



# AIR UNIVERSITY



# **USAF FIGHTER PILOT SHORTAGE**

**EAGLE CROWDSOURCING GROUP SOS 17B**

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# Overview



- Process Timeline
- Problem Definition
- Methodology
- Questionnaire Process
- Courses of Action
- Takeaways
- Summary



# Process Timeline



- Week 1
  - Problem Definition
  - Initial BBP
  - Breakout into Groups/Brainstorm
- Week 2
  - Data Collection
  - Pilot/Aircrew Questionnaire Generated
- Week 3
  - Data Analysis
  - COAs Developed
  - Initial Brief/BBP
- Week 4/5
  - Refined Analysis
  - Brief



# Problem Definition



“The USAF has a shortage of 724 fighter pilots. The AF offered financial incentives to address the problem; however, those incentives proved unsuccessful and the pilot shortage continues to grow. The continued fighter pilot shortage reduces AF readiness and may begin to erode the AF’s ability to establish and maintain air superiority, particularly in a prolonged conflict against a near peer adversary.”

Without relying on financial incentives, how can the AF address the manning, retention and morale issues to eliminate the fighter pilot shortage threat to the USAF’s mission?

**Objective: Continued air superiority against next near peer adversary by addressing manning, retention, morale issues...**



# Methodology



## Crowdsourced

- Utilized Reddit and Facebook Pilot Group to generate 82 potential factors
- Top 5 factors had over 2,100 votes/likes combined
- Top 10 selected for in-depth questionnaire



<u>+494</u>
Additional duties, 60-70 hour work week
<u>+419</u>
Little/no control of your own career... having AFPC decide what is best for you and your family
<u>+310</u>
Lack of support from "support agencies", makes doing your job more difficult.
<u>+281</u>
Endless inconsequential queep
<u>+273</u>
Deployments/365
<u>+259</u>
Staff job I don't want to do. 365-day deployment that could be done from my desk at home.
<u>+245</u>
Complete loss of focus on the mission



# Questionnaire Process



- 35 questions to highlight top contributing factors
- Distributed via Facebook closed pilot group, word of mouth, coworkers, limited 11F squadrons
- 500 total respondents/5 days
  - Approx 20% were 11Fs
  - F-16, F-15C, F-15E, F-22, A-10

Pilot/Aircrew Retention Questionnaire

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\* 1. Gender:

Male

Female



# Questionnaire Process



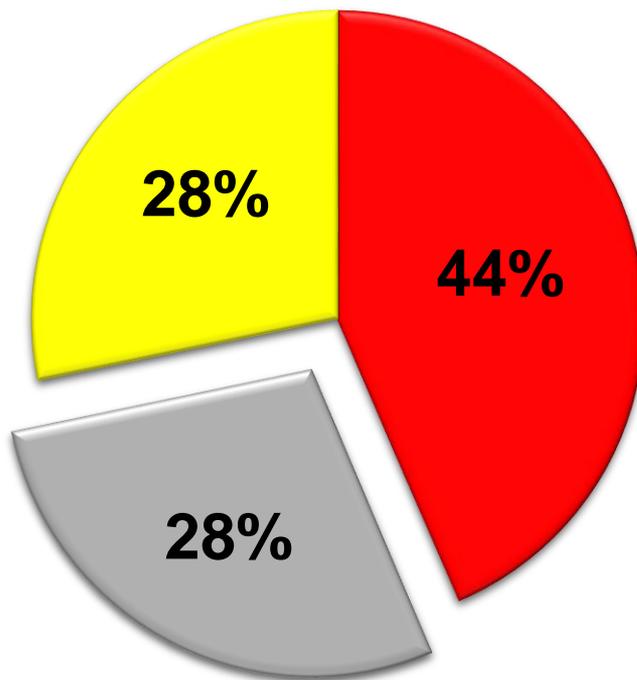
- Question categories included:
  - Demographics
  - Career plans at commissioning, present, future
  - OPSTEMPO/PERSTEMPO (Deployments, TDYs)
  - Family stability (PCS, Home Station Tempo)
  - Aviator Retention Pay
  - Rank Top 10 reasons for leaving service
  - Individual opinion:
    - Top contributing factors of shortage
    - What can be done to improve retention?
    - What can be done to improve morale at the SQ level?



# What We Learned



## 11F Career Intent (85 Respondents)



■ Planning to Separate from Active Duty (37/85)

■ Not Separating from Active Duty (24/85)

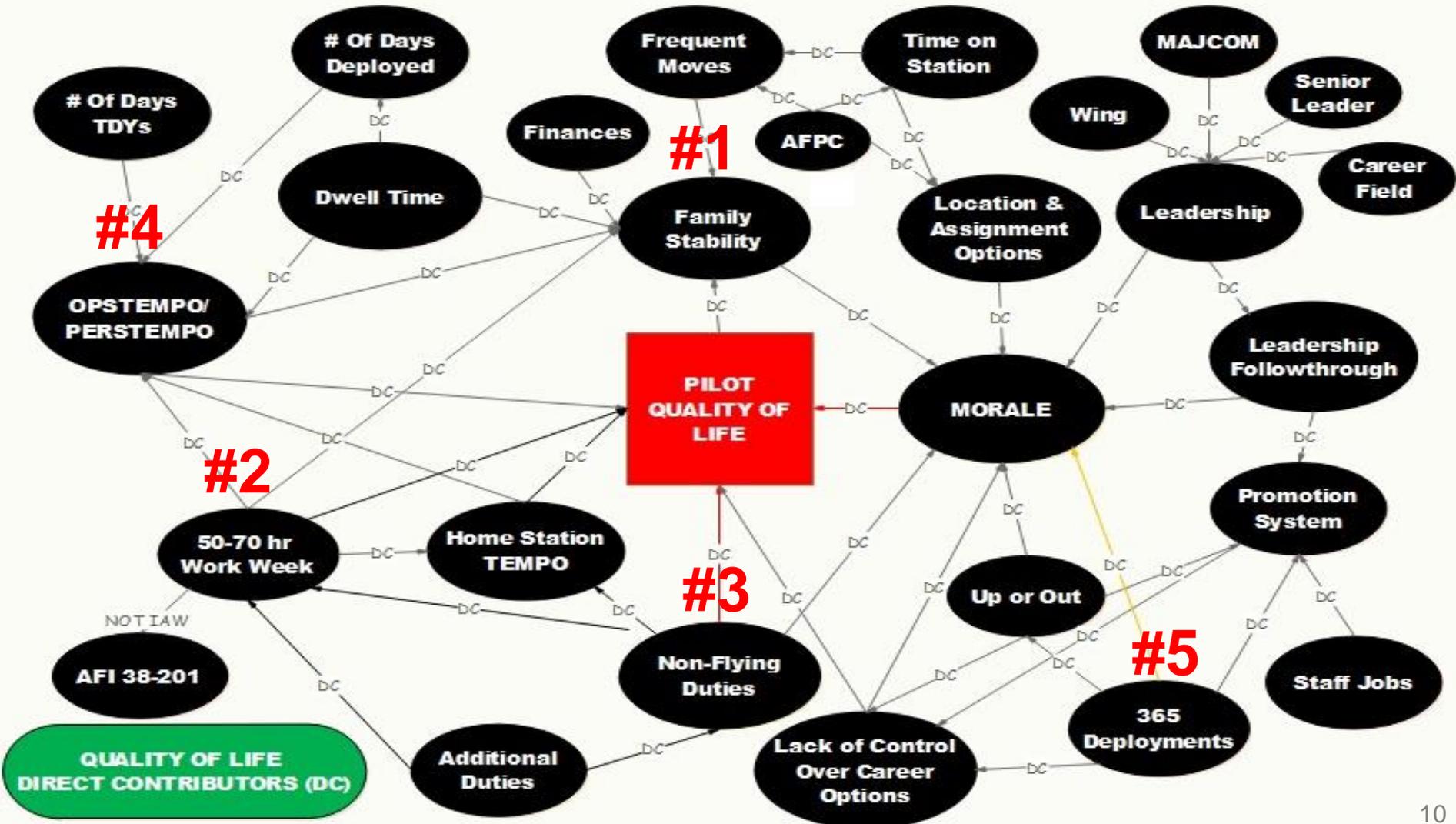
■ Undecided about Separating from Active Duty (24/85)



# What We Learned



11F Quality of Life is THE reason  
pilots are voluntarily separating...  
...or plan to.





# COA #1



- 2015 USAF Retention/Exit Survey - 3 of top 5 reasons pilots are separating:
  - Additional duties
  - Maintaining work/life balance
  - Length of duty day/work schedule (aka “Home Station Tempo”)
- Average 11F workday is 11hrs, 50-70 hrs/week reported per questionnaire
  - AFI 38-201 Management of Manpower Requirements and Authorizations
  - “*Wartime Emergency*” (10hrs/day) to “*Wartime Surge*” (12hrs/day)
  - Already at wartime work levels during peacetime w/increased OPSTEMPO
  - Ability to execute in prolonged conflict against near-peer adv. questionable

**Problem: 11Fs indicate the majority of their time (average 54%) is spent on non-flying duties**



# COA #1



## Additional Duties (AFI 38-206)

- DTS AO, GPC, Awards/Decs, etc.
  - Currently being worked by SECAF/CSAF across the USAF
  - 11F squadrons DO NOT have a CSS to absorb those functions
  - CSS positions “will be funded” but will take 1-2 fiscal cycles

## Non-Flying Duties

- Full-time non-flying positions
  - Scheduling/Training, Security Management/Weapons Duty Officer, etc.
  - No current plan to address these positions/duties

**Pilots should NOT have a full-time job on top of flying. These duties drive an unsustainable Home Station Tempo which is a threat to the USAF mission.**



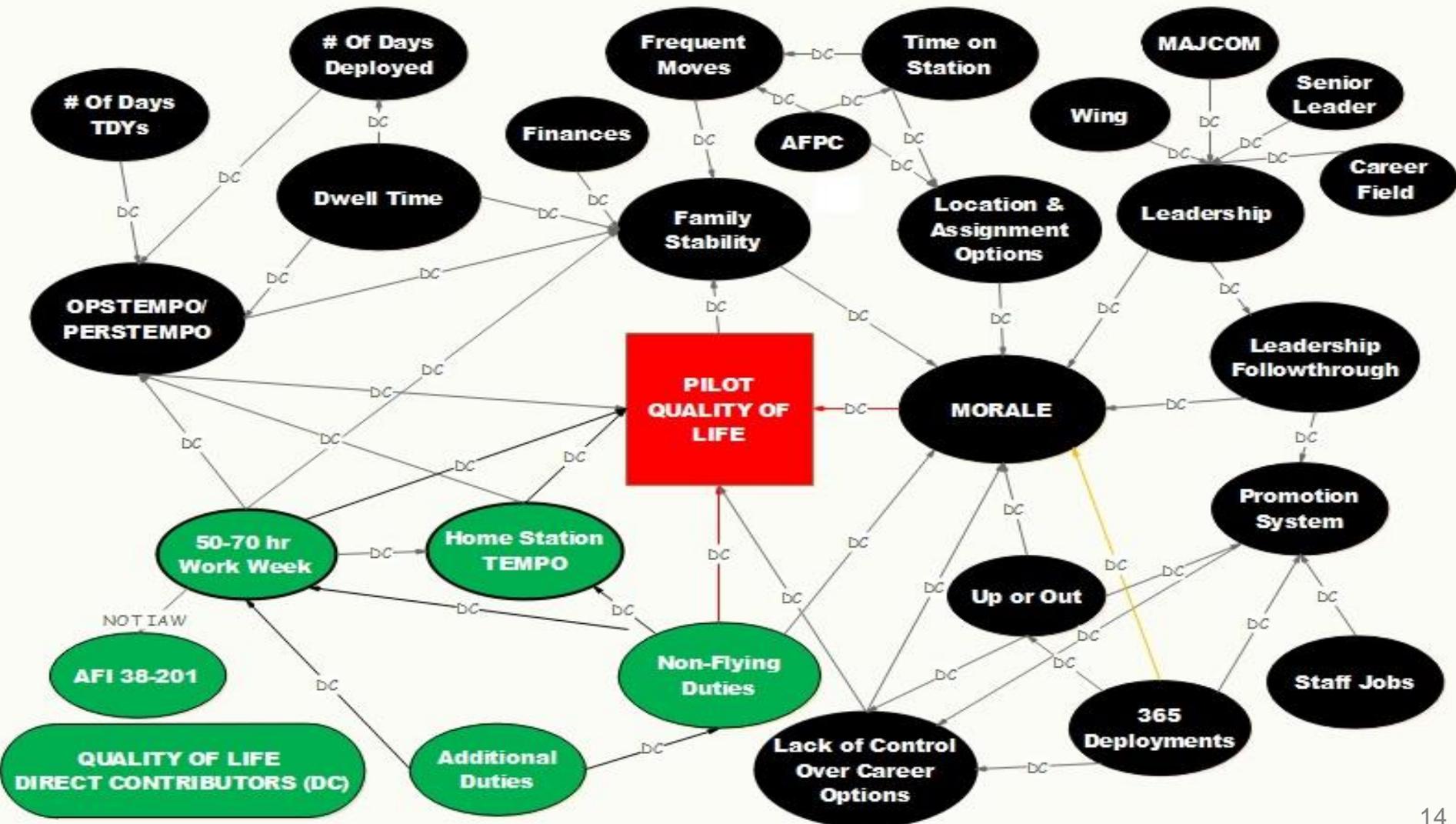
# COA #1



## **COA 1: Authorize/Fund civilian overhire support personnel at the squadron level for full-time non-flying duties**

- Precedent: Civilian support for non-flying duties is fully utilized by Reserve/ANG units
  - Scheduling/Training
  - Security Management/Weapons Duty Officer
- Pros:
  - Can take as little as 2-4 months
  - Provides long-term continuity and experience (limits constant turnover on AD)
  - Frees up more pilots to share the workload of other tasks
  - Brings pilot focus back to primary duties/mission
- Cons:
  - Not feasible everywhere, not all jobs can be filled
  - Additional cost

**Hiring a civilian is substantially cheaper/faster/easier than training a new pilot to replace the experienced IP/WIC graduate who separates due to non-flying duties**





# COA #2



**Problem: Experienced pilots are leaving due to 365-day non-flying/non-command deployments**

## Current 365 Deployment Process for 11F

- Member Deploys; upon return, by regulation (180+ days out of MDS) requires Formal Transition Course (TX) at a FTU (per AFI 11-202V1 /AFI 11-2MDS-V1)
- TX courses take IPs/lines/jets away from pilot production pipeline
  - Home unit readiness decreased with pilot absence
  - Additional time away from family; pilot quality of life is unnecessarily degraded

**365s degrade present readiness, future production, and pilot quality of life**



# COA #2



## **COA 2: Eliminate non-flying/non-command 365 day deployments during a dedicated flying assignment**

- Create rotational deployments modeled after the AEF cycle
  - One 365 tasking broken into 3 sequential rotations of 4 months
  - Pilots sourced from available 11F squadrons
- Improved rotation allows 11Fs to retain qualification in MDS
  - Instead of a TX course, flight currency can be re-accomplished at home station
  - Morale and overall quality of life/stability for family is increased
  - Squadron readiness improved



# Non-Flying Deployment Rotation



**New AEF-based non-flying/non-command deployment cycle:**



**Deployment rotation preserves mission readiness and pilot quality of life**





# COA #3



**Problem: Pilots are separating from AD and the existing personnel system is not designed to retain them**

- USAF is hemorrhaging exceptionally seasoned 11Fs who turn down/7-day opt out of assignments
- Example:                    “In 2012 an [unnamed Major] requested an operational follow on to accept a Saudi Arabian remote assignment. AFPC declined and he quit.”  
  
                                      “Shortly thereafter, they offered an Alt [unnamed Major] the same job with a guaranteed operational follow-on”



# COA #3



- Manning undesirable assignments is a complex problem
  - AFPC could track and report 7-day opts tied to specific assignments
  - Valuable information for MAJCOM/HAF
    - What if one job/location is causing major hemorrhage of 11Fs?
    - Move, reduce, or eliminate locations/positions
- Current process conveys to members that the AF doesn't value their skills, experience, career, or family
  - Current 7-day opt process has no recourse, little to no communication
  - 7-day opt can be followed by a new RIP for a 365 deployment
  - Represents a complete lack of control for pilot's career and life



# COA #3



## COA 3: Enable AFPC to play a role in retention of experienced pilots

- Authorize AFPC to sell difficult assignments with a guaranteed follow-on of choice (formalize an existing un-official process)
- Pilots who 7-day opt could be placed on a list while awaiting separation
  - AFPC can use the 7-day opt list as a tool to attempt retention of pilots
  - MDS functional could provide alternate positions to select pilots who are separating
- Not a negotiation tool for the pilot
  - Member has committed to separating
  - Opaque process; no guarantee of an assignment offer

**Successful companies and organizations do not simply ‘accept’ losing their top talent, they fight for it.**





# COA #4



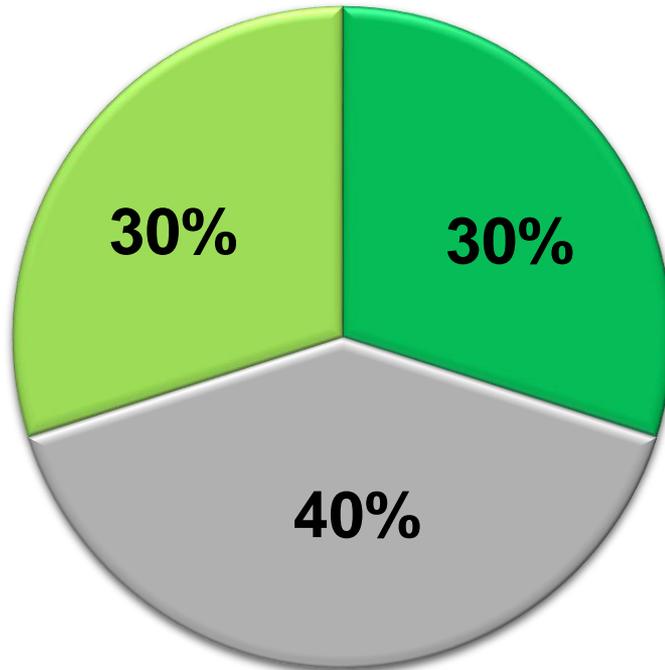
## **Problem: Existing Pilot Retention program is not effective**

- Existing ARP bonus only allows 5 or 9 year ADSCs at \$25K/year
  - Minimum of 2 assignments results in no control over career or family life
  - Effective incentive for those who are committed to a career/retirement
- Pilots report it is not about the money - it's about control and quality of life

**Significant amount of 11Fs undecided/planning to leave would take a bonus  
if the commitment were reduced**



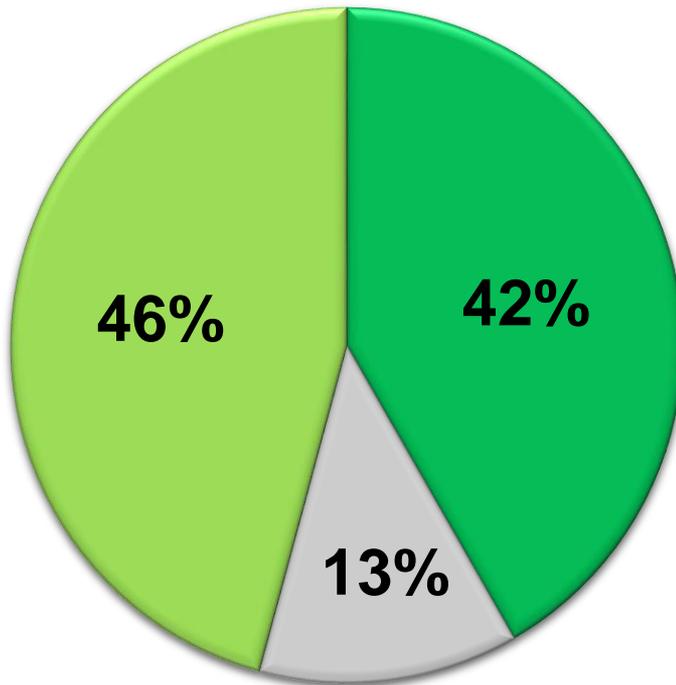
## 11Fs Planning to Separate (37/85 = 44%)



- Would accept a bonus with a shorter ADSC (11/37)
- Would NOT accept a bonus (14/37)
- Would accept a smaller bonus (or none at all) if QoL improved (11/37)



## 11Fs Undecided about Separating (24/85=28%)



- Would accept a bonus with a shorter ADSC (10/24)
- Would NOT accept a bonus (3/24)
- Would accept a smaller bonus (or none at all) if QoL improved (11/24)



# COA #4



## **COA 4: Modify the Aviator Retention Pay (ARP) program to mirror Incentive Special Pay (ISP) program**

- ISP is already being used to retain medical professionals across the Air Force
- Designed to retain special skills, experience, and talent
- Brings compensation closer to that of civilian sector

### **Pilots have the option of signing up for 1-10 years in 1 year increments *at any time* after initial pilot ADSC**

- 1-3 years at a base rate of:  
\$20,000/year
- 4-6 years at a base rate of:  
\$30,000/year
- 7-10 years at a base rate of:  
\$40,000/year

### **Retain and reward the most qualified assets to the force**

- MDS Instructor Pilots (IP) K Coded  
AFSC: base rate + \$5,000/year
- MDS Weapons Instructor Course (WIC)  
Graduate
  - W Coded AFSC: Base rate +  
\$10,000/year
  - Capped at \$48,000/year max



# 2017 Aviator Incentive Special Pay (AISP)

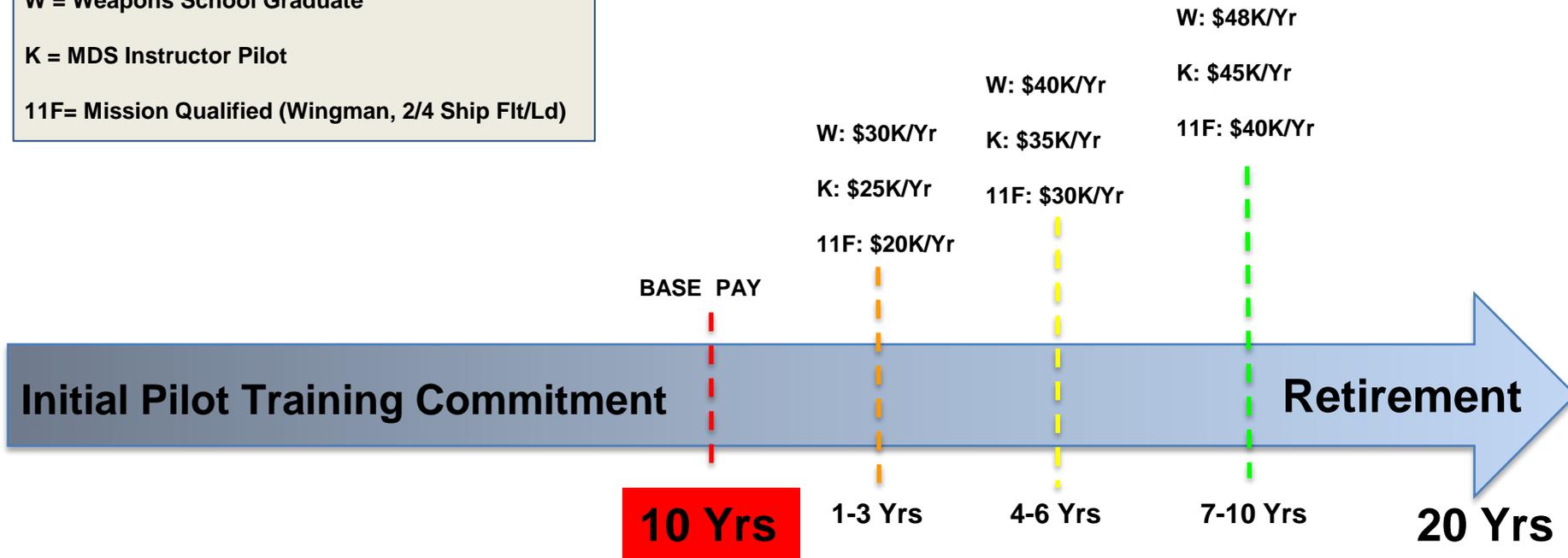


### 11F AFSC PREFIX

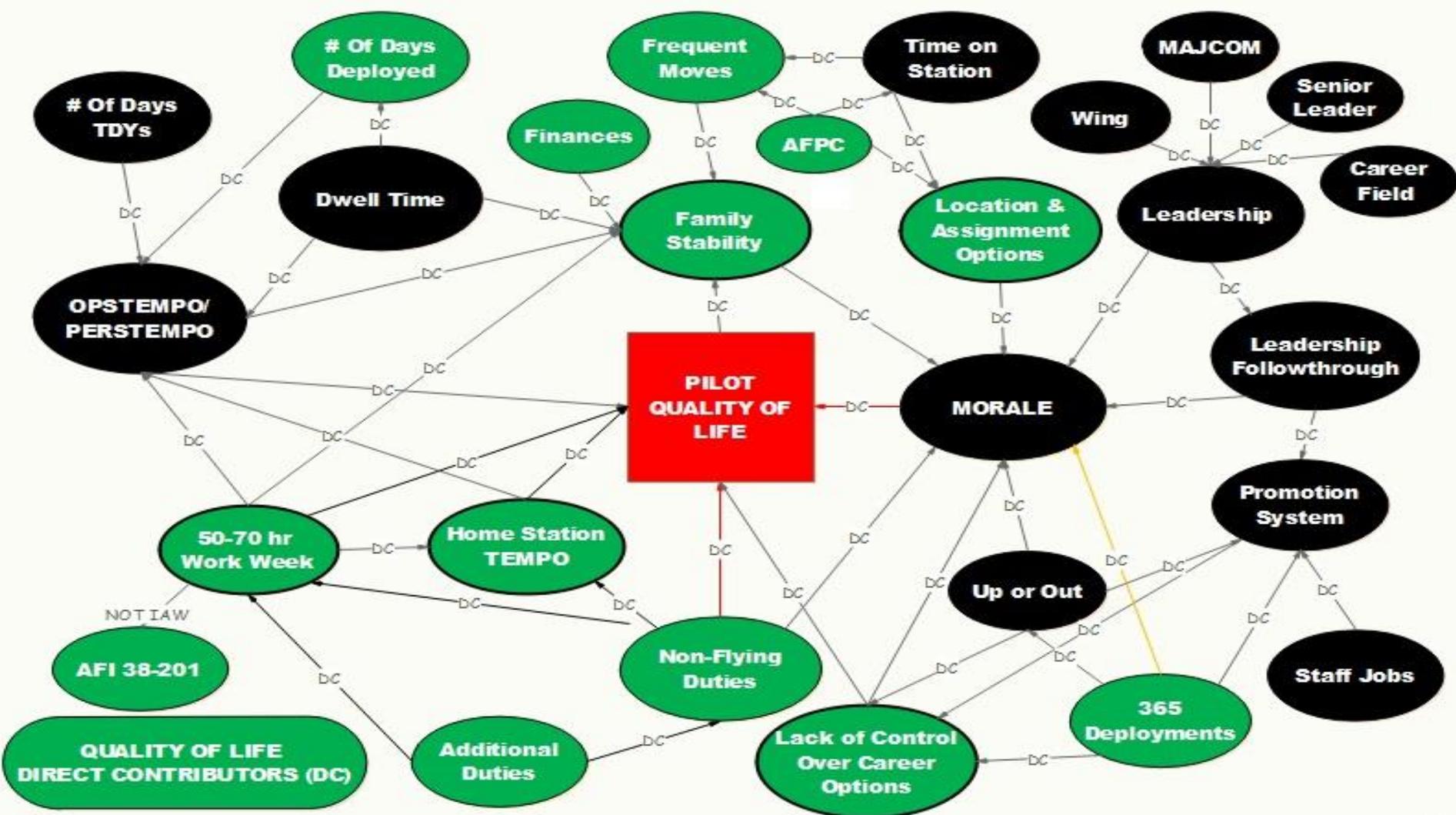
W = Weapons School Graduate

K = MDS Instructor Pilot

11F= Mission Qualified (Wingman, 2/4 Ship Flt/Ld)



**Additional cost, but cheaper/faster/easier than training a new pilot to replace the experienced IP who separates due to higher pay/more control elsewhere**





# Takeaways

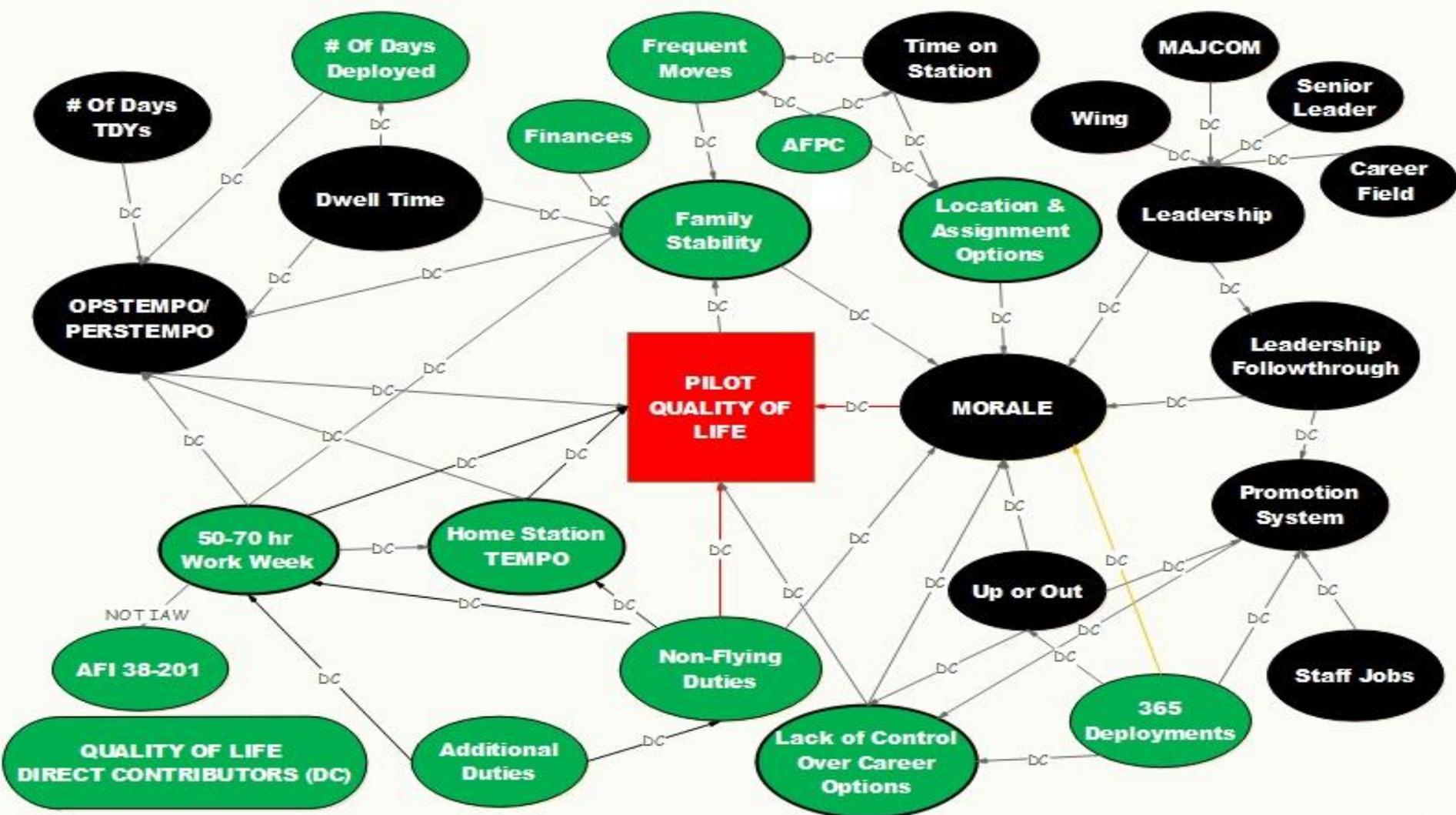


## **Problem is NOT exclusive to 11F**

- Data presented thus far was 11F responses only
- Over 400+ pilots/aircrew in nearly every USAF airframe reinforced these findings

F-15E, F-16, F-22, F-15C, A-10, B-1B, B-2, B-52, C-17, C-5, C-130, MC-130, AC-130, C-146, C-21, C-40, KC-135, KC-10, RC-135, MC-12, U-28, CV-22, UH-1N, HH-60, U-2, MQ-9, RQ-4

**COAs presented are applicable to other MDS/AFSCs**





# Takeaways



- Senior leadership integral to morale, quality of life, and pilot retention
  - Data suggests the following perception:
    - Issues are known by upper leadership
    - May be officially acknowledged
      - Not visibly actioned upon
      - No perceived follow through
- 2015 USAF Retention/Exit Survey - Leadership is an *influence to leave*
  - 50% cited Wing Leadership as influence to leave
  - 47 - 59% cited MAJCOM/HAF Leadership as influence to leave
  - 54 - 60% cited Senior Leadership as influence to leave
  - 32 - 48% cited Career Field Leadership as influence to leave





# Summary



- Process Timeline
- Problem Definition
- Methodology
- Questionnaire Process
- Courses of Action
  - Support at the squadron level
  - Return 365s to rotational deployments
  - Enable AFPC to actively retain pilots
  - Restructure ARP to model ISP (AISP)

**QUALITY OF LIFE IS THE KEY TO RETENTION**



# Questions?



# Pilot Comments



*“Wing **leadership** and above do not actually care about their people. AF leaders are ineffective at **communicating issues** to White House and Congress”*

*“Outside of the Air Force pilots can just be pilots and their flying **skills are highly valued.**”*

*“Complete **disconnect** between **AFPC** assignment fills and **goals of individual**”*

*“Ops tempo, **no-choice** or no-notice **365s/deployments**, promotion system, and the sense of having **no control** or influence on **your future or career.**”*

***Quality of life** regarding tempo and **AFPC** process.*

*“We burn people out with our **ridiculous, unbalanced work schedule.**”*

*“365's are a factor. Having little to **no say** in **follow on assignments** after putting in **10 years** for the same company gets old.”*

*“**Improve lifestyle** -- airlines let you just be a pilot.”*



# Pilot Comments



“Make the work day more tactical and less about additional duties...”

“Civilian continuity provides aircrew [the opportunity]  
to focus on the mission”

***“When weighing the options, a higher salary with a better family life on the outside is more appealing than being busy with non-tactical duties for less money on the inside”***

“Refocus on the primary mission, remove additional jobs and required training that provide minimal benefit to the AF...”

“We have done more with less for far too long...everyone is worn out...”



# Pilot Comments



“It isn’t about the mission any more, it's all about the OPR. We care less and less about the people below us, rather than the people above us. There are better options outside.”

***“The constant grind of having to accomplish tasks that have no value and spending time away from family to eventually get put in a job you despise.”***

“The system is broken and the senior officers don't get it.”

“Organizational culture - the Air force through policy clearly shows that it does not value mission accomplishment”



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