



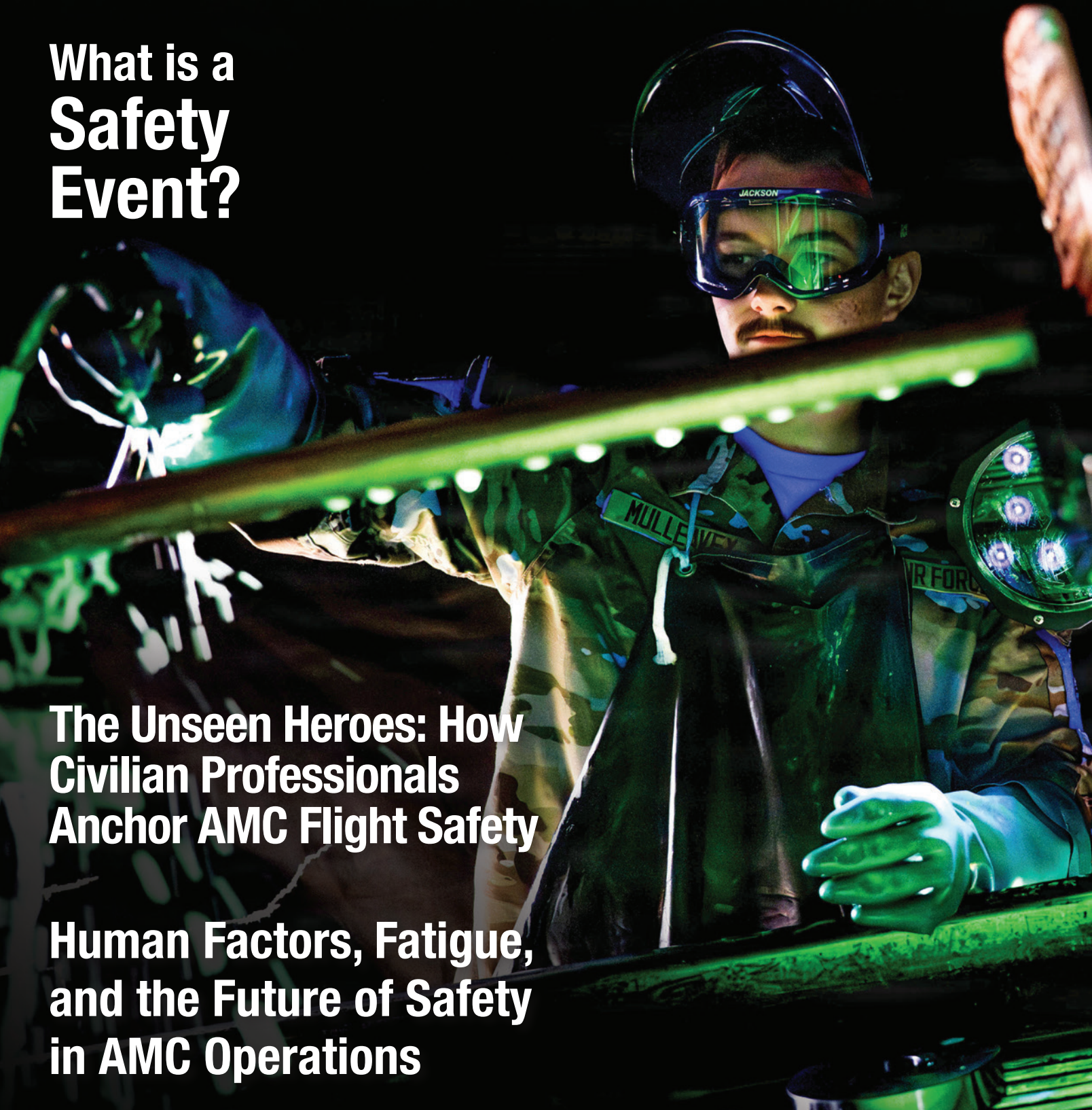
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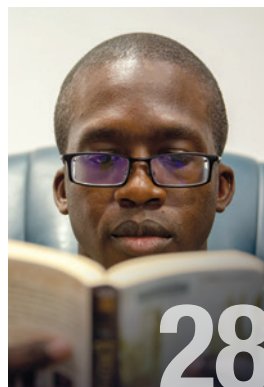
THE MAGAZINE OF AIR MOBILITY COMMAND | FALL 2026

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**The Unseen Heroes: How
Civilian Professionals
Anchor AMC Flight Safety**

**Human Factors, Fatigue,
and the Future of Safety
in AMC Operations**





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ON THE COVER

Airman Samuel Mulleavey, 86th Maintenance Squadron Non-Destructive Inspection Apprentice, performs a magnetic particle inspection at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, April 7, 2026. NDI specialists detect potential defects in aircraft systems and equipment before they escalate into hazards.

USAF photo by Airman Paden Henry

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BACK TO BASICS:

Brig. Gen. Derek M. Salmi on Discipline, Risk, and Readiness

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

After Hurricane Andrew devastated South Florida in 1992, entire neighborhoods were flattened—roofs were torn off, walls collapsed, and homes and businesses were reduced to debris.

But investigators noticed something striking occurred: a small number of houses remained standing.

When engineers looked closer at why, the answer was not luck. The homes had reinforced connections, secure foundations, and were built with stricter adherence to building codes. Under normal conditions, those details may have gone unnoticed. Under extreme pressure, those details made all the difference.

For Brig. Gen. Derek M. Salmi, Director of Operations, Strategic Deterrence, and Nuclear Integration at Air Mobility Command (AMC), readiness is built the same way—by strengthening the details, or fundamentals, long before they are tested.

As the maneuver force for the Joint Force, AMC plays a critical role across airlift, air refueling, aeromedical evacuation, global air mobility support, and command and control.

“The Joint Force does not move without AMC,” Salmi said. “We take our role in that very seriously.”

That responsibility requires constant readiness—and, in Salmi’s view, a disciplined approach to risk and safety. “On any given day, we may be pulled in any number of different directions operationally,” he said. “But if we are not good at the fundamentals, if we don’t work hard each and every day to be good at those seemingly basic parts of our jobs... then we can’t be where we need to be when we’re called upon by the Joint Force.” This focus on what Salmi describes as “basic blocking and tackling” paired with an integrated risk management approach, underpins how he sees safety evolving across the command.

Over the past year, AMC’s global operations—from exercises in the Pacific to missions across multiple combatant commands—have reinforced its role as a credible and agile force. “We can operate literally all over the globe and in really high-intensity operations,” Salmi said. “From the outside looking in, it may look a little bit seamless, it may look a lot easier than it actually is. But when we do so, we build credibility in what we can bring for the Joint Force.”



Brig. Gen. Derek M. Salmi, Director of Operations, Strategic Deterrence, and Nuclear Integration, Air Mobility Command

“
Global air mobility operations are dynamic and, at times, very dangerous. But by applying discipline in how we approach these operations, in turn, sets us up better for success.”



A C-17 Globemaster III aircraft flies over Ramstein Air Base, Germany, June 5, 2026.

USAF photo by Airman 1st Class Paden Lancaster

That credibility, he emphasized, is foundational. “That’s really the cornerstone of deterrence.”

At the individual level, Salmi’s message to Airmen is equally direct: discipline matters. “I would ask Airmen to focus on just bringing discipline to their job each and every day,” he said.

Influenced early in his career by the concept of “flight discipline,” Salmi described discipline not in terms of punishment but as a mindset—one that shapes how Airmen prepare, assess risk, and continuously improve.

“It’s how you prepare. It’s how you use all the resources you have, how you try to identify what threats might be out there and how you can mitigate those threats,” he said. “Global air mobility operations are dynamic and, at times, very dangerous. But by applying discipline in how we approach these operations, in turn, sets us up better for success.”

Such discipline is not developed in isolation. Salmi highlighted mentorship as a key driver of a strong safety culture.

“I’ve really found the most effective mentorship is thirty seconds at a time,” he said. “Along the lines of, ‘Hey, this really worked out well for me,’ or, ‘Did you think about this?’ or,

‘Here’s where something really went sideways—so don’t do this.’”

When it comes to training, Salmi does not anticipate major shifts in focus, even amid broader changes across the Department of War. Instead, he expects training to evolve based on real-world operational experience. “We’re currently asking Airmen to serve in a very dynamic environment and one that has risks that are very different than what any of us have experienced before,” he said. “So, I think we’re going to count on those Airmen to really help us evaluate how we train going forward.”

Across all operational areas, one theme remains constant: integration of risk and readiness. “Risk and readiness go hand in hand,” Salmi said. “The best organizations demonstrate that ability to integrate risk and readiness into everything that they do.”

He noted a proactive approach—identifying risks early and building training and operations to mitigate them—as essential to mission success. Drawing on a framework of “requirements, resources, and risk,” he highlighted how readiness directly influences the level of risk a unit can effectively manage.

Salmi’s experiences reinforce that perspective. Reflecting on his time as a Wing Chief of Safety, he emphasized

the value of proactive, engaging safety programs that not only communicate expectations but also build community and trust.

He also recalled a deployment early in his career where strong crew coordination and open communication made the difference in a high-risk environment. In that instance, a boom operator identified a ground hazard that might otherwise have been missed—an example, he said, of how empowered teams and disciplined execution contribute directly to safety.

Ultimately, Salmi believes the most effective safety cultures are those that look forward, not backward. “I would always ask my safety teams, ‘Where do we think the next mishap is going to happen?’” That question, he explained, encourages critical thinking, situational awareness, and a proactive mindset, shifting safety from a reactive function to an integrated part of mission planning and execution.

“The bottom line,” Salmi said, “is trying to take a proactive approach to safety—not just bolting it on at the end... but really incorporating it into everything you do.” Because when pressure comes—whether from a storm or a high-risk mission—success is not a matter of luck. Success is the result of a strong foundation built long before it is tested. 🇺🇸

What is a Safety Event?

BY MAJ. BEN DICKTER, CHIEF, OPS RAMS (AMC PROACTIVE SAFETY), CATHERINE WARE, AMC CRM/TEM PROGRAM MANAGER, AND MASTER SGT. MATTEO PIRUZZA

“We just had a safety event; I should fill out an ASAP.”

Hopefully, that thought sounds familiar, and you have followed through and engaged with the Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP). This thought begs the question: “What is a safety event?” Or, more specifically, “How do we define *safety*?”

THE OLD DEFINITION

Safety frequently falls into the “you will know it when you see it” category. Dig a little deeper, and most people define safety as an acceptably low rate of mishaps or other accidents. By this definition, then, safety is defined by the “lack of danger.” This definition lacks specificity and direction, causing problems for proactive safety reporting and investigations.

Defining safety by a lack of danger requires an arbitrary threshold at which an organization or individual begins to care about the rate of mishaps. Nearly any supposition from this perspective requires a subjective demand from the one making the claim. Even the claim, “One mishap is too many!” begs the question, “Over what timeline?” It is impossible to expect an organization to have no mishaps forever—or perhaps no Class A mishaps. But how do we decide when several million dollars in damage must be avoided, but a mere million is acceptable? Without specificity in language, we quickly take on ambiguity and lose track of overall safety.

Defining safety in terms of danger also presents a concerning lack of direction: “If I’m supposed to be avoiding a negative, what exactly am I supposed to be doing?” If you have kids, you’ve probably experienced this phenomenon: “Stop hitting your brother!” inevitably leads to more fighting, as children struggle with *not doing* something rather than *doing* something. The adult version of this concern is, “Don’t think about penguins.” In the safety realm, this is like saying that if nothing “bad” happens for a while, we must be running a safe operation. However, does it really make sense to measure something by its absence? Is this even effective? There must be a better way.

AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE

We are pleased to say there is another way we can start thinking about safety. You might have read about it in our team’s previous article on *Safety I vs. Safety II* (a concept described in Erik Hollnagel’s book by that same title). *Safety I*, at its core, focuses on what goes wrong, whereas *Safety II* focuses on what goes right. Traditional safety systems often spend a lot of time focusing on what happened during mishaps (relatively rare events) rather than focusing on what can enable good outcomes.

Another way to think about safety is as the act of responding correctly to a hazard. Instead of “mishap crew error,” think “crew saves the day.” Our team recently attended the Aviation Safety InfoShare

Every time you, as a crew, utilize effective Crew Resource Management—such as a thorough pre-flight briefing, cross-checking a flight computer entry, clarifying a confusing Air Traffic Control clearance, or maintaining high situational awareness—it adds a protective layer to the mission.

Conference—a gathering of prominent industry and government aviators and safety professionals to share best practices in safety. In one main session, a briefer shared this perspective: He acknowledged that yes, human limitations often contribute to accidents, but he made the critical note that *one hundred percent of successful operations are due to human capabilities*. That is, what humans do right! As an aircrew member, your ability to predict, adapt, and focus on mission accomplishment in the complex and dynamic aviation environment is a crucial component of the alternative perspective of safety. Therefore, understanding how you do things right, thus actively participating in safety as a process, is crucial.

SAFETY IS A PROCESS

Threat and Error Management (TEM) defines safety not as a passive state of security, but as an additive process. In this view, safety is a measurable presence of resilience, built layer by layer through the active application of countermeasures. Every time you, as a crew, utilize effective Crew Resource Management—such as a thorough pre-flight briefing, cross-checking a flight computer entry, clarifying a

confusing Air Traffic Control clearance, or maintaining high situational awareness—it adds a protective layer to the mission. Safety is then measured by the presence of these systemic defenses and the capacity of you and your crew to anticipate, detect, and recover from anomalies, rather than by the simple absence of a mishap.

How can we see this TEM process in action? You see it every day as you fly the line. Air Mobility Command (AMC) Headquarters depends on your input (such as through ASAP inputs) to communicate how you actively “do safety.” Your ASAPs show us—and in turn, the rest of AMC—examples of “safety in action.” When you tell us the threats and errors you encounter and the capabilities you use to identify and mitigate them, you play a critical role in AMC’s ability to learn from the “alternative view” of safety as a process.

WHAT IS A SAFETY EVENT?

Any time you recognize a hazard in the flying environment or in aircraft performance, it is a safety event. As we have discussed above, if safety means *doing* something that identifies or mitigates that hazard, we want to know what you did or believe you should have done. We would rather have one hundred different ways that crews responded to an issue with positive outcomes than miss one important event another crew could have learned from.



A critical truth about the “alternative view” of safety is that almost all missions end well. Therefore, we need to learn from those. Learning only from rare mishap events means learning only occurs rarely. Minor but unpredictable variations occur on every flight. When you tell us what you encountered and how you achieved a successful outcome, the whole organization learns about how missions actually get done, not how

Human capability is the critical resource, and knowing what humans do right on a daily basis helps the whole organization “do safety” better.

we imagine they get done. Harnessing what we learn from this—what it takes for things to go right—provides exponentially more data points on how safety occurs, meaning that, as an organization, we have the data to make continuous, incremental improvements over time rather than reacting to a single failure.

IN SUMMARY

The old view of safety defined it as the absence of negative events. The alternative perspective conceptualizes safety as a process, made up of “what goes right.” Human capability is the critical resource, and knowing what humans do right on a daily basis helps the whole organization “do safety” better. So, help us move this forward! Send us an ASAP telling us how you faced a hazard and what you did to safety get the mission done.

ASAP CALL TO ACTION!

Tell us how you are *doing* safety.

Hints for recognizing safety events include:

1. Did you just succeed on a mission despite unexpected threats or errors?
2. What adjustments did you make to get the mission done based on the demands of the situation?
3. Things go right because of how humans manage variability in complex situations. Did you recently do that?

Tell us what the situation was and how you managed the variations (potential hazards or errors) to complete the mission.

REMINDER: WHAT IS ASAP?

ASAP is an identity-protected, self-reporting system that provides you with an opportunity to report safety issues and errors without fear of reprisal (DAFI91-225, para. 3.1.1). Further, it provides AMC staff a looking glass into your everyday realities with getting the mission done.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SUBMIT AN ASAP?

Here is the ASAP lifecycle:

1. You submit the ASAP on the SAFEREP site (<https://saferep.safety.af.mil/>) or mobile application.
2. We act as gatekeepers. We de-identify your entry and forward it to the appropriate subject matter experts for awareness/action.
3. If you provided your contact information, we close the loop and let you know what we learned from the office that took it for action.
4. Each month, we publish a newsletter with every ASAP submitted from the previous month, highlighting and expanding on ASAPs with the broadest relevance for Hangar Fly discussions.
5. We elevate actionable ASAPs and trending issues for review and action by AMC leadership at various levels. 

Did you know? ASAP is an aviation industry standard!

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Thank you

to Air Mobility Command Director of Safety, Col. John B. Kelley

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER



Col. John B. Kelley became Air Mobility Command (AMC) Director of Safety in 2024. As his time in the role comes to a close, the AMC Safety team and *The Mobility Forum* staff reflect on his leadership and impact.

Spend just a few minutes talking with Col. Kelley, and it is clear he is someone who values both people and perspective. He is approachable, thoughtful, and genuinely engaged with whoever is in front of him. There is a depth to his thinking—he is always processing, always considering the bigger picture—and that shows in how he approaches challenges. His small, everyday actions consistently point to a larger goal: keeping Airmen safe while ensuring the mission continues effectively.

His career has intersected with safety at every level—as an aircrew member flying combat sorties over Afghanistan and Iraq, as a planner and strategist on staff, as a squadron commander and deputy wing commander leading Airmen, and as a senior leader overseeing missions on the operations floor at the 618th Air Operations Center.

In these roles, he developed a deep understanding of how a strong safety culture enhances combat capability while simultaneously protecting Airmen.

In his role as Director of Safety, Kelley focused on both mishap prevention and risk mitigation. Noting that

risk management is often the least understood of the four pillars of the Air Force Safety Management System, he worked to bring greater clarity to the subject.

"Understanding risk identification, mitigation, and acceptance is a critical skill for the next challenges we face as AMC and as an Air Force," he said. "...as the U.S. Air Force transforms to meet the demands of Great Power Competition, risk management is taking on a new level of importance."

One initiative central to Kelley's efforts was the Integrating Risk and Readiness campaign, by which leaders were inspired to enhance readiness across the full scope of training, exercises, and combat operations.

He emphasized that risk management starts with understanding the risks Airmen face and recognizing that mitigation strategies exist to reduce them. He sought to empower both leaders and Airmen to communicate openly about risk—what it looks like and when they identify it.

He also reinforced the value of critical thinking. Whether through models such as the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis or the 5M framework (mission, media, machine, management, and manpower), he believes in a systematic approach to evaluating tasks, identifying risks, and applying mitigations to operate more safely and effectively.

In today's fast-moving, distraction-filled environment, having that kind of structured thinking matters now more than ever. He encouraged Airmen to stay focused on the mission at hand in a world full of distractions.

"The world is too much with us," he said, quoting poet William Wordsworth. "There's never been a more apt phrase for right now because the world invades our time to focus and our time to relax. It's very difficult to pull away from that."

Though Kelley emphasizes proactive risk mitigation, he also stresses the importance of learning from the past. As new risks arise, maintaining active engagement in risk management while refining established processes helps eliminate unnecessary hazards and strengthen operational safety.

"These [technical orders and Department of the Air Force Instructions] aren't arbitrary—they're built on decades of experience," he said. "They've been refined by Airmen who figured out what works and what doesn't."

As Col. Kelley moves on to his next role, the AMC Safety team and *The Mobility Forum* team are confident he will carry forward the same thoughtful leadership and commitment to safety that defined his time at AMC.

Thank you, Col. Kelley, for your leadership, dedication, humor, and unwavering commitment to safety. 🇺🇸



Left to right: Mr. Grant Inneo, Mr. D.J. Hernandez, Mr. Steven Panger, Ms. Jeanie Hood, and Mr. Kevin Sluss

The **Unseen Heroes:** How Civilian Professionals Anchor AMC Flight Safety

BY MAJ. ERIC HENDRICKER, CHIEF OF AMC FLIGHT SAFETY

Air Mobility Command (AMC) operates at a relentless operational tempo. From executing rapid global airlift and aerial refueling to orchestrating life-saving aeromedical evacuations, the sun never sets on the AMC mission. When people think of the incredible feats accomplished across the command, they often picture pilots navigating contested airspace, loadmasters expertly securing heavy cargo, or maintainers working tirelessly on the flight line in harsh conditions.

However, ensuring that these missions launch and recover without catastrophic failure requires a comprehensive, deeply ingrained safety infrastructure. Although our military members are the face of this operation, a steadfast, dedicated force is working

The civilian professionals in AMC Flight Safety do not wear the uniform today, but their dedication to the mission is absolute.

relentlessly behind the scenes: the civilian professionals of AMC Flight Safety. These men and women provide the continuity, analytical expertise, and specialized knowledge necessary to protect our Airmen and our assets. They are the unseen heroes of Rapid Global Mobility.

PROFILES IN DEDICATION: THE FACES BEHIND THE DATA

To truly understand the impact of this civilian workforce, one must look at the individuals who dedicate their lives to the safety mission.

MR. KEVIN SLUSS

The Architect of Risk Reduction



Consider Mr. Kevin Sluss, a proud graduate of the University of Kentucky, whose profound commitment to AMC Safety is forged from personal survival. An active flyer and C-130 navigator for twenty-three years, Sluss survived a catastrophic C-130 Class A mishap on August 9, 1989. This life-altering event instilled in him an unwavering dedication to the cause—a direct, visceral connection that drives his work every single day. Behind the scenes, he serves as the indispensable “tasker master,” seamlessly managing daily Task Management Tool requirements and critical publication changes. On

the flip side, his strategic impact is massive: He serves as the lead for the Major Command (MAJCOM) Air Force Integrating Risk and Readiness program, safeguarding more than forty thousand Airmen across the globe. What most do not see is his relentless evaluation of the Hazard Review Board program, for which he meticulously tracks four hundred Class A and B mishaps. Through this work, Sluss embodies a continuous drive to reduce hazards across the entire Air Force enterprise, creating long-lasting, life-saving effects for generations of future Airmen.

MS. JEANIE HOOD

The “SIB Queen” and LOSA Guardian



Vital to the mission is Ms. Jeanie Hood, a graduate of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a true “Ragin’ Cajun.” Before her civilian service, Ms. Hood amassed six thousand corporate and seaplane flying hours, followed by a distinguished twenty-two-year Air Force career as a KC-135 Instructor Pilot and a veteran of twelve Gulf War deployments. She is known throughout the command as the “Safety Investigation Board (SIB) Queen.” Her expertise is unparalleled as she navigates the rigorous task of developing, tracking, and reviewing

more than seventy Class A and B mishap investigations. Hood works diligently with Investigating Officers and Board Presidents to ensure the AMC Commander receives timely, actionable recommendations with zero errors or Air Force Safety Center (AFSEC) rejections. When she is not shoulder-deep in investigations, she manages the Line Operations Safety Audit (LOSA) program. This program provides a critical, nonpunitive, peer-to-peer look at operational and systemic risks across the entire AMC fleet, maintenance, and aerial port operations, tracking more than 750 recommendations since the birth of the LOSA program. Her selfless ability to shoulder these monumental tasks with a smile and a genuine love for safety makes her a cornerstone of the command.

MR. DANIEL “DJ” HERNANDEZ

The Proactive Guardian of Fleet Readiness



Mr. Daniel “DJ” Hernandez, a Jerseyite from Bayonne, NJ, with twenty-two years of experience flying the legacy C-130 as an Evaluator Pilot, is AMC’s Aviation Safety MAJCOM Technical Expert and resident proactive safety professional. His journey within the command saw him initially serving as our SIB team program manager,

followed by a brief stint in AMC/A3, before returning to his true calling in safety. When he is not conducting Continual Evaluations of all AMC wings across the enterprise, he is out on the road, engaging face-to-face with units to complete Safety Program Evaluations (SPE). As the SPE lead, he assesses the effectiveness, compliance, and performance of unit safety programs—a core component of the Mishap Prevention Program. A true C-130 “crew dawg” at heart, Hernandez recently led the C-130J Safety Sprint, generating thirty corrective recommendations that reversed systemic hazards and protected the fleet readiness of the airframe to which he devoted his military career. His relentless efforts ensure enhanced safety at the operational level for all C-130 pilots of the future.

MR. GRANT INNEO

The Backbone of Maintenance Safety



The newest member of our team is Mr. Grant Inneo, a native of Paducah, Kentucky. Although he served a focused four years on Active Duty in the Air Force, do not let that relatively brief blue-suit tenure fool you. Inneo brings more than nineteen years of deeply ingrained safety expertise to the command. His incredibly diverse career spans roles as a Bioenvironmental Engineering Journeyman, a steel mill

Safety Consultant, an Army Reserve Command Safety Specialist, and an Industrial Hygiene Expert with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. This well-rounded, joint safety experience makes him the perfect individual to take on maintenance safety. Maintenance is the undeniable backbone of the AMC fleet, representing an area of equal importance to the AMC Flight Safety team as the aircrew themselves. Safeguarding our maintainers has just as much influence on operational success as protecting the cockpit. We welcome him with open arms to AMC and look forward to the many years of vast expertise he will bring to the command.

MR. STEVE PANGER

The Sage of AMC Safety



Last, but certainly not least, is the “Sage of AMC Safety,” Mr. Steve Panger. A proud local of the great state of Illinois, a “Fighting Illini” alum, and a die-hard fan of the Cubs and “Da Bears,” Panger brings a legendary level of experience to the team. Serving as a former C-141 and KC-135 Instructor Pilot, he holds the distinction of having the most time in the safety directorate of anyone on staff—a true testament to his dedication. Over his incredible thirty years in safety, he even served as the military Chief of AMC Flight Safety before hanging up his flight suit to join the civilian ranks.

Panger expertly manages a complex jigsaw puzzle of safety programs. Serving as the Safety Deployment Functional Area Manager, his impact spans the entire spectrum of mishap prevention and response. He actively leads critical SIBs to uncover root causes when incidents occur, and he serves as the command’s direct, vital link to AFSEC for all aviation safety training and continual education. In truth, Panger has masterfully handled nearly every job related to the safety enterprise. There is simply no one with more encompassing expertise than him. His long-lasting career has created unimaginable ripples in AMC Safety that will protect Airmen for decades to come.

A UNIFIED FRONT FOR RAPID GLOBAL MOBILITY

The success of AMC is entirely dependent on the synergy between its military and civilian workforce. The civilian professionals in AMC Flight Safety do not wear the uniform today, but their dedication to the mission is absolute. They share the same goal as every Airman on the flight line: to ensure the mission gets done and that everyone comes home safely.

As we continue to project American power and humanitarian aid across the globe, let us take a moment to recognize these unseen heroes. To the Airmen of AMC: the next time you step into the safety office or read a safety article, remember the civilian professionals working behind the scenes. Their expertise is your armor. Engage with them, learn from their experience, and work alongside them to ensure that Rapid Global Mobility remains not just effective, but exceptionally safe. 

Airmen Apply Lifesaving Training During Off-Duty Emergency in Okinawa

BY STAFF SGT. SHELBY RAPERT, 515TH AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS WING

Tactical Combat Casualty Care training prepares service members to respond in life-threatening situations, but for Tech. Sgt. Scott Hartnett, 730th Air Mobility Squadron, heavy aircraft integrated avionics craftsman, that training became real during a weekend trip to Okinawa's Miyagi Islands when a nearby man collapsed and suffered a severe head injury.

Hartnett and four other Airmen attending Noncommissioned Officer Academy at Kadena Air Base, Japan, had spent the day exploring the Miyagi Islands, stopping at scenic overlooks and making their way along Okinawa's coastline. Ikei Beach was intended to be one final stop before heading back.

As the group turned to leave, a man nearby stumbled and fell, striking his head on the concrete. Within seconds, blood began pooling beneath him.

While two of his teammates moved to the man's side, Hartnett scanned the area and found a first aid kit, bringing it back as the others began assessing and providing care. Tech. Sgt. Nathan Blizzard, 36th Maintenance Squadron, ASM section chief, used his shirt to apply pressure to the wound. Master Sgt. Clare Gill, 374th Medical Support Squadron, section chief, stabilized the man's neck and monitored his condition. Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Guancia, 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, diagnostic imaging technologist, directed the family to call emergency services, and Tech. Sgt. Kylie Eberle, 51st Medical Support Squadron, unit deployment manager, worked to prevent shock.

"It wasn't something we had to talk through," Hartnett said. "We all snapped into action since we all knew the priorities and order of what needed to be taken care of."

All five Airmen had been trained in TCCC, a program designed to teach service members how to assess and treat life-threatening injuries in high-stress environments. The training emphasizes prioritizing care, controlling bleeding, maintaining airways and preventing shock. The readiness training is designed to translate beyond the battlefield.

In a classroom, those steps are practiced and deliberate. On the beach, they became immediate.

"We were in sync," Hartnett said. "It was amazing teamwork in action."

The group rotated through maintaining pressure on the wound, checking for responsiveness and keeping the man conscious while they waited for emergency responders. By the time local medical personnel arrived, the bleeding had been controlled and the man had regained consciousness. The Airmen briefed responders on what had been done before stepping back.

For Hartnett's leadership, the moment reflected the importance of readiness and training.

"Tech. Sgt. Hartnett's actions reflect the very best of our Airmen," said Lt. Col. Shawn Cox, 730th Air Mobility Squadron commander. "His ability to remain calm under pressure, take initiative and support his team in a life-threatening situation speaks volumes about his character and training. I couldn't be prouder of the way he and his fellow Airmen represented the Air Force."

The five Airmen had only known each other for a few weeks through NCOA, but their response reflected trust, teamwork and shared training.

Afterward, the group was recognized by NCOA leadership and later awarded Air Force Achievement Medals. For Hartnett, though, the recognition is not what stands out most.

"Few people experience saving a life," he said. "I, for one, will never forget that feeling. I'm sure we will talk about it with each other for years to come."

What began as a simple weekend trip became a defining moment, one that reflects the core of what it means to be an Airman: ready to respond, ready to lead and ready to act when it matters most. 🇺🇸



Airmen attending the Noncommissioned Officer Academy at Kadena Air Base, Japan, pose for a photo during a trip to Okinawa's Miyagi Islands on March 22, 2026. During the outing, the group responded to an off-duty emergency at Ikei Beach, applying Tactical Combat Casualty Care training to assist an injured local man until emergency responders arrived.

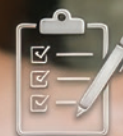
USAF Courtesy Photo

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS:

Insurance and Estate Planning for Airmen



PLANNING



GOALS

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

Between temporary duty, deployments, and permanent change of station cycles, insurance and estate planning often get pushed into the “I’ll deal with it later” category, and stay there. For many Airmen, the assumption is that they are already covered through Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance (SGLI). However, SGLI is a starting point, not a complete financial protection plan.

True readiness isn’t just about the mission, it’s about ensuring the people who depend on you are protected, no matter what happens. Taking the time to understand your coverage, update your plans, and make intentional decisions can help ensure your family is not left facing uncertainty or unnecessary stress. It is one of the simplest ways to protect what matters most.

WHAT SGLI COVERS AND WHAT IT DOESN’T

SGLI is one of the strongest benefits available to Airmen. It provides low-cost life insurance coverage—up to \$500,000—with no medical exam required. It also includes Traumatic Injury Protection, offering additional support in the event of a severe injury.

It’s simple, affordable, and essential. But it’s also limited. SGLI is **life insurance only**. It does not provide:

- Guaranteed long-term income replacement.
- Disability income protection.
- Full financial support for a surviving family.
- Coverage after leaving military service.



And perhaps most importantly, it only pays the **beneficiary designated on the policy**. If that beneficiary has not been updated, the payout could go to someone who is no longer meant to receive it, even if your will says otherwise. One of the most common misunderstandings is that insurance doesn’t automatically adjust as your life changes. It requires active updates.



INVESTMENT



TRAVEL



HOME



FAMILY



Even the most comprehensive insurance coverage won't protect you without a broader estate plan in place.

SGLI ALONE MAY NOT BE ENOUGH

Even with the maximum \$500,000 coverage, SGLI may not fully meet a family's long-term needs. For many households, that amount may only cover:

- A limited period of income replacement.
- Mortgage payments.
- Childcare costs.
- Education expenses.

Many financial planners recommend substantially more life insurance—often one to two million dollars—for long-term protection. There's also the reality of the mission. Mobility Airmen operate in demanding environments that involve frequent travel, long duty hours, and elevated operational risks. These realities make having layered protection—beyond basic coverage—increasingly important.

Upon transitioning out of the Air Force, SGLI ends. While Veterans' Group

Life Insurance is available, premiums typically increase with age and may become more expensive than civilian coverage obtained earlier in life.

INSURANCE IS ONLY ONE PIECE OF THE PLAN

Even the most comprehensive insurance coverage won't protect you without a broader estate plan in place.



That plan should include:

- A current will.
- Powers of attorney.
- Updated beneficiary designations on all accounts.
- A coordinated approach to your Thrift Savings Plan, benefits, and assets.

Many financial professionals also recommend considering a trust as part of a comprehensive estate plan. While

a will outlines how assets should be distributed, assets that pass through a will generally go through probate, a legal process that can create delays and expenses for surviving family members. During probate, creditors may have claims against the estate before assets are distributed to heirs. A properly structured trust can help families avoid probate, provide greater privacy, streamline the transfer of assets, and better protect beneficiaries from unnecessary complications during an already difficult time.

Without these documents, decisions may fall to state law—or create delays in handling your affairs, and uncertainty for your family.

WHAT AIRMEN SHOULD TAKE AWAY

Readiness doesn't stop at the flightline; it extends to your family, your finances, and your future. Just like the mission, it's about being prepared. Taking action today can help provide peace of mind tomorrow—for both you and the people who matter most. 

Human Factors, Fatigue, and the Future of Safety in AMC Operations

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

Air mobility operations move fast—and the margin for error is razor-thin. From global aircraft movements and maintenance activities to mission-critical decisions made under intense time pressure, safety depends on sharp individual performance and seamless team coordination.

Think about swerving to avoid a deer on a dark road, dodging a fast-moving player on a basketball court, or making a split-second aviation decision with

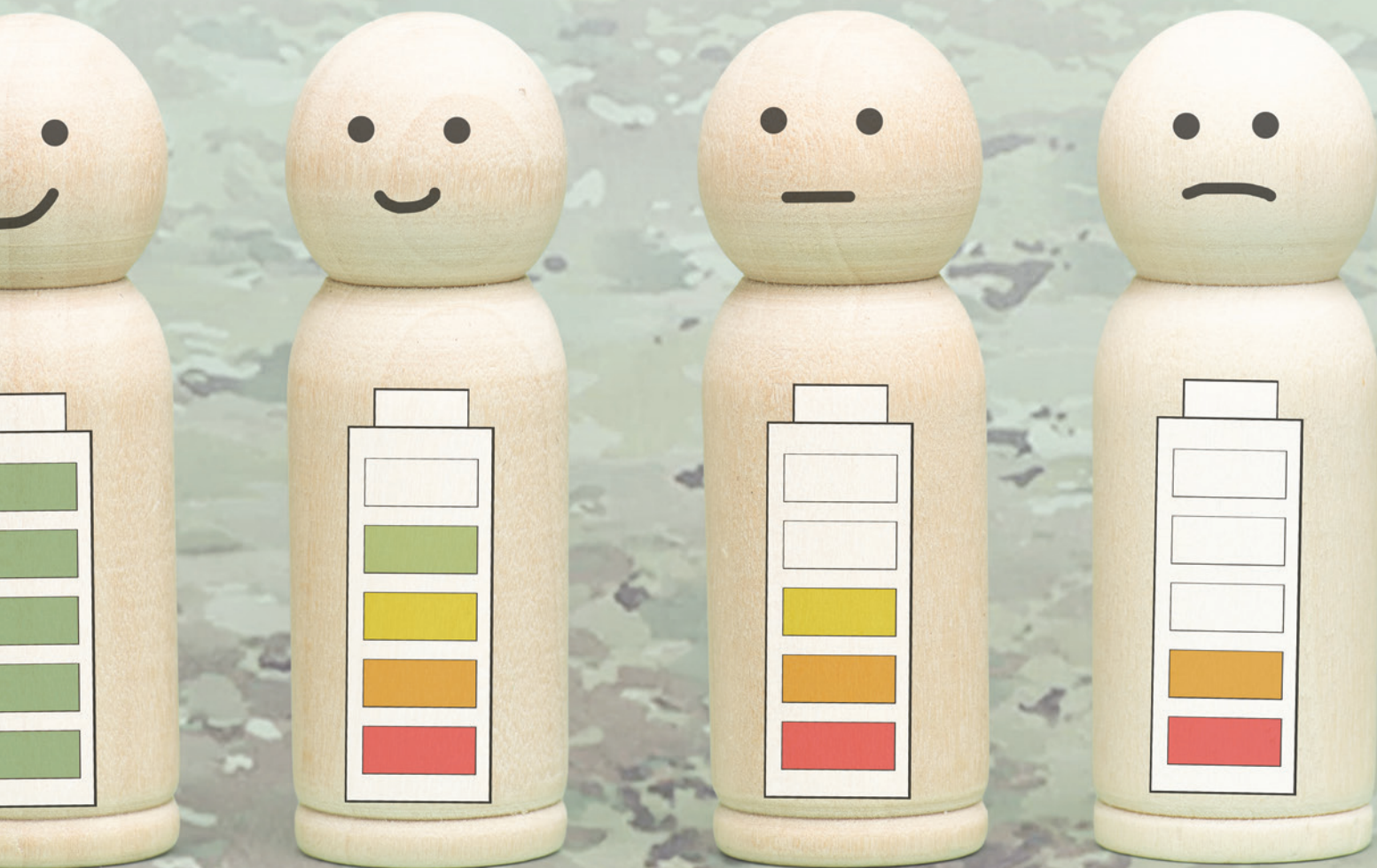
mission-level consequences. In each case, microseconds matter. Reaction time, situational awareness, and judgment often determine whether an event ends safely or becomes a mishap.

While Airmen are the Air Force's greatest asset, they are also human—and human performance can degrade under demanding conditions.

Fatigue, in particular, plays a quiet but powerful role. As air mobility operations grow more complex and fast-paced, the Air Force is increasingly

turning to artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies to help reduce risk, strengthen decision-making, and support the humans at the center of the mission. At the same time, partner nations are adopting similar tools to enhance readiness, performance, and safety across their air mobility operations.

A wide range of human performance factors can contribute to operational risk, including breakdowns in communication, distraction, stress,



Rarely occurring in isolation, fatigue compounds stress, degrades communication quality, increases complacency, and reduces situational awareness ...

resource constraints, decision-making under pressure, and more. While each of these challenges can erode safety margins on its own, fatigue stands apart because of its ability to intensify them all. Rarely occurring in isolation, fatigue compounds stress, degrades communication quality, increases complacency, and reduces situational awareness—often without being immediately recognized by the individual experiencing it.



FATIGUE AS A HUMAN FACTORS RISK

Fatigue is often misunderstood as simply “being tired.” In reality, fatigue is a measurable decline in both physical and cognitive performance that develops over time and interacts with task demands, environmental conditions, and an individual’s physiological and psychological state.

Research shows that fatigue can do the following:

- Degrade physical performance, resulting in slower movements, reduced coordination, and diminished motor control.
- Impair cognitive performance, leading to slower reaction times, reduced attention, lapses in vigilance, and delayed decision-making.
- Alter behavior, influencing risk tolerance, pacing, motivation, and task engagement. Individuals may take shortcuts, miss cues, or disengage altogether without realizing it.
- Emerge from multiple interacting determinants, including sleep loss, extended duty periods, workload intensity, circadian rhythm disruption, stress, and environmental conditions—making fatigue a system-level issue rather than solely an individual one.

Because of this complexity, fatigue risk cannot be fully understood by tracking hours awake or duty schedules alone. Monitoring both objective performance indicators and subjective perceptions of fatigue provides a more complete picture of human risk, especially in safety-critical operations.

TECHNOLOGY, AI, AND THE HUMAN–MACHINE PARTNERSHIP

As operational demands increase, AI-enabled tools are playing a growing role in fatigue risk management and overall safety. Rather than replacing human decision-making, these technologies are designed to support, augment, and inform it.

AI-driven systems can do the following:

- Analyze work-rest patterns, performance trends, and alertness indicators.
- Identify elevated fatigue risk before performance visibly degrades.
- Provide individualized feedback and recommendations for rest, workload management, or task timing.
- Support commanders and supervisors with data-informed insights to guide operational decisions.

When paired with human judgment, these tools help shift fatigue management from a reactive model—responding after a mishap—to a proactive, preventive approach.

THE PATH FORWARD

Safety in air mobility operations depends on understanding how humans perform under pressure and how fatigue quietly erodes performance over time. By acknowledging fatigue as a system-level human factors issue—and by pairing human expertise with intelligent technologies—the Air Force and its partners can better protect personnel, preserve readiness, and reduce risk across every phase of the mission. 

Dealing with Combat and Operational Stress

BY MR. JOSEPH FONTANAZZA, STAFF WRITER

Combat and operational stress often go unnoticed because their early signs can look like the exhaustion already expected in high-pressure environments. Looking back at past wars, it is easy to identify the moment someone collapsed or could no longer continue. Even harder to see are the warning signs that appeared long before the decline.

Most of the time, combat and operational stress do not announce themselves clearly. Instead, it resembles everyday fatigue: weeks of not sleeping well, irritability that builds faster than usual, or tension that never really seems to fade. Yet, the person continues showing up and getting the job done.

This pattern has been a part of military life for a long time. Read enough history, and the same issue appears under different names. People tell themselves they just need to get through the week, the next shift, the next mission, or the next few days until things “settle down.” They believe such an idea because it feels possible. Sometimes they believe it because everyone around them is stressed too, so nothing seems serious enough to call it out. By the time stress finally feels severe enough to seek help, it

When many Airmen hear “get help,” they imagine something formal or career-defining; however, in reality, help starts much smaller. It might begin with a supervisor noticing a change. It could be a conversation with a chaplain, a healthcare provider, Military OneSource, or a confidential request for a mental health evaluation through the Brandon Act.

has usually been lingering longer than anyone wanted to admit.

One bad night of sleep or one difficult day is not the whole story; most people can recover from both. The picture changes when poor sleep becomes routine, when somebody who is usually calm reacts to everything with the same urgency, or when the problems take up so much mental space that the larger, positive picture begins to disappear.



Sometimes the physical signs are even quieter. Details slip that would not have slipped a month ago. A usually humorous person becomes more solemn and stays that way long enough for others to notice. “I’m fine” is repeatedly uttered even when it is clear something is off. Getting help should enter the conversation before the situation forces it.

When many Airmen hear “get help,” they imagine something formal or career-defining; however, in reality, help often starts much smaller. It might begin with a supervisor noticing a change. It could be a conversation with a chaplain, a healthcare provider, Military OneSource, or a confidential request for a mental health evaluation through the Brandon Act.

Help does not require perfect words, and it does not look the same for everyone.



Students from the Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Bud Andrews Airman Leadership School ruck across Scott Air Force Base, Ill., on Nov. 6, 2025. The ruck transitioned students from the classroom to a field training exercise focused on combat leadership skills.

USAF photo by
Airman 1st Class Devin Morgan

If poor sleep has become routine, if patience is shorter than it used to be, or if the same keyed-up feeling follows you every day, get help now. There is nothing to gain from letting it ride another day or week because you are still functioning. Many people can still complete the mission even as stress already affects judgment, tolerance, and interactions with others.

This also means the people around you matter. A wingman, coworker, or supervisor may be the first to notice something has changed, especially when the person experiencing the stress is still telling themselves they are fine because the mission is still moving.

For some Airmen, the easiest first step may be speaking with a chaplain or Military OneSource. For others, it may be talking with a medical provider or trusted supervisor. Some may prefer requesting a mental health evaluation.

The first step does not need to be dramatic. It just needs to happen before the strain settles in deeper.

Given that some situations are more urgent than others, if an Airman seems like they might hurt themselves, hurt someone else, or is clearly in crisis, there is no reason to wait and hope tomorrow will look better. Immediate help must become the priority.

Combat and operational stress are not new, and neither are their warning signs. Bringing help into the conversation sooner gives people a better chance to recover before stress becomes something heavier and harder to carry. Protecting the mission also means protecting the people who make the mission possible. 🇺🇸



Airman 1st Class Kevin White, 92d Operational Medical Readiness Squadron Mental Health Technician, speaks with a coworker at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., March 24, 2026. Mental health technicians help Airmen overcome obstacles, ensuring they are mentally fit to operate within their career field and their personal lives.

USAF photo by
Airman 1st Class Emilee Seiler

BEYOND THE UNIFORM:

The Risk of Homelessness and How Airmen Can Prepare

BY MS. TIFFANY L. TOLBERT, STAFF WRITER

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) notes that “being homeless, or being at risk of homelessness, is one of the most difficult problems any veteran can face.” In 2025, the VA permanently housed 51,936 homeless veterans across the nation, nearly four thousand more than in 2024, reflecting the progress and services provided by multiple organizations to address this critical issue. Yet, homelessness among veterans remains a significant challenge, impacting thousands of former service members. According to a count conducted in January 2024, 32,882 veterans were experiencing homelessness in the United States.

Veteran homelessness rarely results from a single event; instead, multiple risk factors develop and intersect over time. For today’s Airmen, recognizing these risks early creates an opportunity to better prepare, take proactive steps to reduce vulnerability, and seek support when needed.

RISK FACTORS FOR VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Common risk factors include adverse childhood experiences, discharge status other than honorable, lower or absent service-connected disability ratings (which may limit access to financial compensation and support services), a history of military sexual trauma, and the presence of mental health conditions or substance use disorders. Other contributing factors include:

- **History of combat exposure or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** PTSD is a serious condition that can develop after an individual has experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. This condition is considered an invisible wound and can have negative impacts, including trouble sleeping, trouble with memory and attention, feeling anxious, and headaches and migraines. PTSD can result from a traumatic combat or noncombat experience, and all Airmen can be affected.
- **Higher physical and mental health comorbidity burden (or multiple health conditions):** Unhoused veterans often live with multiple overlapping health conditions. For example, many face an increased risk of co-occurring disorders, experiencing both a substance use disorder and another mental health condition at the same time. Coping with ongoing treatment, recurring medical appointments, and other overlapping challenges can make maintaining steady work and financial stability far more difficult.
- **Disability, most often associated with combat:** Approximately fifty-three percent of homeless veterans have disabilities, which range from hearing loss, respiratory conditions, and PTSD to mental illness, substance abuse, and end-stage renal disease. Being disabled can limit employment opportunities due to the required, ongoing medical care and affect income stability.



Connection is one of the strongest protective mitigation factors. Staying engaged with peers, mentors, family, and community groups creates a network that can offer support when challenges arise.

- **Lack of social support:** Among veterans who experience homelessness, social isolation and limited support networks are linked to longer and more chronic episodes of homelessness. When connections with friends, family, or community fade, it becomes harder for a veteran to reach out for help, stay motivated, or regain stability during difficult moments.
- **Lack of access to affordable housing after exiting active duty:** A major barrier facing unhoused veterans is the rising cost of housing, which exceeds what many can afford in communities across the country. Veterans transitioning to civilian life may also encounter limited housing availability, long waitlists, or affordability gaps (e.g., earning less in civilian jobs than they did while receiving military pay and benefits).

Awareness is the first step toward reducing these risks, many of which are manageable or preventable. Early planning matters, even if separation from service is years away.

WHAT CAN AIRMEN DO NOW

Prior to transitioning from military service, understanding VA benefits, healthcare options, employment pathways, and housing resources helps ensure continuity of support after leaving active duty. Similarly, addressing stress, burnout, or trauma early on helps prevent smaller challenges from developing into more serious issues.

Airmen can access a range of resources, including chaplains, installation mental health clinics, and Military OneSource (<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/branch-of-service/air-force/>). Peer support programs and unit leadership also

play a critical role in connecting Airmen with the help they need.

Connection is one of the strongest protective mitigation factors. Staying engaged with peers, mentors, family, and community groups creates a network that can offer support when challenges arise. Financial preparedness is equally important. Establishing a budget, building savings, and understanding available benefits can help mitigate unexpected disruptions. Programs such as the Transition Assistance Program (<https://www.afpc.af.mil/Military-and-Family/Transition-Assistance-Program/>) offer guidance on available benefits and services.

By taking proactive steps today, Airmen can set the conditions for sustained stability well beyond their military service. 



An F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 14th Fighter Squadron receives fuel from a KC-46A Pegasus assigned to the 60th Air Mobility Wing during an off-station training near Misawa Air Base, June 5, 2025.

USAF photo by
Senior Airman Robert Nichols

Carrying the Nation's Mission Forward

BY MR. JOSEPH FONTANAZZA, STAFF WRITER



When the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, the United States declared itself an independent nation. The words became significant, and their meaning did not remain confined to the document. The words became real through the people willing to stand behind them.

As the United States commemorates its 250th anniversary, the semiquincentennial draws renewed attention to that defining moment and to the generations of Americans who have carried the nation's founding ideals forward. Although circumstances have changed considerably since 1776, the responsibility to protect and sustain the nation remains.

Air Mobility Command (AMC) carries out part of that responsibility through airlift, air refueling, aeromedical evacuation, global air

mobility support, and command and control. These capabilities allow AMC to move and sustain the Joint Force in support of national objectives. Whether transporting Airmen and equipment, moving patients who require in-flight care, or delivering assistance during a crisis, AMC depends on people making informed decisions before emerging conditions limit their options.

For example, by the time an aircraft taxis, Airmen are already shaping the conditions under which the mission will operate. Deliberate risk management helps crews identify hazards while there is still time to address them. A maintenance concern corrected before launch may prevent an aircrew from confronting a far more serious problem in flight. Likewise, careful planning, intelligence assessments, and cargo preparation provide crews with the information and resources needed to complete the mission safely.



16th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron members strap down cargo in a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft before a mission in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, Nov. 6, 2025.

USAF photo by Tech. Sgt. Bailee A. Darbasie



Such work also depends on trust across the team. Although the aircrew is the most visible part of an operation, every flight is also shaped by other Airmen whose contributions occur behind the scenes. Crew Resource Management principles give that trust a practical role by encouraging communication, shared situational awareness, and the willingness to speak out when conditions no longer align with the plan. Mission success depends on Airmen at every level having both the knowledge and confidence to identify concerns before they grow.

During the Revolutionary War, discipline helped military forces maintain cohesion despite uncertainty, exhaustion, and limited resources. Within AMC today, discipline remains essential when operational demands increase and timelines become compressed. Technical orders, checklists, and established procedures are not obstacles to the mission; they serve as a layer of protection when pressure increases or circumstances diverge from expectations.

Mobility operations rarely unfold under perfect conditions. Weather may change after a route has been planned, ground conditions may shift before departure, and fatigue may begin to affect a crew before the schedule reflects the strain. Airmen must be prepared to reassess plans and address concerns as conditions evolve.

Training and exercises also help Airmen reassess quickly by allowing teams to test procedures, identify gaps, and practice decision-making before facing the same pressures during an operational mission. Such preparation protects more than a single flight; preventing a mishap keeps an aircraft available for the next operation, while managing fatigue helps ensure crews remain ready as conditions change.



Airmen from the 446th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron participate in a joint mass casualty exercise with a Soldier from the First Special Forces Group on March 7, 2026, at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash.

USAF by Staff Sgt. Brittney Korte

AMC's flightlines may be far removed from the battlefields and supply routes of 1776, but the work still comes down to people accepting responsibility for something larger than themselves. Two hundred and fifty years later, AMC carries that responsibility forward through disciplined preparation, sound judgment, and service in support of the nation's interests. By protecting Airmen and sustaining the Joint Force, the command helps ensure the Nation remains ready to meet the challenges ahead. 

To view the Declaration of Independence in its entirety, visit <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

NITMRE: Putting Data in the Hands of Decision-makers

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER

It is hard not to feel the momentum of rapid technological advancement happening all around. New capabilities emerge almost daily, changing how people work, communicate, and live. While it may be tempting to simply buckle up and enjoy the ride, we are also responsible for steering the “vehicle.” At Air Mobility Command (AMC), that means ensuring Airmen have timely access to the data they need to make informed, mission-critical decisions.

Enter NITMRE—pronounced “nightmare”—or the Next Generation Information Technology for Mobility Readiness Enhancement. Despite the intimidating name, the NITMRE initiative represents a key component of AMC’s broader modernization strategy to transform how information

is collected, processed, analyzed, and delivered to Airmen.

At its core, NITMRE uses artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled tools to rapidly synthesize large volumes of information. The platform can scan sources such as group chats, operational documents, and systems, including the Air Force Global Decision Support System, where planners coordinate details such as mission timing, cargo movement, and crew assignments. Tasks that once required days or even weeks for Airmen to complete can now be accomplished in a fraction of the time. According to Maj. Laura Quitiquit, Agile DevOps Lead of the 618th Air Operations Center (AOC), AMC’s around-the-clock management of global mobility requires operators to maintain a comprehensive operational picture while making prompt decisions. NITMRE helps address that challenge by transforming unstructured communications into usable data and pairing them with structured information from existing systems.

The result is a centralized resource for relevant information in real time.

As the future fight becomes increasingly geographically dispersed, speed matters more than ever. Having immediate visibility into operations helps reduce blind spots and strengthens command and control.

Like widely used AI assistants such as ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Grok, and Claude, NITMRE leverages natural language processing (NLP)—a branch of AI that enables computer systems to interpret and respond to human language. Unlike traditional search engines that rely on keyword matching, NLP-powered tools are designed to understand intent, context, and relationships within data. This understanding allows users to uncover relevant information more quickly in a single setting.

Much of this work is being advanced at the 618 AOC, where NITMRE is helping reshape command and control (C2). When prompted, NITMRE can, for example, identify missions



requiring operator action, draw attention to urgent issues discussed in mission chats, and notify C2 teams of mission-impacting conditions.

One of the most compelling benefits of AMC's NITMRE and other AI initiatives is cognitive offloading—the ability to shift routine, mentally-exhausting tasks from humans to technology. By reducing the burden of data gathering and initial analysis, Airmen can devote more time and attention to higher-level problem solving and decision-making.

However, even with AI-enabled tools, there is an important balance to strike, and that balance depends on how Airmen use them.

Emerging research suggests that over-reliance on AI tools may correlate with reduced critical thinking performance, particularly when users outsource too much of their analytical tasks. In other words, if not carefully managed, the tools designed to enhance critical thinking could gradually erode it—much like a muscle that atrophies without regular physical exercise.

Like any other AI system, NITMRE is not immune to error. Outputs can be incomplete, misinterpreted, or occasionally incorrect. This reality makes

human oversight not just valuable, but required. Questioning results, validating information, and maintaining healthy skepticism must remain part of the user's process. As Quitiquit noted, AMC's competitive edge remains its Airmen.

Although the command continues to explore more advanced human-machine teaming capabilities, keeping humans in the decision-making loop will remain a top priority; NITMRE delivers powerful capabilities, but it does not make the call. That responsibility still rests with Airmen. Looking ahead, the team plans to further integrate data across systems, improve cross-functional capabilities, and explore emerging technologies such as agentic AI and persona-based features to enhance planning,

execution, and mission readiness. As AMC continues modernizing for the future, initiatives like NITMRE represent more than technological advancement; they represent AMC's commitment to ensuring Airmen are not simply along for the ride, but equipped to help steer the mission forward. 🇺🇸



Loadmasters assigned to the 16th Airlift Squadron load cargo onto a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft during local training at Kunsan Air Base, South Korea, July 21, 2025.

USAF photo by Senior Airman Zachary Foster

Lifting Spirits:

AMC's Pilot for a Day Program

BY MS. SOFIA SCHATZ, STAFF WRITER



For families navigating serious medical challenges, uplifting moments matter deeply. At Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM), Wash., Airmen create such moments—a day filled with encouragement, connection, and opportunities for children to simply be kids again, surrounded by a community that stands beside them.

Air Mobility Command's (AMC) "Pilot for a Day" program is designed to bring joy, inspiration, and a sense of normalcy to children and families in the local community who are facing serious or chronic medical conditions. The program is not limited to a specific diagnosis and is open to children with a wide range of health challenges. For many families, participating in the initiative becomes a meaningful and encouraging experience during a demanding time.

Supported by the Air Force Association (AFA) McChord Field Chapter, the program promotes public awareness, community engagement, and education while creating a positive, memorable experience for each child. Through personal interaction with Airmen and hands-on exposure to military aviation, children are welcomed as honorary members of the JBLM family for a day.

The experience begins the evening prior to the main event with a

meet-and-greet pizza party, where the child and their family meet their assigned host pilot, who serves as their wingman throughout the following day. During the gathering, the child is issued a full set of flight gear, including a flight suit with name tags, a flight cap, a leather flight jacket, squadron memorabilia, and other keepsakes. They also receive official orders to report to JBLM the next morning.

On the day of the event, the honorary pilot's journey begins with a visit to the Security Forces Squadron working dog compound, a specialized kennel facility designed to house, train, and care for military working dogs. There, children and families see firsthand how the 62nd Airlift Wing's Security Forces protect and defend the installation, including a military working dog demonstration.

The excitement continues with a stop at the JBLM Fire and Emergency Services station, where participants suit up in firefighter gear, ride in a fire

truck, receive an honorary firefighter certificate and badge, and take part in a beloved activity—spraying the fire hose. The group then visits the Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) unit, where children operate a bomb disposal robot and observe a controlled demonstration conducted by EOD Technicians.

Following lunch at The Club with AFA members and other military personnel, the group ascends to the top of the Air Traffic Control Tower. From ten stories above the airfield, children observe aircraft takeoffs and landings while interacting with Air Traffic Controllers who keep operations running safely and efficiently.

Next, participants visit the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape training office, where instructors provide hands-on demonstrations of the specialized equipment aircrew use in emergency situations. The experience includes a virtual parachute training simulation, allowing children



Leah Young

USAF photo by Airman 1st Class Benjamin Riddle

USAF photo by Airman 1st Class Benjamin Riddle

USAF photo by Staff Sgt. Rachel Williams

to see what it is like to fly under a canopy while safely secured in a parachute harness.

The day continues at the 4th Airlift Squadron, where the honorary pilots receive mission, intelligence, and tactics briefs tailored specifically to them. These briefings creatively incorporate each child's own neighborhood into the mission, making the experience personal and engaging. Following the briefings, children tour the flightline and explore a C-17A Globemaster III during a static aircraft display alongside pilots and loadmasters.

The day culminates at the base's Boeing flight simulators, where the honorary pilots can fly the C-17. Past participants have described their simulator experience as a highlight of the day, offering a rare opportunity to experience what it feels like to sit at the controls of one of the Air Force's premier airlifters.

Families who have participated in the program have shared that the Pilot for a Day program strengthens connections between the military and the surrounding community, fostering a welcoming and supportive environment.

Parents have noted that the genuine enthusiasm and pride shown by Airmen throughout the day leave a lasting impression on the children.

After completing their mission, families return to JBLM, where the children are released from their orders and presented with souvenir patches, a C-17 model aircraft, and heartfelt thanks from the Airmen who made the day possible. The Pilot for a Day committee also follows up with families after the event, providing personalized keepsakes, including a C-17 lithograph featuring photos from the child's experience.

The men and women of JBLM take great pride in offering the Pilot for a Day program, recognizing the strength and spirit of the children and families they serve. Through this program, AMC demonstrates its ongoing commitment to compassion, community outreach, and service, creating lasting memories for families in the local community. 

How Airmen Can Avoid Common FOOTBALL INJURIES

BY MR. JOSEPH FONTANAZZA, STAFF WRITER

Whether the annual Army–Navy game, the service academies' dominance in college football's infancy, or a shared language for strategy, few institutions have been more influential in making football a cultural force than the U.S. Armed Forces. That connection is fitting, as the qualities that drive success on the football field are the same qualities that drive success in military service. Although physical strength matters, so does strength of character and selflessness—a willingness to put the team before self. That shared foundation of discipline and teamwork carries naturally into recreational play.

Many Airmen have buttoned a chinstrap at some point in their lives. Most are not suiting up on Sundays, but that does not mean they have to give up the fun and exercise football brings. Flag football, compared to the traditional game, offers a way to stay on the field with less risk. You may not be launching yourself into a defenseless receiver coming across the middle like professional safety Brian Dawkins, but contact

can still occur, and injuries can still happen. That possibility is why some protection helps.

Wearing a mouthpiece, for example, is a simple way to protect your teeth and jaw during collisions, falls, or other unexpected contact. Wearing soft shell helmets in a recreational league setting may also help players who are more susceptible to head injury by providing an extra layer of protection designed to absorb and distribute impact energy.

Stretching is important for any physical activity, especially as you age. Stretching before exercising or playing sports, which extends beyond a few arm circles and side lunges, matters, as adults who maintain a consistent workout routine often do not perform many explosive movements. That difference in movement makes stretching even more important in recreational activities such as basketball and flag football, which require explosive actions.

Staying hydrated is another key to avoiding injury and is drilled into every athlete's head

from a young age. However, a disconnect occurs when sports shift from being a core part of a person's daily routine (as they often are for high school and college athletes) to a recreational activity that adults fit in between work and home life. Staying hydrated, then, requires a more conscious effort. Remember to bring your water bottle to flag football and sip it during breaks in the action so as not to fall victim to issues such as leg cramps and fatigue.

Lastly, be mindful of wearing the right footwear for the surface you will be playing on. Consider investing in cleats or turf shoes that provide the traction needed to avoid slipping





or rolling an ankle when changing direction, whether playing on an uneven grass field or making hard cuts on turf.

By taking these safety measures, you can stay game-ready and mission-ready both on and off the field. Success depends on discipline, preparation, and looking out for one another as a team. Every practice is an opportunity to build strength, sharpen focus, and reinforce the habits that keep you and

your wingmen safe. When you commit to proper technique, equipment, and accountability, you are not just protecting your performance—you are strengthening the resilience and readiness required to answer any challenge. Stay focused, stay disciplined, and bring that warrior mindset to everything you do—because readiness is not a moment, it is a standard you carry every day. 🏆

AIR MOBILITY COMMAND at the LIBRARY



BY MR. JOSEPH FONTANAZZA, STAFF WRITER



Most Airmen have at least one book they want to read. Maybe it is a military history title someone mentioned, a memoir a teammate recommended, or something from the Air Force Leadership Reading List that caught their eye. But as the week picks up and duty days get longer, the hard copy version of that book often ends up sitting in the car, on the desk, or by the bed—for a while.

Audiobooks and e-books may fit more naturally into the busy lives most Airmen lead. When squeezing in a few minutes to read between shifts or during lunch, sitting down with a physical book can become a moment that never comes. The Department of Defense (DoD) Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Libraries collection offers e-books, audiobooks, and magazines through Libby, a web and mobile app developed by OverDrive, providing access to reading material. Military OneSource links to the same digital library and adds resources like academic support, test prep, and professional development tools, all available to check out whenever the moment arises.

Libby includes many of the books Airmen gravitate toward. Military history remains popular because it chronicles others making difficult decisions, facing setbacks, and trying again. In such stories, plans

For additional interesting titles, it helps to see what other branches of the U.S. armed forces are reading.

are often stretched too far, warnings are ignored, or someone convinces themselves to push forward even when in unimaginable situations. The details, such as names, locations, and gear, may differ, but the mistakes and the lessons feel familiar. These stories do not stay stuck in the past.

Storytelling is most genuine when themes and plots unfold naturally. A good history book leaves the reader with a bad decision while the characters involved still believe they can fix it. As the narrative progresses, confidence hardens into stubbornness—because that shift happens at the wrong moment—and the consequences grow even larger. That progression resembles how real decisions unfold far more than the neatly packaged lessons that characters receive at a novel's conclusion.

Leadership books are also popular; the best ones rarely seem like leadership books. They read like real accounts of people making tough choices without knowing how events will end. What sticks with readers is not the polished

takeaway, but the unsettled moments along the way. Like the people they are reading about, readers are on an emotional rollercoaster, feeling the pressures, experiencing second-guessing, sensing the weight of making a decision, and living with the outcome. These moments stay with readers longer than any quote on a presentation slide because the character exhibits how responsibility actually works.

For such books, Airmen already have a good place to start. The July 2025 Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force (CSAF) Leadership Library featured “Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance,” the ChinaPower podcast episode “Rethinking

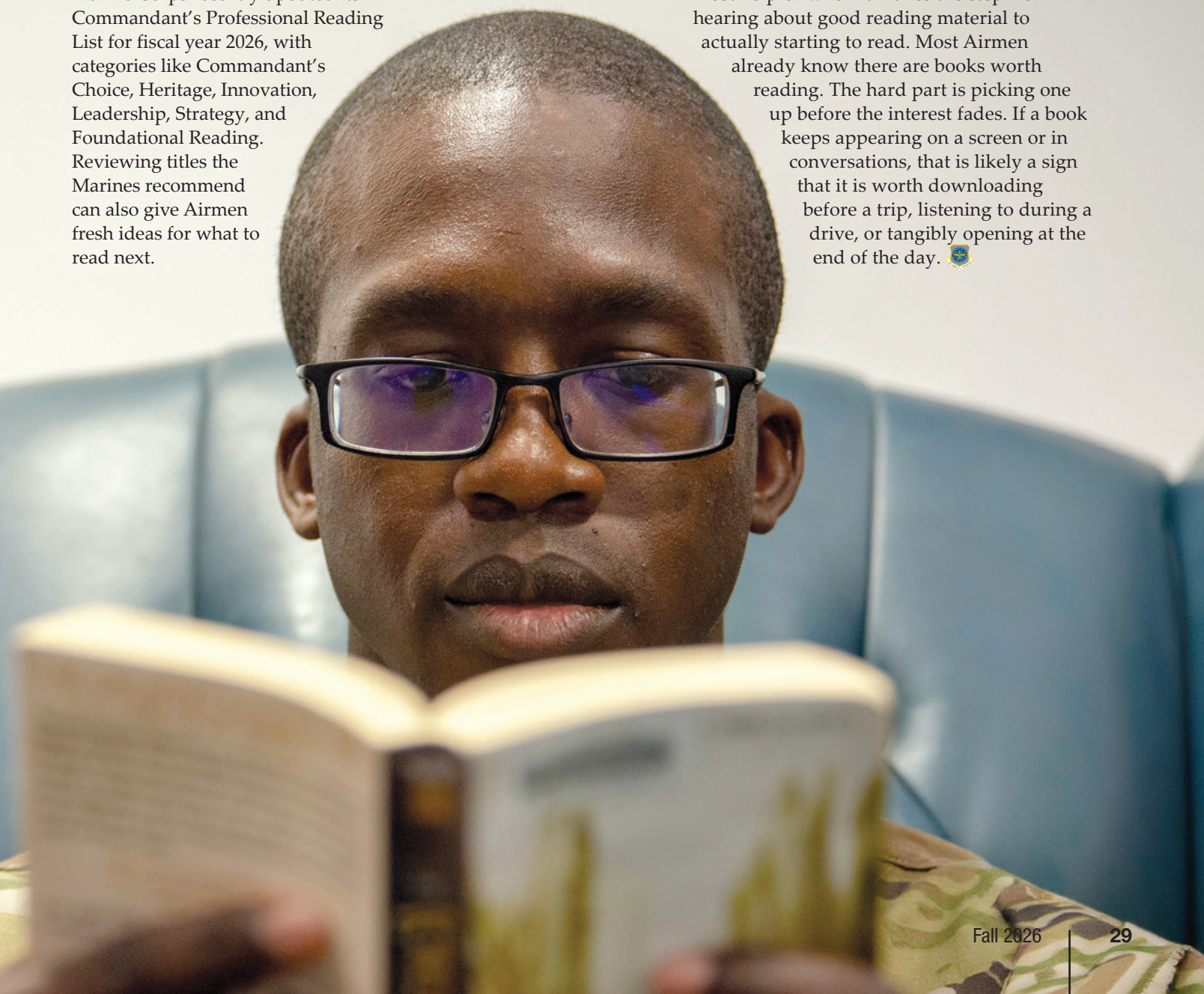
Strategic Competition with China: A Conversation with Mr. Elbridge Colby,” and “Concrete Sky: Air Base Hardening in the Western Pacific.” Together, these selections offer storytelling that blends resilience, strategic competition, and modern warfighting without requiring readers to sort through endless options first.

For additional titles, it helps to see what other branches of the U.S. armed forces are reading. The U.S. Marine Corps recently updated its Commandant’s Professional Reading List for fiscal year 2026, with categories like Commandant’s Choice, Heritage, Innovation, Leadership, Strategy, and Foundational Reading. Reviewing titles the Marines recommend can also give Airmen fresh ideas for what to read next.

WHERE TO START

- DoW MWR Libraries e-Books and Audiobooks
<https://www.dodmwrlibraries.org/ebooks-audiobooks>
- Military OneSource MWR Digital Libraries
<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/benefits/mwr-libraries/>
- CSAF Leadership Library, July 2025
<https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/4234731/csaf-leadership-library-july-2025/>
- Marine Corps FY2026 Commandant’s Professional Reading List
<https://www.marines.mil/News/Messages/Messages-Display/Article/4351724/update-to-the-commandants-professional-reading-list-for-fiscal-year-26/>

Air Mobility Command at the Library is most helpful when it makes the step from hearing about good reading material to actually starting to read. Most Airmen already know there are books worth reading. The hard part is picking one up before the interest fades. If a book keeps appearing on a screen or in conversations, that is likely a sign that it is worth downloading before a trip, listening to during a drive, or tangibly opening at the end of the day. 🇺🇸



Seasonal Affective Disorder and Its Impact on Airmen

BY MS. SOFIA SCHATZ, STAFF WRITER

Seasonal changes often bring cooler weather, holiday traditions, and time with family and friends. However, for some people the change in seasons can also bring unexpected emotional challenges. Seasonal Affective Disorder, commonly known as SAD, is a form of depression that follows a seasonal pattern and can impact daily life, mood, and overall mental fitness.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, SAD affects an estimated ten million people in the United States. Symptoms often appear during the fall and winter months when daylight hours are shorter, and they typically improve in the spring and summer. Though many people experience mild mood changes during seasonal transitions, SAD can be more severe and may affect a person's ability to function normally.

For Airmen, maintaining mental health and resilience is essential for both personal well-being and mission

readiness. Recognizing the signs of seasonal depression early and understanding available resources can help individuals seek support when needed.



RECOGNIZING THE SIGNS

Seasonal Affective Disorder is considered a type of depression with recurring seasonal patterns. The most common form is winter-pattern SAD, sometimes called winter depression, which begins in late fall or early winter and improves as daylight increases in the spring. A less common form, summer-pattern SAD, can occur during the warmer months.

Common symptoms of SAD may include:

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day.
- Losing interest in activities once enjoyed.
- Changes in appetite or weight.
- Trouble sleeping or oversleeping.
- Low energy or fatigue.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.

Winter-pattern SAD may also involve oversleeping, increased cravings for carbohydrates, weight gain, and social withdrawal. Summer-pattern SAD may include insomnia, restlessness, anxiety, and reduced appetite.

These symptoms may occur on a spectrum, ranging from mild mood changes to more serious mental health concerns. If symptoms worsen or include thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seeking professional help is strongly encouraged.

WHY SEASONAL CHANGES AFFECT MOOD

One of the key factors contributing to SAD is reduced exposure to sunlight. Shorter daylight hours can disrupt the body's internal clock, also known as the circadian rhythm, which helps regulate sleep and mood.

Sunlight also influences chemicals in the brain, such as serotonin, which plays a role in regulating mood. When sunlight decreases, serotonin levels may drop, potentially triggering symptoms of depression. Changes in sunlight can also affect melatonin, a hormone that helps control sleep patterns.

These biological changes, combined with environmental factors such as colder weather and spending more time indoors, can contribute to seasonal mood changes.

SUPPORTING MENTAL FITNESS

For Airmen, maintaining mental fitness is just as important as physical readiness. Developing healthy routines and recognizing mood changes early can help reduce the impact of seasonal depression.

Airmen experiencing symptoms of seasonal depression are encouraged to seek support early. Talking with a trusted friend, coworker, or supervisor can be an important first step.

Helpful strategies include:

- Maintaining a consistent sleep schedule.
- Exercising regularly and staying physically active.
- Eating balanced, nutritious meals.
- Staying socially connected with friends, coworkers, and family.
- Keeping a structured daily routine.



Creating a positive work environment and maintaining an organized workspace can also help reduce stress and prevent feelings of being overwhelmed.

PRACTICAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SAD

Several strategies can help reduce the effects of SAD.

Light therapy is one commonly recommended approach. Special lamps that emit bright light can mimic natural sunlight and may help regulate mood and sleep cycles. Exposure to bright light for a set period each day has been shown to

reduce symptoms for many people experiencing seasonal depression.

Other helpful practices may include:

- Spending time outdoors when possible.
- Taking vitamin D supplements if recommended by a healthcare provider.
- Staying hydrated and maintaining healthy nutrition.
- Practicing relaxation or grounding techniques.
- Finding hobbies or activities that boost mood.



Several Air Force installations have also introduced wellness initiatives, such as light therapy stations and resilience programs, to help Airmen cope with seasonal stress and maintain mental well-being.



LOCAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

Airmen experiencing symptoms of seasonal depression are encouraged



to seek support early. Talking with a trusted friend, coworker, or supervisor can be an important first step.

Several resources are available to help, including:

- Base Mental Health Clinics
- Military Family Life Counselors
- Chaplain Services
- Employee Assistance Programs
- True North Resilience Teams

These resources offer confidential support and guidance for those who may be struggling.

SAD is common, and experiencing it does not mean someone has to face it alone. Early awareness, healthy routines, and access to support services can help Airmen maintain resilience throughout the changing seasons.

By recognizing the signs and prioritizing mental fitness, Airmen can take proactive steps to protect their well-being and remain ready to accomplish the mission. 

Avoiding Complacency

While Riding a Motorcycle

BY MR. JOSEPH FONTANAZZA, STAFF WRITER

You are riding on your usual route home. You pass through the same traffic lights every day and know their timing well enough to recognize when each tends to turn red. You know the merge lane tends to tighten up for about half a mile before it opens up. Traffic moves just fast enough to feel smooth. The bike feels settled. Your mind starts wandering the way it does after a long day: *What is for dinner? What time is tomorrow's meeting? Did I answer that email?*

As you ride, a car drifts toward your lane at that merge, moving slowly and casually, like it expects the space to be available. You react suddenly and intuitively. What just happened registers with you a beat later. Your head has barely moved for blocks; up until that moment, you were riding fine—but mentally somewhere else.

Riding complacency—an unconscious state of overconfidence caused by routine or experience that can result in mental wandering, decreased attention, and other unsafe behaviors—often sets in gradually. This complacency (or level of comfort) rarely feels dangerous. It feels earned, built after enough miles that the controls feel automatic and your route feels familiar. The ride starts to feel solved, so you stop checking things the way you used to. Although experienced riders usually stop making beginner mistakes, being in a routine brings its own mistakes, and routine mistakes carry weight, especially on two wheels.

Most people ride motorcycles because it feels like freedom. Wind clears your head. The bike responds immediately. You are one with the road. Even a short commute feels alive. That closeness between rider and environment shrinks the margin of error. However, if traction changes, visibility drops, or another driver makes a late move, you feel it fast. You have to respond just as quickly.

Staying safe on a motorcycle is usually about a run of small choices.

Crashes rarely start with one obvious mistake. They start when a few minor problems stack up, and the rider does not adjust early enough. For example, you feel a bit tired; the road has a light sheen; visibility is worse than you expected; and traffic feels impatient or unpredictable. On a motorcycle, these details can change the entire ride.

The per-mile fatality rate is hard to ignore. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2023 statistics put motorcyclists at 31.39 fatalities per one hundred million vehicle miles traveled, compared to 1.13 for passenger car occupants. That equates to roughly twenty-eight times higher per mile. These numbers do not forecast what will happen on a given ride, but they do underscore how much riding depends on sustained attention, anticipation, and judgment.

Complacency usually starts with scanning. You look forward and feel attentive, then your attention narrows until it turns into tunnel vision. Mirror checks shrink into quick flicks that do not yield any information. Intersections receive the same treatment—a glance instead of a full read. You lock onto the vehicle in front of you and miss the wider picture: a car creeping up to your left rear quarter, a driver two lanes over drifting, or the gap in your following distance closing ahead before you fully register it. Riders sometimes say, "I never saw them" after crashes, when what they really mean is they were looking but did not actually process what they saw.

Surface awareness fades in the same way. Pavement can look clean but still be slick in spots where cars commonly brake and accelerate. Painted road markings change once damp, especially in low light, when they

Riding complacency—an unconscious state of overconfidence caused by routine or experience that can result in mental wandering, decreased attention, and other unsafe behaviors.

become reflective. Metal can be just as unforgiving when wet, and you feel it through the handlebars the moment your front tire touches it. Work zones also shift constantly, and a familiar route can trick you into expecting yesterday's pavement. That relaxed state misses the new patch, the steel plate, or the gravel pushed toward the gutter after a storm.

Traffic also reinforces complacent habits. For instance, your following distance shrinks, your lane position becomes a default (you stop actively managing your space), and your speed creeps up as you edge closer to the vehicle ahead. When traffic compresses again, you end up carrying more speed in less space. Then brake lights shine, and your tires and timing must do more work—right beside drivers who merge late or change lanes without checking their surroundings. Complacency turns "I have room" into an assumption instead of a fact you consciously checked.

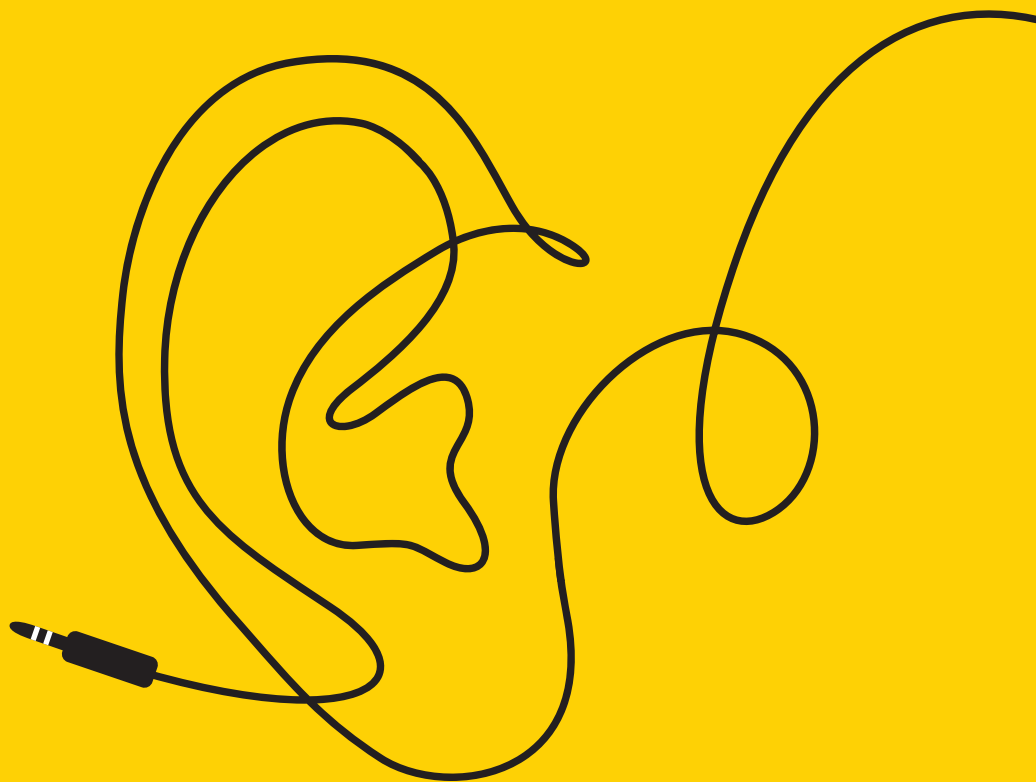
Fatigue also makes riding complacent easier. Tiredness rarely appears as dramatic exhaustion; it often shows up as impatience or a shorter attention span, which can lead to later decisions and sharper inputs, reducing your safety margin with every rushed choice.

Experience riding motorcycles should make surprises on the roadway rarer, especially when paired with intention, even on roads you know best. Continue moving your head and eyes at intersections and merges. Keep a safe following distance and protect it as traffic builds. Admit when you are not feeling fully alert. Choose a safer means of transportation if needed. A motorcycle responds directly to rider input—every single time. 

Your Ears Matter:

Practicing Safe Listening

BY MS. LAUREN FOSNOT, STAFF WRITER



Headphones and earbuds have become a normal part of everyday life. Whether listening to music, podcasts, or videos, or studying or exercising, many people spend hours each day wearing audio devices. While headphones are convenient and enjoyable, using them at high volumes for extended periods may increase the risk of hearing damage over time.

However, according to audiology recommendations, hearing damage is not determined by volume. Risk depends on a combination of three factors: how loud the sound is, how long someone listens, and how often the exposure occurs.

Why Volume and Duration Matter

Modern devices can reach sound levels of approximately 120 decibels (dBA), comparable to the noise level of a rock concert. At such high sound levels, hearing damage can occur much more quickly.

A commonly referenced guideline is that listening at eighty-five dBA may be tolerated for approximately eight hours. However, for every three dBA increase, the recommended exposure time decreases significantly. As a result, both volume and listening duration should always be considered together rather than separately.

What Happens When Hearing Is Damaged?

Repeated exposure to loud sounds can damage the delicate sensory cells inside the inner ear. This type of damage, called noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL), may occur suddenly after exposure to extremely loud noise or develop over time gradually. Unlike many other cells in the body, these sensory cells do not regenerate once they are permanently damaged.

Symptoms of NIHL may include:

- Ringing, buzzing, or hissing sounds in the ears (tinnitus).
- Difficulty hearing in noisy environments.

- Trouble understanding conversations.
- Needing to increase the television or device volume.
- Difficulty hearing high-pitched sounds.

Because hearing loss often develops gradually, recognizing early signs may help reduce long-term risk.

Headphones and Situational Awareness

For Mobility Airmen, headphone use is not only a hearing-health consideration but also a situational awareness issue. Flight lines, maintenance areas, warehouses, and transportation hubs are dynamic environments where personnel may need to hear vehicle movement, equipment alarms, radio traffic, verbal instructions, or warning calls from coworkers.

Wearing headphones at high volumes, or becoming fully immersed in audio, can reduce awareness of the surrounding environment and increase the risk of missing

Risk depends on a combination of three factors: how loud the sound is, how long someone listens, and how often the exposure occurs.



important cues. While headphones can be useful during workouts, travel, or administrative tasks, Airmen should consider their surroundings and follow local policies regarding headphone use in operational areas. Maintaining awareness of what is happening around you is an important part of both personal safety and mission readiness.

Ways to Practice Safer Listening

Protecting hearing does not mean avoiding headphones completely. Adopting a few simple habits can help reduce the risk of hearing loss.

One recommendation is the sixty/sixty rule: listen at no more than sixty percent of maximum volume for no longer than sixty minutes at a time before taking a break. While this guideline can be helpful, it should not be treated as exact, as different headphones and devices may produce different sound levels.

Other practical strategies include:

- Taking regular listening breaks to allow the ears time to recover.
- Monitoring sound exposure using smartphone features or sound-level apps.
- Using well-fitted headphones.
- Choosing noise-canceling headphones to reduce the need for higher volume.
- Lowering the volume in noisy environments rather than competing with background noise.
- Remaining mindful of situational awareness, especially in workplaces, on flight lines, near vehicles or equipment, or in any environment where hearing alarms,

instructions, or approaching hazards is essential.

Additional signs that volume may be too high include others being able to clearly hear your audio or being unable to hear someone trying to get your attention.

Practicing safer listening does not mean giving up music or entertainment; headphones are not inherently harmful, but listening habits matter. Lowering volume, taking regular listening breaks, and choosing headphones that reduce outside noise all help protect long-term hearing health while still allowing for comfortable, enjoyable listening. 🎧





Flash Flood Safety

BY MS. SOFIA SCHATZ, STAFF WRITER

Flash floods are sudden and dangerous events that occur when water rapidly accumulates on normally dry land due to intense rainfall, storm surges, or overflowing waterways. Unlike gradual flooding, flash floods can develop within minutes, leaving little time to react. These events can disrupt transportation, damage infrastructure, cause power outages, and pose serious risks to personal safety. Proper preparation and knowing how to respond can significantly reduce the risk of injury or loss of life.

HOW TO PREPARE BEFORE A FLASH FLOOD

Preparation is the most effective way to protect yourself and others during a flash flood.

Know your risk.

Understand whether your home, workplace, or commute routes are in flood-prone areas. Even areas not traditionally considered high risk can flood during heavy rainfall. Stay informed through weather alerts, local news, and emergency notification systems.

Create an emergency plan.

Identify evacuation routes and determine safe locations on higher ground. Make sure household members know where to go and how to communicate if separated. Include pets in your evacuation planning.

Prepare an emergency kit.

Have essential supplies ready in case you must evacuate quickly or lose access to utilities. Your kit should include the following:

- Drinking water
- Non-perishable food
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- First aid supplies
- Portable phone charger
- Important documents stored in waterproof containers

Protect your property.

Move valuable items and important documents to higher levels. Clear drains and gutters to improve water flow and reduce the risk of flooding inside your home.

As little as six inches of moving water can knock a person off their feet, and one foot of water can sweep away a vehicle.

WHAT TO DO DURING A FLASH FLOOD

If a flash flood occurs, immediate action is critical to protect your safety.

Move to higher ground immediately.

Do not wait if water levels begin rising. Avoid basements, low-lying areas, and underpasses. Follow evacuation orders from local authorities without delay.

Avoid walking, swimming, or driving through floodwater.

Floodwater can move faster and be deeper than it appears. As little as six inches of moving water can knock a person off their feet, and one foot of water can sweep away a vehicle. Water may also conceal debris, sharp objects, or open hazards.

Prepare an emergency kit that includes the following:



Drinking water



First aid supplies



Non-perishable food



Portable phone charger



Flashlights and extra batteries



Important documents stored in waterproof containers

If trapped in a vehicle, prioritize escaping safely.

If water begins rising around your vehicle, exit the vehicle and move to higher ground if it is safe to do so. If escape is not possible and water enters the vehicle, move to the highest point available and signal for help.

Turn off utilities if it is safe.

If time permits, shut off electricity, gas, and water services to reduce the risk of electrical shock or fire hazards.

Stay informed.

Monitor local news, emergency alerts, and official instructions. Emergency responders provide guidance based on changing conditions and safety risks.

IMMEDIATE SAFETY AND HEALTH MEASURES

After floodwaters recede, hazards may still be present. Continue prioritizing safety.

Avoid contact with floodwater.

Floodwater may contain sewage, chemicals, bacteria, and other harmful contaminants. Avoid wading in standing water whenever possible.

Watch for electrical and structural hazards.

Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. Be cautious of weakened roads, damaged bridges, and unstable structures.

Return only when authorities say it is safe.

Follow official guidance regarding re-entry into affected areas. Road closures and unsafe conditions may still exist even after visible water has receded.

Use protective equipment during cleanup.

Wear gloves, boots, and protective clothing when handling debris or cleaning flooded areas. Mold can begin developing within twenty-four to forty-eight hours, so prompt and safe cleanup is important.

Document damage and assess conditions carefully.

Photograph damage and evaluate your environment for safety risks before beginning repairs or cleanup.

Flash floods can occur suddenly and with little warning, making preparation and rapid response essential. Understanding your flood risk, creating an emergency plan, and preparing essential supplies can help prevent harm. During a flood, moving to higher ground, avoiding floodwater, and following official guidance are critical safety measures. After the flood, continued caution is necessary to avoid hidden hazards and health risks. Taking these steps can help protect lives, reduce injuries, and support safer recovery. 🛡️



QUICKSTOPPERS

MOOSE 70: A Case Study in Airmanship and Calculated Risk

BY MAJ. CHRISTOPHER TEAFORD

On March 27, 2026, MOOSE 70, a C-17A Globemaster III crew from the 6th Airlift Squadron, faced a series of escalating challenges that tested their expertise, decision-making, and airmanship. Their experience at Duqm International Airport in Oman serves as a powerful real-world case study in managing emerging risks and fostering a proactive safety culture.

The mission began as a standard cargo transport, but complications arose during preflight operations. After identifying an issue with the auxiliary power unit's air pressure, the crew of MOOSE 70 experienced a failed start on Engine #3. Following a second unsuccessful attempt, the crew, in consultation with maintenance personnel, made the prudent decision to ground the aircraft and await a Maintenance Recovery Team. This initial choice underscored a commitment to standard procedure and safety, prioritizing the well-being of the crew and the integrity of the aircraft over expediency.

Over the next two days, the situation evolved. On March 29, the U.S. Embassy in Oman, citing the time-sensitive nature of the mission, requested that the crew of MOOSE 70

depart in a three-engine configuration. This was no ordinary three-engine ferry flight. The aircraft's gross weight was 391,000 pounds, a full fifty-one thousand pounds over the flight manual's prescribed limit for a three-engine takeoff.

Faced with this high-stakes scenario, the aircrew exemplified a proactive safety mindset. They immediately began to mitigate the risks by:

- **Practicing Procedures:** The crew thoroughly reviewed and rehearsed the Expedited Three-Engine Takeoff procedures.
- **Analyzing Performance:** They ran performance charts and calculated critical flight parameters, assuming a lower weight to understand the baseline requirements and the additional risks of their overweight condition.
- **Contingency Planning:** The crew discussed and planned for potential emergencies, from brake release to an altitude of one thousand feet, including the critical possibility of a second engine failure.

This preparation was not done in isolation. The crew's situation drew

the attention and support of leaders across Air Mobility Command (AMC). The 618th Air Operations Center (Tanker Airlift Control Center) and the AMC Chief of Standardization and Evaluations (AMC/A3V) were engaged, and Boeing engineers provided crucial takeoff and landing data for the unprecedented overweight three-engine departure. Fellow C-17A aircrews from the 305th Air Mobility Wing and 437th Airlift Wing even flew the same parameters in a simulator to provide valuable lessons learned to the crew of MOOSE 70.

With this support and their own rigorous preparation, the crew of MOOSE 70 accepted the mission. During takeoff, the aircraft commander demonstrated exceptional skill, using significant rudder and brake inputs to maintain directional control as the two port-side engines delivered maximum thrust. Once airborne, the crew expertly managed the aircraft's configuration, climbing safely away from the airfield and turning out over the ocean to avoid populated areas.

After a four-hour flight, MOOSE 70 landed safely in Jordan, concluding a mission that showcased the remarkable capabilities of both the C-17A and its crew. The events at

A large military transport aircraft, a C-17 Globemaster III, is shown from a low angle on a runway. The aircraft is silhouetted against a bright sunset sky with orange and yellow hues. The runway is in the foreground, and some airport buildings are visible in the background.

A C-17 Globemaster III aircraft assigned to the 6th Airlift Squadron sits on the flightline at an undisclosed location. As the most heavily tasked C-17 squadron in the Air Force during the first quarter of 2025, the 6th AS enabled strategic movements across every combatant command, showcasing the squadron's role in delivering Rapid Global Mobility at the speed of relevance.

USAF Courtesy Photo

Duqm highlight the importance of:

- **Airmanship and Proficiency:**
The crew's ability to handle the aircraft under extreme conditions was a direct result of their training and expertise.
- **Calculated Risk Management:**
The decision to undertake the overweight three-engine takeoff was made only after extensive analysis, collaboration, and mitigation of the associated risks.
- **Teamwork and Communication:**
The successful outcome was a team effort, involving not only the aircrew but also leadership and technical experts across the command.

The experience of the MOOSE 70 crew—Maj. Christopher Teaford, Maj. Jenna Dolata, Capt. Abdullah Ghorri, Senior Airman Codie Hayne, Airman 1st Class Bernardo Salazar, Staff Sgt. Marcel Banez, and Airman 1st Class Dylan Stockwell—provides invaluable lessons for the entire mobility enterprise. It is a testament to the professionalism of our Airmen and a compelling reminder that a proactive safety culture is not about avoiding risk at all costs, but about understanding, respecting, and managing it effectively. 

A Day in the Life



Staff Sgt. Briana Antoine-Bazan, 62d Airlift Wing Protocol non-commissioned officer in charge, stands in the customer service mall at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., Feb. 19, 2025. Antoine volunteers her time and creative talents to create artwork including murals, custom portraits and challenge coin designs.

USAF photo by Senior Airman Megan Geiger