



CHIEF's Sight Picture

Combat Wing Organization

Our service has witnessed dramatic change over the past decade. Beyond our transitioning to an expeditionary construct to address this new environment, we have made few changes to our organizational structure. Right up front I want to say that nothing is broken—I'm extremely proud of the job each of you have done rising to meet our many challenges. People are working hard to make our weapons systems work, and the successes of the past 12 years tell us that we can organize for success in more than one way. Many questions arise: Are we organized as smart as we could be, given all we have learned about the expeditionary world we've lived in over the past decade plus? If we are to continue to deploy in sub-squadron size packages into expeditionary wings as part of Joint Task Forces, are we organized at home the way we should be? If we are to continue to deal with aging weapons systems, are we growing the right kind of focused maintainer to deal with those problems? If the trends of the last decade continue to dictate that we deploy rapidly into tent cities on bare or ill-prepared bases, are we growing the kind of support personnel who understand all that is needed to pick up a unit, get it there, and sustain it?

When it comes to deploying and sustaining the force to fight our nation's wars, I believe the two hardest things we do in our Air Force are flying and fixing our weapons systems—especially old weapons systems. This does not mean that the rest of us who don't have a stick, yoke, launch button or wrench in our hands are not important. It means that the nation pays for an Air Force to help win the nation's wars and our value as air and space warriors is measured by how we contribute to those victories. If you wear a blue suit or are a civilian in the Air Force you are an important part of our victories. I believe that flying and fixing our weapons systems are essential skill sets, along with mission support. Each requires PhD-level expertise, proficiency and leadership. This level of proficiency is only possible if we allow our leaders to develop great depth in their specific fields. It is for this reason that we will transition into a new Combat Wing Organization designed to fully develop commanders with specific functional expertise to fully plan and execute air and space power as part of expeditionary units.

The Combat Wing Organization will retain the **Operations Group**, which will continue to focus on the skills of tactical employment that make ours the greatest Air Force in the world. The group and squadron commanders will be leaders in the air and on the ground—role models, ready to lead the first missions into combat. The planning, training, and employment of our weapon systems are fundamental core capabilities and require the undivided attention of our operational commanders. We will also ask the

commanders in our Operations Group to become more active in the operational level of war—the skills of commanding air and space power.

Maintaining the health of our aging fleets balanced with the need to produce the sorties that help win wars is a core capability that requires focus and proficiency. To that end we will establish a **Maintenance Group**. Commanders within the Maintenance Group will be responsible for the full spectrum of base-level weapon system maintenance and to produce sorties at the designated rates. Units within the maintenance organization will continue to be identified with, located with, and deployed with the operational squadron they support. This will include slices of maintenance organizations such as munitions, component, and equipment maintenance designated to deploy with specified units. They will wear the colors of that squadron and will continue to interface on a daily basis with the scheduling and detailed integration of that squadron's activities. The Maintenance Group commander is expected to be the role model to maintainers just as the Operations Group commander is to the operators.

Recent events have clearly focused us not only on sustaining home base capabilities, but also on rapidly employing our weapon systems and establishing our operational presence anywhere in the world. This expeditionary capability will fall largely on the professionals in our new **Mission Support Group**. This group merges the current Support Group with the Logistics Readiness, Contracting, and Aerial Port Squadrons as applicable. Here is where we will hone the expeditionary skills of crisis action planning, force protection, load planning, communications, in-transient visibility, reception, contracting actions, bare base preparation, munitions and fuels site planning, personnel readiness, and contingency bed down. Contingency bed down will include such areas as falling in on an existing expeditionary wing or group, weapon storage, tent city administration, and integrating with a contingency theater's supply system. We are just beginning to develop this skill set. The spectrum of skills required to be a proficient mission support commander now reside as unrelated elements. These skill elements need to be brought together as a core competency as we are tasked to operate large support functions which in some cases are not associated with deployed Air Force operational units.

Medical Groups will remain organized as they are although specific changes that deal with medical operations at home and deployed are being worked for later implementation.

Conclusion

Our Combat Wing Organization will allow us to grow leaders with the depth of experience and expertise needed to plan and execute in the full spectrum of deployment, combat planning, execution, and sustainment. Although the reorganization is called the Combat Wing Organization this is not just about the wings that fly--almost every unit in the Air Force supports our Air Expeditionary Force in some way. Our support unit leadership will be trained in the dynamics of contingency support with the opportunity to command during deployed operations. Over the next several months, we will identify the way ahead for increased training opportunities for leaders of these new groups.

One difficult part of this transition will be for the units whose flightline maintenance will transfer to the command of the Maintenance Group. I have already heard from some who talk about "losing" their maintainers, or believe we are organizing

away from the way we will deploy and fight. This is simply not true. When I was a squadron commander there was an Aircraft Maintenance Unit (AMU) attached to my squadron. I didn't command the AMU. The officer in charge of the AMU was trained by the Colonel who ran the maintenance organization. This colonel had been in the business of maintaining airplanes for 24 years. When the squadron deployed, there was no doubt that the AMU would come under my command. But that AMU had been trained by someone who knew the fixing business as well as I knew the flying business.

The Combat Wing Organization is very similar to the organization that was in place between 1978 and 1991. It is the organization that brought us Mission Capable rates greater than 90% in Desert Storm and it works. As I said in the beginning our operators have not flunked maintenance—we aren't fixing something that's broke, we are making it better. Thank you for your support.



John G. ...
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