanders, civilian leaders, superintendents, first sergeants, and Airmen feel first-hand the challenges associated with increased mandatory recurring training, a growing list of additional duties, and the challenge of a ‘do-it-yourself’ world in place of Airmen who previously provided services for them.<sup>28</sup>

This resource-limited environment as described by General Goldfein when explaining the associated challenges found on CONUS main operating bases is well-supported by the findings from a RAND report and AFIS. The OCONUS mission is getting accomplished, but it is getting done at the cost of CONUS main operating base compliance. Air Force Chief of Inspection Policy (SAF/IGI) Maj Chris Warner, reports that “active duty service end-strength numbers have declined from 535,233 in 1990 to 317,000 today. However, our publications requiring wing-level compliance still contain 130,028 items (albeit down from 210,000+ in 2012). Complying with every wing-level requirement is *unattainable* in today’s constrained resource



**Figure 4: Fighters Over Time**<sup>29</sup>

environment.”<sup>30</sup> The RAND study published in 2013 agrees: “There are always more tasks for a wing to do than it has the resources to carry out safely. On a day-to-day basis, one of the primary tasks of a wing’s leadership is to decide in which areas to take risks. If the leadership emphasizes the wing’s mission, risk will fall on those elements of compliance that do not relate directly to the mission in the form of less-stringent monitoring.”<sup>31</sup>

The Air Force Inspection System concluded this resource discussion well with an AFIS update published in December of 2016. Resourcing to include dollars, equipment, facilities and training remain top concerns.<sup>32</sup> Training continues to be further inhibited by operational tempo and manning concerns exceed all other resourcing issues.<sup>33</sup> These manning concerns are not just about numbers, but address insufficient manning and the appropriate experience/skill imbalance, quality of life remains a concern, as well as the need to improve the timeliness of the civilian hiring process.<sup>34</sup> The Air Force is getting the job done, but the constrained environment in which it operates is coming at a cost.

#### Additional Constraints: The VUCA Environment

To further put the resource constrained environment into context, it is important to distinguish the idea that *resource constrained* can mean more than just dollars for manning and equipment. “Today’s strategic environment is increasingly characterized by threats that ‘are both diffuse and uncertain, where conflict is inherently unpredictable, and where our capability to defend and promote our national interests may be restricted by political, diplomatic, informational and economic *constraints*. In short, it is an environment marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity.’”<sup>35</sup>

Air Force squadron commanders must operate with effectiveness and efficiency in an environment with declining manpower and supplies, and they must do so while being challenged by forces of uncertainty created at home and around the world. The Continuing Resolution (CR) saga acts as an excellent example of self-induced (by US lawmakers) uncertainty that inhibits Air Force commanders to budget and properly plan for the uncertain, ambiguous, complex, and volatile environment that is created by United States enemies abroad. General Goldfein

readdressed these concerns during a hearing on Capitol Hill on April 5, 2017. “As a service chief, I have many obligations, but one remains paramount. Every Airman we send into harm’s way must be properly organized, trained, equipped and led to succeed in their mission, and we must take care of their families while they’re gone. This is our moral obligation. A yearlong CR makes meeting this obligation extremely difficult.”<sup>36</sup>

The CR will leave the 2017 budget \$2.8 billion short which may ground flying squadrons preparing to deploy or not deploying, cancel readiness exercises, thousands of family’s stateside moves would be delayed, promised retention bonuses would be deferred, and all taking their toll on morale.<sup>37</sup> These additional factors further burden and compound the challenges that Air Force squadron commanders face, only elevating the expectations being put on their shoulders. This potential \$2.8 billion shortfall also only assumes what variables on the horizon are known quantities such as future planned deployments. It is not accounting for the natural disasters, terrorist attacks, or the additional unforecastable situations that will require the help of Airmen and their equipment.

## **EXPECTATIONS OF THE SQUADRON COMMANDER**

The expectations and responsibilities of the squadron commander are well defined in the Air Force Instruction 1-2, *Commander’s Responsibilities*.<sup>38</sup>

### **Commander Conduct**

Commanders are delegated special authority and responsibility with command, and are expected to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner as defined by US law (Title 10 USC § 8583):

All commanding officers and others in authority in the Air Force are required: (1) to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination; (2) to be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command; (3) to guard against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Air force, all persons who are guilty of them; and (4) to take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the Air Force, to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the persons under their command or charge.<sup>39</sup>

Conducting themselves in an exemplary manner is the first expectation of a squadron commander. Leading by example is necessary in order to successfully fulfill the remaining duties and responsibilities.

### **Commander's Duties and Responsibilities**

The Commander's Duties and Responsibilities portion of AFI 1-2 lays out the expectation of commanders to Execute the Mission, Lead People, Manage Resources, and Improve the Unit.

#### Execute the Mission

Mission execution is ultimately the responsibility of the commander.

Commanders hold the authority and responsibility to act and to lead their units to accomplish the mission. Air Force commanders have threefold mission execution responsibilities: primary mission, Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) readiness, and mission assurance command and control. Commanders must apply good risk management, accept risk and manage resources to adjust the timing, quality, and quantity of their support to meet the requirements of the supported commander.<sup>40</sup>

Executing the mission and understanding what it takes to get the job done is more easily definable than what comes next, and that is leadership.

## Lead People

Leadership is complex. Is not easy nor is it easily defined. The 1-2 uses the term *art* to encapsulate all that one must do to successfully lead. “Effectively leading people is the art of command.”<sup>41</sup> To further describe what must be captured, AFI 1-2 goes on to say:

Commanders must maintain effective communication processes and ensure unit members are well disciplined, trained and developed. At all times, commanders must lead by personal example and pay judicious attention to the welfare and morale of their subordinates. Commanders will enforce the Air Force cultural standards on conduct, performance, and discipline outlined in AFI 1-1, Air Force Standards. Further, commanders will establish and maintain a healthy command climate which fosters good order and discipline, teamwork, cohesion and trust. A healthy climate ensures members are treated with dignity, respect, and inclusion, and does not tolerate harassment, assault, or unlawful discrimination of any kind.<sup>42</sup>

The 1-2 breaks the leadership component down even further. Under discipline, the AFI dictates that “commanders must cultivate a culture of compliance and accountability,” while also being responsible for creating and maintaining a disciplined and proud command climate.<sup>43</sup>

## Manage Resources

Squadron Commanders are expected to provide the leadership combined with the resources they are given, to accomplish the mission. These Air Force provided resources include:

Manpower, funds, equipment, facilities and environment, guidance, and Airmen’s time. Commanders must consider risk in their stewardship of scarce resources to ensure effective and efficient mission accomplishment. As part of managing their resources, higher echelon commanders must ensure adequate resources are provided to subordinate commanders. Likewise, subordinate commanders must inform higher echelon commanders of resource shortfalls.<sup>44</sup>

The guidance provided by commanders to lead this effort to manage resources is called *commander’s intent* by the 1-2.<sup>45</sup>

## Improve the Unit

Once the commander has accomplished the mission through leading the people and managing resources, they are now held responsible for improving the unit.

Commanders must foster a culture of innovation and challenge inefficiencies. A process for identifying and fixing deficiencies should be established and followed. Commanders must make data-driven decisions and manage risk while ensuring their unit's authorities, missions, plans and goals stay strategically aligned. A robust self-assessment program will identify the root cause of deficiencies and enable sharing of best practices with other organizations. Commanders are expected to inspect their units and subordinates to ensure maximum effectiveness, efficiency, economy and discipline of the force are maintained.<sup>46</sup>

The responsibilities put on commanders to conduct themselves in an exemplary manner while leading people, managing resources, accomplishing the mission, and improving their unit all while maintaining a robust self-inspection program are extraordinary. The Air Force measures the ability of squadron commanders to fulfill these 1-2 duties and responsibilities by means of the Air Force Inspection System, while also compiling data from the IG Complaints Resolution and Air Force Climate Survey offices.

### **AIR FORCE SQUADRON COMMANDER PERFORMANCE DATA**

Air Force squadron commander performance is evaluated by data collected by the Inspector General's Air Force Inspection System as well as the Complaints Resolution program. The Total Force Climate Survey is also used to measure the performance of the squadron commander.

### **The Air Force Inspection System: CCIP and UEI**

The Air Force Inspection System was designed to focus on reporting and assessing "a unit's readiness, economy, efficiency, state of discipline and effectiveness to execute assigned missions."<sup>47</sup> AFIS provides commanders and independent assessment of "a unit's compliance

with established directives and ability to execute its assigned mission, leadership effectiveness, management performance, and aspects of unit culture and command climate.”<sup>48</sup> AFIS also assesses a unit’s ability to self-inspect and prevent fraud, waste, and abuse.<sup>49</sup>

AFIS is comprised of a number of different inspection types. This research will limit the scope to only the Commander’s Inspection Program (CCIP) and the Unit Effectiveness Inspection (UEI). The CCIP is a wing commander, IG-led effort comprised of two elements: the Self-Assessment Program and the Wing’s Inspection Program designed to provide critical data to leadership about the adequacy of their organizations. This critical data is to be used to improve the readiness, efficiency, discipline, and effectiveness of a unit and allow the wing commanders the ability to reduce the risk to their organizations by understanding where they are not compliant.<sup>50</sup>

The UEI is conducted by MAJCOM IGs and the Air Force Inspection Agency (AFIA) on Wings, to “validate and verify a Wing’s CCIP for accuracy, adequacy and relevance, and provide an independent assessment of the Wing’s resource management, leadership, process improvement efforts and ability to execute the mission. A UEI is a multi-year, continual evaluation of a unit’s effectiveness, and is intended to help the Wing Commander understand the areas of *greatest risk from undetected non-compliance*.”<sup>51</sup>

The Unit Effectiveness Inspection and the Commander’s Inspection Program use four Major Graded Areas (MGAs) to assess “key processes, procedures and requirements based on either public law, executive orders, directives and instructions.”<sup>52</sup> These MGAs are pulled directly from AFI 1-2, *Commander’s Responsibilities: Executing the Mission, Managing Resources, Leading People, and Improving the Unit*.<sup>53</sup> See Figure 5.



**Figure 5: UEI and CCIP Major Graded Areas<sup>54</sup>**

When a non-compliant area is detected during an inspection, that deficient area becomes known as a *deficiency*. AFI 90-201, *The Air Force Inspection System* defines a deficiency as “an inspection finding that has been validated against established guidance.”<sup>55</sup> Once that deficiency is identified, it is then categorized under the applicable Major Graded Area and given a level of severity: Critical, Significant, or Minor. A Critical Deficiency is defined by 90-201 as “any deficiency that results in, or could result in, widespread negative mission impact or failure.”<sup>56</sup> A Significant Deficiency is defined as “a validated deficiency that has or could have negative mission impact.”<sup>57</sup> A Minor Deficiency is one that does not meet the definition of a Critical or Significant, but does require corrective action.<sup>58</sup>

The Air Force Inspection System is still relatively new only being about five years old, but it has been producing a steady flow of data now for several years. Unlike the Air Force Climate Survey which gathers its data from the opinions and perspectives of Airmen, AFIS is documenting the things that commanders and their organizations are required to do but are not,

as required by established law and guidance. The following figure (Figure 6) depicts CCIP deficiencies by MGA, per year.

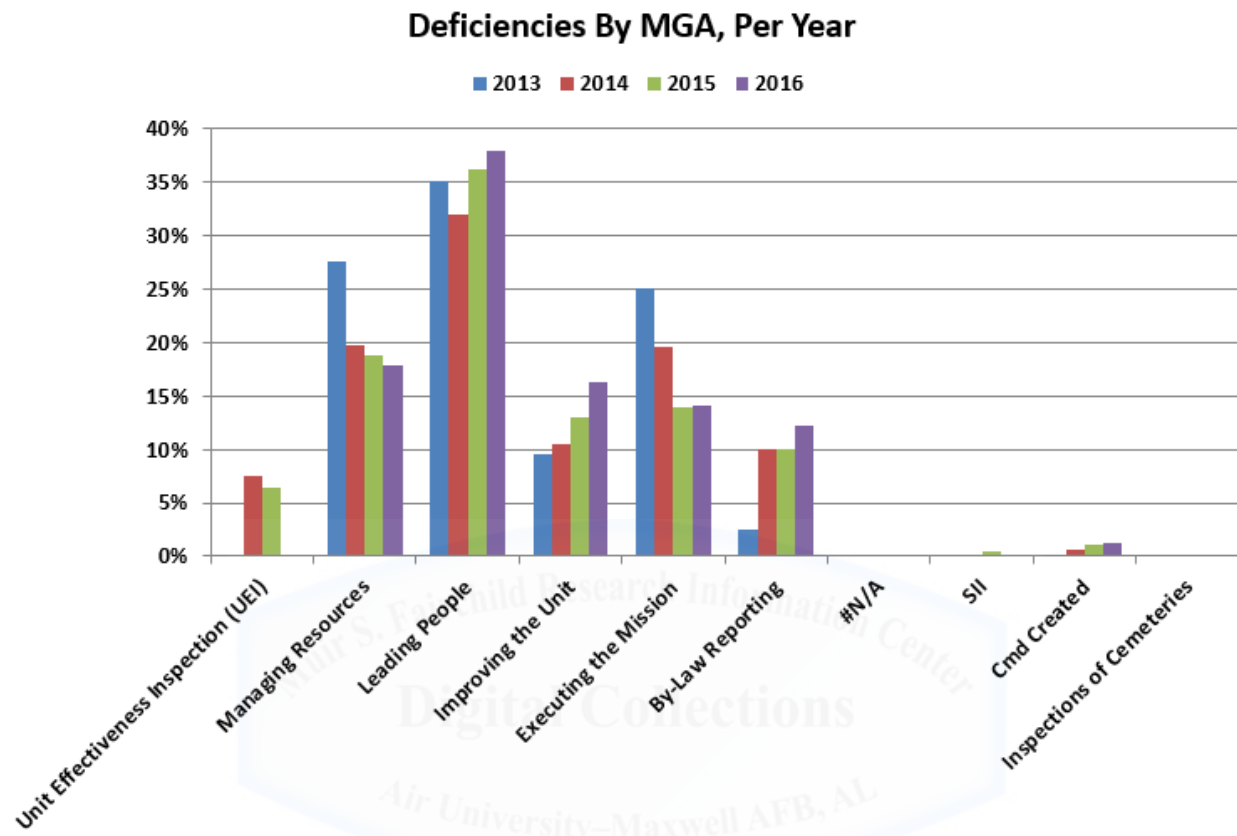


Figure 6: CCIP Deficiencies By MGA, Per Year<sup>59</sup>

CCIP Data

Focusing just on the four MGAs associated with the CCIP, it is difficult to arrive at specific conclusions based on this data compiled over four years. Within the scope and purpose of this research paper though, this data is enough to assist in addressing gaps, and attempting to mitigate those gaps in the pursuit of continual improvement.

What is not difficult to conclude, is that the most deficient area by far is found under Leading People. Managing Resources comes in second followed by Improving the Unit and

Executing the Mission. Improving the Unit is trending in the wrong direction, while Executing the Mission appears to have stabilized after a couple years of improvement.

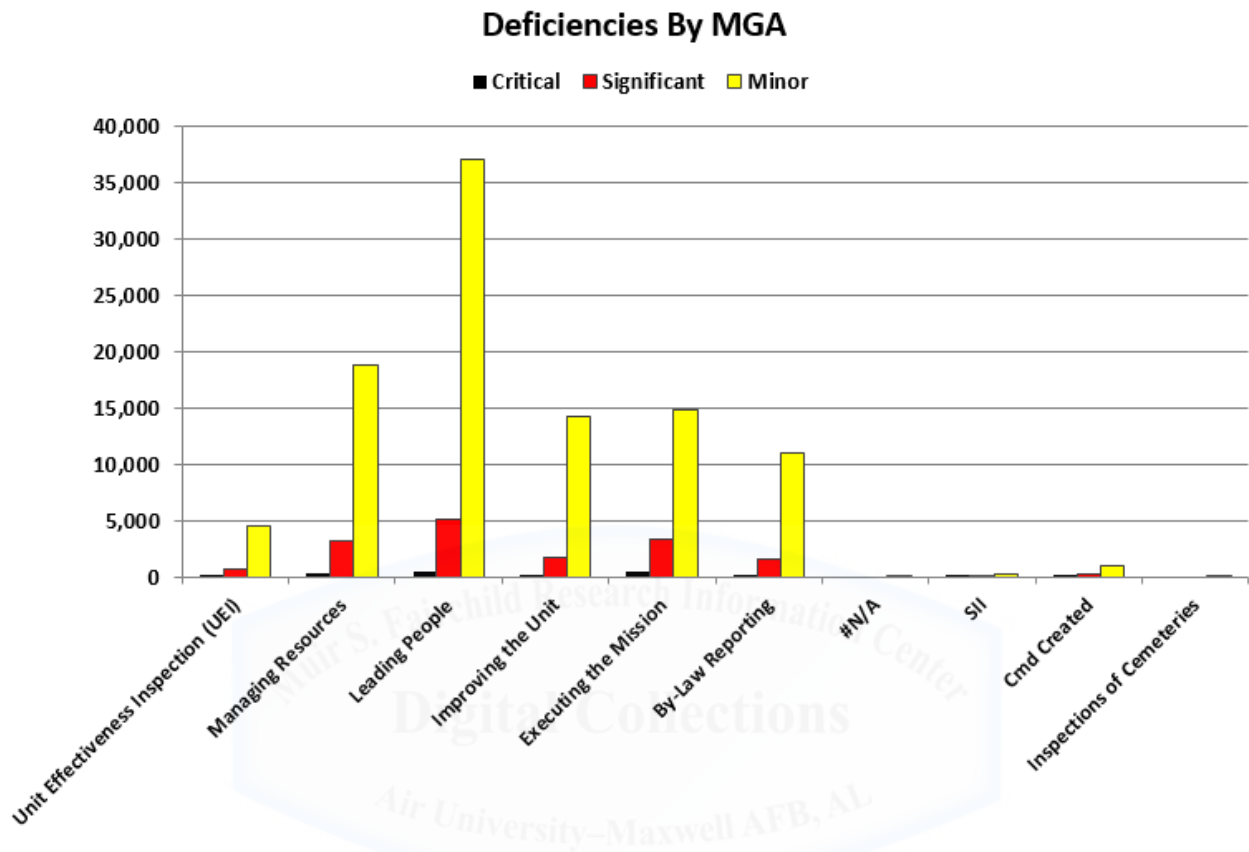


Figure 7: CCIP Deficiencies By MGA, By Severity<sup>60</sup>

Figure 7 addresses the severity level of the deficiencies reported in Figure 6. It is good to see that among the deficiencies levied, Minors significantly outnumber Significant, which also greatly outnumber Criticals. Regardless though of severity level, each deficiency identifies a required area not being complied with.

## UEI Data

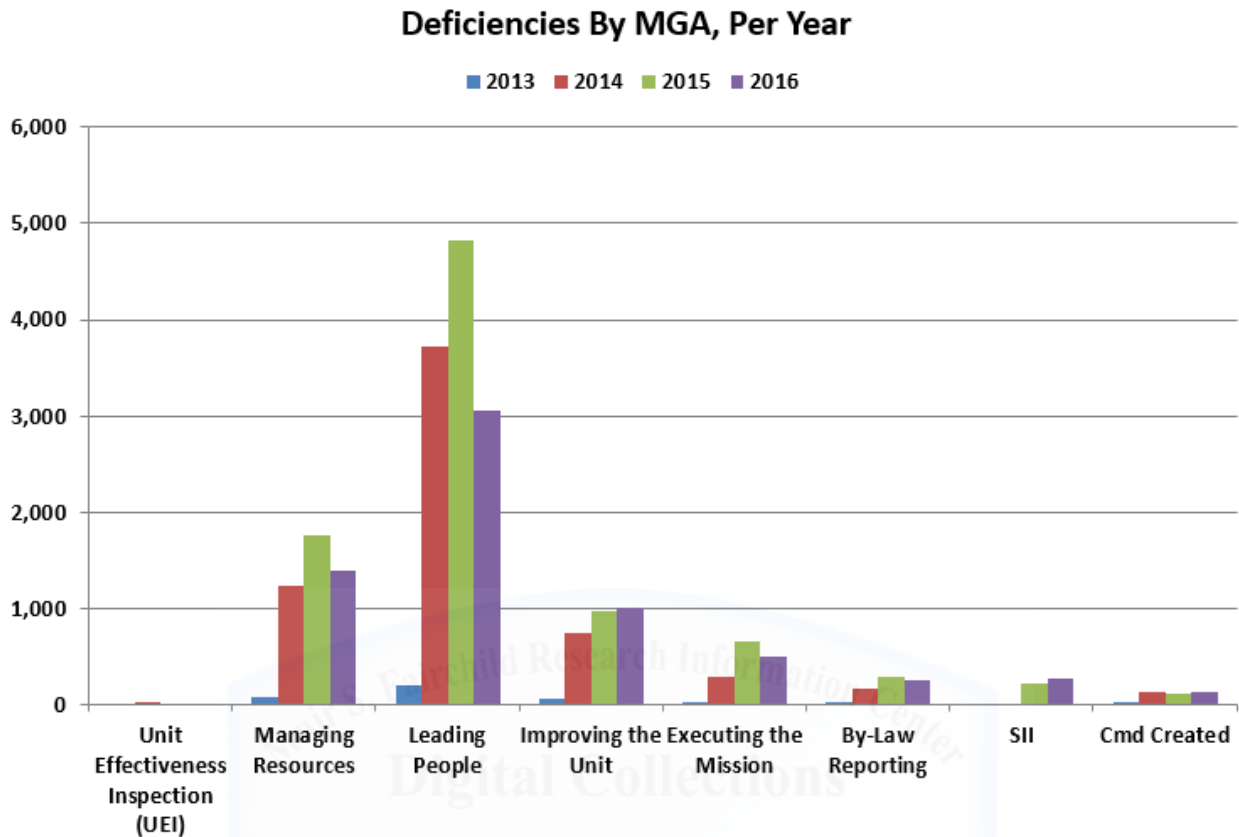
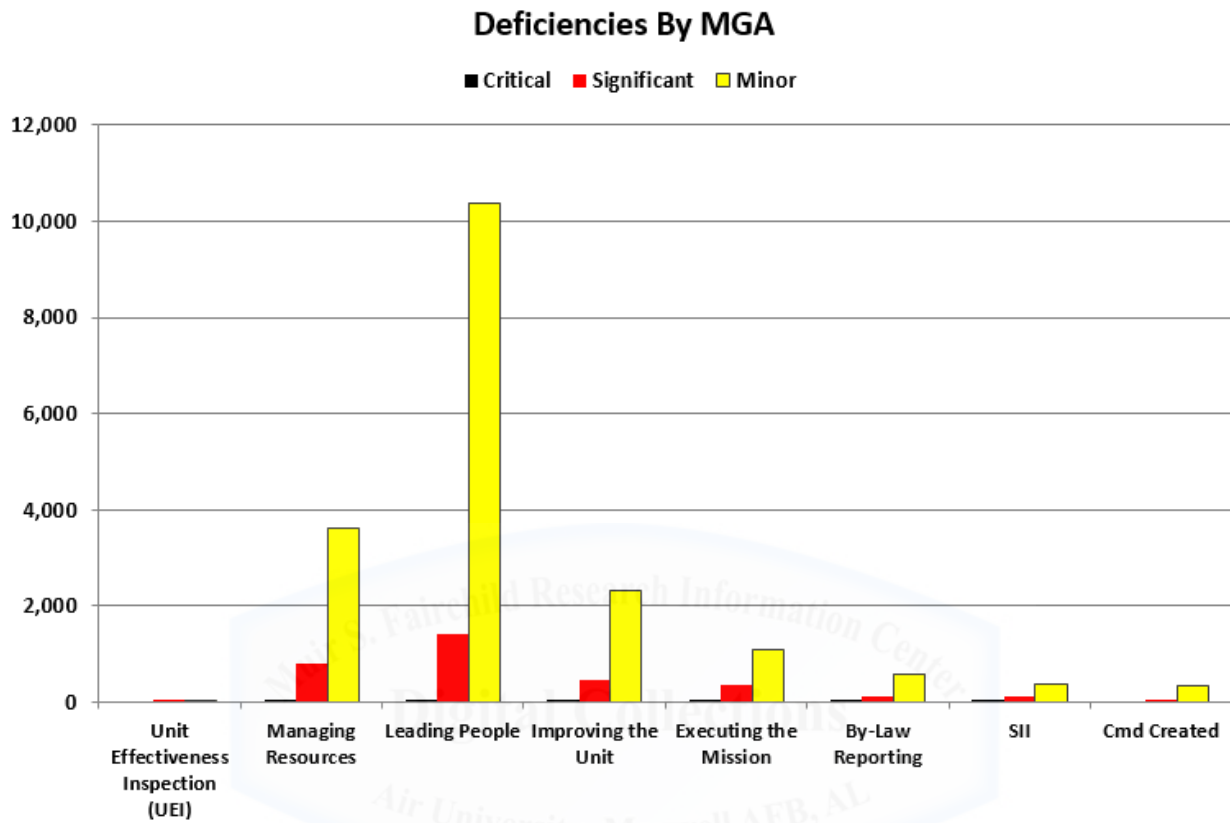


Figure 8: UEI Deficiencies By MGA, Per Year<sup>61</sup>

Being that the UEI findings are those deficiencies identified by MAJCOM led IG teams inspecting individual Wings, it is interesting to see that the Leading People Major Graded Area also far exceeds that of any other MGA (Figure 8). Areas of non-compliance that are detected by a Wing's CCIP will *not* be identified by a UEI, unless the deficient area had already been identified, complied with, and then to be later found neglected and once again declared non-compliant. The point is that Wings are finding themselves most non-compliant in the Leading People MGA, and then when the MAJCOM-led IG teams are inspecting the Wings, they are finding significantly more non-compliant areas under the same MGA having also gone

undetected at the Wing level. To now put the UEI deficiencies against level of severity, see Figure 9.



**Figure 9: UEI Deficiencies By MGA, By Severity<sup>62</sup>**

Over the last four years, this data illustrates that UEI and CCIP combined areas of detected non-compliance have climbed well above the six-digit figure. The stance of AFIS is not, nor has it been one to say, *just do better*. The Air Force Inspector General and the IG enterprise who manage the Air Force Inspection system not only understand this, but encourage “smart compliance: knowingly accepting risk through waiving requirements and informing HHQ Functional Area Managers (FAMs) and subordinates.”<sup>63</sup> There are many ways to deal with non-compliant areas. Oftentimes, these areas have just been missed due to workload, turnover, or possibly negligence. Other times, resource shortfalls may be the culprit. But, “when a

commander has identified an inability to comply with official policy, guidance, and/or procedures, the organization *should* request a waiver.”<sup>64</sup>

In 2016, only 3% of the MAJCOM IG executed UEIs were scored as Outstanding, on a three tiered scale of Outstanding, Effective, and Ineffective.<sup>65</sup> It is relatively reassuring to know that only 4% of the inspected units were found to be Ineffective, but these large numbers of non-compliant items are keeping Wings from bridging the gap from Effective to Outstanding. There are a number of criteria that must be met for a Wing to be rated as Outstanding, one of which is that “programs are nearly deficiency-free, and efforts to benchmark and share lessons learned with other Wings are evident.”<sup>66</sup>

This goal of becoming deficiency-free is where the waiver process comes in. The Air Force Inspector General, Lt Gen Rock, describes the waiver process as one that “will establish a road map for eventual compliance or elimination of unnecessary requirements.”<sup>67</sup> If an area of non-compliance is waived, it cannot be considered a deficiency. This concept is being repetitively communicated through IG channels out to the Wings because the idea has not yet been fully embraced. To further advocate the benefit for commanders at all levels, Gen Rock articulates that “Wing Commanders can waive almost 25 percent of those compliance items and your MAJCOM Commander can waive an additional 35 percent.”<sup>68</sup> He goes on to say that “of course, this must be done in a deliberate and disciplined manner carefully considering how much risk we can absorb.”<sup>69</sup>

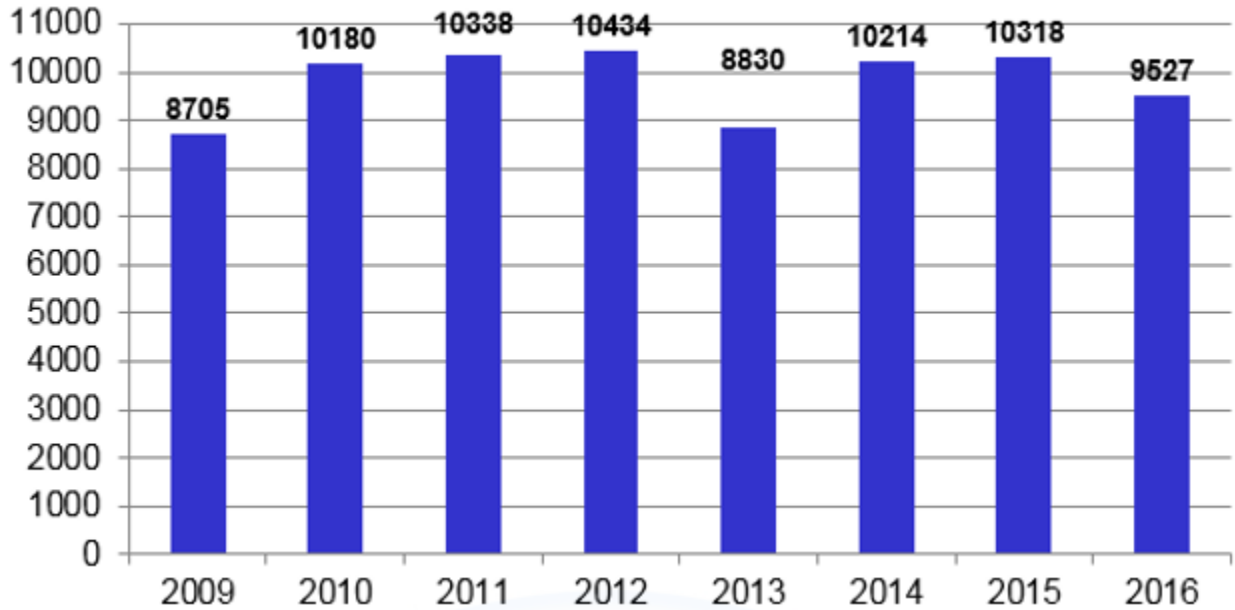
In today’s Air Force which is frequently labeled as resource-limited and constrained, it seems odd that the waiver concept is such a tough sell to commanders who complain of being over-worked and under-resourced. Pursuing waivers at the unit level is an approved method to reduce the burden being put on Airmen.

The combination of the CCIP and UEI which evaluate commanders through the lens of the four MGAs, have created much more than just an inspection system. It is a new way of doing business in the Air Force. The inspection system evaluates how commanders lead their organizations through a model of self-assessment, inspection, and continual improvement. It is a model that if properly executed, must be incorporated into the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly battle rhythms of each squadron. To expedite this process of cultural change, the Air Force Inspection Agency in 2016 has recommended that in order to improve the results of AFIS, a bolstering of the knowledge base of the force through education must take place for commanders, operators, and techs.<sup>70</sup>

### **Complaints Resolution Data**

The Office of the Inspector General not only inspects, but takes complaints from Airmen who believe their issue was not properly addressed by their chain of command, or for some reason, feel as though they cannot address their issue *with* their chain of command. Information resulting from these complaints are collected by the Secretary of the Air Force Inspector General Automated Case Tracking System known as ACTS.

### IG Contacts Per Year



**Figure 10: Historical/Projected IG Contacts-Per Calendar Year<sup>71</sup>**

Figure 10 shows that IG contacts average nearly 10,000 per year since 2009, and during that time, have not begun to show trending signs of improvement. Even though IG Contacts have remained relatively stable, actual complaints resultant from those contacts have steadily risen at the SAF and DOD levels (Figure 11), especially complaints involving reprisal and restriction (Figure 12). As you can see, the IG has reacted to, and improved their processes to handle an increased reprisal and restriction workload. Now the Air Force must work to address the potential underlying issues that have caused such an increase.

### SAF/IGQ Caseload Illustration

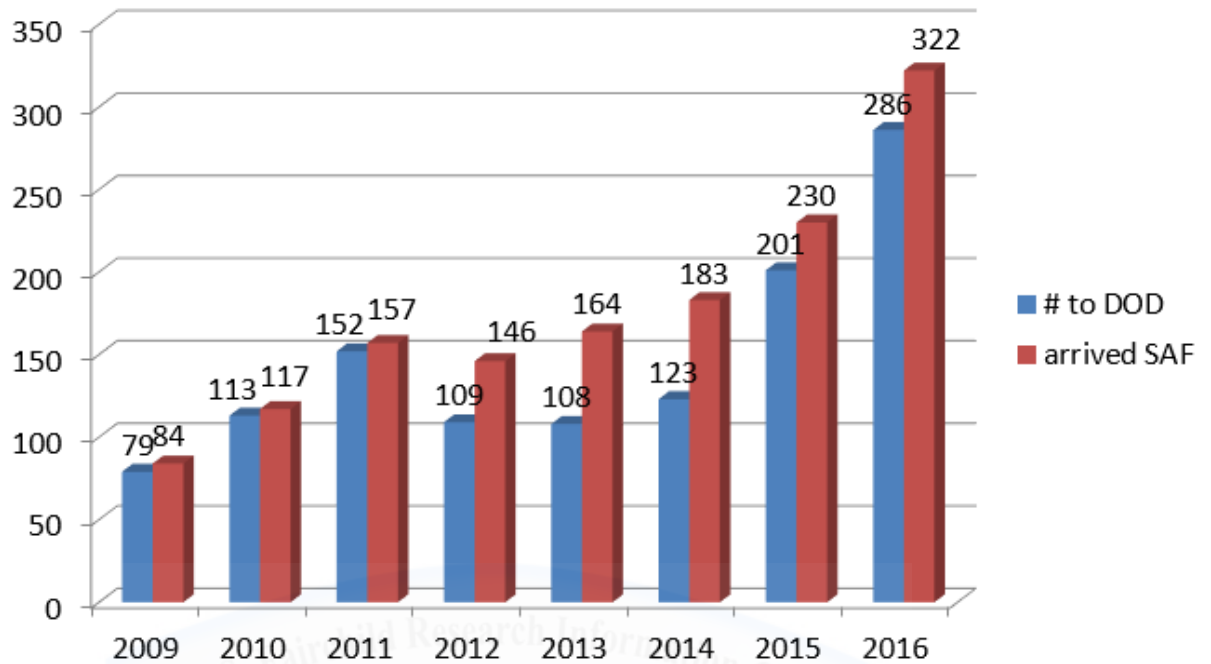
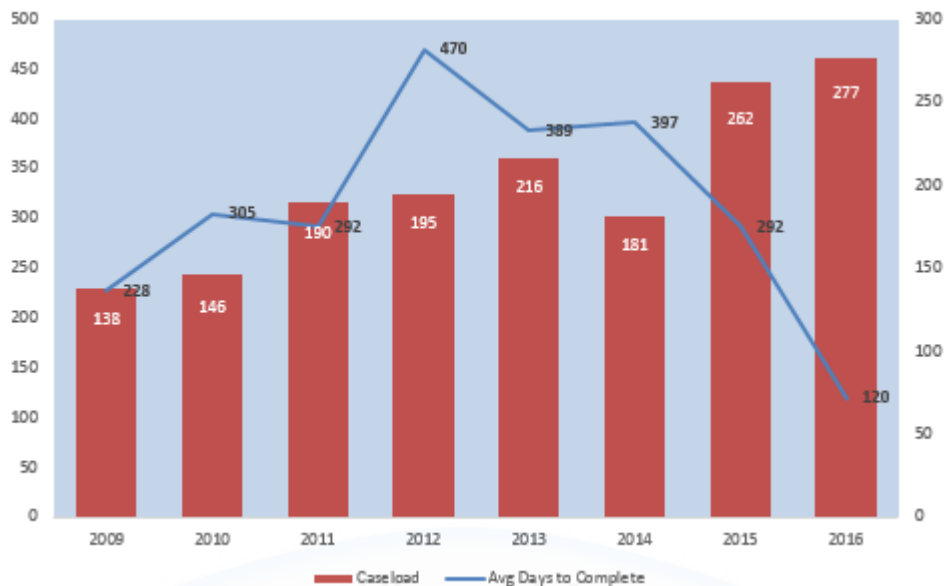


Figure 11: SAF/IGQ Caseloads<sup>72</sup>

The addition of the Complaints Resolution data can assist in substantiating the idea that this rise in IG complaints amid a resource constrained environment, does come at a cost. This data, combined with the results of the Air Force Inspection System, begin to better illustrate what this *cost* is. It makes logical sense that if Executing the Mission is going to take priority over Leading People, Managing Resources, and Improving the Unit, that deficient, non-compliant areas will exist as well as Airmen who have issues that go unaddressed. If the cost is that squadrons will have non-complaint areas and increasing numbers of complaints by Airmen, then the *gap* in squadron commander performance is the inability of those commanders to fulfill their Commander's Responsibilities as defined by AFI 1-2, in an even an balanced manner.

### Reprisal/Restriction Timeline and Caseload Comparison



**Figure 12: Reprisal/Restriction Caseload Illustration**<sup>73</sup>

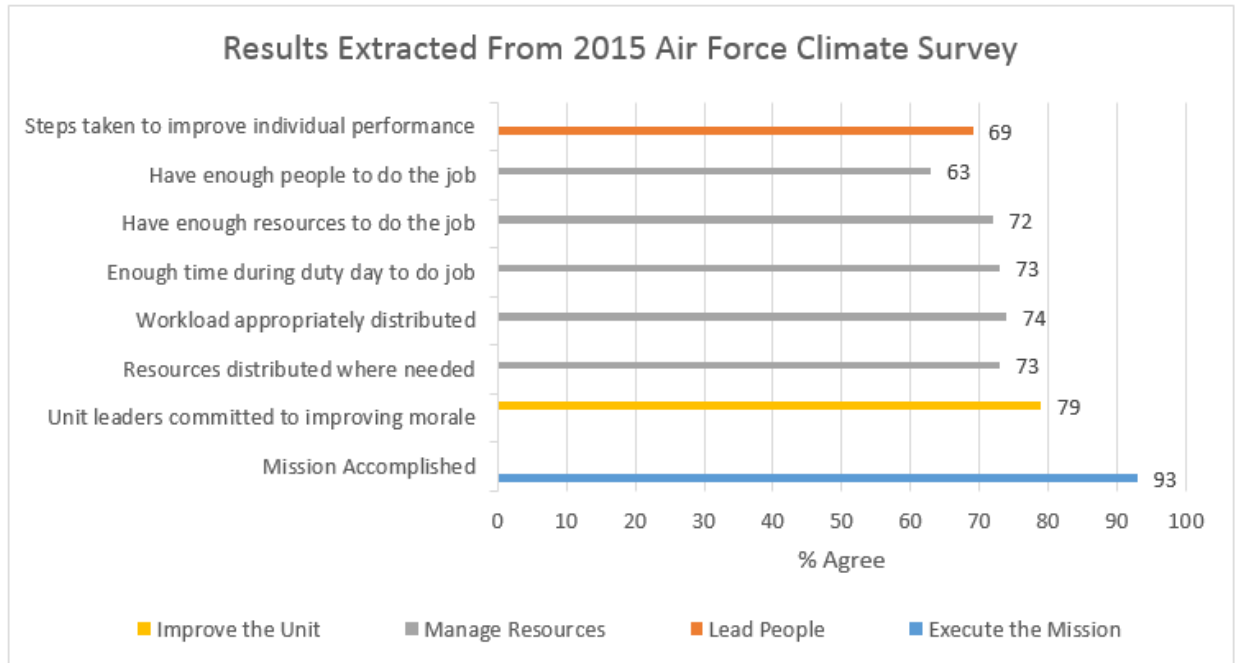
The Inspector General data illustrating this unbalanced accomplishment of the 1-2 duties and responsibilities, is given further credibility by the data provided by the Total Force Climate Survey.

### Total Force Climate Survey

The purpose of the Air Force Climate Survey, now known as the Total Force Climate Survey, is to provide feedback on Air Force organizational climate by assessing “the opinions and perceptions of the Air Force active duty, guard, reserve, and civilian personnel on a wide range of issues, including Satisfaction, Resources, and Unit Performance.”<sup>74</sup> It has been determined that “one of the most effective means to determine how well the current system is preparing officers for command is by assessing the views and perceptions of the rank and file members of the Air Force.”<sup>75</sup>

Researchers have been surprised by the depth of influence that is provided by the performance of the squadron commander.<sup>76</sup> This research effort has extracted some of the lower scoring results from the most recent 2015 survey, while keeping in mind the last four years (2013-2016) of CCIP and UEI data as reported by the Air Force Inspection System. The Air Force Climate Survey does not break down the responsibilities of the commander and view them through the same AFI 1-2 lens as does AFIS, so this analysis has attempted to capture what this might look like had the Climate Survey results incorporated AFIS's four Major Graded Areas. See Figure 13.

The findings in this figure (Figure 13) do a fair job at substantiating conclusions already drawn by this research effort. The Air Force is getting the mission accomplished (93% report this to be true), but areas that have been highlighted for improvement fall mostly under Leading People and Managing Resources. Only 63% report having enough people to do the job and 73% enough time during duty hours to do it, while 73% and 74% report that workload and resources are appropriately distributed. AFIS on-lookers would suggest that before commanders can claim they don't have enough time and/or resources to do the job, they must first adequately manage resources meaning: They must assess risk, waive all requirements that are appropriate, and properly distribute resources while improving their processes. If Commanders still cannot be fully compliant, then they may have the grounds to report that they do not have the manpower and resources to fulfill their command responsibilities.



**Figure 13: Extracted 2015 Air Force Climate Survey Results<sup>77</sup>**

Knowing that the expectations of commanders are well defined by AFI 1-2, and that the Air Force Inspection System uses those 1-2 responsibilities as the Major Grades Areas, this research effort needed to understand what type of curriculum the Air Force is using to prepare squadron commanders to Execute the Mission, Lead People, Manage Resources, and Improve the Unit in the environment captured by Inspector General and Climate Survey data. Understanding this courseware, may highlight whether or not the Air Force is using available data to drive desired learning outcomes to prepare officers for future command.

### **AIR FORCE SQUADRON COMMANDER PREPARATION**

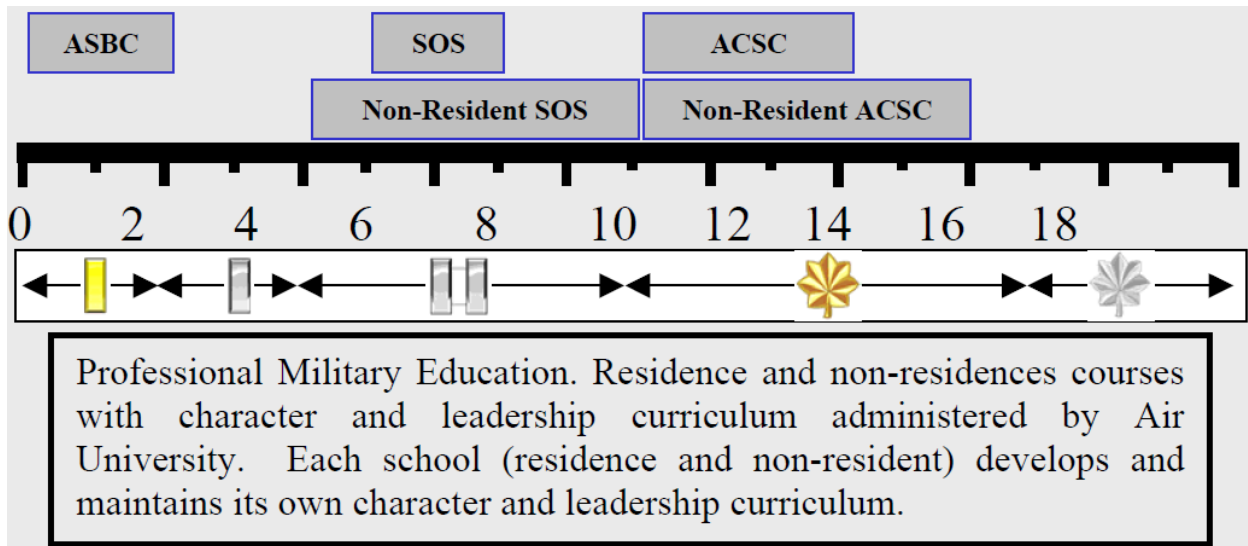
The Air Force currently uses a variety of methods to prepare officers for squadron command. This research effort will take a look at Professional Military Education (PME), on-the-job training and mentorship, and the Squadron Commander's Course.

## Professional Military Education

Spanning an officer's career, the Air Force has built an extensive training and education system known as Professional Military Education (PME). This PME, or formal education (not including the USAF Academy) is owned by Air Education and Training Command's (AETC) Air University (AU) located at Maxwell AFB, AL.<sup>78</sup> AU's vision is "to be the intellectual and leadership-development center of the Air Force"<sup>79</sup> Air University expects to "become the hub of airpower-focused intellectual networks, connecting innovators, operators, experimenters, researchers, scientists, war gamers, and other experts to analyze emerging trends, technologies, and threats."<sup>80</sup>

Until 2011, Air University had offered Air Force officers the Air and Space Basic Course (ASBC), Squadron Officer School (SOS), and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC). See Figure 14. ASBC was created in the 1990s and was usually attended in the first or second year (rank of Lieutenant) of an officer's career, SOS during the four to seven year (Captain) mark, and ACSC once these officers became eligible for the rank of Major. The ASBC course was terminated in 2011 mostly for cost savings measures, and its important components were incorporated into SOS which resulted in stretching the program from five to eight weeks beginning in 2012.<sup>81</sup> Both ASBC and SOS were intended to achieve "100 percent in-residence attendance for line-of-the-Air Force officers," but because of operations tempo and other operational concerns, it was understood that this goal was unattainable resulting in the distance-learning option.<sup>82</sup>

## Professional Military Education



**Figure 14: Professional Military Education.**<sup>83</sup>

ASBC was incorporated into SOS in 2012.<sup>84</sup>

### Squadron Officer School

Today, Air University offers a five-week SOS in-resident course and a non-resident course that must be completed within 18 months.<sup>85</sup> The two courses are similar, but do differ. The in-resident course curriculum covers five core areas that include Leadership, Profession of Arms, Warfare Studies, Communication, and International Security Studies. “The focus of leadership studies at SOS is on the flight command level,” thus producing graduates who are able to “operate on the commander’s intent, using the full range of leadership behaviors to achieve mission success.”<sup>86</sup>

The SOS non-resident course also focuses on leadership at the flight level but interestingly, it does not include the production of graduates who are able to operate on the commander’s intent as a focus as does the in-residence program. Its program areas are slightly

different focusing on Communication and International Security Studies, Leadership, Warfare and Profession of Arms, and Integration and Application. See Figures 15 and 16 for comparison.

### Syllabus

MSOS001 Program Areas	Contact Hours
Profession of Arms Studies	23
Warfare Studies	20
Leadership Studies	39
International Security Studies	12
Communication Studies	25
Administration	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>

**Figure 15: SOS In-Residence Syllabus<sup>87</sup>**

### Syllabus

MSOS00022 Courses	Contact Hours
00022A Communication and International Security Studies	68
00022B Leadership	36
00022C Warfare and Profession of Arms	66
00022D Integration and Application	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>

**Figure 16: SOS Non-Residence Syllabus<sup>88</sup>**

### Air Command and Staff College

Air University offers three completion methods for Air Staff and Command College. There are two versions of the Master of Military Operational Art and Science Degree Programs, a resident (Figure 17) and online course (Figure 18), and a distance learning (Figure 19) program with no associated master's degree.<sup>89</sup> The program description and curriculum of all three

courses are very similar. “The Air Command and Staff College curriculum is designed to develop higher-order thinking within the context of the war-fighting profession by challenging students to think critically and exercise a combination of analytical and practical tools required of field grade officers serving in operational-level command headquarters staff positions.”<sup>90</sup> The learning outcomes for the three courses mirror each other, except that the master’s degree

### Syllabus

Course Number and Title	Semester Hours
IS 5601 International Security 1	3
IS 5602 International Security 2	3
AP 5611 Airpower 1	3
AP 5612 Airpower 2	3
JW 5621 Joint Warfare 1	6
JW 5622 Joint Warfare 2	3
LD 5631 Leadership	3
RE Research/Electives 1	2
RE Research/Electives 2	2
AP 5651 Airpower Professional Paper	2
WI 5661 War-gaming Internship	12
GE 5671 Gathering of Eagles	Non-Credit
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>

**Note:** Courses in the non-master’s distance-learning program may not be used to satisfy course requirements of the resident master’s degree program.

### Figure 17: ACSC In-Residence Master's Program<sup>91</sup>

courses include “apply research methodologies and critical-thinking skills to analyze issues of concern to the war fighter and/or broader defense community” because they require a major research paper, and the in-residence course adds: “forge professional relationships which

facilitate efficient, effective, and collaborative accomplishment of assigned tasks” due probably to the on-site learning setting.<sup>92</sup>

The In-Residence and the Distance Learning courses each offer one course on leadership, while the On-line course offers two (See Appendix B for these course descriptions). Each course description is different, tackling various topics on the very broad leadership spectrum. Unlike AFIS which leaves no doubt that AFI 1-2’s *Commander Responsibilities* are used to evaluate commanders and their organizations, ACSC curriculum for the most part does not focus

<b>MACSC010 Joint Warfare Concentration Courses</b>	<b>Semester Hours</b>
OC 5510 Orientation Course	Non-Credit
LW 5510 Leadership and Warfare	3
AP 5510 Airpower Studies	3
NS 5510 International Security Studies	3
WS 5510 Warfare Studies	3
CS 5510 Regional/Cultural Studies	3
RE 5610 Research/Electives I	3
RE 5611 Research/Electives II	3
LC 5510 Practice of Command	3
JF 5510 Joint Forces	3
JA 5510 Joint Air Operations	3
JP 5510 Joint Planning	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

**Figure 18: ACSC Online Master's Program Syllabus<sup>93</sup>**

on the squadron level, and the small components that do touch upon the subject, do not appear to use AFI 1-2 as a foundation for development.

## Curriculum Summary ACSC DL Version 6.0

MACSC003 Curriculum Areas	Contact Hours
00030O Orientation and Introduction	6
00030A Leadership and Command	24
00030B Applied Leadership and Command	15
00030C National Security Simulation	21
00030D Applied National Security	9
00030E Warfare Studies	24
00030F Airpower Studies	24
00030G Applied Warfare	15
00030H Joint Forces	30
00030I Joint Planning	30
00030J Joint Air Operations	30
00030K Applied Joint Warfare	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>

**Figure 19: ACSC Distance Learning Syllabus<sup>94</sup>**

Air University’s SOS focuses training on the flight level, while some of the individual ASCS courses offer a look into command at the squadron level, but it is not the overarching focus of the course as described by the program descriptions. Air University offers a course called Commander’s Professional Development School that “prepare attendees for duty as wing commanders, vice wing commanders, group commanders, senior materiel leaders, incident commanders, and emergency operations center directors.”<sup>95</sup> It also offers multiple courses for one-, two-, and three-star general officers, but offers no courses directed solely at squadron commander preparation.<sup>96</sup> As a result, the Air Force has relied upon on-the-job training and mentorship, and Squadron Commander Courses at the MAJCOM (major command) level to shape future squadron commanders.<sup>97</sup>

## **On-the-Job Training and Mentorship**

*“There are no poor outfits, just poor leaders.... The leadership makes all the difference-always.”*

-General Wilbur L. Creech<sup>98</sup>

The Air Force relies heavily on mentoring and on-the-job training to build squadron commanders, and is unique as organizations go who develop their leaders from within their own ranks.<sup>99</sup> General Goldfein explains that “as a commander, one of your key roles is to teach-to develop those entrusted to your care to their fullest potential and prepare them for future leadership challenges. While you are putting out the inevitable daily fires, you can easily neglect this responsibility.”<sup>100</sup> So, how does the Air Force address gaps in leadership training and mentoring for up-and-coming commanders, from commanders who are either poor leaders or neglect the responsibility as Goldfein indicates? A plausible answer to this question may be the Squadron Commander’s Course delegated to the MAJCOMs.

### **Squadron Commander Course**

There is no Air Force owned Squadron Commander Course. The course is delegated to the MAJCOMs who have full latitude to teach what they deem relevant, since no centrally developed curriculum has been created.<sup>101</sup> Zadalis and Shrader conducted a deep-dive look into the development of Air Force squadron commanders in their 2003 work and made a number of conclusions. One of which, was that because the USAF had “no single ‘owner’ of Air Force leadership development,” collective Air Force squadron commander type training was suffering from the absence of curriculum driven by centralized Air Force desired learning outcomes, making it “very difficult for course developers to ensure they are providing the best training

possible.”<sup>102</sup> An attempt to debunk the 2003 conclusions of Zadalis and Shrader by this research effort through the collection of new information, only further substantiated this particular claim.

The Air National Guard (ANG) Squadron Commander’s Course (SCC) course information for example, explains that the course “traces its roots to the ANG Squadron/Flight Commanders Course which was developed at the ANG Professional Education Center at McGhee Tyson ANG Base, TN in 1984 by order of the Director ANG.”<sup>103</sup> The ANG Fiscal Year 2017 SCC announcement further explains that “the course provides an opportunity for you to share leadership experiences and issues which affect the Commander each day. SCC is conducted ‘by the Field, for the Field’ and supports the basic premise of ‘what I wish I had known before assuming command.’”<sup>104</sup>

This research effort is not attempting in any way to imply that these individual SCC’s are not extremely valuable, but simply to illustrate what variations may be encountered across the MAJCOM-led Squadron Commander Course spectrum. It is interesting that the Squadron Commander’s Course does not benefit from a centralized, Air Force owned and based curriculum, but the systems (AFIS, IG, Surveys) in place that evaluate the performance of those same commanders *are* highly centralized, *and* Air Force driven. It seems odd that squadron commander training does not appear to be aligned with expectations of a commander as outlined in AFI 1-2, nor does it provide an understanding of the standards that the Air Force Inspector General will hold them to.

## **ALTERNATE WORLD DEVELOPMENT**

The purpose behind this research effort is to provide sound recommendations to the Air Force so that squadron commander performance can be elevated to meet the demands of leading

in a resource constrained environment, within the context of the VUCA environment. In order to create recommendations that can be applicable to the complexity and uncertainty of the VUCA environment and be applied to any future situation, the driving factors of these alternate worlds must address the full range of operations tempo and resource allocation possibilities. Using the Scenario Methodology, these alternate worlds will be created by overlaying the driving forces of resources and operations tempo on a scale of high to low. See Figure 20.

### **Alternate World Assumptions**

Through the Inspector General lens that this research paper was written, it seemed that simply overlaying operations tempo and resources against each other did not create a comprehensive enough picture, considering all of the data that the Inspector General's office provides. Research linking few deficiencies and good morale to a highly resourced and high operations tempo, with many deficiencies and bad morale in a minimally resourced environment, was beyond the scope and time constraints put on this project. But based on the comments made by General Goldfein in the constraints section of the paper linking readiness and morale, it seemed fair to assume especially in the context of the data provided by AFIS, to incorporate the AFIS/Morale ruler concept to project what type of morale and compliance might be expected among these four alternate worlds.

# Alternate World Scenario Diagram

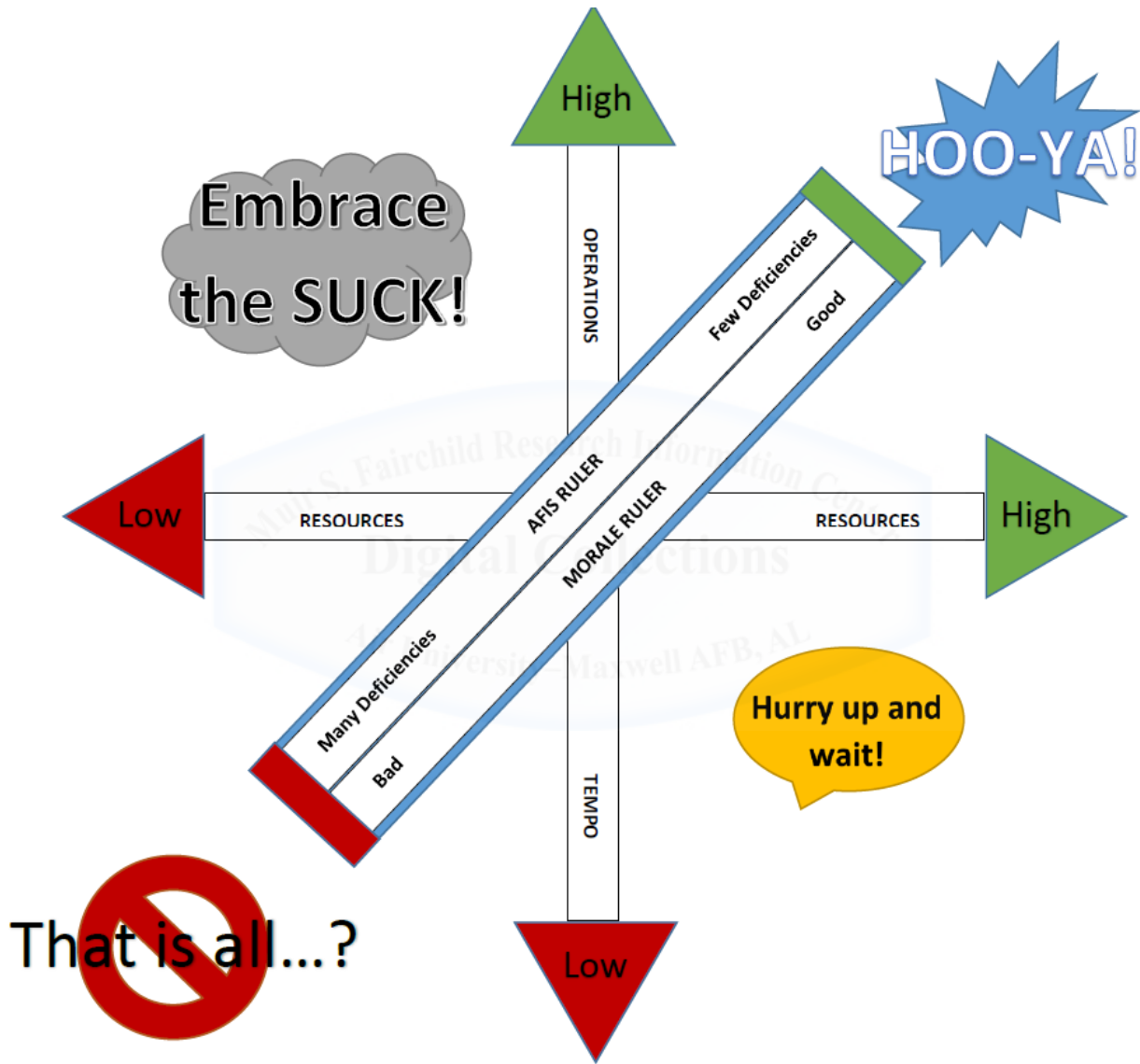


Figure 20: Alternate World Diagram

### **Alternate World One: “Embrace the SUCK!”**

Alternate World One probably most closely resembles the constrained resource environment that today’s Air Force is operating in. It is an environment where the operations tempo remains high in a world where past and looming budget cuts continue to reduce the size and the resources available to the force. It is assumed that AFIS would describe this environment as one that is getting the mission accomplished, but morale and compliance flex along with fluctuations brought by available resources and ops tempo. In this world, soon-to-be squadron commanders attempt to accomplish PME with an attitude that allows valued learning, but due to time available because of operations tempo induced constraints, the PME reverts mostly to a “box-check.” “Embrace the SUCK!” is the title given to this *do more with less* Air Force.

### **Alternate World Two: “HOO-YA!”**

In Alternate World Two, Airmen are probably so supercharged that they sing the Air Force Song daily. Operations tempo is high, but that is ok because such a high tempo while being overly resourced has generated pride and excellent morale. Commanders have no need to ask for waivers since they are adequately resourced across the board. Airmen can even maximize their leave, work out during duty hours at least three times a week, and the majority of those Airmen across the Air Force can attend PME in residence. The negative side to this world is that it can potentially create complacency, waste, and inefficiency due to the overabundance of resources, but who cares! “HOO-YA!”

### **Alternate World Three: “That is all...?”**

Alternate World Three suffers from poor resourcing and little to no operational tempo. Poor resourcing combined with little purpose due to lack of a rewarding mission create

extremely low morale and drive. AFIS detected deficiencies nearly mirror the amount of required compliant items, but few care because the amount of work required to make the smallest smidgen of progress, is believed to not be worth the effort. Funding for PME is limited as well, but for those officers who do complete the training, it is training that is not highly valued in an under-resourced force that is unlikely to be utilized any time soon. World three is named “That is all...?”, because it is.

#### **Alternate World Four: “Hurry up and wait!”**

The World Four force is all dressed up (resources high) with nowhere (ops tempo low) to go. Morale and compliance probably fluctuate like they do in World One, responding positively towards indications of a purposeful mission, and negatively when Airmen wonder “why are we here?” In this environment, Commanders struggle to get Airmen to take training and compliance seriously. PME is adequately funded and Airmen are well-trained, but lack the experience of a battle-ready force. In this world it is even more likely than in World Two that complacency and inefficiencies can rule. Here it is easy to imagine hearing, “Hurry up and wait!” except that no one does.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

If the Air Force is serious about improving the squadrons, it must do so by focusing on squadron commander preparation. This preparation must go beyond the current reliance upon, on-the-job training and mentoring, and MAJCOM led Squadron Commander Courses that are currently resulting in thousands of non-complaint areas levied under the Major Graded Areas of Leading People and Managing Resources. Current PME (SOS and ACSC) covering the time-span where Air Force officers are preparing for future command do not appear to benefit from desired learning outcomes driven by the results provided by the IG led Air Force Inspection

System, Complaints Resolution data, or the Climate Survey. This research effort believes these fixes are attainable, and Air University can lead the effort.

Air University needs to own, develop, and maintain the Air Force Squadron Commander Course. This course is not recommended to replace what is currently offered by the MAJCOMs, but would act as a foundational prerequisite to clearly present to all developing squadron commanders what the Air Force expects of them. Owning the Squadron Commander Course would allow Air University to take another step closer to obtaining their vision: “to be the intellectual and leadership-development center of the Air Force.”<sup>105</sup>

If budget constraints and operational tempo do not allow for additional courses (all four alternate worlds would not support this), this paper recommends reworking Squadron Officers School (SOS). SOS could then focus on the squadron as the name implies, and there is probably no better way than to prepare future flight commanders (and follow-on squadron commanders) by getting them to fully understand what is expected of a squadron commander. If the Air Force were to wait for Air Command and Staff College to impress upon officers the importance of Commander Conduct, Executing the Mission, Leading People, Managing Resources, Improving the Unit, and Commander’s Intent, it is too late. These qualities need to be ingrained in Air Force culture, and should be on the tip of every commander’s tongue. This needs to happen in order for the results of the Air Force Inspection System to improve in any of the Four Alternate Worlds.

To accomplish this, the Squadron Commander Course curriculum *must* be built upon AFI 1-2, *Commander’s Responsibilities*. After all, it is these duties and responsibilities by which squadron commanders are evaluated and measured, and to that point, commanders and units alike will not be receiving “Outstanding” scores until they become mini-AFIS experts. AFIS and

the CCIP do not just represent an inspection, they represent a way of conducting business in the Air Force every day. The philosophy and intent behind AFIS and the Commander's Inspection Program must be taught if it is expected to produce the desired results. The Air Force cannot afford to be satisfied by the current data presented by the Inspector General's office in a world where commanders are told they will never have enough resources to do their job. Purely relying on mentoring and on-the-job training does not provide a proactive enough effort, to overcome the current results presented by AFIS. If the Air Force ever finds itself in Alternate World Two ("HOO-YA!") or Four ("Hurry up and wait!"), this educational mindset would still be required by commanders to manage and lead in the most efficient way, while remaining responsible to the taxpayer.

The Squadron Commander Course curriculum must also be data driven. This would allow desired learning outcomes to be identified by the results presented by the Air Force Inspection System, so that the Air Force can continually improve its commander force to combat identified areas of weakness. To do this, Air University should ensure members of the Inspector General's office are involved in their curriculum building, since it is this body of Air Force Airmen who are analyzing and drawing the conclusions based on AFIS findings. Incorporating AFIS findings into the Squadron Commander Course curriculum would put Air University closer to another goal articulated in their Strategic Plan: to "become the hub of airpower-focused intellectual networks, connecting innovators, operators, experimenters, researchers, scientists, war gamers, and other experts to analyze emerging trends, technologies, and threats."<sup>106</sup>

Another recommendation for Air University to best accomplish its mission in any one of the alternate worlds, is to create the same learning outcomes and program descriptions regardless of the method (distance- or in-residence learning). Since distance-learning and online type

degree programs have proven to be so successful and today are accepted just as are the degrees from brick and mortar institutions, there should be no reason to differentiate what is offered by the various methods.

## CONCLUSION

For the Department of Defense and the United States Air Force, the future will remain an unpredictable one. Current indicators though, lead one to believe that future budgets will remain scrutinized and limited, and the operations tempos will remain high and unforgiving. If the Air Force does not have future plans to reduce the responsibilities and duties put on the squadron commanders in any volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous setting, steps must be taken to elevate squadron commander performance to meet the demands of leading in such an environment. The Air Force cannot predict the future, but it can control the preparation of those who lead the squadrons where the mission gets accomplished.

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<sup>1</sup> Air Force Personnel Center, "Air Force Demographics," accessed 24 February 2017, <http://www.afpc.af.mil/Air-Force-Demographics>.

<sup>2</sup> Col David L. Goldfein, *Sharing Success Owning Failure: Preparing to Command in the Twenty-First Century Air Force* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2001), 53.

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- <sup>40</sup> Air Force Instruction (AFI) 1-2, *Commander’s Responsibilities*, 8 May 2014, 2.
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- <sup>54</sup> Air Force Instruction (AFI) 90-201, *The Air Force Inspection System*, 27 September 2016, 24.
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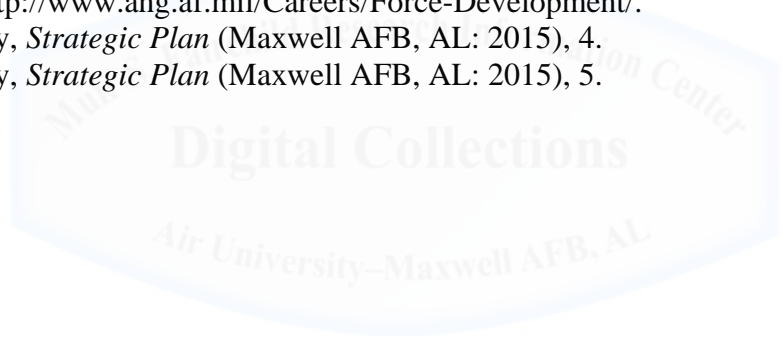
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<sup>106</sup> Air University, *Strategic Plan* (Maxwell AFB, AL: 2015), 5.



## APPENDIX A

### ***Additional examples of instruction, guidance, or works to provide squadron commander guidance not included in this research:***

Air Command and Staff College. *Guidelines for Command: A Handbook on the Leadership of Airmen for Air Force Squadron Commanders*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2008.

Air Force Instruction (AFI) 38-401. *Continuous Process Improvement (CPI)*, 15 April 2016.

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Department of Defense. *Continuous Process Improvement/Lean Six Sigma Guidebook*, Revision 1, 2008.

Newby, Maj Gen Brian C., and Col Mary A. Enges. *The Air National Guard Commander's Legal Deskbook*. January 2016 Edition.

Smith, Lt Col Jeffrey F. *Commanding an Air Force Squadron in the Twenty-First Century, A Practical Guide of Tips and Techniques for Today's Squadron Commander*. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2003.

## APPENDIX B

### ***Course descriptions referenced on page 31:***

LD 5631 Leadership (In-Residence Master's Program) 3 Semester Hours

This course examines current leadership theory as it relates to problems and possibilities inherent complex, dynamic, and ambiguous operational environments. The practical aspects of leadership—decision making, communication, negotiation, resource management, and force development—are emphasized throughout the course. Students are encouraged to reflect upon essential aspects of ethical leadership.<sup>1</sup>

LW 5510 Leadership and Warfare (Online Master's Program) 3 Semester Hours

The Leadership and Warfare course analyzes factors that guide military leaders' actions in establishing and maintaining an effective leadership environment. The course also seeks to educate and inspire students to reach their full leadership potential by studying great commanders and their conduct of warfare, and current problems of command in contemporary joint operations. Through these studies, students gain a unique understanding of the specific

leadership challenges that leaders face in guiding people and organizations through crises and environments of change.<sup>2</sup>

#### LC 5510 Practice of Command (Online Master's Program) 3 Semester Hours

The Practice of Command course provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their personal philosophy on the art and craft of command, honing that philosophy through interaction and the study of responsibilities and challenges unique to commanding an Air Force squadron. The course introduces students to the resources available to assist squadron commanders with their duties. It also stresses the importance of commanders melding their personal philosophies on command, the unique requirements of their situation, and their responsibilities to service, mission, people, and themselves.<sup>3</sup>

#### 00030A Leadership and Command (Distance Learning Program) 24 Contact Hours

The Leadership and Command course equips students with the knowledge and tools necessary to help them lead in today's dynamic environment. The course is centered on the concept that leadership-and-command abilities can be improved through self-assessment/reflection, dedicated study, and adaptability. Phase I of the course focuses on Air Force organizational leadership competencies and sub-competencies across the personal, people/team, and organizational levels of leadership. Phase II explores the unique experience and responsibilities of command by introducing practical applications of leadership competencies, advice, and supporting resources that will aid future commanders in the performance of their duties. The course concludes with a written assignment that requires personal reflection, interaction with a senior mentor, and an analysis of a significant leadership and/or command challenge.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Air University, *Air University Catalog, Academic Year 2016-2017* (Maxwell AFB, AL: 2017), 47.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-90.

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