



AIR UNIVERSITY



“Taking the Pulse”

on the Heartbeat of the Air Force



Overview



- Introduction and Process Timeline
- Problem Definition
- Initial Brainstorming & Hypothesis Generation
- Core Concepts
- Survey Generation
- Survey Results & Key Findings
- Way Forward



Process and Timeline



**Problem Definition
& Hypothesis
Generation**

**Data
Collection**

**Data
Analysis**

**Results and
Final Product**

Week 1

Week 5

**Brainstorming
Crowdsourcing
“Core Concepts”**

**SOS/SNCOA
Survey**

Findings

Way Forward



Problem Definition



CSAF Memo on Squadrons

- The beating heart
- Foundational building block
- Develop, train, build...
- Cohesive, ready, agile



CHIEF OF STAFF
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

The Beating Heart of the Air Force ... Squadrons!

On 1 July, Secretary James swore me in as your 21st Chief of Staff. This is the privilege of a lifetime. Standing on the shoulders of the 20 giants who paved the way ahead of me, I take on this sacred duty of leading our 660,000 active, guard, reserve, and civilian Airmen absolutely committed to servant leadership. I am honored to be your Chief.

Over the next several weeks leading up to the Air Force Association convention in September, I will publish a series of short papers laying out my thinking on key focus areas. This is the first in the series.

Under the leadership of Secretary James, General Welsh, and Chief Cody, we completed a number of strategic planning documents that provide a useful framework and planning process to shape our future force. I fully support the strategy articulated in the Strategic Master Plan (SMP) and Air Force Future Operating Concept (AFFOC) and we will continue to align our strategy with this vision. I also look forward to championing the priorities that Secretary James has established for us and has so consistently and tirelessly advocated throughout her tenure: Taking Care of People, Balancing Today's Readiness with Tomorrow's Modernization, and Making Every Dollar Count.

If we are to achieve the aspirations laid out in the SMP and AFFOC, I believe we must have a solid foundation organizationally. Our own AFIs state that "squadrons are the basic, building block organizations in the Air Force, providing a specific operational or support capability." I have always believed this to be true and so I am convinced it's where we need to start. This applies equally to our support organizations that may not align under a squadron construct, but actively support squadrons in the execution of their mission.

The squadron is the beating heart of the United States Air Force: our most



Initial Brainstorming



- Crowdsourced Data
- 27 member Think Tank used “Reddit” to conduct brainstorming in order to build hypotheses
 - 44 initial ideas
 - 221 replies to ideas
 - 490 voting participants
 - Think Tank members used Reddit data to formulate the “Core Concepts”

6d, 3h • u/xile_logic

Centralization has reduced billets but created a tremendous amount of extra work for people still in the squadron. The air force only measures the money saved from eliminating positions but not the cost of all the additional work out on the squadron.

8



6d, 4h • u/xile_logic

Create a structure that focuses on the primary job and being good at it. Eliminate all the wasted additional duties from squadron members and give the ones that must be done to relevant AFSCs placed within the squadron

8





Core Concepts



- Support Manning and Additional Duties
- Size Matters
- Workload
- Time in Squadron
- Squadron Commander Influence



Survey Process



- 13 question survey tested core concepts & gathered demographic data
- Survey reviewed by AU integration cell to guard against bias & leading questions
- 267 SOS and SNCOA respondents

SOS Think Tank Eagles

SOS Think Tank Survey: Focus on the Squadron

The Chief of Staff of the Air Force has declared the squadron the "Heartbeat of the Air Force." Your input on this survey will help us determine what needs to be done to return the squadron to the center of Air Force life.

After each question is a textbox for entering additional information relevant to your answer. These boxes are completely optional, though any information you provide may be helpful.

1. My squadron commander has the most influence on my future. *

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Not Sure / Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>				

2. Optional Comments for Question 1

3. I would be willing to risk a bad squadron commander having more influence over my career if it meant the good squadron commanders also had more influence over my career. *

Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Not Sure / Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="radio"/>				

4. Optional Comments for Question 3



Survey Process



- Demographics heavily biased toward Captains, with some SNCO representation
- Virtually no data from FGOs and junior enlisted ranks

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4. Optional Comments for Question 3



Survey Results



- Squadrons should be manned to accomplish recurring tasks associated with its primary mission
- Duties not directly supporting the squadron mission should be removed from the squadron
 - **Currently being addressed by CSAF**
 - 77% desire embedded support
 - 39% spend > 50% on additional duties
 - 75% identified additional duties as a major obstacle



Survey Results



- Squadron size is a key factor in forming identity
 - 18% identified this as an obstacle
 - No strong correlation



Survey Results



- Squadrons must have a manageable workload to foster community
 - 54% of survey respondents identified this as a problem
 - This perception is wrong!
 - We found no correlation between workload and cohesion
 - 83% of respondents work more than 45 hours per week
 - 43% of respondents work more than 55 hours per week



Survey Results



- Spending time together as a squadron improves unit cohesion

“...other members of the Sq can't believe I've been there so long because they rarely see me”

- Only 11% of survey respondents identified this as a problem
- 63% in the squadron < 70% of career
- 43% in the squadron < 50% of career
- 29% in the squadron < 30% of career



Survey Results



Time in Squadron vs Cohesion





Survey Results



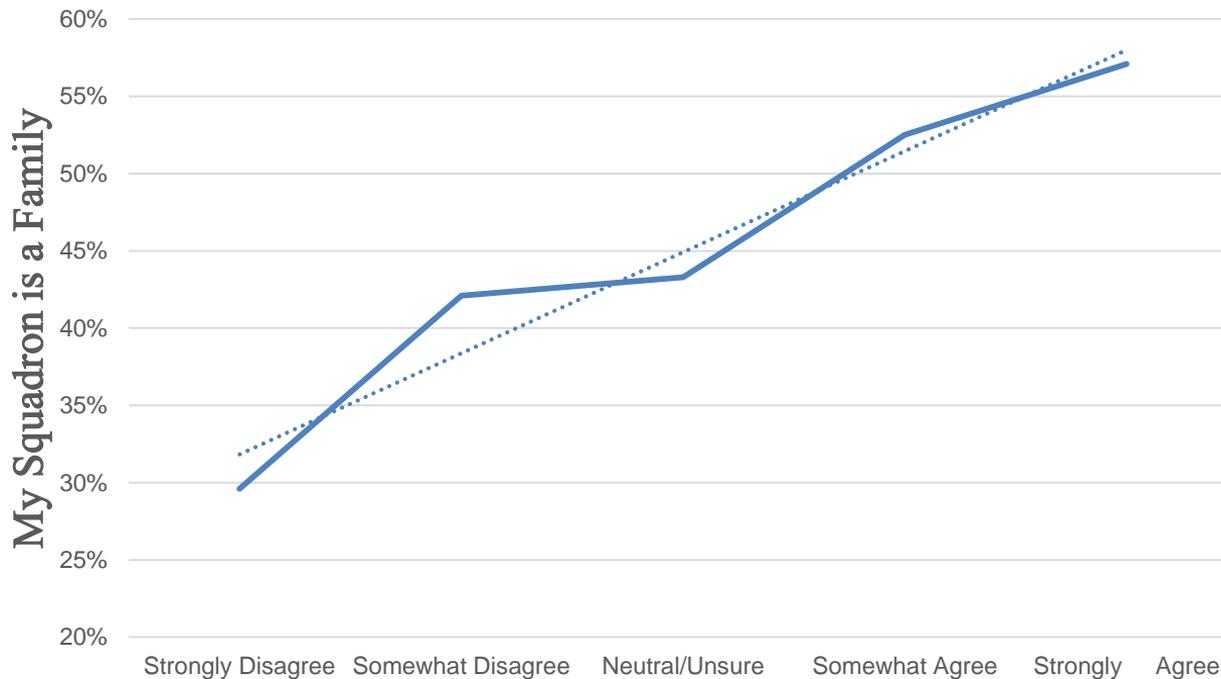
- Squadron Commander should have greater influence over people and resources
 - “My squadron commander has the most influence on my future.” – 57% agreed



Survey Results



Sq/CC Influence vs Cohesion





Survey Results



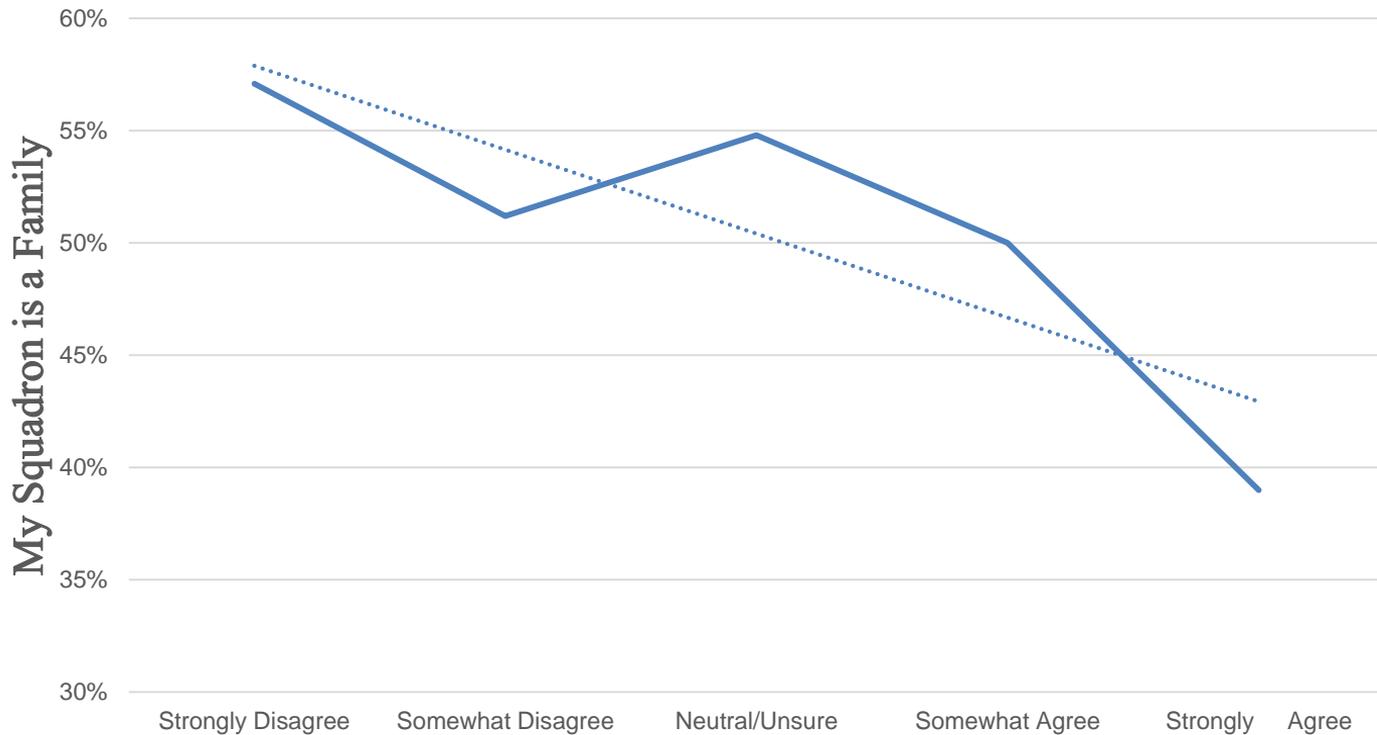
- “I need to work at the group and wing level to be competitive for assignments, promotions, and awards”
- 69% Agree
- “My group and/or wing detracts from my squadron’s ability to accomplish the mission” - 40% Agree



Survey Results



Gp/Wg Promotion Influence vs Cohesion





Survey Results



“...but not much power in a positive way”

“This is what my CC has been preaching. I either need to work at Group or Wing...”

“If you aren’t on the wing commanders radar you will get passed over”

“I feel like he has to get everything approved by the Wg/CC and Gp/CC”

“...It is almost as if he is a staff officer rather than commander.”

“...but my Senior Rater has more influence on my future”

“He has bosses who tell him what to do.”

“...it is the OG and WG that dictate opportunities”

“Working at the group and wing gets you strats”

“...work at the squadron level, and in my AFSC the flight level, is not respected when it comes to promotions...”¹⁹



Key Findings



- The Air Force should empower squadron leadership and deemphasize upper echelons of command
 - Increased SQ/CC influence correlates to stronger cohesion
- We need to spend more time together with members of our squadrons
 - Unit deployments, TDYs, face-to-face training may help
 - Factors that detract from this are:
 - CBTs, GSU constructs, email instead of in-person interaction
 - JET/individual taskings are the norm, not the exception for many Airmen

“We really bond when we deploy as a SQ...”



Way Forward



- Think Tank Eagles identified two key findings
- Additional surveys needed to validate these findings
- Future research/actions must address both findings



Questions

