

2023 DOCA Conference #5
US Army Fort Leavenworth and USAF Whiteman Air Force Base
September 11-12, 2023



US Army Fort Leavenworth: Building Tomorrows Leaders since 1827

Fort Leavenworth historical overview and base tour

Nestled on the higher ground of the west bank of the Missouri river, Ft. Leavenworth is truly an historic but also forward looking American military site. Founded in 1827 by General Henry Leavenworth to protect settler traffic headed west to the frontier on the Santa Fe trail, Ft. Leavenworth is the 3rd oldest continuously active military base in the United States and the oldest west of the Mississippi. We had the great fortune to be guided across the base by the historian of the Combined Arms Center Dr. Walt Napier on our windshield tour of the many historic sites not only extant, but most are still in active use. Although entirely on base, public tours are available and highly recommended as it would be impossible to cover everything here.

Built during the long, but shaky peace with native peoples of the American plains, but also to maintain that peace with the influx of settlers coming west, the Fort also played an important role during the Civil War, as both an armory and supply depot for troops heading South, but as a military cemetery housing the honored fallen. After the war, Ft Leavenworth provided training grounds for cavalry units marching west to maintain peace on the plains, including the formation of the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments, America's Buffalo Soldiers, one of

four African-American units formed here. Despite the sprinkling rain, we made a quick stop at the heroic-sized Buffalo Soldier monument, celebrating these fierce American patriots, and whose creation was first sparked by a young officer attending command school here, but whom would later make his vision honoring his fellow black soldiers a reality after becoming America's first Caribbean-Black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and first Black Secretary of State, future General Colin Powell. The fort is perhaps best known by the public as the site of the US Disciplinary Barracks, built in 1875, which operated as the US military's main prison until 2002, when the new facility was finished; former and current inmates include(d) William Calley of the My Lai massacre, Chelsea Manning of WikiLeaks fame, the Ft Hood jihadi shooter, and General George Custer, although he was court martialed and subsequently released just a few years before the Barracks was completed, about a decade before his demise at Little Big Horn.

The fort's future-defining moment came in 1881, when General William T. Sherman formed the School of Application for Cavalry and Infantry, sparking its reputation as a place of learning and innovating, rather than a dusty frontier post. In 1946, the school was renamed as the Army Command and General Staff College, having earned its place as the "Intellectual Center of the US Army." Our series of briefings for the rest of the day aligned more along the future than the past as we entered Grant Hall, built in 1908, but commonly known as Building 52 for our first briefing.

Center for Army Leadership Mission Brief

Greeted by Dr. Melissa Wolfe, an industrial psychologist and Chief of Leadership Research, Assessments, and Doctrine within the CAL, and Senior Enlisted Advisor SGM Tasalaotele Porras, we dove right into the investments the Army has made into understanding what makes a good leader and how to instill those qualities in every soldier. The CAL conducts studies, develops doctrine, and provides assessments to improve Army leadership in order to achieve positive command climates which foster mission ready units.

Rooted in data and analysis, the science behind Army leadership development wouldn't be out of place in any executive level business course, and is, of course, outlined in a very thick manual titled ADP 6-22 Army Leadership and the Profession (available online here https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-5.pdf) which lays out the core Leadership Requirements Model, which can simply be described as Be, Know, and Do. An effective military leader, defined as influencing others by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission WHILE improving the organization, soldiers must BE of good character and proper military bearing, must KNOW what they need to know (skills, ethics, intent, tact), and then DO the things a leader must (lead, develop, and achieve the mission). In short, despite what we often hear, leaders are not born, but rather leadership is a skill to be developed like any other, and the time and effort the Army has invested into leadership development is an investment in readiness for tomorrow. In the end, despite all the technology and weaponry available to modern combatants, effective leadership can compensate for deficiencies, whereas poor leadership can negate advantages. An Army of lambs, led by a lion is more fearsome than an army of lions led by a lamb. This combination of superior material AND superior leadership has made the US Army all but unstoppable.

How the Army translates the science of leadership development into developing leaders is by continuing investments in taking soldiers of all ranks through a sequence of escalating

programs, each designed to teach the soldier how to be a better leader for both the stage they are at in their career, but also builds upon prior courses to set the soldier up for higher level responsibilities later in their career. The Army does this through a three-pronged approach to learning. First the soldier learns by training in their home unit, through first learning his job, and then the job of the soldier above him. At the appropriate time, the soldier will attend institutional training and be exposed to more academic level learning taught by professionals and monitored by scientific experts. All throughout, each soldier is expected to also self-teach, either alone, or by distance learning, choosing from a vast array of available learning resources, many of which were developed here. Finally, data on each soldier's experience is gathered through career long annual surveys, much like a corporate employee survey, which feeds back to scientists like Dr Wolfe and her team of 14 psychologists to continuously revise and improve the leadership model. This culture of standard assessments allows each soldier to become self-aware of his or her own leadership strengths and weaknesses and to take immediate action to self-improve, utilizing the online self-development tools developed uniquely for them and their experiences. It says much about the Army approach to leadership development that its manuals and handbooks are published open source, trusting full well that top-down rigid blindly following orders type militaries like those of China or Russia will, of course, acquire and read them, but won't be able to replicate them, if they even understand the principles.

Lunch with Soldiers at the 12th Brick Grille

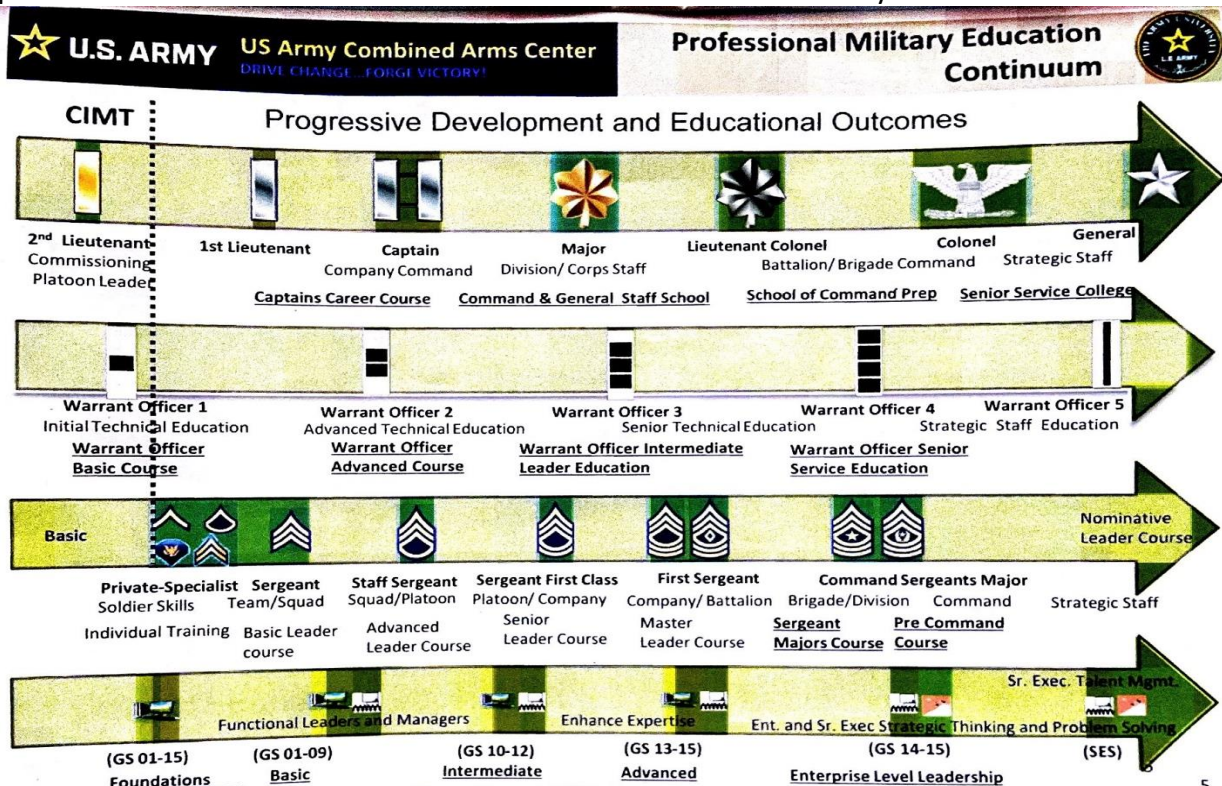


We enjoyed lunch with our military guests at the historic 12th Brick Grille, part of the Castle-like guard-house of the old Disciplinary Barracks built with prison labor, with every 12th brick cast by the inmates during construction being so marked with USMP for US Military Prison. Despite the casual feel and renovations since closing as a prison, the décor of barred windows and walls covered with prisoner mug shots reminded us of its rather unique history, before driving to the absolutely stunning Lewis and Clark Center which houses our next stop, the US Army Command and General Staff College, part of Army University.

Army University Mission Brief

Despite the warnings we would soon be entering the “nicest building in the DoD system”, the “new” (built in 2007, as opposed to the 19th century like the buildings around it) building overwhelmed us anyways. Entering under a grand classical facade, we met the estimable Dean of Academics, Dr. Jack Kem, who hosted our overview of the Army University system before leading us on a guided tour of the building.

Army University, conceptually, is somewhat like a state university system of many geographically separated schools and diverse learning programs, each targeted towards a different means to achieve the mission of educating adaptive and agile leaders of character to prepare them to lead, fight, and win against peer threats in any contested environment. The Army University System is massive, consisting of more than 70 schools and 150,000 students, overseen by a Board chaired by the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff, the highest civilian and uniformed leaders of the entire Army and operates everything from traditional degree conferring schools like the US Military Academy at West Point, to high level executive programs like the CGSC and the Army War College, to highly specialized one off programs like the Defense Language Institute, to soldier skill centers of excellence like schools for Armor, Intelligence, Artillery, and Engineering. In short, AU provides the content and delivery of professional military education to each soldier from their first days as a new lieutenant or private, all the way through their retirement, potentially as a general officer, warrant officer, or senior enlisted and at each step of the way. AU has even established and resourced a Spouse Development Office for the total force of active, guard, reserve, and National Guard, recognizing that the spouses of leaders have educational requirements of their own, especially when trying to keep professional certifications active when moving state to state or overseas and that the spouse of a commander is themselves a leader of the unit community.



This level of investment in developing future leaders is unparalleled, but it doesn't stop with merely educating soldiers, the CGSC also conducts its own faculty development to keep and retain the best educators through a career long progression of first becoming qualified to teach courses, eventually being accredited to alter and finally develop program coursework itself after many years and several certifications. Professors do not earn tenure, but rather are reappointed on up to 5-year contracts, renewed based on performance in progressing their skillset as mentioned above. Continuous education and recertification are the mantra for both the faculty and the staff and this helps keep the curriculum flexible, current, and of course, Army University has established a consortium with civilian universities such as Kansas U, Kansas State U., and others in the region to enrich student learning, support faculty engagement, and contribute to the body of work in national security studies.

As the premier Army program for professional military education, the CGSC has four schools offering coursework, but not just for Army officers, the CGSC today is joint service, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational, providing the educational needs of not just the Army, but all the services, non-uniformed US government executives, and for our friends and allies as well. Currently, over 180 officers and NCOs from 88 partner nations across 5 continents are enrolled in coursework offered at Ft Leavenworth through the International Military Student office. The keystone school of the College is the Command and General Staff School itself, which offers the graduate level Staff Officers Course, which prepares field grade officers for higher command. Second, but not less, the School of Advanced Military Studies provides graduate level programs for staff planners who help senior leaders understand and solve problems in the operational military environment. Third, the School for Command Preparation hosts 10 courses for future battalion and brigade commanders, command sergeant majors, spouses, and even company level leaders and first sergeants. Finally, the Sergeants Major Academy conducts resident and non-resident courses for upper-level non-commissioned officers destined for leadership roles across the Department of Defense.

We ended our stop at the Lewis and Clark Center with a quick tour of the lobby and its remarkable collections by the retiring Dr Kem, quickly and off the top of his head, pointing out historical portraits of past students, class mementoes, international gifts such as helmets, plaques, statues, artwork, and key features of the building, such as the beautiful three levels high stained-glass sets depicting every major US military campaign from the Revolutionary War through the 1991 Gulf War which were salvaged from the old building.





US Army Combined Arms Center mission brief

We returned back to the conference room in Grant Hall for the command brief of the Combined Arms Center, hosted by Col Trent Upton, the CAC Chief of Staff. A subordinate command of US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the CAC is responsible for most aspects of Army training except initial military training. Working in cooperation with three other Army Major Commands (Forces, Material, and Futures), the Combined Arms Center drives change, advances leader development and stewards the military profession to provide the nation with a trained and professional leadership of the Army of 2030 and lays the foundation for building the Army of 2040. All that fancy talk simply means that through its four lines of business, CAC plans for future conflicts through modernizing the Army by developing education, training, doctrine, lesson learned, and procedures to provide the Army with agile, adaptive, and

professional men and women ready to lead the fight to dominate and win on the modern (and future) battlefield. In addition to Army University and the Center for Army Leadership, the Sharp Academy for sexual harassment and assault response and the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute are direct reports to the CAC Commander. CAC overseas 34,000 employees across the globe, teaching 500,000 students annually, including 9,000 international students from 146 countries, in 11 Centers of Excellence, through the roughly 30 branch schools, 23 language training detachments, 37 Army schools (under Army University), 4 Combined Training Centers conducting over 40 Brigade level exercises annually, all with the singular goal of driving change through teamwork, excellence, and commitment.

MWR Donation Presentation to Army Emergency Services

Before departing the CAC HQ, we were able to connect with Mr. Phillips Reynolds of Army Community Services on behalf of Army Emergency Relief, an official nonprofit of the US Army dedicated to enhancing the financial readiness of soldiers by relieving financial stress on their families by providing grants and interest-free loans and scholarships. When soldiers need help with home or auto repairs, or unexpected medical or childcare costs which aren't covered at government expense, AES can provide donated funds to bridge the gap on a by case basis, typically without expecting repayment. AES is proud that 90 cents of each dollar donated goes directly to help. Most importantly, small loans can be quickly approved by a soldier's CO or first sergeant to get the funds transferred ASAP. The generous check provided by the DOCA Defense Fund will go to work immediately, by the time the check clears, the dollars will be out the door.



Whiteman Air Force Base: Global Strike... Anytime, Anywhere

Whiteman Air Force Base Arrival

Upon arrival at our destination, we parked over at the golf course (wouldn't be an American Air Base without one) across from the main gate to transition to an older-than-a-B52 USAF school bus to enter into Whiteman Air Force Base. Located near the small town of Knob Noster, Missouri and named after an American Army Air Corps fighter pilot killed when his P-40 was shot down immediately after taking off during the initial Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, the former Sedalia Army Airfield was originally built as a glider training base for the future invasion of Nazi occupied Europe, the field took on a new role during the Cold War, as a strategic bomber and later intercontinental ballistic missile base, Whiteman is most famous today as home to the futuristic B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, but as we would soon find, it has so much more going on every day than you'd expect from this sleepy town amidst the cornfields.

509th Bomb Wing mission brief

The 509th Bomb Wing is assigned to Air Force Global Strike Command with exactly that mission, to be prepared to strike anywhere on the globe when the National Command Authority requires it. The 509th traces its legacy back to the 509th Composite Group formed during the latter years of World War II to take the war to the Japanese home lands with the then cutting-edge B-29 Superfortress. It was two 509th B-29 bombers, launched from Tinian in the Marianas Islands of the Pacific, which dropped the atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, bringing the war to a successful (for us) conclusion. Today, the 509th still maintains this global watch by flying and maintaining the entire USAF inventory of 20 B-2 Spirit stealth bombers which, with the assistance of aerial refueling and coordinated planning, can strike anywhere, anytime, from the fields of western Missouri and returning safely home, long before we'd even read about it in the newspaper.

On behalf of Wing Commander Col. Butler (TDY for the Air Force Association meeting), Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Maxwell Dipietro kicked off the command brief by showing a short video clearly stating the "Defend and Avenge" mission of the B-2 Stealth bomber. While being developed to supplement the B-1 and replacing the B-52, the Air Force strongly insisted on building a fleet of at least 100 B-2s, however, due to exponentially exploding construction and maintenance costs, funding from Congress was only made available to build 21 hulls and no more. One B-2 was written off after a flight computer malfunction caused by moisture resulted in a post takeoff crash, although the pilots safely ejected, leaving a total force fleet of 20 aircraft, supplemented by 60 or so B-1 bombers. These aircraft will comprise the bulk of USAF Global Strike capabilities, along with the aging B-52 fleet, all to be replaced when the B-21 comes online sometime in by the 2030s. Unlike the B-52 and the B-1, only the stealthy B-2 can safely penetrate heavily defended airspace such as would be required to go against peer and near peer threats, such as Russia, China, or North Korea. In short, the men and women of the 509th provide "a spirit looming unseen, yet ever present" in the minds of those who would seek to do harm to the US and our allies.

As we have heard throughout our DOCA Conferences, the US Military is shifting from the long asymmetric war on terror, which, for the USAF was largely decades of "target practice" against third world insurgents, pivoting back to full spectrum war against peer adversaries.

The 509th, while remaining focused on its readiness training mission, often sends deployable packages around the globe, both to signal American resolve to protect its interests and allies, but to showcase our ability to do it. These Bomber Task Forces consists of around 200 personnel and 4 C-17 loads of equipment to support 3 bombers for a month-long mission to regions such as Europe and Asia. These packages were developed in response to longer term deployments, which didn't turn out to trigger the kind of shock and awe response expected and, in the end, didn't justify the exposure to unfriendly intelligence gathering. As it turns out, having a bomber task force suddenly show up out of the blue in an unexpected location was much more effective and far less burdensome. Be on the lookout soon for a B-2 package deploying in a place our opponents might least expect (hint hint).

The most vulnerable link, besides the cost of maintenance, in the bomber chain is the tankers, without which, the B-2 would have to be much more forward deployed, exposing it and its crew of pilots, maintainers, and munitions loaders to deadly threat, but also exposing the entire system to snoopers, electronic or otherwise. B-2 squadrons used to take experienced pilots from other platforms and transition them, but now they are staffed the same way other platforms are, based on performance in flight training, pilot desire, but ultimately on Air Force needs. In the end, like the Navy's aircraft carriers, and the Air Force's ICBM programs, the B-2 fleet has proven its value in protecting freedom, despite the immense cost, without losing a single aircraft to enemy action, despite hundreds of combat missions.

Flight Line for B-2 tour

Nestled in their individual bunkers, the 20 (or rather 19 as 1 is being evaluated after a 2021 crash landing) B-2 Spirit strategic bombers, each named for a US State, sat quietly as we bussed out to the flight line for our tour. Welcomed by two pilots, we split into two groups for a literal walk around guided tour, with our pilots proudly pointing out all of the visible and invisible factors which make the B-2 literally one-of-a-kind platforms. As wide wing tip to wing tip as a B-52, but only as long as an F-15, the flying wing makes a monstrous impression. The two pilots first climb up a ladder 15 feet off the ground to the otherwise airliner looking cockpit, which houses a small toilet, a coffee pot, and a microwave (hot pockets were our guide favorite in flight snack). From this perch, the B-2 can be flown 10,000 miles with one refuel load. As it has no empennage (the tail), the aircraft is controlled in flight by multiple redundant flight computers continuously controlling the clamshell split rudder and elevons on each wings trailing edge, they work together to raise or lower the nose in flight, or opposite to make the bomber yaw side to side.

The entire surface is designed to deflect incoming electromagnetic waves, and in combination with the special radar absorbing material coating each part, the massive bomber has a radar signature of a large insect. Openings in the hull, such as the bomb bays, landing gear bays, and access panels blend so perfectly and seamlessly that when open, they are razor sharp. Even the bolts sealing the panels shut are coated with radar absorbing gels. When viewed from any angle, the B-2 appears almost two dimensional, with no corners or flat surfaces to reflect radar back to an operator. Despite being designed in the 1980s, these aircraft remain technological marvels, found nowhere else on Earth, no Chinese or Russia "stealth"

aircraft are anything like it. About half of the 20 bombers are mission ready at any given time and these missions could include conventional or nuclear weapons to be used anywhere on the globe, day or night. Although incredibly expensive to build, operate, and maintain (up to \$44 million per bomber annually with a per hour flight cost of nearly \$200K), the fleet is expected to continue flying for at least another decade or two, even after the B-21 fleet comes online.

B-2 Weapons Loading Trainer and loading crew mission brief

Our tour of the aircraft complete, we headed across the tarmac to where the 509th maintainers were waiting to show us their pride and joy, the B-2 Weapons Loading Trainer. 67 feet long, 48 feet wide, 18 feet tall, and weighing 80,000 pounds, the WLT is a full-size mockup of the center portion of a B-2, complete with simulated cockpit controls the main show, the two bomb bays, the associated bomb racks, and lift/trailer, the WLT cost nearly \$20 million. The WLT allows for the ground crew to practice the safe and rapid loadout of munitions on board the bomber. Each bomb bay is designed to hold what is effectively a large rotisserie spit for freefall and guided conventional or nuclear bombs, but also a variety of cruise missiles. Using these spindles, called the rotary launcher assemblies, the loaders can load up to sixteen B61 or B83 nukes or a similar number of 2,000-pound JDAM conventional GPS guided bombs, 2 massive ordnance penetrator bunker busters, multiple standoff cruise missiles, or an incredible eighty (80) 500-pound GPS bombs on each B-2. The massive WLT allows the crews to practice and become certified on any and all combinations of these loadouts, depending on the mission set, which includes deploying overseas with the earlier mentioned bomber packages, although the munitions themselves are usually pre-positioned at the other end, the WLT and its trailer do not travel with the loaders themselves as this piece of equipment is unique to Whiteman.



Lunch with Airmen at Mission's End Club

Joined by several airmen at the almost B-2 shaped Missions' End Club, which has been serving the Whiteman community, hosting birthday parties, graduations, even weddings, the Club is mostly used to relax after a hard day, but today, its role was serving delicious Kansas City BBQ brisket and chicken to a room of hungry members, fresh from our B-2 experience.

442nd Fighter Wing A-10 Thunderbolt II Hanger visit

Sharing the flight line with the B-2 equipped 509th and its Air National Guard co-unit the 131st Bomb Wing, the 442nd Fighter Wing is the only Air Force Reserve wing located in Missouri, tracing its heritage back to the 442nd Troop Carrier Group, based at then Sedalia Army Airfield, and trained crews for their missions in WWII, which included airdropping troops and supplies during the D-Day landings in Normandy and Operation Market Garden, the largest Airborne operation of the war. Currently the 442nd operates the always popular A-10 Thunderbolt II, affectionately also called the Warthog. Although designed in the 1970s to kill Soviet tanks, the single seat A-10 remains the only Air Force aircraft designed solely for close air support, but has evolved other mission sets such as fast air control of other attack planes and providing support to downed airmen, ambushed ground troops, protecting them while other forces can go and get them out safely.

Designed to take a beating and still be mission capable, everything on the A-10 serves this purpose, the engines are on pylons designed to burn off and drop a burning engine, saving the aircraft, the pilot literally sits in an armored bathtub, foam filled flaps prevent ground debris from being ingested, even the large vertical stabilizers shield the engine exhaust from heat seeking missiles. Everything is redundant with the only singular systems being the massive 30mm gatling gun and the "flight-suit insert or stick actuator" (pilot). The weapons loaders and maintenance folks can turn the A-10 around with a new load of weapons, bullets, and fuel and send it back out on mission in less than 30 minutes.

Our briefer shared an anecdotal story of an Army ground convoy ambushed in Afghanistan, surrounded on three sides by mountains with the Pakistani border on the other. Cut off and pinned down by masses of fighters on the high ground and unable to reach anyone by radio, one vehicle finally made it to higher ground and called for help. Two nearby A-10s flying a different mission were redirected and suppressed the enemy long enough for our guys to get out. Later, one of these surviving soldier's wives was assigned to the 442nd and reached out to find out who was flying those A-10s, as it turned out, they not only identified the pilots, but they were on base, in the building, and able to shake the hands of the soldier who thanked them for ensuring that he could watch his daughter graduate. Soldiers and Marines alike love the A-10 even more than we do and justifiably so.

20th Attacks Squadron mission brief

Assigned to the 432nd Wing out of Creech AFB in Nevada, but based at Whiteman, the 20th Attack Squadron flies the MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle with which we have all become quite familiar with during operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Activated and inactivated throughout the decades first as a troop transport unit in WWII, later flying O-1 Bird Dogs as

forward air controllers during Vietnam, and later flying OV-10s doing the same mission in Europe, the 20th was reactivated in 2011 to fly UAVs in the Global War on Terror. Unique to larger UAVs, the aircraft themselves are shipped in crates to a forward operating location near the intended area of operations, but flown entirely sight unseen by pilots based around the world utilizing satellite uplinks to see through the many sensors onboard the MQ-9. Being located together, the members of the 20th Attacks are able to build true cohesive culture, flying round the clock on three shifts, each operator working 5 days on, 3 days off, flying 3-5 hours a shift for several months, until the rotate to a different shift. The aircraft are worked even harder, with the extreme loiter capability of the MQ-9, it isn't unusual for one pilot to begin a mission, with a second or even a third taking over and completing the mission and landing the aircraft. Each flying crew consists of a pilot and a sensor operator and they typically fly the Reaper from a "cockpit" built inside of a mobile trailer.



Flying this kind of tempo around the world, these pilots have been on the front lines of global security for several decades, flying, observing, even fighting the most implacable enemies in the most remote and dangerous areas of conflict. This mission leads to an unusual situation where crews are literally driving to work, spending their work shift killing bad guys halfway across the planet, then driving back across town to pick-up the kids for soccer practice before tucking into their own bed, all without being able to talk about what and where they do.

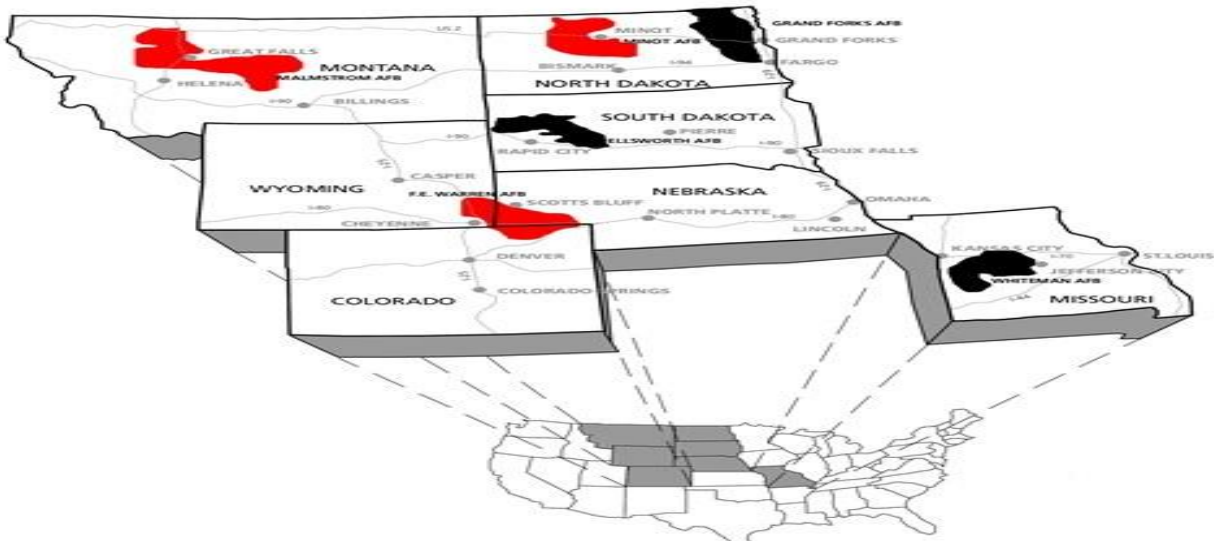
As with their sister B-2 unit across the flightline, the UAV squadron is also pivoting from the counter-insurgency mission to prepare for any major operation against a peer or near peer adversary. Being unmanned and relatively inexpensive, the MQ-9 provides a "tripwire" which can take more risk to see what is happening without exposing our side to much risk. We've

come close to losing pilots flying missions in the Black Sea or South China sea due to unprofessional and dangerous Russian and Chinese close quarter intercepts, but the MQ-9 fears not to tread in this airspace. Another unique aspect of the pilots flying in the 20th is that they are administratively under the command of the 4 star Air Combat Command, one of the 9 Major Commands of the USAF, but when operational, belong to the Air Component Commander of the Combatant Command region they are flying in, So, on the one hand, they are a strategic asset personally belonging to the most senior Air commander in the region, but they are flexible enough to often be assigned to locate, follow, even kill, one man in one car or at one house.

These danger spot missions also have an advantage for training, as the 20th can't utilize the full spectrum of electronic eavesdropping while flying over US Citizens in US airspace, which would ordinarily degrade training, but this hasn't been a problem when flying in say Afghanistan or off the coast of China, Syria, or North Korea. As we have heard across the services, the greatest threat comes from China. Not as much their military might, but their ability and willingness to infiltrate our society and sow division, weakening patriotism, and hampering our ability to support the military forces engaged in the shooting war. The war we can win, it will be tough and losses will be high, but China knows it isn't ready, but also fears it may have closed the gap with us as much as it will ever be.

Oscar One Minuteman Launch Control Complex

Built as part of an enormous complex of connected intercontinental ballistic missile silos and launch control facilities, Oscar One is one of the last vestiges of the Minuteman missile fields of Missouri, although similar fields were built in Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, both Dakotas, and Montana, for a total of 1500 missiles (see graphic below). From 1964 until the 1993 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty signed by President George H.W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin ended their mission, Oscar One served as the command center for a squadron of 10 ICBM silos in the surrounding fields. Part of 15 similar facilities spread across Central Missouri, Oscar One was the only one actually located on a US military base, the reason why it still exists and why we were able to take a tour, virtually all of the others having been decommissioned, destroyed, and the ground sold for commercial operations as part of the START treaty obligations.



launched, it was expected there would be little left for them to escape to but a nuclear wasteland from the Soviet retaliatory strike. In the end, the furious pace of construction from 1961-1963 saw thousands of men working three shifts, seven days a week, reaching a peak of building silos at a rate of one per day, finally completing the vast project with 1,000 missiles on alert by 1967.



MWR donation presentation to Whiteman First Sergeants Council

We ended the day and this Conference with the presentation of our MWR donation to the Whiteman AFB First Sergeants Council, consisting of the First Sergeant of each of the resident squadrons at Whiteman. The First Sergeant originally was simply the senior Sergeant of a unit, but evolved to become its own official rank after WWII. Unlike Master Sergeant, which is equal in rank, the First Sergeant signifies a split in responsibilities with the First Sergeant taking on more of a leadership than a technical role, more focused on the morale,

welfare, and conduct of the lower ranked enlisted personnel of a unit and typically reports directly to the unit commander as the senior advisor on the issues facing the enlisted members. In the Air Force, the First Sergeant is a position more than just a rank, and each squadron has such a “unit Mom” for lack of a better term. There likely isn’t a better group to trust our DOCA Defense Fund dollars to than those already entrusted precisely with the responsibilities of taking the best care of the airmen and their families.

