

WINGMAN, WARRIOR, AIRMAN
BRANDING THE U.S. AIR FORCE

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

WINGMAN, WARRIOR, AIRMAN | BRANDING THE U.S. AIR FORCE

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DEDICATION

Thanks, Mom and Ty. Dedicated to my Dad.

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introduction

branding | The U.S. Army Air Forces and then the Army Air Corps struggled in the 1940s to become a separate, specialized military service from the U.S. Army, as air power doctrine and theory were realized and defined. Today, since its inception in 1946, even after 60 years of air superiority and dominance, the U.S. Air Force struggles to find a recognizable image and identity among the five services, to include the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. The AF dominates air, space and cyberspace, and is capable of global reach, vigilance and power, yet its “brand” has never reached audiences as well as the Marine Corps or Army.

According to multiple studies¹, the Marine Corps has the most recognizable marketing slogan with “The Few, the Proud, the Marines.” These studies, cited below in the literature review, demonstrate the American public failing to recognize the core capabilities of the AF. That’s not a failure on their part, but on the part of AF communicators to tell the AF story.

Continued publicity struggles follow what the researcher believes to be a major flaw with Air Force Public Affairs: failure to develop into a brand. As an AF public affairs officer, the purpose in studying the 2008 Integrated Marketing Campaign, “[Above All](#)” and the 2009 campaign, “It’s not science fiction,” is to review the messages portrayed, and then test a proposed slogan to see if branding is, in fact, possible. The researcher does not presume to believe one proposed slogan will “brand” the AF, but instead will develop an integrated marketing campaign through historical and whole concept integration.

To successfully brand the AF, a slogan should define the qualities of today’s Airmen. Studies² here show when Americans think of the term “warrior,” they associate it with a Marine or an Army soldier. They don't think of an Airman. In today’s conflicts, Airmen are not just flying

¹ United States Air Force (d) Air Force Symbol, Slogan & Ads, (2007); United States Air Force (g) Awareness of Air Force Advertising, (2007); United States Air Force (j) Influencer Views of the Services, (2007); United States Air Force (n), Slogans, Airman’s Creed, Warrior Ethos, (2007).

² United States Air Force (o) Trends: Airman’s Creed & ‘Warrior’ (2008); United States Air Force (h) CSAF White Paper – Warrior Culture (2008)

over the battlefield; they are also on the frontlines calling in air strikes, patrolling villages and detonating improvised explosive devices, one of the deadliest weapons facing our forces. Airmen are clearly in the fight, and there are countless casualties to support that premise.

The Airman's Creed defines members of the AF as Wingmen, Warriors and Airmen. It is logical to assume these characteristics would define the AF brand, just as “The Few, the Proud, the Marines” defines the Marine Corps, as a specialized service with a long, rich history.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the messages portrayed in the marketing campaign “Above All” and determine if the central AF themes are showcased, then propose a slogan based on qualitative analysis with in-depth, semi-structured interviews and a survey. This is intended as an exploratory study to better understand how to brand the AF. This study will look at how the “Above All” IMC succeeded, and how it failed to establish a brand for the AF. It should be noted, the campaign was pulled within six months of release in the summer of 2008. Following a tumultuous summer of controversy, the Secretary of the AF and Chief of Staff were fired. The new administration essentially didn't approve of the superior and historical undertones according to personal discussions with senior officials. It was noted that Adolf Hitler used the phrase “above all” multiple times in public speeches. In one example, “Above all, I enjoin the government and the people to uphold the race laws to the limit and to resist mercilessly the poisoner of all nations, international Jewry,” (Hitler, 2009).

Currently, the AF has launched a new commercial, “[It's not science fiction](#).” You've seen the technology in the biggest Hollywood films. It's not science fiction; it's what the U.S. Air Force does every day.” Unlike the “Above All” campaign, this commercial was launched on television and on AF social media sites in July 2009 without much internal promotion. (*Researcher's note:* The commercial is too recent for inclusion in the Air Force studies section, but it is mentioned here and will be included in the branding study. Also of note, this thesis topic has evolved over the course of two years due to two deployments and a permanent change of station, or move. The purpose is constant, however, and the desire to brand the AF continues.)

1 | literature review

branding principles | To begin, the definition of branding with respect to this study, is to market an idea or image so that it is recognizable by more and more people, and something internally identified with and accepted. Several principles of branding have been considered, to include brand trust theory and brand-customer relationship theory. With respect to *brand trust theory*, authors Delgado-Ballester, Yague-Guillen and Munuera-Aleman (2003) cite two assumptions about the relationship between brands and consumer trust: trust is the “cornerstone” of any relationship and it is the most important “attribute a brand can own” (Delgado-Ballester, Yague-Guillen, & Munuera-Aleman, 2003). As studies show³, the American public holds high trust with the U.S. military and the Air Force in particular. Even when controversial or highly visible events occur, such as the failure of nuclear inspections and the firing of the Chief of Staff and Secretary of the Air Force in 2008, public opinion bounces back and remains steady and positive, according to Lt. Col. Robert Pope, Air Force Public Affairs. The Air Force is accepted as a reliable national defense asset built on integrity and capability.

Brand trust is a multi-dimensional construct between the consumer and the brand with two distinct components: brand reliability and brand intentions. The first component is the basis for the trust, where a consumer believes the brand will accomplish what it promises. The second component is the point where consumers believe the brand will “hold the consumer’s interest when unexpected problems arise” (Delgado-Ballester, Yague-Guillen, & Munuera-Aleman, 2003). The nuclear mishaps of 2007 and the failed inspections in 2008 were public problems for the AF and its leadership, as evidenced by their abrupt removal from office. When surveyed, most people believe the AF is “fixing the problems” and generally have the best interest of the American public (CRB Version 60 “Recovery in Public Attitude Trends”).

³ United States Air Force (l) Public Opinion of the Air Force, (2007); United States Air Force (m) Recovery in Public Attitude Trends.

brand-customer construct/model | Public opinion that shapes perception and image is tied with its brand. “...Corporate image is every dimension of the brand, which is externally perceived by the consumer” (Power & Whelan, 2005, p. 2). Power and Whelan theorize the brand is tied to corporate image, and the corporate image includes the CEO. The theories of brand trust are best summarized by Fournier (1998), who called the relationship between brand and consumer trust a multi-faceted construct. Others have gone further, saying the relationship construct is “focused on the future” while also drawing on past information. “Without trust, there can be no stable or durable relationship” (Gurviez & Korchia, 2003, p. 4). In their research Gurviez and Korchia found no other offers of measuring trust, so they proposed a trust scale based on three dimensions of trust, including eight items for credibility, integrity and benevolence. They determined the path between credibility and trust was five times greater than benevolence and integrity with trust. Credibility of the military has long been a source of positive public opinion and support. Based on these theories, there exists a key opportunity for the AF to develop and establish its brand identity. Further, the U.S. military is characterized by service, sacrifice, honor and other attributes that emotionally tie the American public to its young men and women in uniform. “Brands with a strong emotional link will be at the top of its category” (Ruvalcaba & Elkes, 2008, p. 2).

brand building | David Aaker, a professor at University of California, Berkeley, studied building strong brands in a book of similar name. His case studies on brand building follow some of the most successful brand builders, like GE and Harley Davidson. His theory offers an explanation for the problems of the AF over the past couple of decades. “Yet, too often, the brand message to customers is weak, confused, irrelevant, or, worst of all, indistinguishable from competitor offerings” (Aaker, 1996). According to Aaker, “a brand personality can make a brand more interesting and memorable and can even become a vehicle to express a customer’s identity” (Aaker, 1996). He also claims a strong symbol can build a brand personality (Aaker, 1996). As shown by several studies here, the official AF symbol is highly identified and the keystone to developing the AF into a brand.

In another book, *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*, the authors instruct how to brand a product or service by following 22 rules or laws. The authors, Al and Laura Ries, describe the current consumer environment as one where most products and services are bought, not sold. They claim branding “pre-sells” the product or service to the user, making marketing and selling close to obsolete.

The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding will be used as a how-to guide during brand development. Ries & Ries make several valuable lesson points: “branding is simply a more efficient way to sell things ... brands are not limited to the 2.5 million trademarks registered with the U.S. government ... any proper noun is a brand ... and brands possess unique identities and qualities separate and distinct from their company or product names” (Ries & Ries, 2002, p. xii). A proposed brand would aim to “sell” confidence, trust and pride in the men and women serving in the AF. Further discussion will follow in developing a proposed brand.

congruity theory | Another area of study providing helpful insight is Osgood and Tannenbaum’s congruity theory. Congruity theory “makes specific predictions about the direction and amount of attitude change that will occur from persuasive communication” (Benoit, 2009, pp. 5-6). Persuasive communication is integral to strategic communications plans developed by the military, whether it is timely, accurate information through public affairs, influence communication through information operations or even psychological communication through military deception. Congruity theory involves situations where “a Source makes an assertion about a Concept, and the audience has attitudes toward the Source and the Concept...this theory holds that incongruity (like imbalance) is unpleasant and motivates audiences to change their attitudes” (Benoit, 2009, p. 5). In terms for this thesis, when the AF makes an assertion about its weapons program, the American public (audience) has attitudes toward the AF and the program. These attitudes may change as imbalance creates differing opinions, disliked Sources or disliked Concepts.

image congruity theory | Product image is a key aspect to congruity theory as well, and is based on the argument that consumers choose products that are consistent with their self-concept in an attempt to satisfy symbolic needs (Han & James, 2007). Women who want to feel beautiful may buy Cover Girl or Revlon products because the images displayed with the products are beautiful, the spokeswomen are beautiful, and they want to relate the images to their own lives. It's the same reason why someone would want to join the Air Force. They see images of precision and bravery by the AF Thunderbirds team, and they strive for that achievement.

2 | applying theory

It can be inferred brand recognition and recall are the keystones of a marketing campaign. The theme or brand image has changed so often the Air Force isn't recognizable. Additionally, the U.S. Navy and AF fly similar jet aircraft, and both have jet aerial demonstration teams, further making the AF indistinguishable. A proposed brand must be recognizable.

After a decade of publication, the official symbol (see footnote) is the most recognizable advertising 'gimmick' in the AF arsenal. In 2007, 69 percent of respondents to an "Awareness of Air Force Advertising" campaign recognized the AF symbol without aided recall (United States Air Force (c), 2007). The symbol is a great product and is widely used and published: two key aspects according to one author. "In reality, brands are a by-product, only of having a great product and communicating it well to people," (Miller, 2008, p. 12).

3 | air force studies

The following are a wide collection of studies funded by, related to, or researched by the AF. They discuss public opinion, internal AF opinion, airmen, wingman and warrior concepts and most specifically, the “Above All” Integrated Marketing Campaign (IMC).

The research findings that follow were conducted from 2000 to August 2008 and cover public perception of the Air Force, current opinion of the “Above All” IMC, current acceptance of the warrior culture and wingmen concept, opinion of the official symbol, understanding of the Airman’s Creed, and current trends in public opinion polls. The research studies are mainly internal Air Force products conducted at the Pentagon by SAF/PA (Public Affairs) and CM (Communications), while some of the research was conducted by outside agencies. Outside companies hired or contracted include *The Everett Group*, *Siegel & Gale*, *GSD&M – Idea City*; Department of Defense/Air Force agencies include the *Joint Advertising and Marketing Research Studies*, and *Internal Communication Assessment Group*.

The “Above All” IMC was developed by *GSD&M - Idea City* for launch in the spring of 2008 (United States Air Force (e), 2008). The “Above All” advertising products centered around three significant AF terms with one main goal: show the **Warrior** culture of **Airmen** actively engaged in the fight, serving and protecting their **Wingmen** and nation. The fallout opinions expressed however described the campaign as arrogant, fulsome and as previously discussed, resembling Hitler. On the flip side, the proposed slogan to “Fly, Fight, Win” successfully incorporates the Warrior, Airmen and Wingmen concepts.

In a study of Airmen's Views of “Above All” ads, sixty-two percent of the sample, 654 Air Force Internal Communication Assessment Group panelists, saw the AF's “Above All” advertising commercials either on television or the AF intranet. Of those sampled 43 percent of active-duty Airmen and AF civilians agree or strongly agree that the “Above All” tagline accurately describes the Air Force and 41 percent agree or strongly agree that the tagline is memorable. Several contributing factors hindered the tagline success: just 24 percent of panelists agree or strongly

agree that they were satisfied with the provided information explaining the “Above All” ad campaign and a large number, 82 percent, said their chain-of-command did not explain why the campaign was created. The ads were well made and had an average rating of 4.5 (1-dislike very much to 7-like very much), but only half agree or strongly agree the ads effectively tell America what the AF does, delivers a strong recruiting message, or are proud of the ads, and close to a quarter agree or strongly agree the ads make the AF look arrogant and conceited (United States Air Force (f), 2008).

In an *Everett Group* national survey of 1,200 adults, one of the concepts measured was exposure to and recall of the “Above All” tagline. Only one in five respondents said they remembered being exposed to the tagline when aided by a recall questionnaire item, although respondents rated the tagline at remarkably positive levels, even at similar levels as “Army Strong” and “Accelerate Your Life” among youth. Two segments of the target market included “true-blue patriots” and “secondary segments,” both of which reported higher levels of recall than segments not within the target markets (by eight percent and 28 percent respectively.) When associating “Above All” with AF attributes, recalled exposure to “Above All” ads caused an increase in positive attribution. For instance, respondents who associated “integrity” with the AF rose from 8.2 to 8.7, “elite” from 7.9 to 8.5, “cyber warfare” from 6.4 to 7.1 and even a negative attribute: “stressed,” rose from 6.1 to 7.4. All other positive attributes, measured on a 5-point Likert scale, also rose between .20 and .40 points. Finally, youth reaction was measured. In comparison to a Wave 19 (October thru December 07) Joint Advertising and Marketing Research Service study, youth respondents measured the “Above All” tagline at similar levels of the Army and Navy, and second only to the Marines. The previous AF slogan, “Cross Into the Blue” received the lowest measured with only a quarter of the population reporting strongly/somewhat positive feelings (United States Air Force (a), 2008).

This internal study, “Airmen's Initial Views of Above All,” of 411 Airmen was conducted in January 2008, a few months before the public distribution. Internal opinion of the “Above All” IMC tended to be negative with 76 percent reporting they agree/strongly agree the tagline says

the AF is better than the other services. Sixty-eight percent agree/strongly agree the tagline tells people nothing about the AF (although 16 percent disagree/strongly disagree). Fewer than 40 percent agree/strongly agree that the tagline is memorable or accurate and only a quarter of the respondents think the tagline encourages youth to enlist in the AF, and most notably 20 percent even felt it was inappropriate because of religious reasons. Seventy-eight percent disliked the tagline for reasons ranging from it being too vague, easy to misinterpret, conceited, arrogant, egotistical, lame, and because it sounds like the AF is above the other services. Of positive comments, 59 percent said they liked it because it was short, simple, connotes flying above, the sky, superior, elite and because it's catchy and clever (United States Air Force (e), 2008).

In a study by an internal focus group titled, "Slogans, Airman's Creed, Warrior Ethos," more than 1,100 people responded to two different surveys conducted in 2007 containing questions on slogans, the Airman's Creed and the Warrior Ethos. Forty-one percent of panelists preferred the tagline "Global vigilance, global reach and global power," versus less than 15 percent for "Top cover for freedom," "We hold the ultimate high ground," "Airmen save lives," "America's sword and shield." Less than five percent preferred "We dominate adversaries choices." Exceptions varied by career: medical fields preferred "Airmen save lives" and the legal and chaplain fields preferred "We hold the ultimate high ground." The Airman's Creed includes statements like "Wingman, Warrior, Airman," "I will never leave an Airman behind," "I defend my country with my life." Most respondents identified with statements involving service before self, one of the three core values. Respondents felt a weaker connection to newer phrases like "I am a warrior." In the Warrior Ethos survey, slightly more than half of respondents say they feel like a warrior (51 percent), while it was greater for officers. Twenty-nine percent do not feel like warriors, but wish they did, although 21 percent do not feel like warriors, and don't want to. However, with the statement "If I had wanted to be a warrior I would have joined a different service other than the Air Force," 55 percent disagree/strongly disagree. That number varied by career field and officer versus enlisted corps (United States Air Force (n), 2007).

Most respondents of the 454 ICAG “Identification as Airman, Wingman, Warrior” panelists felt a connection to the statement “I am an Airman” and most said they “felt like an Airman” and “felt like a Wingman.” Nearly one-third of Airmen surveyed felt a “very strong connection” to “I am an Airman” and the overall average was 5.2 on a 7-point scale. Enlisted personnel felt the strongest connection and civilians working with the Department of the Air Force felt the weakest. Those with weak feelings were mainly okay with not feeling like an Airman. On the other hand, most respondents said they do feel like a Wingman. Eighty-one percent of enlisted and 81 percent of officers also felt like Wingmen, and 77 percent of overall respondents said they either felt like they have multiple Wingmen in the Air Force or they felt like everyone in the Air Force was their Wingman. This culture of looking out for each other and being Wingmen to each other was stronger than even feeling like an Airman. During an Air Force-wide Wingman Day, Airmen spent an average of 6.4 hours on Wingman Day activities, and between 58 percent and 74 percent of the internal audience agreed or strongly agreed with three positive statements about the activities. Level of agreement was said to build camaraderie and esprit-de-corps. Almost two-thirds of Airmen participated; those that couldn't participate were TDY or couldn't leave work, etc. When considering themselves “Warriors” more than half of respondents agreed, while 21 percent did not feel like warriors and did not care to. While the terms Airman, Wingman and Warrior have been used for a long time and quite frequently, it is believed they may not be well defined (United States Air Force (i), 2008).

In a related assessment “Trends: Airman's Creed & 'Warrior,’” 1,600 Airmen and Air Force civilians were asked questions, first in August 2007 and again in June 2008, regarding “Reinvigoration of the rich Air Force Warrior Culture,” one of the four desired effects of the Air Force Strategic Communication Campaign Plan. To achieve the desired “reinvigoration,” Air Force leaders encouraged greater acceptance and understanding of the Airman's Creed. Ten months later, respondents were significantly more connected to the Airman's Creed. For eight out of nine phrases, the difference between the ratings from the two surveys was significant. Only two phrases, “I am a Warrior” and “Its sentry and avenger,” continued to have weak connections

however, and military personnel continued to have a stronger connection to the Airman's Creed than civilian personnel (United States Air Force (o), 2008).

Another one of the four desired effects is “Reinvigoration of Airmen Culture.” The Air Force Strategic Communication Campaign Plan was further explained in the December 2007 Chief of Staff White Paper, “*The Nation's Guardians: America's 21st Century Air Force.*” The Internal Communication Assessment Group (Study 12) surveyed the internal population's knowledge of the White Paper. Most of the 1,269 panelists had not heard of the CSAF's White Paper, although the majority were familiar with the first two messages that touched on the warrior culture: “We must refocus our organization and culture on the warfighting mission; implement advanced operational concepts **to fly, fight and win** in all domains, make best use of game-changing technologies, and recapitalize our aging equipment,” and “We must prepare our Airmen for a challenging future, encouraging and nurturing intellectual curiosity and the ability to learn, anticipate and adapt. To do this, we are reinvigorating warrior ethos, revitalizing the world's most advanced training system and expanding the 21st Century educational opportunities.” The third message was not widely recognized, although it did not include familiar themes and messages like the other two. “We will develop self-forming, self-healing networks that harness the power of machine-to-machine interfaces freeing up human resources for activities where intellect and warrior spirit are indispensable.” Two-thirds of the respondents were familiar with the first message, which included well known terms such as, “fly, fight and win” and “recapitalize the aging equipment.” Over half of the respondents were familiar with the second message, while 18 percent were not familiar at all. Overall, only one-fifth of the internal audience was familiar with all three of the messages (United States Air Force (h), 2008).

An external *Defense Trends* survey, “Public Opinion of the Air Force,” by *The Everett Group* was conducted in the spring of 2007 on 1,200 adults across the United States. Of 20 words and phrases tested, three stood out as predominantly associated with the Air Force when asked what service do you think of first when you hear (term): 55 percent associated “technology,” 41 percent associated “skilled,” and 32 percent associated “professional.” The survey also linked

those terms to the Air Force on a 10-point scale. Positive terms, including those associated with the warrior ethos were strongly associated with describing the Air Force. Eighty-nine percent have great confidence in the Air Force and 90 percent agree the Air Force gets the job done when called upon. Eighty-one percent agree the U.S. Air Force is the strongest air force in the world and more Americans believe the AF will be the single most important branch of the military in future wars, 42 percent versus 31 percent for the Marines, and 27/26 percent for Army/Navy. While comparing the services, respondents answered “Service in the (blank) is an honorable profession I’d recommend for a young person” with the Army 7 to 14 percent lower than the other services. Finally, respondents answered questions about the need for funding for the services. Fifty-three percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Army receives sufficient funding from the federal government versus 35 percent for the Air Force (United States Air Force (I), 2007). The Army has the largest budget request, for 2010 at \$225.2 billion, and this poll result is of no surprise, especially with widespread news reports soldiers don’t have adequate equipment or security vehicles to ward off lethal IED attacks.

As mentioned above, this project was conducted by an independent, syndicated, commercial research company by *The Everett Group*. In another study, fifteen-minute interviews with adult residents of the households were conducted on 1,200 households between March 28 and April 5, 2007. The male to female ratio was 50/50. Eighty-four percent of respondents were not veterans of the U.S. military and only 35 percent had parents who were veterans. Twenty-one percent had a family member serving and 65 percent claimed to have friends or family who served in Iraq or Afghanistan. The majority of respondents were Caucasian (by 84 percent) versus “non-white.” Education levels were pretty evenly split between high school, some college, bachelor’s degree and graduate degree work. Ages also were pretty evenly split between 18- to 65-plus (with six categories total). Overall attitudes and opinions about the military tended to be positive or favorable; however demographics played a role in the results. Females generally believed military members should not serve more than one tour of duty in Iraq or Afghanistan, the military is spread too thin, there are enough troops deployed in the wars and the military is too stressed.

Males said more active-duty military are needed, held high confidence in the military and that America will win the Global War on Terror and the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are an important part of GWOT. Veterans agreed that more active-duty military are needed, held high confidence in the military and agreed the Afghanistan war is important to GWOT, but did not include Iraq. Non-veterans had similar results as females, saying no military members should serve more than one tour of duty and there are enough troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. Non-veterans also said there is no need to reinstate the draft. People with family members in the military said more active-duty are needed, Rumsfeld's resignation will make GWOT harder, it will take years to win GWOT, both Iraq and Afghanistan are important parts of GWOT and also said there is no reason to reinstate the draft. People with friends or family in Iraq or Afghanistan added, the military is too stressed, but generally agreed with the other statements. The "white majority" tended to hold high confidence in the military, agreed it would take years to win GWOT, but that Afghanistan is an important part of GWOT. The "non-white" minority said no one should serve more than one tour of duty, there are enough troops deployed, Rumsfeld's resignation would make it harder and that the military is too stressed. Education levels showed that those with less education thought that no military members should serve more than one tour of duty and they were confident America would win. Those with higher education agreed it will take years to win. Younger populations did not see a need to reinstate the draft and thought there are enough troops deployed.

The groups that tended to have similar views included females, "non-white," non-veterans, younger respondents and those without members in the military. They tended to believe there is no need to reinstate the draft, the military is stressed, there are enough troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, no troops should be required to serve more than one tour of duty, and Secretary Rumsfeld's resignation will make GWOT harder. Males, "white-majority," veterans, and respondents with members in the military or serving in Iraq and Afghanistan tended to side together as well. They tended to have confidence in the military, believe that both Iraq and Afghanistan are critical to winning GWOT, and believe it will take years and that more active-duty

personnel are needed. With regards to media coverage, respondents who consider television to be at least a somewhat important source of information tended to believe AF coverage is balanced, but those who considered a family member or friend with military experience to be a very important source of information tended to believe the coverage is balanced to negative. The elderly and 35 to 44 year olds believed the coverage was balanced to negative, while young adults believed it was balanced to positive (The Everett Group, 2007). So, what does that mean to brand development here? Brand recognition is dependent on familiarity with the military and other key demographics, such as gender, age and race. “Be, all you can be, in the Army,” became a well known slogan with women and their children when G.I. Joe became a cartoon and super hero figure. Marketing to all demographics increases brand reach and effectiveness.

Now to look at one of the most successful AF branding tactics, an internal focus group study titled, “Air Force Symbol: 1999-2001 Focus Group and Survey results.” The current Air Force symbol was created in 1999 by the Siegel & Gale identity consulting firm (see header for symbol). They recommended a modern, stylized version of the Hap Arnold wings (see insert) as the new Air Force symbol. Twenty-five focus group studies in October and November 1999 measured public opinion about the proposed symbol, with a strong civilian preference for the new symbol over the old Hap Arnold wings. Military, retirees and senior leaders had a weak preference for the old symbol, which was believed to be the official AF symbol. In the surveys, respondents believed there were more important things to discuss than the AF symbol, however they said they'd support anything their senior leaders chose, but would like it to be adopted quickly. Civilian groups said the Hap Arnold wings were “goofy looking,” and the “angel wings” were inappropriate as a symbol for a force with the destructive, war-fighting power of the AF. Most civilian groups preferred the stylized wings because they said it appeared to be an eagle, enlisted stripes, the American Star and the Medal of Honor connoting valor, courage, and honor, in a futuristic image. The military groups preferred keeping the AF's heritage and they questioned the need for changing logos. The retirees merely liked the “looks” better of the Hap Arnold wings. Senior leadership agreed that younger people might like the new design,



but felt it was too far out there and thought they needed to be more cautious. Web-based surveys were conducted for Airmen and AF civilian employees in November 2000 and May 2001. The results found that fewer than 10 percent realized there was no official symbol at the time of the November survey; half assumed it was the Hap Arnold wings. Airmen and AF civilians were asked to respond on a 1-5 scale on 14 given statements regarding their preference for the two symbols. Most responses teetered around neutral, showing neither strong agreement nor strong disagreement, and only about one-quarter of respondents knew the meaning behind the new symbol.

The meaning of the symbol shares the heritage of the wings and star with circle, but reflects the modernized air, space and cyber space. The wings look like enlisted stripes representing the enlisted corps, and they are separated into six sections for six distinctive capabilities: air and space superiority, global attack, rapid global mobility, precision engagement, information superiority and agile combat support. The star and circle represent the globe and the AF obligation for “Global Vigilance, Reach and Power,” and also the AF's ability to deploy globally anywhere within 24 hours. The star's five points represent the components, the active-duty, civilians, Guard, Reserve and retirees, and the star also represents the officer corps, central to leadership. The three diamonds represent the core values, integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do. Representing an eagle, the emblem of our nation, and a medal, representing valor in service to our nation, the Air Force symbol, adopted in 2000 became a widely accepted symbol, as evidenced by future studies (Pope, 2007).

Since the introduction of the first official AF symbol, a number of internal and external studies have been conducted comparing public opinion and reaction. In April 2002, the *Everett Group* reported the two results from the 2000 and 2001 telephone surveys, (as previously discussed). Then it replicated the study of internal audiences again in June 2007, which showed higher preference for the official symbol versus the Hap Arnold wings. During the six years between studies, overall acceptance of the official symbol increased. There was the strongest agreement the official symbol reflected the Air Force's roles in air, space, and cyber space. The

Hap Arnold wings were preferred in regards to the Air Force heritage. Respondents strongly agreed the qualities the symbol should have were: appeal to young people, be modern, futuristic, high-tech and represent the people of the Air Force.

January thru March 2007, the Department of Defense Joint Advertising Marketing Research & Studies (JAMRS) conducted an external audience review among youth (15-21 years old) and their influencers (parents, teachers, coaches, etc). Young audiences preferred the official symbol to the Hap Arnold wings. Fifteen-hundred youth and 1,125 youth influencers were surveyed measuring awareness and recognition of the official symbol. Sixty-eight percent of youth recognized the official symbol, more than 52 percent for the Marine Corps symbol, but less than the 81 percent for the Army. Youth who could recall seeing an AF ad were more likely to recognize the symbol, by 77 percent, versus 59 percent who could not recall seeing an advertisement. Youth influencers, who were obviously older, could recognize the Marine Corps and Army symbols more than the AF symbol. The current, official symbol was well regarded across most of the studies, and it ranked significantly higher for representing skill, high technology, being a memorable symbol, and for its mission in space and cyber space. Also of note, during an on-site survey during the September 2007 New England Air Force week, people provided one-word responses about the symbol, which included bird, wings, eagle, medal, plane and the star with wings. Respondents for the Hap Arnold wings used terms like wings, flying, bird, eagle, "old" Air Force, patch and angels (United States Air Force (c), 2007). AF symbol recognition increased a significant eight percent from the previous quarter. Once accepted, the AF symbol became the sole marketing tool for AF brand recognition, regardless of slogan.

When the AF launched the "Do Something Amazing" advertising campaign in September 2006, ad recall among recruiting-aged youth and their influencers decreased significantly by 20 percent from July thru September 2006 to October thru December 2006, according to a study titled "Air Force Symbol, Slogan & Ads." Ad recall also remained lower through the beginning of the following year, only rising by two percent. A positive attribute of the "Do Something Amazing" commercials however, determined youth found them to be more interesting, by close to

40 percent in comparison to the Army Strong ads and by more than 50 percent for the Marine Corps Diamond advertisements. Unaided, only six percent of youth recalled seeing any AF recruiting slogan, while aided recall pushed that figure up to 13 percent. Remarkably, the Marine Corps' "The Few, The Proud, The Marines" had a 74 percent recognition rate. Youth were more likely to think of the AF as offering training in technology, an attractive lifestyle, excellent preparation for a future career, and was interesting and more than just a daily routine, as compared to the other services. Phrases most strongly associated with the Air Force, but that were also similar to phrases of the other services, included: "Provides an opportunity for travel (77 percent)," "For people willing to make sacrifices (74 percent)," "Offers an opportunity for adventure (70 percent)," and "Offers opportunities to do amazing things (70 percent)." The phrases that separated the AF from the other services included "Lifestyle that is attractive to me," "Excellent preparation for a future career," and the "Most elite service" (United States Air Force (d), 2007). The success of the Marine Corps slogan among youth is noteworthy, and it can be theorized the main reason for the success, is the longevity of the quote. With branding, consistency is key.

Three surveys included in "Awareness of Air Force Advertising," by JAMRS, in the winter, spring, and summer 2007 included interviews of approximately 1,500 recruiting-age youth. The surveys asked youth to recall AF advertising, the 2003 – 2007 slogan "Cross into the Blue" and the AF symbol. It also asked about the AF recruiting Web site, www.airforce.com. From January thru March to July thru September, 33 percent of youth recalled seeing, reading or hearing an AF ad unaided, down from 40 percent. Current ad recall was significantly lower than several years ago, and lower than the other services. During a series of questions regarding the different ads, the AF's "Do Something Amazing" ranked in the top three for these characteristics: interesting value, appealing option, new or different and to find out more. The Marines and Navy ranked in the top three for each of the four categories, but the Army was not. When asked about the recruiting slogan "Cross into the Blue," only 1 percent of youth correctly recalled the AF slogan unaided. Ninety-one percent were "not sure" and only 5 percent recalled "Do Something

Amazing.” Twenty-one percent of youth recalled “Cross into the Blue” aided, however the AF ranks fourth of the five services for aided and unaided recall of slogans with only 20 percent. The Marines have the highest recall at 66 percent. The AF symbol has the highest recognition of any of its marketing products. Sixty-nine percent of respondents correctly associated the official symbol with the Air Force (United States Air Force (g), 2007). Again, the common thread is longevity and consistency with message. The most recognizable marketing products were long-term. The Marine Corps hasn’t changed its slogan for many years, just as the AF hasn’t changed its official symbol since 2000 ... that’s branding.

Receiving a consistent message is as important as how and where that message is received; 1,387 influencers of recruiting-aged youth reported the AF was the most highly evaluated military service option and was most likely to be recommended by youth influencers, such as parents, grandparents, teachers and coaches according to a JAMRS nationally sampled survey taken March thru June 2007, “Influencer Views of the Services.” Those recommending the AF reported higher levels of knowledge of the military service than neutral or non-supportive influencers. Those recommending the Air Force also held higher opinions of people who chose to serve in the military. All influencers gave the Marine Corps, Army, National Guard, and Reserves the lowest evaluations. Influencer attitudes toward voluntary military service showed several positive attributes; they had a higher level of respect, a more favorable view, and felt more pride for military members. Those unlikely to recommend the AF also had a higher belief those members of the military volunteered only because they had no other option. Based on GSD&M/Idea City focus group research, they determined the data indicated a positive correlation between influencing public opinion and educating the public (United States Air Force (j), 2007).

In the same study, JAMRS also studied how influencers and recruiting-aged youth get their information about the military. Influencers were more than 50 percent likely to get information from interpersonal relationships and online, rather than traditional media or advertising. The majority considered family, friends and teachers or coaches as the most influential in their opinion about recommending the AF to recruiting-aged youth. JAMRS

accurately assumed the military and AF control the information flow from military sources and from paid advertising. Among sources of information, 36 percent among influencers did not trust recruiters; however 72 percent used recruiters for their military information. The same held true for military Web sites, 44 percent trusted them; however 75 percent used them for sources of information. Even newspapers, television, mailers and commercials were all trusted less than they were used (United States Air Force (k), 2007). The take-away here is even if messages aren't fully trusted, the military and AF public affairs can influence opinion based on being the source of information. Over time, as information remains credible and accurate, influencer trust level should rise.

To track trends, *The Everett Group* conducted surveys at 11 Air Force Week sites between March 2007 and August 2008 for its study "Recovery in Public Attitude Trends." That data was included with eight *Defense Trends* surveys that tracked public perception of four Air Force measures: Air Force reliability, confidence in the Air Force, Air Force involvement in the Iraq/Afghanistan wars, and Air Force recapitalization. Prior to March 2008, public opinion of the Air Force was on a positive slope, but events later that year resulted in two downturns in April and July 2008. Those two main dips coincided with the mishaps with the nuclear program and the firing of the top two Air Force officials, including the negative press coverage that followed. The study consisted of four statements of trust: "When America calls on the Air Force, the Air Force does its job;" "I have great confidence in the Air Force;" "The Air Force is 'in the fight' in Iraq and Afghanistan;" and "The Air Force has many planes and other equipment that are very old and need to be replaced." During the 17-month survey period, final opinion rebounded and was higher than the March 2007 results for all four measures. In regards to reliability and confidence, 90 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the AF reliably does its job and that they have confidence in the Air Force. The "low" for reliability was in April 2008 at 82 percent, but rebounded 10 percent to 92 percent. The "low" for confidence was in July 2008 at 80 percent, but rebounded to 89 percent, for a nine percent increase. Perception of Air Force involvement in the ongoing wars rebounded by five percent from its April 2008 low, but was still

eight percentage points below its March 2008 high of 90 percent. Recapitalization perception rebounded slightly by five percent, but not as high as its highest point in March 2008, falling short by six percent.

Overall, the public opinion of the Air Force remained flat, with slight increase in the long-term, despite two substantial declines. The rebound followed a month of no mishaps and the reappointment of the Secretary of the Air Force and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. For background, General T. Michael Moseley and Secretary Michael Wynne were fired for their perceived ineptitude and irresponsibility following months of nuclear mishandling. It marred the image of the AF, and so they were replaced. The April 2008 dip followed the investigation report of the nuclear mishaps at Minot Air Force Base. The results of this study reinforced *The Everett Group's* findings in August 2008, which indicated minimal long-term effect of negative news events, and showed negative news events have “little lasting impact on public opinion, and that focus on restoring confidence in the Air Force should be directed” to internal audiences and those in the D.C. Beltway (United States Air Force (m), 2008).

Following that assessment, an internal focus group survey was conducted. “AF Nuclear Enterprise – Internal Audience Baseline,” an Internal Communication Assessment Group Survey included responses from 1,091 panelists regarding the Air Force Nuclear Enterprise; involving nuclear safety and security, processes, mission and importance. The internal study found that most Airmen and Department of the AF civilian employees believed the nuclear mission was just as important now as it ever was and that the AF was committed to achieve very high standards in the nuclear enterprise. There was no consensus reported on how the AF handled the nuclear mission or if the recently publicized events were isolated, or if they identified a larger problem in overall performance. While 72 percent agreed the AF was committed to achieving the highest standards in its nuclear mission, the differences by major commands varied greatly. Those commands or organizations that played a role in the nuclear enterprise had a stronger belief of the AF's commitment than people in commands with no nuclear role. A majority, although little more than half, believed the Air Force was being open and honest in its efforts to strengthen

performance in the nuclear mission areas. Seventy-two percent believed the nuclear mission was as important today as it was in the Cold War and 64 percent agreed the AF was the best manager of that program compared to the other services. The internal audience was mainly neutral with respect to meaningful or significant improvements being made and whether the recent “security” incidents reflected the overall performance. However, a majority disagreed with the statement, “Those sorts of security incidents have happened for years and years without harm, it’s just that the Air Force is under the political and media microscope in today’s environment.” Only one-quarter agreed with the statement. Fourteen percent of respondents provided comments. One staff sergeant said, “The media focuses solely on the negative things, they always have and they always will. I heard nothing about the fact that there has never been a nuclear mishap, or the total number of nuclear related items that are tracked year in and year out. Yes the mistakes were bad, but I applaud the men and women that do those jobs to deter America’s enemies, while constantly being under intense scrutiny” (United States Air Force (b), 2008). These studies show the importance of upholding the highest standards for a military service. The public perceives military service, in particular the AF, to be responsible and respectable. The AF core values embody these standards: excellence, integrity and service before self.

To continue to study public perceptions of the military, specifically the war in Iraq, telephone climate surveys of the American public were conducted in four waves beginning January 2003 and ending August 2005. Each survey measured 900 adults, 300 young adults (18-22 year olds) and 300 teenagers (although they were not sampled in the 2005 survey). Data was weighted for population age proportions, and the numbers listed below might equal more than one person for each unit depending on the particular weighting for each question, however for clarity, the term respondent will equal that of the weighted value, not necessarily one person. The point of the summary below is to determine the terms Americans identify with the AF. Once identified, those terms can be effectively used in brand development.

First, half of the respondents identified the military service they first thought of when responding to various attributes. January 2003 is considered pre-war, July 2003 is considered

post-war (ongoing operations still continue in Iraq, but the main assault was considered to have ended when the U.S. took over the Iraqi military forces, government and parliament in the spring of 2003). September 2004 is considered to be one year later, and August 2005 is two years later. When hearing the word “professional,” respondents selected the AF by 43 respondents pre-war, versus 24 for the Marines, 19 for the Navy and 15 for the Army. Only six months later, that dropped for the AF to 33, 32 for the Marines and 19 for the Army and only 17 for the Navy. One year later, and also at two years later, the Marines had the highest rating, at 33 respondents for both. The Air Force had 31 one year later and 30 two years later. The Navy continued to rise with 19 respondents and then 21. The Army dropped again to 17 and then to 15. Quite simply, the respondents labeled the AF as the most professional pre-war, but also considered the Marines Corps to be highly professional even two years after the war “ended.”

“Integrity” remained high for the Marines in all four surveys, pre-war was 39 respondents, post-war was 42, one year later was 39 and then two years later showed an all-time high at 44 respondents. While the AF was second in regards to “integrity” pre-war, the Army rose for the last three surveys as the second highest, although still was selected by 20 fewer respondents behind the Marines. The term “warriors” held two extremes; the Marines and Army far outweighed all respondents choices compared to the Navy and AF (both of which only held two to four people over all four surveys). “Excellence” also was selected most for the Marines followed by the AF, then the Army, with the Navy close behind. “Respected” and “disciplined” favored the Marines by 30 to 50 people respectively. The AF was considered to be the least disciplined of all the services and although it was second highest of services for “respected” pre-war, it dropped below the Army during the course of the war and even two years later. The Army, AF and Marines equally shared the population for the term “power,” leaving less than 15 going to the Navy. The term “elite” far favored the Marines again, although the AF led the rest of the services. The AF was selected as being identified as the most “skilled,” however it came in last for being considered “brave,” which was identified with the Marines and Army. “Technology” was only tested in the 2004 and 2005 surveys, and highly favored the AF. “Scandal” was included in

the 2005 survey only and Army was identified the most, by at least 40. The results identify a problem with the efforts to brand the AF. Not only did respondents fail to identify the AF with its core values, but it also showed only two to four respondents identified the AF with the term “warrior.” Most identified the AF with being professional, skilled and technical, not brave warriors. The Marines are such a specialized service they are easily identified as elite warriors. That’s one reason its slogan is right on the mark, “The Few, the Proud, the Marines.”

The other half of respondents rated only the AF on ten attributes. The scale included 1, which equated “doesn’t describe the Air Force at all,” to 10, “describes the Air Force very well.” Terms that scored the highest included: professional, skilled, brave and technology. Respondents also were asked to agree or disagree with a series of statements about the U.S. military and the AF. Most respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statements by more than 80 percent, including “I have great confidence in America’s military,” “In technology, the AF always must be a step ahead of everyone else in the world,” “The AF is the world leader in air power,” “When America calls on the AF, they do the job,” “I have great confidence in the AF,” and “The AF plays a critical role in keeping America secure through Homeland Defense.” Opinions were slightly lower when responding to “Defending America from attack should be the AF’s number one mission,” “The AF will become more and more important to America in the 21st century,” and “Service in the AF is an honorable profession I’d recommend for a young person.” Only 60 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that “AF people are warriors.” Forty to 50 percent agreed with, “The AF is also America’s ‘space force,’” “I pay less attention to the news from Iraq now than I did a year ago (2004 and 2005),” and “the AF has more high technology than the other military services.” Roughly thirty percent agreed that “Service in the AF is safer than in the Army, Navy or Marines Corps,” “In future wars, the AF will be the single most important branch of America’s military,” and increasing from the 2004 to 2005 study, respondents agreed “I would not recommend military service for my kids.” Less than 20 percent agreed “In the news media I see as much good news from Iraq as I see bad news from Iraq,” and “AF people face very little danger when they fly over Iraq.” Four questions were added to the 2005 survey. Close to 50 percent of

respondents agreed or strongly agreed “AF active-duty members have more years of experience than in the Reserves;” slightly more than 40 percent agreed “Though I know the AF is over in Iraq, I don’t really know what they’re doing there;” less than 30 percent agreed with “Almost all the flying in Iraq now is being done by Army or Marine Corps pilots;” and 20 percent agreed “These days the AF is flying more unmanned aircraft over Iraq than planes with pilots” (Everett, 2005).

It’s clear the American public thinks of Marines and Army soldiers as “warriors,” but not with America’s Airmen. The Airman's Creed defines members of the AF as Wingmen, Warriors and Airmen. While these characteristics are shown in the integrated marketing campaign, “Above All,” the American public barely had an opportunity to see it or accept it. Internal griping over the “Above All” slogan began as soon as the IMC was released in the spring, and the AF Director of Public Affairs and Communications said it was a failure by early summer. It was not surprising then in the fall of 2008 SAF/PA ordered all bases, Web sites and “Above All” products to be removed from all public viewing.

How did the “Above All” IMC succeed and how did it fail to establish a brand for the AF? Americans surveyed in the studies mentioned here said they thought the products were interesting and showed the AF offered exciting career choices, although it was considered arrogant. Airmen were being represented as warriors and elite aviators; aircraft assets were shown as flying over every battlefield ... above all ... yet it failed. Why?

The ultimate goal and purpose of this research study is to create a brand that is recognizable, powerful, memorable and likeable. Suggestions will be proposed and tested through the following research methods.

4 | research methods

This study will use qualitative research methods through a short survey and semi-structured interviews for a historical collection of relevant data, to include pictures, words and objects as related to the AF. As a public affairs officer and AF active-duty member, participant observation will be seamless and compiled from seven years of personal experience. Semi-structured interviews will be attempted at all levels and chains of command for a wide array of messages and themes. Thru interpretivism, or the qualitative research paradigm attempted here, the researcher intends to understand what defines Wingman, Warrior and Airman in a proposed brand. Essentially, what do Airmen want? If “Above All” failed, what do Airmen want to see as representative of their service? Airmen, as defined here, are assumed to include AF Airmen of all ages, ranks, time in service and generation. The opinions of young 19-yr old fresh enlistees will most likely not match that of our retired World War II brethren, and interpretivism is the most plausible way to capture their perceptions.

Surveys will be sent to personnel across the Air Force through Facebook and email contact, but namely at Hurlburt Field, Fla., home to Air Force Special Operations Command headquarters, and Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. AFSOC personnel include Airmen in higher combat related career fields than the rest of the Air Force. Eglin AFB includes personnel from Air Force Materiel Command and Air Combat Command, both of which have a higher degree of civilians and mission support personnel.

Semi-structured interviews will take place during the same time period and will include commanders, command chiefs and subject matter experts. Topics of questions will focus on Wingman, Warrior and Airmen concepts, as well as recall of Air Force slogans and messages. The researcher will also test a proposed brand, for audience approval and acceptance. The proposed brand will be presented through words and pictures. The purpose of the qualitative methodology will be to gain a comprehensive understanding of Airmen identification and brand relationship.

5 | semi-structured interviews

The following semi-structured interviews were conducted in February and March 2010 at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, and Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. The purpose of the interviews is to gather a historical look at senior leader perspectives on marketing and Air Force themes/messages. Questions involved four areas: former Air Force marketing slogans, knowledge of the current marketing slogan, general themes/messages and the Air Force mission statement – *The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight and win in air, space and cyberspace*. (See 5.a for questions.) The time in service of those interviewed ranged between 21 to 30 years, ranks of chief master sergeant to brigadier general, and included both active-duty Airmen, Air National Guardsman, and even a Naval career public affairs officer.

5.a | interview themes/questions

Former AF slogans

- Q1. What AF slogans can you recall over your AF career?
- Q2. Which ones have you used or referred to regularly?
- Q3. Do you think former slogans have represented Airmen accurately throughout the years?

Knowledge of current slogan

- Q4. Do you know the current AF slogan?
- Q5. How do you feel about tying the AF to video games or Hollywood movies?
- Q6. Do you think it represents the entire AF?
- Q7. Do you think it reaches our target audience?
- Q8. Do you think it is a good internal message to increase morale, internal identification?

Themes/messages

- Q9. What words would you use to describe today's Airmen?
- Q10. What messages do you want the public to relate to the USAF, our Airmen?
- Q11. What messages or phrases do you currently use in briefings?

Mission Statement

- Q12. How long can you recall hearing the mission statement?
- Q13. Do you think the mission statement accurately represents the AF?
- Q14. Do you think it reaches our target audience? Public (externally)? Airmen (internally)?
- Q15. Do you think "To Fly, Fight, Win" is an appropriate message to market?

5.b | interviewee answers

Interviewee 1 | Total years of service: 30 | Rank: Brigadier General

Currently: Air Expeditionary Wing commander, Operation Enduring Freedom

Previously: Wing Commander for Air National Guard

Q1. Aim High, the most common one. Above All, there's a more recent one from that perspective. Second to None...or Nobody Comes Close.

Q2. I use Check 6 a lot, although it's never been the motto, it is one of those fighter pilot terms. It's short and sweet and only associated with the Air Force, so that's the only one I've used. Check 6 is really an air-to-air type of thing that deals with mutual support, and it deals with making sure there's not a bad guy or fighter about to shoot you down. It's about taking care of your Wingman.

Q3. I think it's very tough to represent a large group of Airmen with just a few key words. From my perspective, we're much more diverse than the Marines. Where every Marine, a rifleman, every Marine, those type of things, from that perspective I'm not sure we have captured every Airman, but I'm not sure in our service if we can capture that aspect. In our service, if you go with and I'll add this to my slogan check 6 a lot, the Fly, Fight, Win slogan (unaided mention), that piece is very straight forward, and I think it captures fairly well our primary mission.

Q4. I do not.

Q5. If I were to critique that, my critique is for most it's science fiction, but for us in the AF, it's what we do every day. I just don't like "it's not science fiction," I associate us with people. I think by the fact that you're doing a television commercial; you're tying it to that form of media. I think it could be very effective, but not as the overarching theme for the entire AF.

Q6. No, but again I'm looking for a small niche of people.

Q7. Yeah, probably, I think we have several target audiences, and I think it reaches one of those. I think we're looking for some high-tech folks, the computer folks, the folks that do those type of operations, and I think that slogan can reach that group.

Q8. I don't see it working (internally), but I'm not a Next-Gen type person.

Q9. Motivated, versatile, professional, courteous, setting them apart from the other services because I think in terms of core values, it's very obvious on day to day discussions. They have initiative, they're proud, willing.

Q10. I think the biggest thing missing, if you look at the activity or actions, or the results accomplished by a very, very small number of AF personnel, we've never captured the fact the magnitude of what we can do with a few Airmen compared to a thousands and thousands of members of other services in terms of doing operations. So because of our such small numbers, down from Marines-size number, the magnitude of what we do every day by our Airmen to be able to capture that for the public and for them to know that and understand that, it's huge. Because again, we're seen as the fourth service sometimes, and we've never captured how much we accomplish per body as opposed to some of the other services. The Marines do an outstanding job for a small service to get the visibility they do, as far as the public affairs, the media, the hype. They do an outstanding job for the size of what they do and the scope of what they do, and certainly in appearance, and I think we're at the other end of that spectrum right now. What the American folks don't have, I think we fail at taking. The Marines have an area 20 miles by 30 miles, and they're all over the news for that day for that 20 miles by 30 miles, we're covering the entire scope of the country of Afghanistan every day, and it doesn't even hit the papers.

Q11. I use the core values quite a bit. I also use "All in" over here and within the joint environment here. Most of the other stuff I'll throw in terminology to the ground audience, but it's more air terminology. Chaff..

Q12. I know that it sort of disappeared until General Moseley took over as AF Chief of Staff.

I remember hearing it for most of my career...back to basics, and the resurgence since 2002. It's been around longer than that though.

Q13. I think it serves a purpose, serves a niche, but doesn't accurately represent the entire AF.

Q14. If we focus on all of those things that we do...I don't know how we incorporate the cyber space, but we're one of many joint players. I think it is important because I think we can lose the

ability to be the U.S.'s predominant air power source. The Army has more aviation assets than we do, the Navy and Marines together are able to utilize their assets and use their air space very effectively, so there are other operations where I don't see us doing the Fly, Fight, Win, so unless we maintain that mission, I can see us overcome by other services. I think we need to maintain that focus to Fly, Fight and Win.

Q15. I think it's appropriate, that should be the bottom line. We have to lead into it, and follow up on it, and we have to expand on it. It's (the message's) there, but let's not leave it at that. I still think "Fly, Fight, and Win," but I think it's also important to be able to very well articulate how broad a mission statement that is.

Interviewee 2 | Total years of service: 21 | Rank: Colonel

Currently: Expeditionary Operations Group commander, Operation Enduring Freedom

Future: Fighter Wing commander, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

Q1. Aim High, Above all else, No one even comes close, Do something 'special' (amazing)

Q2. No, never used them

Q3. I don't think any of them relate. I think Aim High was good for somebody coming in. Once you're in, I don't? think any of them really resonated with me. Maybe Aim High, but once you're in I find them all recruiting based and not for me. I did like Aim High.

Q4. Above All, not Nothing Comes Close.

Q5. I think deep down it hurts because that's not what we want in our people long term. If some kid signs up and thinks he's going to sit on the couch and watch video games all day as part of the AF, then we sold the wrong thing, especially since we deploy them here to Afghanistan and make him do without his Gameboy, his Wi-Fi, you know you can't get Wi-Fi here for less than \$70 a month and yet that's what we're selling to our kids. That's the environment they're going to get. I think it contradicts the "All in" message that we send when we get here.

Q6. No

Q7. Well I don't know what the AF wants – does the AF really need gamers and what do they really need them to do? What I see as the bulk of what people here are doing here at Kandahar Airfield: standing patrol as cops, maintaining aircraft, putting up communication systems, there are probably, (generous) 100 people that may interact with a computer flying predators and reapers that have that experience. Out of 2,000 people, maybe 100 live that environment, and I don't think they're that hard to recruit.

Q8. No, definitely contradicts the battlefield Airmen mentality, which we're trying to build.

Q9. Diverse, hard-working, mission focused in the operation world, mission focused about getting the job done, and the maintenance world in the lower ranks, they just want to get the job done. They deal with a lot of stuff, but they don't want to deal with a lot of it, they just want to fix jets,

fly jets, and that's just what they want to do. That's what resonates with these guys and that's where the "administrivia" of the AF disillusioned some of these guys.

Q10. We have a role in the current fight, and we have a bigger global responsibility of the nation. I think those are the two really big themes that we could play off, I think people want to be a part of the current fight, and yet there's bigger picture, the global responsibility, to see the world type things. With the Navy, they used to really pride themselves on that. So those two themes I think are really good and themes I've enjoyed about the AF. What I'm doing today, this isn't Europe, but I've been stationed there twice and had a blast. Those are the happy memories.

Q11. I tend to talk about team, mission and people. The three have to be in balance. That's usually how I describe organizations, and how I put focus on my efforts.

Q12. I can remember Fly, Fight and Win since I've been in the AF, even prior to being in during ROTC, so 1984-85.

Q13. Yeah I do, I just don't think we've expanded the Fight and Win aspect; we tend to focus on the fly piece. Everybody knows you're flying...fight and win via flying, but I do think that's a specific medium that we operate in, fly is very important, it's distinctive of what we do from an Airman's perspective and the flying and winning part is what I think other communities haven't jumped on. How do you fight and win in other mediums, like cyberspace? But I think if you lose that and delete that, you really dilute what the AF is.

Q14. I think internally it's good, but I don't ever remember hearing it externally. You hear Semper Fi and you know that it's the Marines, and to Fly, Fight, Win. You never hear people say that, but I think it's a great internal message.

Q15. Good question. Well, I think again, I don't think it's a bad one, but from a marketing perspective it may not be great because of the fighting portion. But then again, people join the Marines knowing full well they're going to fight, you know it depends on, do we want battlefield Airmen or do we want couch potatoes that play Xbox? If you want to recruit battlefield Airmen that are prepared to fight, then yes, it's good. If you want "it's not science fiction, it's what we do every day" then no, it's not good. So I think the AF has to decide what it wants. I think we want

people who want to fight. You never have any problems finding pilots that want to fight, there's always more want than slots available for pilots. It's getting people who believe they're just going to come in and just do computers, or just do this, and you say, oh no, you have to go outside the wire, go out on a convoy, and they say, oh no, I just thought I worked on an airfield. So I think that's where we go crosswise and those people obviously have a negative reaction to the AF, so I think there's expectation management of our recruits, and if retention is important, then I think it's important we retain people with the right expectations.

Interviewee 3 | Total years of service: 26 | Rank: Colonel

Currently: Expeditionary Maintenance Group commander, Operation Enduring Freedom

Previously: Maintenance Group commander, Shaw Air Force Base, S.C.

Q1. All in, Above All and I think there was Into the Yonder, Into the Blue – Cross into the Blue.

Q2. The one I use is All in, more so because of a team approach and that we're committed, and I see where the focus is from the Chief on that. Above All put us as an elitist group and being a service organization, we need to humble ourselves to be public servants because that's what we are. I think when we did that, although I understand the Above All approach, being that we have above presence, above interdiction, and you know with space, above reproach. Catch phrases like that as far I'm concerned, diminishes what you are and I think trying to communicate that or sell that to Congress or even the public themselves say, well we're better than we are because understanding what a slogan is has to be communicated at all levels and all spectrums.

Q3. That's the one, Aim High, even Aim High or Cross into the Blue, because they did not have any relevance. No, not at all, because when you're communicating thoughts, you have to communicate something that is understandable and easy to remember. Just like the Nike commercial "Just do it." Got it, just go out there and do it, do something, but just do it. Cross into the Blue, Aim High, what does that mean? Aim high to what? Do Something Amazing? I don't even remember seeing it in print. What does that mean? Is that flowery, what's amazing? What's relative and amazing to one person isn't amazing to another. Aim High, what are you aiming for, for what? It kind of just drops. Nike's "Just Do it," could be anything. When you say you're "All in," well, that means you're in, not partially in, you're either in or you're not. You're either resolved, it's an absolute, that's the way I see it. When you talk about branding and slogans, there are average slogans. If you look at slogans, whether it be corporate America or teams, think about the ones that you believe in. What we think of a soft drink, we don't think Mountain Dew or root beer, we think of Coke. I think branding has to have that mainstay or staying power, and I think the current Chief (of Staff) has it right with "All in." You're either with me or against me.

Q4. Obviously I don't.

Q5. No, emphatic no. Again, the "All in," and in again, maybe that doesn't address all issues, but at a leadership standpoint, you can communicate that, whether you're a coach or chief. We all have different backgrounds, and we all have different reasons for coming into the AF, for some it's to serve their country, for others it's an escape mechanism from that small town, or education benefits. I think "All in" can cross all layers of (demographics). Science Fiction gives a two-head sword on it, yeah, we're the smarter AF, but anyone can do it. Or you're strictly targeting a certain set of folks. But to some folks, what does science fiction mean, is it good or bad? Are we looking at it as an enabler for good, or do we see it as a bad Frankenstein movie?

Q6. No, especially because some folks don't understand what sci fiction is, is it good or bad? If you're trying to get the iPod or Xbox generation, whatever techie there is, not everybody is a techie or Gameboy master. We're only targeting that small sect of just gamers, you really ostracize the rest of the organization. The cultures are different.

Q7. You put science fiction, I see it as degrading. I hear it, so anytime you say that...I think well I guess I'm not smart enough for you.

Q8. I think "The Few, The Proud, The Marines" is where it is today because of the way it was marketed. When you see a good-looking guy that's etched, but what you've done is marketed an elitist group. You don't ever say once an Airman always an airman, when they take that to the next level, how much do they take care of their fellow Marines, I don't see it, look at how many homeless Marines there are. While it's a catchy theme, I think it's elitist, we think we're better than everybody else, but that's the way they marketed it. We're the few, the proud, well, is proud a good thing or a bad thing.

Q9. I feel all Airmen are a product of leadership, Airmen will follow as long as we lead. The Airmen coming in today are much smarter coming in than we were coming in. Not knowledgeable, but smarter. They have an easier understanding of what a culture is, more understanding of all people. ... (diverse) ... I think they're more adaptive. Smarter, more accepting, more transparent, more open. They don't care about their private information, so their

social networking is more improved, everybody is their friend versus what we had developed. More tech advanced, but every generation is, so I can't say that. Knowledgeable, I would say not as much. Information is provided to them, versus what we had, we had to look for it. More flexible, less rigid.

Q10. I would like not just the public, but the Congressmen, to know ... we have a bad reputation right now, whether it be stewards of money, the tanker thing, acquisition process, nuclear weapons...so the section I would like us to focus on is: America, you can trust the AF, we are good stewards, 24/7 we are there for you. And we do that, with Haiti, if you want us there, we're there. We're the first responders, we can get there fast...but we're not seen as that, we're only seen as dropping bombs and launching missiles. That's where I think we need to advertise what we do in the warfighting aspects. That's why we don't get our tankers, our C-17s, because we're selling the wrong product, we're focused too much on fighters.

Q11. When I'm talking to maintainers or some audiences, I use my three-P's because it's catchy and it's in threes...We're taught to learn in three's. Mine is People, Processes, Planes (or Products, it's interchangeable.)

Q12. Fly, Fight and Win, what does that mean? That's the question I ask myself. When you talk to an Airman, how does he tie himself to flying or fighting or winning? If you're talking about the civil engineer dude, he doesn't understand it. The mission statement has been out maybe 3 to 4 years...not long, I think it came out with General T. Michael Moseley, because it has been changed on and off. I would suspect it would change with each administration.

Q13. They expect you to fly, fight and win, but how do you sell an unmanned aerial vehicle?

Q14. We'll be short lived, and we'll be part of the Army Air Corps because why does the AF really need to be a separate service.

Q15. No.

Interviewee 4 | Total years of service: 25 | Rank: Colonel

Currently: Director, Headquarters Air Force Public Affairs, Pentagon, Washington

Previously: Director, Air Force Space Command, Colorado

Open Subject Matter Expert interview

I had a meeting January 24, where I met with GDS & M and the Air Force Recruiting Squadron to come up with a new Air Force motto. Many of the ones used have been recruiting slogans, not service mottos. Sempir Fi is a service motto for the Marine Corps, but their recruiting slogan is “The Few, The Proud, The Marines.”

This is an identity thing – what defines us? It goes all the way back to the Wright brothers. Innovative, creative, unique? Billy Mitchell saw the need for a separate service from the Army Air Corps. We’re the youngest service, so we have to define who we are – who can we identify with. We’re looking for an Air Force service identity. For instance, “we’re all in.” It meets Air Force priorities and shows the joint fight. It’s about every one of us contributing to the fight.

We need to be talking about the great Airmen – telling their stories speaks volumes. (To tell those stories, Colonel Kodlick put together a “Thinkocracy,” a panel of scholars and Airmen to discuss the incredible things they’re doing for our nation.)

We’re not after branding the Air Force, we’re after an enduring motto. “Fly, fight, win” might work as a recruiting campaign. With marketing it, we want Airmen to be able to identify with it and take pride in it.

The guidance I gave to GDS & M was be confident, but not cocky, bold, but not bravado. It will involve the core values, the Airman’s Creed and the mission statement. So, we’re on that journey now with focus groups, and it will be well researched and very methodical.

Interviewee 5 | Total years of service: 23 | Rank: Colonel

Currently: Director, Air Forces Central Public Affairs, Air Forces Forward-A, Southwest Asia

Previously: Director, Air Education & Training Command Public Affairs, Randolph AFB, Texas

Open Subject Matter Expert interview

As you mentioned, we've been working actively for several years to establish an identity and market it so people brand us for what we want to be known.

I think over the past 12 to 18 months, we've (corporately) done a good job recaging our focus on who we are and what we do; which, in and of itself, is change ... CSAF and SecAF have led a "back to basics" approach; I also think they're conscious of the impact constant change has on our Airmen – change that we control should be substantive, directly impacting our Airmen and their families. The symbols and slogans debate often just brings ridicule, internally and externally.

People talk marketing and branding a lot, and use the words liberally and often interchangeably – effective marketing actually helps develop a brand by which people recognize who you are. The more we try to adjust our symbols, slogans, uniforms, you name it – the greater risk we run of being branded as something we don't want ... indecisive, trivial.

Much easier said than done, but what we need is consistency – so we can earn our brand; we simply need to be who we are ... over time, I honestly think that's what Airmen want – more than 300,000 Airmen will never agree on a symbol or slogan, but they will be proud of the organization to which they belong and serve. Airmen's pride about being Airmen is just as, if not more, important as the public's recognition of our symbol.

I think we're headed in the right direction – we need time, and a couple of generations of top AF leadership that do not let their own wishes for aesthetics drive unnecessary change.

Interviewee 6 | Total years of service: 24 | Rank: Colonel

Currently: Expeditionary Mission Support Group commander, Operation Enduring Freedom

Previously: Deputy, chief financial officer, Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, Fla.

Q1. Aim High, the controversial one Above All, All in (now)

Q2. Aim High was useful for me, I never liked Above All because of the connotation of arrogance. I have used the core values significantly, and frequently.

Q3. Again I would say Aim High is the best of all of them. Immediately, the other ones strike me as recruiting slogans rather than a real motto or course direction. Cross into the Blue was targeted more at our sister services, and that's not a very useful approach.

Q4. I'm not even familiar with the current one, I didn't even know it. To me it sounds like something deliberately targeted at very young people, so I'm unfamiliar with it. I like the idea ... but I don't think it's getting much traction since I'm not aware of it.

Q5. Overall not great, but I can see some value at remaking ourselves to attract a certain talent that we need at a given time. Part of the reason that it wouldn't be popular with me, a lot of movies that Hollywood makes don't represent the Air Force or our core values, so I find some conflict in them.

Q6. Well, I think we need an AF that portrays itself as cutting edge, we emphasize our technological prowess, that is certainly important in a lot of ways, but not in video games. Video games are entertainment and I think we need to reach a different methodology. The audience that is video game aficionados may or may not be the exclusive audience that we're looking for.

Q7. One segment of our audience

Q8. I don't think so; I think it's more about recruiting. Morale? You know I suppose if it was developed there could be a sense of pride in that. Even science fiction is only popular in a limited segment of our population. To me I'd say it's more of a reach to help morale.

Q9. Describing Airmen: resourceful, dedicated, ambitious, inspiring, patriotic, "All in" captures we're all in as a service.

Q10. I think that anything that perpetuates the trust and confidence of the American public in the AF and the entire DoD, is beneficial to all of us. We say and do what we mean, and we mean what we say and do. I want them to relate that we are all about protecting the freedoms that we cherish, and that we can absolutely be relied on to do the right things, and if we make mistakes we'll own up to them, and generally, we won't make mistakes.

Q11. Make good things happen, make a difference, here we're in a deployed environment, so we focus a lot on staying engaged. I say "Day one to Day done," which is tied into the deployed environment. Other than that I talk to issues of core values, but I'm not using slogans per say.

Q12. To fly, fight and win seems to be pervasive throughout most of my career, but today is somewhat limited. The fighting part of what we're doing is somewhat limited...because what we're doing today is way beyond flying because it is ironically the foundation of our service, but much of the fighting we're doing today is more than flying. It's flying Remotely Piloted Aircraft, but it's also fighting, certainly, in cyberspace, but on the ground in terms of being engaged. We have a bunch of people, wearing the USAF uniform out on foot patrols, slugging it out with the Taliban in a supporting role, so I think that certainly relates back to "All in." I don't think we're trying to be what the other services are, we want to stick to our heritage and our roots, which is related to aviation and air and space, but we need to recognize we're doing a lot on the ground now as well.

Q13. Today's AF is bigger than that message. It still is an appropriate message, but I think we would need to develop the fighting part, because we need to do more than fly to win. A good message could use different nuances and different twists.

Q14. I think that it could be updated. The fly part, you don't hear the other services say sail and win, or track on and win, because of who we are, our heritage is so tied to aviation and the thrill of flight that we're emphasizing that, that we're reminding everybody that we're a "flying club," and I think we should move beyond that.

Q15. No, I think we need to alter it to be more comprehensive and to not focus on a single mode, which is flying.

After semi-structured interview: I think we're missing opportunities because we're so focused on flying, because guess what, every other service has flyers, we're not the exclusive service. Let's talk about who we are, that's our heritage and I don't ever want to downplay that, let's stay close to our heritage, but let's explore the rest of what we're doing. We're doing an awful lot in space, and I'm not sure we're truly capturing that with To Fly.

Mission Support encompasses Security Forces, right now we're providing tactical movement for the Office of Special Investigations operating within the Ground Defense Area. We're definitely fighting, but we're not flying. Our Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel are clearing and doing demining operations and counter-improvised explosive device operations, obviously fighting, but not flying. We all support the aviation mission, which is the roots of our service, but to suggest a motto that says to fly, fight and win, doesn't capture all the ways that we fight and win.

The conventional AF hasn't learned from Special Operations – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines are all working counter-insurgency, and arrogance doesn't work.

Interviewee 7 | Total years of service: 23 | Rank: Commander

Currently: Director, ISAF Regional Command South Public Affairs, Operation Enduring Freedom

Previously: Chief of Media Production for Armed Forces Inaugural Committee, Washington

Q1. Aim High, that's the only one I can think of right now.

Q2. N/A

Q3. Probably the last one (science fiction) talks a little bit more because it's a little bit more, I don't want to say generic, but it probably applies across the board to more members of the Air Force than say Aim High, which automatically translates into someone flying, in particular an attack type aircraft, probably more than most other jobs that you associate with the Air Force.

Above All, it's a little nebulous if you're not in the military, but if you're in the military you kind of understand the double-entendre of it, but again it kind of talks to flyers again, rather than the other professions within the Air Force.

Q4-8. N/A

Q9. Technically proficient, overall confident, I'm thinking of Airmen I worked with two years ago too, knowledgeable, definitely I would use the term professional compared to a lot of civilians, since I'm a reservist.

Q10. I think they immediately think aviators, think technology. They probably think if you're not an aviator you're a groundcrewman-type person, I don't think they think about other things that you all do, maybe they think about drone pilots, but not on a large scale yet.

Q11. N/A

Follow-up question 1: How do you think the Navy better markets itself to the public than the Air Force does, based on some of the commercials you've seen.

Follow-up answer 1: I think the Marines, the Army and the Navy do a much better job of showing your average Marine, Soldier or Sailor doing what they do. In some dramatic shape or form, whether it's the cinematography that is used or the chosen background or landscape or whatever, I think they do a very good job of romanticizing it as well, and I think there's a touch of history that

is present, even that is present just in the way that they are portrayed in commercials or advertising. There always seems to be, whether it's the shadowing that's been used with the Army Strong campaign, I think it kind of gives a almost a black and white type photos, even though they are full color, it kind of gives you a sense of history about it. Little subtle things like that, which is played off on, and I think that is probably what stands out the most. It's the way they use the young Soldiers, Sailors or Marines in kind of a historical context, but romantized and showing them do exciting things as well.

Q12-13. N/A

Q14. Even on the fly side you have your groundcrewmembers and ISR and drones. I think that it is probably closer to something that would resonate with the public, and I think if there's some way to also show the historical context, and I don't think that you all should even be afraid to dig back down into your Army roots and use your Army roots to help tell your history as well, rather than to pretend like you guys weren't part of the Army since the early 1900s when flight was being tested by the Navy and the Army.

Q15. I think the way you've described it that it would resonate.

Follow-up question 2: With your experience as a public affairs officer, how can we better tell our story or market ourselves to the American public?

Follow-up answer 2: I think that obviously there's always room for the marketing campaigns that are done by the recruiting services, you have to do that. I do think that the hometown face-to-face recruiting works as well for the young kids, especially those who are on the fence, predisposed, but haven't made up their mind yet. On the larger context of trying to market the services and potentially talking about what we're doing over here in Afghanistan or what's still going on in Iraq, I think to reach the target audience for recruiting efforts is different than trying to reach the audience for political context shaping and buy-in. For the recruiting side of it, back from here, it has to be things having to do with new media, whether getting on CNN's iReports or blogging or dynamic Facebook or all those types of things, that's how you're going to get the young Airman on the ground talking to a potential young recruit back home and if you can connect those too up out

in cyberspace, that's the way to get those. On the troop-contributing nation side and the political context and the buy-in to keep the troops over here until the fight is over, I really think that it is the embedded media, that's the way that you market back to them about the stories and about what's going on here. I do think that the point should always be to highlight the younger groups. The professionalism that they can express speaks to all the generations, and I think that's because even somebody like myself, looks at a young kid talking about something that he knows and knows well, it's impressive to you and you kind of have a motherly response to that and wow how impressive or proud you are of this young American or you just have a reaction that's of surprise and a little bit of satisfaction just knowing that that's the type of guys we send over to take care of this. On the flip-side, if we went against what we know to be true about marketing those types and used our general officers all the time, you lose that recruiting half immediately and you'd probably lose people like myself too unless you are extremely politically motivated. So, I think time has tested spotlighting the younger Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines that we've all been taught to do and I can't argue with that methodology.

Follow-up question 3: Recently, the Air Force media advisor, Dave Moniz, said the Navy is by far the best public affairs organization among the services. What do you see in the Navy that is more refined or makes it better at telling your story?

Follow-up answer 3: I really do think that we're extremely pushy and maybe that's what makes us good at it, but I think we get ourselves or stick our tentacles down into what we don't need to be sticking our tentacles down into all the time. When I first started as a public affairs officer, we were sticking lieutenants on aircraft carriers, now we're putting lieutenant commanders on aircraft carriers, and I think I'll be shortly retired when we start putting commanders on aircraft carriers. It just seems to me that we've lost a lot, and I think in a few years you'll hear that we're not as good as we used to be because we're centralizing a lot of what we consider the professionalism up at the upper level, and we've kind of snuffed out a little bit of the initiative that used to happen at the lower level, and I think it was the initiative that won us that reputation.

We used to let the young lieutenants go, and just exercise all that creativity that they had bottled. I remember sitting around tables at the Pentagon at times talking, you know we'd have the admiral sitting there along with some Navy captains and some commanders, and it was the lieutenants telling them how they'd gotten around regulations, or systems or processes that had been impeding them on embeds and all this other type of stuff, and they were teaching the old guys, and we don't do that anymore. It was that type of harnessing of creativity and energy and all that that won us that reputation. I could be wrong, we could still maintain that reputation for the foreseeable future, but I think that if we don't lose it, at least the other services have caught up with us.

Interviewee 8 | Total years of service: 28 | Rank: Chief Master Sergeant

Currently: Superintendent, Expeditionary Operations Group, Operation Enduring Freedom

Previously: Superintendent, Fighter Wing, Holloman Air Force Base, N.M.

Q1. Aim High, Cross into the Blue

Q2. No

Q3. Not really, I'm not a big slogan person.

Q4. I've seen that commercial and since I'm a sensor operator as well, I realize it's not very accurate. I don't really pay attention to it, it's all very Hollywood to me. Maybe that's one of the reasons why it doesn't even register with me or caught on.

Q5. It does, sure I guess. I don't think the commercial is all that accurate.

Q6. Yeah, it probably does.

Q7. No, probably not, it's a recruiting tool. I don't know that it's really for that.

Q8. Intelligent, probably more on the selfish side, more like I would have thought I was, I've probably changed, they probably haven't so much. I would say that they are intelligent people. I think they're motivated, and most of them are enthusiastic.

Q9. I was thinking more of today's Airmen, I hear this all the time being a guy who's almost approaching 50 years old, who's been in the Air Force for 28 years, so my peers are guys like me who've been around a long time. We have these conversations all the time, that you know the Airmen of today, they're just not like we were, 'blah blah blah,' and you know I think it is 'blah blah blah,' because they are just like we were, we've changed. Trust me, I was not the most stellar of Airmen of the whole wide world, there were a hell of a lot of problems when I first came in the Air Force...I guess what I'm getting at, you see people today saying "oh, these Airmen," but they're just like any other young people. They have their own desires, their own drive, and their own ambitions. They're no different, yeah, maybe they play video games but we did our own things back in those days. Yeah, they're into computers but we were into other things, too. They're the same kids, and kind of what I was telling you about the World War II correspondent, he was

worried, I don't even remember where they were invading, it was one of the islands in the Pacific and there was some actor reading his memoirs, and he said he was worried about this generation of today, and this was 1943. He didn't think they were mature enough to handle the stresses of battle. That discussion has been going on for years and I think it's all chaff. It's just people getting old and set in their ways. Bottom line, today there is a 2nd Lt in the Air Force, who will be a 4-star general and will be just fine, and there's an Airman Basic who will be a chief and will be just fine.

Q10. I want the public to perceive the Air Force as an organization or force that deals with change very easily, changes in technology, changes in the world because that really is what we have to do, to be able to change, to adapt with the changing environment. It's probably what I would like the public to see us as, also as good people who live by the core values.

Q11. No, I don't, not that I don't believe in the core values, but sometimes people that spout off those slogans seem like a robot, and I don't want to be perceived like that.

Q12. Since about 1991 or 1992, it all started when Total Quality Management came on, I was probably a staff sergeant then.

Q13. Yeah, I do. Actually I'm going to take something back. I was thinking the other day about the whole 'fly, fight, win' thing [unaided], and, well, we don't all fly. We don't all fight, but we definitely don't all fly. And some of us are at the pointy end of the spear, are guys or gals that never even come close to an airplane, guys that work outside the wire, so I don't know that it applies to everybody in the Air Force, it might not.

Q14. Oh, yeah, sure, I think it could be. That's a good point, I never thought about that, our recruiting slogan doesn't really center on someone like Army Strong.

Q15. Yeah I think it could be, in a commercial around those three words. It's good, but you're right we change a lot of things on a whim. Like our uniform, my dad was a Chief Master Sergeant in the Air Force, he retired in the last 1960s, but the only thing I could wear is the little blue nametag of his, we've changed everything. Even the chevrons, we've changed everything, except for the little blue nametag, but I do wear his, it's a little yellowed, but I don't care. We do change things a lot in the Air Force.

Interviewee 9 | Total years of service: 26 | Rank: Chief Master Sergeant

Currently: Career field Manager, Headquarters Air Force Public Affairs, Pentagon, Washington

Open Subject Matter Expert interview: As a service, we have a big problem with branding. Take the service songs, for instance. Every Marine is a rifleman, and every Marine can relate to the Marine-hymn. Every Soldier can relate to every verse in the Soldier's song. I don't think all Airmen feel like equal partners in our service. Not every Airman flies.

The Air Force has the lamest song because it's not the "Air Force" song, it's the "aviator" song. Only 5 percent of Airmen fly, so 95 percent of the Air Force doesn't care about it because we support, but don't fly. Officers and enlisted can't relate to it.

Identification issues are the microcosm of our Air Force branding issues. Why are you valuable? If you can't define your own identity internally, how can you market it externally?

The biggest problem internally is the need to add an emotional investment to our marketing for every Airman...an emotional investment in their story.

U.S. Marine Corps Hymn (Marine Hymn)

From the Halls of Montezuma

To the Shores of Tripoli;

We fight our country's battles

In the air, on land and sea;

First to fight for right and freedom

And to keep our honor clean;

We are proud to claim the title

of United States Marine...

The United States Marines.

Here's health to you and to our Corps

Which we are proud to serve

In many a strife we've fought for life

And never lost our nerve;

If the Army and the Navy

Ever look on Heaven's scenes;

They will find the streets are guarded

By United States Marines.

Official U.S. Army Song – The Army Goes Rolling Along

Intro: March along, sing our song, with the Army of the free

*Count the brave, count the true, who have fought to victory
We're the Army and proud of our name
We're the Army and proudly proclaim*

*Verse: First to fight for the right,
And to build the Nation's might,
And The Army Goes Rolling Along
Proud of all we have done,
Fighting till the battle's won,
And the Army Goes Rolling Along.*

*Verse: Valley Forge, Custer's ranks,
San Juan Hill and Patton's tanks,
And the Army went rolling along
Minute men, from the start,
Always fighting from the heart,
And the Army keeps rolling along.*

Official Naval Academy Song – Anchors Aweigh

Verse 2 (most widely sung in the fleet)

*Anchors Aweigh, my boys, Anchors Aweigh.
Farewell to foreign shores, We sail at break of day, of day.
Through our last night on shore, Drink to the foam,
Until we meet once more. Here's wishing you a happy voyage home!*

Official U.S. Air Force song – Off we Go Into The Wild Blue Yonder

*Off we go into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high into the sun;
Here they come zooming to meet our thunder,
At 'em boys, Give 'er the gun!
Down we dive, spouting our flame from under,
Off with one helluva roar!**
*We live in fame or go down in flame. Hey!
Nothing'll stop the U.S. Air Force! Zoom*

Interviewee 10 | Total years employed by the Air Force: 3

Currently: Media Advisor, Headquarters Air Force Public Affairs, Pentagon, Washington

Previously: 25 years as a local and regional reporter, most recent assignment was as a military reporter for *USA Today*

Open Subject Matter Expert interview

The Air Force engages national media better than any other service, yet the Marines are seen as the best at communicating their mission and the Navy public affairs organization is seen as the best (overall).

The problem is the Air Force's reputation has really suffered because of the dark years when (pilots and commanders) were reticent to talk. (There has been some improvement.) Our credibility, not just our responsiveness has helped. Other services don't have media advisors, but this builds trust for the Air Force.

Mr. Moniz was hired in 2007 by the Air Force to learn how to better engage media and how to better package story ideas for national play. While a reporter and a civilian government employee, he requires the same credibility with reporters as public affairs officials. His credibility and relationships with fellow reporters build trust and have helped the Air Force make front-page news with USA Today, The Washington Post and NPR, among others.

6 | concept test survey

**Caveat – The following is not based on a social marketing survey, but is for informational purposes only. (Duncan, 2010)*

Concept Test (To Fly, Fight, Win)					
Survey Status: Active Launched: 3/3/2010 3:09 AM Closed: N/A					
Email Invites: 0	Visits: 74	Partials: 7	Screen Outs: 0	Over Quota: 0	Completes: 44 (Does not include blank responses)

Welcome to this survey. I am interested in your opinions. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes. I really appreciate your time. Your responses will be used in a personal thesis paper presented to the University of Missouri, Columbia School of Journalism.

1. Please click on the category that includes your age.

17 or younger		0	0%
18 to 24		6	12%
25 to 34		24	47%
35 to 44		11	22%
45 to 54		6	12%
55 to 64		4	8%
65 or older		0	0%
Total		51	100%

2. Please indicate your gender.

Male		31	61%
Female		20	39%
Total		51	100%

3. In the past 5-20 years, which, if any, of the following AF slogans have you heard advertised? Select all that apply.

ABOVE ALL		31	61%
CROSS INTO THE BLUE		46	90%
AIM HIGH		49	96%
DO SOMETHING AMAZING		36	71%
IT'S NOT SCIENCE FICTION, IT'S WHAT WE DO		23	45%
TO FLY, FIGHT, WIN		27	53%
None of the above		0	0%
Other, please specify View Responses		7	14%

3. In the past 5-20 years, which, if any, of the following AF slogans have you heard advertised? Select all that apply.

#	Response
1	U.S. Air Force, No One Comes Close
2	No One Comes Close
3	DO MORE WITH LESS
4	We're all in
5	No one comes close
6	No one comes close
7	No one comes close.

4. Please read the following terms, and then check "agree" or "disagree". By your participation in the following survey, you hereby agree to keep all information about this proposed slogan and its contents completely confidential, and further agree to not disclose such information to any other party, not attempt to copy, print or download any of this information.

Agree		51	100%
Disagree		0	0%
Total		51	100%

Please look at the picture below and carefully read the description then answer the questions that follow.

Image



5. Based on the picture and description you just read, if this slogan was used to brand the U.S. Air Force name, would you use it on marketing products, internal presentations or unit coins or patches?

Definitely would use		11	22%
Probably would use		20	41%
Might or might not use		9	18%
Probably would not use		6	12%
Definitely would not use		3	6%
Total		49	100%

6. Why did you answer that way?

[View 36 Responses](#)

#	Response
1	It captures the AF in a clean, simple manner.
2	Fly, Fight, Win is a slogan that excludes the majority of the Air Force. Most Airmen don't fly or fight.
3	I think it gets the point across and lets whoever is looking at it know that symbol represents the Air Force mission.
4	Strong wording - adequately describes the AF mission in three simple, yet powerful words. The design isn't very eye catching - those used to the AF symbol may not pay attention to the descriptions below it.
5	It was bland.
6	If "Fly, Fight, Win" is the new slogan, eh.
7	I don't think Fly Fight Win captures all we do, especially humro. many in the public won't appreciate the word fight anyway
8	For an internal audience, i think it is important to show our Airmen that we are changing our face to show that we're in the fight, too. That being an Airman means commitment and sacrifice on the same level as Soldiers and Marines. Take away the corporate, "Chair force" image and replace with something to be proud of.
9	Not a fan
10	I like AF logo itself; the only concern is, it is too close to what is already used. I would suggest if you change a logo, you go all the way. This one is too close to the ccurrent one and would remind me of it (the prior one) instead of the new one.
11	Because it's simple, memorable and kicks ass.
12	It's what the Air Force does. It's simple, but it's very similar to the USMC's, "The Few, The Proud, The Marines." I like it.
13	I would definitely use this slogan because it gives the subject an idea of what the Air Force does in simple but bold manner. It looks professional and I think motivates with the last word, "win."
14	It's among the symbolic images for USAF that are out there.
15	If I had the need, I would use a sanction AF logo because it would be recognized.
16	It's what we do; Fly, Fight and Win!
17	I answered maybe because the AF changes its branding so often that who wants a product with a "temp" logo? Just go back to AIM HIGH -- it's the most recognized.
18	Because that slogan is the easiest for me to remember out of all the slogans produced over the past few years. I think it really sums up what our AF is all about.
19	Not very catchy, too generic.
20	It is short, concise, tells the whole story and is memorable.
21	It is just plain stupid...the Air Force is gonna' fly? The Air Force is gonna' fight? The Air Force thinks it is gonna' win? Duh, duh, duh...what is catchy about relaying the obvious?
22	Our shop typically sticks to wing or HQs patches.
23	Simple
24	If it was pushed to me to use it, I would. My hesitation comes from the fact that I'm not sure "Fly, Fight, Win" is the best representation of today's Air Force mission.
25	I think it's a great concise snapshot of what we do. Good slogan.
26	It is brief, relevant and memorable, but flying is only part of the AF mission. It reinforces the idea that all Airmen are pilots.
27	It's short, direct, and evokes an emotional response. It's what we do, and breaking it down into three words gives it more impact.
28	To high school rallish
29	The concept only captures the mission of the pilots in the AF; what about the 95% of the AF?
30	This does not apply to me, I am not in the Air Force.
31	not what i do
32	it doesn't inspire
33	Simple, clean, effective
34	It's short and gets to the point.
35	Some people in the general population might be turned off by the "Win" part, like fighting a war is on the same level of a basketball game. Cynics might see that as another part of U.S. warmongering, like we don't take it seriously when we go to war, we just want to "win" to satisfy our egos. Air Force people get the Fly/Fight/Win concept, but civilians may not.
36	I don't typically engage in marketing products. The internal presentations I use are usually squadron-centric, as well as unit coins or patches. The Air Force logo isn't representative of what's most important to me in the Air Force, especially compared to my squadron.

7. Based on the picture and description you just read, how much do you think you would like to "Fly, Fight, Win" as a marketing slogan or internal motto?

Extremely well		8	17%
Very well		12	25%
Quite well		9	19%
Somewhat well		3	6%
Slightly		7	15%
Not at all		9	19%
Total		48	100%

8. Considering the official mission statement, which statement best describes how you feel about how to "Fly, Fight, Win" represents you in the U.S. Air Force?

Very good representation		14	29%
Fairly good representation		13	27%
Average representation		10	21%
Somewhat poor representation		7	15%
Very poor representation		4	8%
Total		48	100%

9. How would you rate to "Fly, Fight, Win" in terms of being different from other U.S. Air Force slogans?

Extremely different		7	15%
Very different		7	15%
Somewhat different		21	44%
Slightly different		7	15%
Not at all different		6	12%
Total		48	100%

10. Please indicate how you would rate to "Fly, Fight, Win" based on other service's slogans, such as "The few, the proud, the Marines (USMC)," "Army Strong (USA)," or "Accelerate your life (USN):

Most favorable brand of the four		9	19%
Slightly more favorable than 2 of the others, but not the most favorable		14	29%
Neither more nor less favorable than the others		7	15%
Slightly less favorable than 2 of the others, but not the least favorable		13	27%
Least favorable brand of the four		5	10%
Total		48	100%

Please read the slogan description again.

Image - Air Force Mission | The mission of the U. S. Air Force is to fly, fight and win ... in air, space, and cyberspace.

11. What do you like most about the slogan? Please type the specific phrases below.

[View 43 Responses](#)



United States Air Force
Fly | Fight | Win

11. What do you like most about the slogan? Please type the specific phrases below.	
#	Response
1	- clean - memorable - simple - AF colors
2	- concise - catchy - easy to remember
3	- Short, only three words
4	- It adequately describes some of the AF mission.
5	- The assertive nature of the slogan.
6	- Symmetry
7	- Air, Space and Cyberspace
8	- "Fight" b/c we do. Most people think we sit on the sidelines. - "Fly" because this is still what defines us.
9	- It's a good internal slogan
10	- It's Clean and uncluttered - Short and to the point
11	- the logo itself - Fly I Fight I Win represents the Air Force
12	- It's short and easy to remember - Cute
13	- simple
14	- It's what we do.
15	- fly, fight, win
16	- It includes our mission to fight, unlike past ones
17	- fly, fight and win - in ari, space and cyberspace
18	- Simple. Straight to the point. - Fly. We are the Air Force - Fight. We are the Air Force - Win. We are the United States Air Force
19	- It's simple
20	- short - easy to remember - concise
21	- nothing
22	- Short - concise - memorable - applicable
23	- The Font...though I don't like it very much.
24	- Simple, to the point
25	- Simple - Easy to Remember
26	- I like the simplicity of three single-syllable words. - It's easy to remember.
27	- brief - straight to the point - honest

28	- easy to remember
29	- Concise - Accurately describes what we do - Looks good under the logo - Easy to remember
30	- Colors - Star
31	- It is brief, relevant and memorable - It is active and positive
32	- Fly - Fight - Win
33	- Simple and direct
34	- Win
35	- United States Air Force
36	- the FLY reference
37	- like the flying as it represents the AF
38	- united states air force - emblem
39	- What happens if an engagement is not a "win"
40	- in air, space, and cyberspace
41	- Simple, to the point - Focus on the Flying part of the Air Force
42	- It's simple - It's accurate
43	- simplicity




12. What do you dislike most about the slogan? Please type the specific phrases below.

[View 37 Responses](#)

12. What do you dislike most about the slogan? Please type the specific phrases below.

#	Response
1	- Flying centric - exclusive
2	- Makes mission sound simple, when in reality it's hard work and Airmen should be recognized for their efforts - Doesn't inspire me to join, Marine Corps' motto ignites a passion to be part of something
3	- The Air Force is an air superiority entity - though fly, flight, win describes what it does, it doesn't portray its strengths as the Marine and Army slogans do. - To someone with no AF knowledge, the slogan may lead the reader to believe all the AF does is fly - though security forces, pararescue, etc., may be conveyed in the "fight" portion, the initial lead is Fly.
4	- It just doesn't look aesthetically pleasing
5	- Font
6	- Fly, Fight, Win
7	- The fact that it's too bland. It doesn't really invoke any real passion. If we go with this, then we need to stick with it and make it powerful like "The few, the proud, the Marines." Stop changing. - "Do something amazing" made the point of us being elite.
8	- It doesn't describe the Air Force well to an external audience. - It perpetuates the myth to an external audience that we are all all pilots.
9	- Doesn't represent ground personnell - Many people assisting war on the ground need rep - Air Force is more diverse than strictly air
10	- Fly I Fight I Win test is too generic - the logo is used in current slogan
11	- Doesn't encapsulate all our missions, - Not inspiring

















12	- mom and dad may not like it.
13	- Nothing
14	- air, space, and cyberspace
15	- Impersonal, antiseptic in tone
16	- n/a
17	- It sounds like a Junior High Cheer: Go Air Force! Fly! Fight! Win!
18	- may need explaining to non-mil members
19	- Sounds like it came from a high school cheer
20	- another change
21	- It is just plain stupid...the Air Force is gonna' fly? The Air Force is gonna' fight? The Air Force thinks it is gonna' win? Duh, duh, duh...what is catchy about relaying the obvious...what is catchy about relaying what we do when it is already inherent in the name of our service?
22	- Just another slogan that will change in a year
23	- As an AF member, I don't fly -- doesn't represent what I do as a member of the Air Force ...
24	- As a recruiting tool, it doesn't focus on the individual. - The AF is fighting for relevancy in DoD right now and may need to focus on something other than flight to differentiate itself. - "Winning" a war is not an easy thing to quantify these days and it seems overly simplistic to say that an unequivocal win is one of our main three tenants.
25	- na
26	- Always changing--my goodness, leave it alone!
27	- It does not represent the various missions of the Air Force.
28	- cyberspace (I understand why it's there, but it still bugs me) - I don't really care for the "new" AF symbol either.
29	- Only captures the aircrew mission
30	- Fly Fight Win
31	- the fight reference. War is not my first option but it is front & center in this slogan.
32	- Fight
33	- fly fight win
34	- N - O - N - E
35	- Win- puts what we do on the same level as a game
36	- It's something I feel like we say a lot at work already
37	- relegates most of us to Flying, which isn't true.

13.	Where are you currently stationed or located?		
Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan		2	5%
Hurlburt Field, Florida		1	2%
Eglin Air Force Base, Florida		8	18%
Other, please specify View Responses		33	75%

13. Where are you currently stationed or located?	
#	Response
1	Nellis AFB, Nevada
2	Home Station, Charleston AFB
3	Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C.
4	Langley Air Force Base
5	pentagon
6	Offutt Air Force Base
7	Pentagon
8	Seymour Johnson
9	Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Hawaii
10	Pentagon
11	Hickam AFB, Hawaii
12	Kirtland AFB NM
13	Nellis
14	Offutt AFB
15	Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan
16	Afghanistan
17	Joint Base, Balad, Iraq
18	transit center at manas
19	Joint Base Andrews
20	Barksdale AFB, LA
21	Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ
22	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC
23	Seymour Johnson AFB, NC
24	Yokota AB, Japan
25	Langley, Virginia

14. Which of the following best describes your military status?			
Active Duty Air Force		29	66%
Air Force Reserves		2	5%
Air National Guard		1	2%
Civilian/Contractor		11	25%
Other Service		0	0%
Retired		0	0%
Student		0	0%
Spouse		0	0%
Prefer not to answer		1	2%
Total		44	100%

15. Which of the following best describes your number of years involved with the U.S. Air Force?			
Under 2 years		2	5%
2 - 5 years		3	7%
6 - 10 years		17	39%
11 - 20 years		13	30%
More than 20 years		8	18%
Prefer not to answer		1	2%
Total		44	100%

16. Which of the following is your rank or grade?			
E1		0	0%
E2		0	0%
E3		1	2%
E4		1	2%
E5		4	9%
E6		3	7%
E7		1	2%
E8		1	2%
E9		1	2%
O1		1	2%
O2		3	7%
O3		9	20%
O4		6	14%
O5		0	0%
O6		1	2%
GO		0	0%
GS 5/6		0	0%
GS 7/8		3	7%
GS 9/10		0	0%
GS 11/12		4	9%
GS 13/14		2	5%
GS 15		0	0%
Other		3	7%
Total		44	100%

Response Overview [Learn More](#)

Launched 03/03/2010 - 3:09 AM

Closed

Email Invites 0

Visits 74

Partials 7

Completes 44

Screen Outs 0

Over Quota 0

7 | analysis

Experts in the field of Air Force public affairs agree on one thing: Airmen lack identification as Airmen. The answer to how the Air Force becomes a brand depends in part on the realization of an identity. In reality, less than 5 percent of Airmen are pilots or aircrew (loadmasters, gunners, weapons systems officers, navigators, etc.) according to Interviewee 9, and validated by *Airman 'The Book' 2010* (4.6 percent based on Total Active-Duty, civilian, Reserves and Air National Guard strength)(Secretary of the Air Force Office of Public Affairs, Defense Media Activity, 2010). That leaves 95 percent who struggle with identifying with flight and the core mission: To fly, fight and win ... in air, space and cyberspace.

Creating internal identification as Airmen, Wingmen and Warriors is the crux of the battle for public affairs. Change is the other problem. Flexibility may be the key to airpower, a popular phrase ... but too much change has left the youngest service with no footing with which to stand. As Interviewees 5 and 8 said, the Air Force changes frequently, possibly too much, from its uniforms, to its slogans, even its mission focus (reference the controversial debate to purchase more fighter jets versus other weapons systems, like tankers or unmanned aerial systems.) Comments by Airmen in the survey include “another slogan that will be changed in a year” and “changing again, enough already.” Change is inevitable with each new political administration or top-level leadership change. A perfect example was the campaign “Above All”—pulled as soon as the 19th and current Chief of Staff, Norton Schwartz, took office. How can Airmen identify with a moving target or a changing message? One way is through persistent and purposeful marketing, as emphasized by one respondent, “if we go with this, we need to stick with it and make it powerful.”

The difference between the Air Force and its sister services is longevity of service and historical meaning and messaging. The proud history of the Marine Corps is taught to every Marine in boot camp, and the heritage spans hundreds of years. The proud history of the Air Force only spans 60 years, and its leaders have fought hard for every inch of recognition as the

primary leader in airpower. As Interviewee 6 suggested, the love of flight, even the connection to the U.S. Army, make up what the Air Force is today. Reconnecting to those roots would be a way to share its history and to develop its identity.

One individual surveyed said, “The Air Force is fighting for relevancy in the DoD right now and may need to focus on something other than flight to differentiate itself.” Many surveyed wrote since “fly” is the lead word, an external audience will assume everyone in the Air Force is a pilot, and it doesn’t accurately describe what Airmen, other than flyers, really do — such as security forces, pararescue, or ground crew. Another wrote, “It doesn’t inspire me to join, the Marine Corps motto ignites a passion to be part of something,” and others said it doesn’t focus on the individual, or the service’s strengths like the Marines or Army slogans. Others wrote it’s too generic and simplistic. It just reiterates “U.S. Air Force,” without encapsulating the other missions. Even “Win” gives the wrong impression and is “overly simplistic to think an unequivocal win is one of the three main tenants [of the Air Force].”

However, it could be argued every Airman is connected to the service’s heritage of flight. A security forces detail can’t operate without the unmanned aerial surveillance or without close air support in case of a troops-in-contact. The civil engineers ensure airpower through infrastructure, and “ammo” troops *begin* the process of putting bombs on target. It may not be the day-to-day job, but every Airman either supports or depends on airpower. Developing that mind-set is one challenge in strategically marketing to “Fly, Fight, Win.”

The Vision and core competencies of the Air Force include Global Vigilance, Reach and Power. When the monumental earthquake devastated Haiti in January, it was the Air Force who deployed forces within three hours of notification; it was the Air Force who had control of the small runways in Port-au-Prince within seven hours of notification to launch the largest humanitarian effort to date; it was the Air Force who airlifted thousands of people to medical facilities in Florida and airlifted millions of pounds of foreign aid into Haiti for the relief effort.

It is also the Air Force who has been forward deployed in Southwest Asia and the Middle East for more than 20 years, long before Sept. 11, long before Operations Enduring and Iraqi

Freedom. It is the Air Force who can be deployed to anywhere in the world within 24 hours, thanks to the ingenuity and tenacity of people like the Wright Brothers, Billy Mitchell—the ‘father’ of the AF who first publicly espoused the vision of strategic airpower, Hap Arnold—who advocated for an independent Air Force and held positions as the Chief of the Army Air Corps and then Commanding General of the U.S. Army Air Forces and is still the only appointed five-star Air Force general, and Robert White—the first to fly Mach 4, 5, and 6 and earn astronaut wings for flying high enough as a test pilot in an X-15 rocket plane in the 1960s. (White, in particular, is mentioned here to pay homage; he died March 24.) This story, the AF story, is vital when considering the brand-trust construct model. Reaching out to public audiences and building trust must be part of brand development.

From this exploratory study of qualitative research, most see the possibility in marketing the proposed slogan, to “Fly, Fight, Win,” but it is not a hands down winner or a solution to the Air Force’s branding issues. Just as “Above All” and “It’s not science fiction” didn’t reach all internal or external audiences, to “Fly, Fight, Win” alone, misses the mark also. If it was craftily marketed, and continually pushed as a message of a total force in a joint fight, it may have a chance. It even meets the three-word rule for ease of recall, as suggested by Interviewee 3.

The answer will come from accepting a message that doesn’t center on pilots, but rather aviation, doesn’t target only a select few, but touches all Airmen, and that is marketed consistently over several generations. A fellow officer said a Marine goes into the Marines to be a warrior and to go to battle, but not all Airmen join the Air Force to drop bombs or blow stuff up, they just join the Air Force for the opportunity.

8 | conclusions & recommendations

When lives are at stake, it takes the joint efforts of ground, sea and air forces to get an edge. In Afghanistan, where home court advantage is certain (consider its terrain, the local tribal influences and the culture of war ingrained in each generation) U.S. servicemembers and their Coalition partners require seamless interaction. Many Airmen don't understand how their mission equates to lives saved, battles won and overall mission accomplishment; if they understood this, then they may identify with the love of aviation, just as soldiers under attack love the sight of an A-10 fighter or AC-130 gunship.

To understand how an Army Joint Terminal Attack Controller relies on Air Force close air support to ensure personnel recovery, a fictional, yet realistic discourse follows:

(Bolt 51 is an A-10 Thunderbolt II fighter jet pilot, Pedro 22 is an HH-60 Pave Hawk rescue helicopter, and JTAC 18 is an Army soldier assigned to a ground force under attack.)

“Bolt 51, this is JTAC 18, roger. Call ready to copy Area of Operations update. Request big gun strafing target over coordinates ... multiple enemy forces firing on friendlies. Three down, sending 9-line, 2-CAT A, 1-CAT B, heavy small arms fire and RPG from treeline, vicinity ... 150 clicks from our position, over.”

“JTAC 18, this is Bolt 51, understand last, enemy forces moving to your right, vicinity ... looks to be three military-aged males, suggest show of force to allow Pedro 22 in for rescue.”

“Okay Bolt 51, need the help to regroup. Still taking fire, freedom of movement is restricted, need more firepower to disengage enemy.”

“JTAC 18, from up here looks to be a gathering of locals in field moving toward treeline ... picking up multiple weapons ... hostile, repeat group is hostile ... prepare for danger close weapons drop ... requirements for engagement met. Fire, fire, fire...”

“Thank you Bolt 51, firing has ceased, medics are picking up my troops, advancing out of ambush zone, over.”

This type of contact between a pilot and a JTAC highlights two important points: ground forces rely on both the Air Force's kinetic (dropping bombs), and non-kinetic (aerial reconnaissance and escalation of force) capabilities; but more importantly, saving lives of U.S.

ground troops does not stop with the medic, or the rescue pilot or close air support; it reaches back to the maintainers who turn the wrenches to ensure aircraft are mission ready, to the ‘intel’ analysts who provide information on enemy forces, to the weather forecasters who determine flying conditions or measure air density and wind speed, and even to the communications technicians, who keep phone and computer lines up for optimal ‘comms’ from the operations desk to the Combined Air Operations Center—where all air taskings and ‘fraggos’ are determined. The list of people responsible for saving lives is endless.

I would argue every job in the Air Force supports that mission. The Air Force needs to do a better job to instill that level of importance into their Airmen. If they could witness that scenario—hear the panic, see the wounded—they could internally identify with what it means to be an Airman in the United States Air Force, and more importantly a brother- or sister-in-arms alongside their Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Coasties. Crafting that message is what is needed.

Independently, to “Fly, Fight, Win” was not effective in crafting a message or creating an Air Force brand, as originally sought and contemplated. Yet, there are several key take-aways to base recommendations for future research. The purpose of this study was to create a brand that was recognizable, powerful, memorable and likeable. As researched here, was the proposed marketing slogan recognizable? Yes, those surveyed and interviewed easily and quickly recognized the phrase from the Air Force’s mission statement. Was it powerful? Opinions varied. To some, it conveyed strength and pride, but to others it was characterized as a flippant high school cheer. Was it memorable? Yes, those surveyed and interviewed remarked it was easy to remember because it was short, monosyllabic and used the rule of three. Was it likeable? Opinions varied. Results were pretty well divided between the flyers that liked the phrase, and non-flyers that did not. It was often remarked by those surveyed, it had nothing to do with their day job. As previously identified, this is a classic *Catch-22*, and developing a service identity is the sine qua non for branding the Air Force.

Further study in organizational identity management is highly recommended prior to developing and researching a new marketing campaign. As suggested by the research thesis committee, the first step for the AF is marketing who the AF is to people in the AF. Through a generation-long effort, Airmen would become walking advertisements, just as the Marines turn out walking Marine billboards with each new recruit. Similar organizational identity programs were developed at Southwest Airlines and would be useful for comparative study.

As part of an integrated marketing campaign, to “fly, fight, win” could be part of the solution through execution, implementation and reiteration. The official symbol has already become the most identifiable service symbol, now the service just needs to develop a slogan, e.g. “Fly, fight, win.” Develop it—market it—continue it—keep it and mass produce the heck out of it.

As the senior Air Force public affairs leader said, “it’s not about branding the Air Force, it’s about finding that which endures.” “Fly, fight, win” as written in the mission statement has been referenced for more than 20 years. Most Airmen don’t fly, but they do make up the service whose primary role is airpower, just as people think of rifle when they hear Marine, tank when they hear Army, ship when they hear Navy, they think of a plane when they hear Air Force—it’s embedded in the name. While the diversity and breadth of Airmen’s roles may hamper unity or identity, I challenge the Air Force to find a more historical or accurate representation of defining an Airman, Wingman, or Warrior in today’s Air Force.

appendix | definitions

GWOT – Global War on Terror

USAF/AF – United States Air Force/Air Force

IMC – Integrated Marketing Campaign

Above All – AF slogan developed by GSD & M – Idea City 2008

It's not Science Fiction, it's what we do everyday – most recent AF slogan 2009

Do Something Amazing – AF slogan before Above All was released in 2008

Cross into the Blue – AF slogan developed by Siegel & Gale in 2000

Aim High – AF slogan in the 1990s

Army of One/Army Strong – last two Army slogans

Accelerate your life – Navy slogan

The Few, the Proud, the Marines – longtime running Marine Corps slogan

Be all you can be in the Army – old Army slogan from the 1980s/1990s

UAV – unmanned aerial vehicle

CRB – Communication Research Bulletin

ICAG – Internal Communication Assessment Group

SAF – Air staff

CM – Communications division

PA – Public Affairs division

JAMRS – Joint Advertising and Marketing Research Service

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