

CHIEF MASTER SERGEANT OF THE AIR FORCE DAVID A. FLOSI

The United States is at a critical juncture. The era of Great Power Competition marks a new security environment, and we are no longer afforded the safety of operating in uncontested environments. Make no mistake—our competitors are formidable and want to see our nation fail. To win today and in the future, the United States must cultivate leaders who are mission-ready, flexible, and resilient.

The US military is made up of volunteers, and the defense of our nation is a task never taken lightly. The weight of defending the Constitution against all enemies is a heavy burden. We owe every service member a debt of gratitude for putting on the uniform each morning. They are the lifeblood of our forces. Without these individuals, we cannot meet and defeat peer threats in contested environments across the globe.

Sometimes the burdens a service member carries in support of their nation are invisible, and sometimes those invisible struggles lead to tragedy. The uncomfortable truth is suicide is real and impacts our forces. Any suicide is a tragedy and terrible loss.

For the Air Force, the mission of *fly, fight, and win . . . anytime, anywhere*, cannot happen without every Airmen. We as wingmen need to do everything we can to prevent such losses. Yet the hard truth is sometimes the signs are missed, and when this happens, we must support our Air Force family members and those left behind. Every member of the Air Force needs to understand there are tools available when it comes to supporting each other, reducing suicide risk, and promoting healing and resilience.

Prevention, intervention, and postvention are heavily discussed throughout the articles in this special edition of *Air & Space Operations Review*. From the research presented, it is clear the authors leading the effort to reduce the number of suicides in the Air Force are knowledgeable and passionate about taking up the fight against suicide. It is up to us, however, to take what is discussed in these pages and find ways to use the recommendations.

Leveraging academic discussions and applying them to real-world situations takes critical thinking. Suicide prevention is a daunting task, but the Airmen of the world's premier air force cannot afford to let this monumental task take a back seat. We must use the data in these pages to make informed decisions and find new ways to develop solutions to implement prevention, intervention, and postvention strategies across all levels of the force.

This will not be easy. Not only will it take critical thinking, but it will also take Airmen digging deep into the topic of suicide. Surface-level thoughts and discussions will not help an Airman who is struggling silently. What will help them is being surrounded by wingmen who are ready to act and bring about change. Airmen who are willing to have open dialogue about hard, uncomfortable topics.

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force David Flosi is the 20th Chief Master Sergeant of the US Air Force.

This special edition offers the perfect point from which to launch real conversations, and these conversations will have the potential to unleash new and innovative ideas. These ideas will help not only Airmen but also members of the Army, Navy, Marines, Space Force, and Coast Guard overcome the internal struggles they believe they must carry by themselves.

This effort demands great care, but once again, the Air Force will rise to the occasion. The US Air Force is the most trusted and capable air force in the world. Our Airmen prove this every day with their disciplined application of airpower . . . anytime, anywhere! ✈️

Disclaimer and Copyright

The views and opinions in Air & Space Operations Review (ASOR) are those of the authors and are not officially sanctioned by any agency or department of the US government. This document and trademark(s) contained herein are protected by law and provided for noncommercial use only. Any reproduction is subject to the Copyright Act of 1976 and applicable treaties of the United States. The authors retain all rights granted under 17 U.S.C. §106. Any reproduction requires author permission and a standard source credit line. Contact the ASOR editor for assistance: asor@au.af.edu.