



Combat Control Association

Team,

Happy New Year to all, we hope the holidays treated everyone well.

We have not put out any communications to the team in about a month and figured we owe everyone a new year update.

This one is lengthy, but we believe you will find it very informative.

Last week the board of directors met in San Antonio (Lackland AFB – Medina Annex; home of AF Special Warfare training) for our annual strategy session. It was an extremely productive event.

We invested time discussing what the Combat Control Association accomplished in 2019, what we did well, and where we can improve. We also voted on our Executive board positions and outlined our 2020 strategic initiatives. Additionally, we were able to spend time with AF Spec War leadership, AF Spec War recruiting, Wounded Warrior and Care Coalition leaders to understand what is going on in our community; specifically, so we can answer the many questions that are presented to our Association throughout the year. Lastly, we spent time with board members from the TACP Association, Grey Beret (SOWT) Association, PJ Association, PJ Foundation, and Air Commando Association discussing each of our organizations, and how we can work together to serve our members.



The CCA board members and officers for 2020 are: ([More information and photos here.](#))

Secretary: Mark Nevatt

Treasurer: Bernie Oder

Vice President: Mike West

President: Mike Lamonica

Board member: Kyle Stanbro

Board member: Chris Larkin

Board member: John Bringolf

Regarding our strategic initiatives, here is where we plan to invest our energy in 2020:

1. **Review and update CCA Bylaws:** Although the board will lead this initiative, you can expect we will be formally asking for membership input. We will do this in a structured way, so you can



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provide surgical feedback based on the current bylaws and how you would like to see them adjusted. This is your Association, and we need your input to shape it.

2. **Modernize the website and social media presence:** John Bringolf will lead a committee in this effort. Although we have some names of people who will help, we welcome volunteers, and input. If you are interested in volunteering or have suggestions, please email us at board@usafcca.org
3. **Formalize a fundraising campaign:** Chris Larkin will lead this effort. Although we do a decent job of raising funds to support tactical events, we will benefit from a more formal strategy to drive consistent results. If you are interested in assisting this effort, please email us at board@usafcca.org
4. **Mature the regional reunion model:** Kyle Stanbro and Mike West will lead this effort. This is not an attempt to standardize reunion templates, rather a way to export best practices to support anyone who has interest in hosting a regional reunion. If you are interested in hosting a regional reunion, please email us at board@usafcca.org
5. **Execute a membership recruiting campaign:** Mike Lamonica and Mark Nevatt will lead this effort in conjunction with leaders in our active duty community. We could use some retiree volunteers to be part of this team, especially if you live near one of our squadron. If you are interested in helping strategize/execute our recruiting campaign, or would like to be a squadron liaison, please email us at board@usafcca.org
6. **Mature and codify relationships with peer Associations / Foundations:** From our survey's last year, you expressed you would like CCA to provide lots of services (wounded/injured support, transition assistance, job placement, etc...); the list was long and meaningful. The best way for us to provide the many desired services is through partnerships.

Additionally, as the USAF Special Warfare community evolves, we are well served to communicate and provide co-support with our peer TACP, PJ, SOWT, ACA organizations. To be clear, this is not an attempt at combining our organizations, it is a concerted effort to work together to serve the needs of each of our communities.

On Wednesday, we spent a full day receiving briefings and tours from our active duty leaders in Spec War training Wing, Spec War recruiting squadron, and AF Wounded Warrior / SOCOM Care Coalition. Below is a brief summary of the information we were given

1. **Spec War Training:**
 - a. Special Warfare was a CSAF initiative to bring our battlefield Airman specialties under a single umbrella organization to empower our leaders to stare at our unique challenges and create appropriate solutions.
 - i. Spec War is comprised of 4 enlisted and 3 officer specialty codes (Combat Control, Special Tactics Officers, Pararescue, Combat Rescue Officers, Tactical Air Control Party Enlisted, Tactical Air Control Party Officers, Special Reconnaissance (an evolution of what used to be SOWT))



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- ii. Spec War is not a war fighting unit, it is an organization built to allow these 7 career fields to gain mass and empower our leaders to represent and solve our unique challenges at the Wing, Numbered Air Force, and MAJCOM levels.
 - iii. Spec War supports these war fighting entities:
 - 1. Guardian Angel Weapon System
 - 2. TACP Weapon System
 - 3. Special Tactics
- b. The Spec War Wing has a very robust infrastructure. The entire pipeline for all 7 specialties falls under the operational control of the Spec War Wing which offers Wing and Group leadership the ability to maintain visibility on challenges and authority to fix them
 - i. The Wing has the appropriate Group and Squadron infrastructure required to provide command & control of all the pipelines, and has Human Performance Group that provides instructors and candidates with access to specially trained professionals who specialize in mental, physical, and nutritional performance
 - ii. Our Spec War leadership can communicate with Numbered Air Force, and MAJCOM leaders directly to address institutional challenges
- c. The advent of Spec War formalized many groundbreaking initiatives, not the least of which is a focus to solve our legacy challenges of graduating enough Airmen to meet the needs of the field.
 - i. The Wing's approach to this is to focus on challenges posed from recruiting, to basic training, to pipeline entry, to pipeline execution, all the way through graduation.
 - ii. This wholistic approach allows them to dissect and address lots of small issues where they happen; when you solve lots of small issues, the aggregate has meaningful impacts
- d. *We will discuss recruiting as a separate discussion point below.*
- e. Once our recruits ship to basic training, they are all in the same basic training flight (except women candidates; basic training is not equipped to handle coed flights); they start functioning as a team from day one.
 - i. As you can imagine a Spec War basic training flight drives second order effects like the warrior culture our candidates are immersed in during basic training, surrounded by like-minded Airman
- f. During basic training the strength/conditioning coaches assigned to Spec War Wing visit the trainees daily to provide physical training, nutrition, and mental preparation support so our candidates do not lose momentum during basic training
 - i. Coaches also electronically monitor physical performance
 - ii. Through collection and review of the data the coaches collect, they can influence what our basic trainees do daily to improve performance/reduce injury (they found too much marching rather than PT, can drive a spike in shin splints)
- g. Once our candidates graduate basic training, they move to the Prep Course on Lackland AFB where they spend 9-weeks together learning history of their specialties, how to PT,



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being immersed on Spec War culture, and baselining their physical, mental, and nutritional abilities at an individual level

- i. They all live together in the same open bay barracks (including women candidates)
 1. The barracks for this phase of training is temp controlled to 65 degrees for optimal rest conditions
 2. Students have tempurpedic mattresses and down comforters. This is just for prep course as the students are learning fitness, conditioning, flexibility, mental toughness and the impact rest has on performance. When they understand what right looks like, it is their responsibility to manage it through the rest of the pipeline (without special mattresses, comforters, or climate-controlled sleeping conditions).
- ii. They go through a full physical assessment to include strength, conditioning, psych evaluation, flexibility, range of motion, and vitals (core temp, heart rate, hydration, etc..). This is all led by experts trained in these specialties with state of the art measurement equipment
- iii. The candidates PT on average 6hrs a day
- iv. They are also given classes on strength, conditioning, flexibility, nutrition, importance of rest, hydration, and mental toughness (all have shown meaningful impact to pipeline performance)
- v. During PT they have Division I coaches leading the events, and each candidate is connected to science based electronic devices that feed into a single dashboard so the coaches can monitor group and individual performance.
 1. Long term this may lead to performance baselining (what indicates a successful operator); the goal is to understand indicators, not eliminate people due to them
 2. Short term it allows cadre to understand the ebbs and flows of performance and positively intervene when necessary
 - a. Anecdotally the cadre told us that when they see candidates red line for core temp, heart rate, hydration, etc... the root cause is typically something they can address (illness, hydration, major life stressor, etc..) to get the candidates back to optimal performance, and teach candidates how to be more aware going forward
- vi. The candidates have access to Spec War medical staff, and a dedicated chow hall (the food is labeled to explain nutritional value for them).
- vii. The main focuses of prep course are to get good baseline data, teach the candidates what right looks like, and prepare them for the next phases of training; Spec War leaders feel this has been working
- h. When our candidates graduate the prep course, the TACP enlisted/officer attend the TACP prep course, and the CCT/STO/PJ/CRO/Special Recon candidates attend assessment and selection.



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- i. TACP don't require SCUBA or water training, which drives them to attend a similar but separate course
 - i. During assessment and selection candidates are pushed hard, and their performance is surgically measured.
 - i. Once they graduate A&S the candidates are boarded
 - ii. After the board, they are selected, given an opportunity to attend A&S again, or eliminated.
 - iii. Spec War leadership can influence where candidates who are not selected go (i.e. EOD, SERE, or other AFSC that would benefit from having men/women with our culture/focus)
 - j. Those selected then enter our 3-level pipeline (pre-SCUBA, SCUBA, SERE, Airborne, Military Free Fall, Combat Control School), then on to Special Tactics Training Squadron at Hurlburt
 - i. Spec War leadership has many initiatives to improve the pipeline and optimize training days. The list is lengthy but could have a meaningful impact. For example, an idea was discussed where the AF would have its own certified Airborne School that did not require candidates to be out of our Wing's control and culture for 3-weeks; maybe it could be shortened to 1.5 weeks and led by our cadre. This is just a sample of the ideas they have, and is not an approved course of action today
 - k. The Pipeline for our Airmen takes approximately 2-full years.
- 2. Spec War Recruiting:**
- a. The Spec War recruiting squadron is not operationally controlled by the Spec War Wing; rather it falls under AF Recruiting Command (our leadership agrees with this action, as the Recruiting Command is designed to recruit; we just needed a mechanism to address our unique challenges)
 - b. However, the Spec War Wing does work hand in hand with Recruiting Command leadership to influence how we recruit for the Spec War specialty codes
 - c. The Spec War recruiting squadron has 90+ actual recruiters assigned, focused solely on recruiting for Spec War
 - i. They are specially selected / trained / incented to recruit Spec War Airmen
 - ii. They attend an orientation/training course at Lackland to prepare them for this very important role
 - 1. During our visit we saw the recruiters finishing a team run, after they completed a pool orientation session
 - 2. Recruiting Command seems to understand Spec War has special needs and requires special recruiters trained / equipped / incented to locate talent for our unique missions
 - iii. When a recruit identifies they want to join a Spec War specialty, the generic AF recruiter is supposed to connect them with a Spec War recruiter in their region to ensure the recruit is vetted and funneled into the appropriate Spec War specialty



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- d. Spec War also has 40+ field developers to aid candidates in the preparation for their journey to become a Spec War operator
 - i. These developers are former operators charged with mentoring / preparing candidates to be successful in the pipeline
 - ii. Once the Spec War recruiter is complete with the recruiting paperwork, they connect the recruit with a Spec War developer, to work together until the ship date
- e. Spec War recruiters ship recruits to Lackland in batches so they can fill Spec War basic training flights

3. AF Wounded Warrior and Care Coalition

- a. The services are mandated to have robust Wounded Warrior programs.
 - i. AFW2 is the Air Force answer to that mandate
 - ii. Care Coalition is the SOCOM answer to that mandate
 - iii. Although all services have programs, the Service Chief dictates the emphasis of the program so they each have a different flavor
 - iv. Since all CCT / STO fall under AF, and SOCOM, we get the benefit of taking the best from both
- b. The AFW2 program is run by Col Mike Flatten (a STO), and his Senior Enlisted Managers SMSgt Marcus Mader (a TACP)
 - i. The current CSAF (Gen Goldfein) told Col Flatt, "take care of our Airman, past, present, and future"
 - ii. From the CCA boards perspective, we are in good hands
- c. Both AFW2 and Care Coalition can directly assist with our active duty teammates, or those injured/wounded on active duty
- d. They can also help with many of our teammates who were wounded/ injured (to include PTSD/TBI/substance abuse, etc...) from previous generations
 - i. In some cases, it could be direct support
 - ii. In other cases, it could be referral support
 - iii. Both organizations told us specifically to not hold back; if we have teammates in CCA (or our peer organizations) who need help, we should reach out, and they will let us know what they can do to assist

On our last day of our trip, we spent 4.5-hrs with our teammates from TACPA, PJA, PJ Foundation, Grey Beret Association, and Air Commando Association.

- 1. Each association/foundation briefed their mission, priorities, and programs
 - a. This allowed us to ID where we have similarities and maybe work together
 - b. It also showed us where we diverge, which could show us where we will operate separately/differently
- 2. What became very apparent is we have more in common than we have differences
 - a. We all want to take care of our teammates and families of our wounded, injured, and KIA
 - b. We all have similar recruiting challenges, specifically with our active duty teammates
 - c. We all want to assist our teammates during significant events



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- d. We all need to raise money
 - e. We all want to host reunions/events to get the members of our individual organizations together for brotherhood/fellowship
 - f. We all want to capture our history
 - g. Each of our organizations have best practices we can share; if our peers want to employ them, they can; if not, that is fine as well
 - i. A great example of this is the TACPA formally reaches out to the children of their fallen at age 16, upon graduation of high school, and at age 25 with support; this is meant to simulate times in young people's lives where their father would be there to support and guide them; maybe this is something we in CCA would want to employ, maybe it is not; regardless, it is an incredibly thoughtful effort that merits discussion.
3. We discussed ways for us to work together more cohesively in 2020
- a. We will maintain a data base of contact information for each of our boards so we can quickly communicate with each other
 - b. If one of our organizations is working an initiative that could be beneficial to all, or a significant event happens (WIA of one of our teammates is a good example), that org will come on line with a message to all of our peer organizations letting them know what is going on
 - i. The peer organizations can communicate to their membership
 - ii. The peer organizations can offer assistance (finances, labor, coordination, etc..), but is not mandatory
 - iii. The organization that initiates the initiative/event will be lead and responsible for communicating to all organizations, coordinating efforts, and execution
 - c. As we continue to work together and support each other, we can advertise our combined efforts to our active duty force, and as a result promote recruiting for each of our organizations in the squadrons
4. We discussed the success we had as a combined group for Rachel Condiff and the girls; it was truly a team effort.
5. We discussed the many referral agencies we are associated with who can help our organizations support our members, samples below
- a. Fusion Cell: Assists former/transitioning military members with mentorship, and job placement
 - b. The Honor Foundation: Provides formal training, mentorship, and job placement for transitioning SOF members
 - c. Warrior Support Foundation: Aides families of wounded/KIA with financial assistance (this organization paid off Rachel Condiff's mortgage)
 - d. Organizations that assist with PTSD/Substance abuse, there are many that each of our Associations/Foundations use
 - e. Entities that can aid our people in getting properly evaluated to formally get the appropriate benefits from the VA; there are many that each of our Associations/Foundations use



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6. Ultimately, we agreed to form a coalition of associations to communicate with and support each other in our combined efforts.
 - a. We are not trying to create a Spec War Association, nor do we have any plans to take anything away from our individual Associations/Foundations
 - b. There are no plans or intentions of disbanding CCA or having CCA fall under another organization
 - c. We all agree we are better when we collaborate, so we will do just that.
 - d. We all agree there is value in communicating periodically, and will figure out what that looks like
 - e. We all agree there is value in meeting annually, and will plan to do that

We on the board recognizes this was a lot for the team to digest; heck, we are still digesting it after our visit to Lackland this week. However, we wanted to provide you with everything we learned and did this past week, as soon as possible.

We owe you a summary of 2019 and hope to provide that in the coming weeks. Getting the financials together to present takes a little while, so we appreciate your patience.

Lastly, we would like to thank Bruce Dixon for the past three years of service to the Board and the entire Association. Last week marked Bruce's final act as our Vice President. Thanks Bruce, you are a great teammate.

Thanks to all for your patience and support. CCA is just a shell of an organization without its dedicated members

Respectfully
CCA BOD