

## BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

### ON

#### “TAKING THE PULSE” OF THE HEARTBEAT OF THE AIR FORCE

##### PURPOSE

Discuss the factors that have eroded squadron culture and degraded squadrons' ability to effectively execute their missions. Identify core concepts that need to be examined in order to determine how to rebuild squadron structure and function.

##### DISCUSSION

- CSAF letter identifies squadrons as the “beating heart” of the AF, the foundational building block responsible for developing, training, and building our Airmen within a cohesive, ready, agile unit
- 27-member “Think Tank” crowdsourced feedback focused on CSAF’s letter, using Reddit website
  - 44 substantive submissions; 221 user comments; 490 unique visitors to the site
  - Identified core concepts: support manning and additional duties; squadron size; workload; time in squadron; squadron commander influence
- SOS and SNCOA course members (267 respondents) surveyed on identified core concepts
  - Squadrons should be manned to accomplish recurring tasks associated with the primary mission
    - Recently addressed by SECAF and CSAF, no further analysis
  - Squadron size is a key factor in forming identity (can be too big/small to be effective)
    - No strong correlation between unit size and unit cohesion
  - Squadrons must have a manageable workload to foster sense of community
    - 83% work > 45 hours per week
    - 43% work > 55 hours per week
    - No correlation between work hours and perceptions regarding squadron cohesion

- Time spent within the squadron improves unit cohesion
  - CGOs are spending less time actually working within their squadrons
  - Strong correlation between increased time working w/in the squadron and increased perceptions of squadron cohesion
- Squadron commanders should have greater influence over people and resources
  - Perception of higher squadron commander influence correlated to perception of higher degree of unit cohesion
  - Perception of importance of group- and wing-level work correlated to decreased perception of the squadron as a “family”
- Survey results indicate two primary findings
  - To make the squadron the beating heart of the AF once more, members must spend more time together
    - Includes deployments, TDYs, training, and other face-to-face interactions
  - AF must emphasize the squadron and deemphasize the role of upper echelons of command
    - Squadron commander influence correlates to stronger unit cohesion
- Future corrective actions must address the aforementioned findings to be effective

## SUMMARY

The current make-up and functionality of Air Force squadrons do not allow for adequate focus on the squadron and do not facilitate unit cohesion. Increasing members' time spent actually functioning as a part of the squadron and empowering squadrons to be more self-determining will strengthen what once was the core building block of the service.