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Tapia retires, looks back at career

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Chief Master Sgt. Gerardo Tapia, Air Education and Training Command command chief, speaks to members of the 12th Flying Training Wing during a May 20, 2013 visit to Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

Photo by Joel Martinez

U.S. Air Force archive photo

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Photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarayuth Pinthong

AETC releases 2016 Strategic Plan, page 5

Courtesy graphic

JBSA tax centers open, page 11

COMMENTARY

The importance of relationships

By Lt. Col. Jason Earley
435th Fighter Training Squadron director of operations

"During our discussion, Coach Smart focused on two key leadership elements: relationships and balance."

In a continuing effort to grow leadership skills and enhance human capital, the flight commanders of the 435th Fighter Training Squadron recently organized a summit with new University of Texas Men's Basketball Coach Shaka Smart.

In April 2015, Sports Illustrated labeled Coach Smart as the "biggest hire" of the National Collegiate Athletic Association basketball season. In 2011, despite being one of the last four teams invited to the NCAA tournament, Smart led Virginia Commonwealth University all the way to the Final Four. In his six seasons at VCU, Smart led his student athletes to at least 26 wins each year – a feat never before accomplished at the school.

Smart's transition to UT is similar to a situation many Air Force leaders face. He entered a new organization with existing personnel, policies and habits. His challenge was to lead them to a culture and climate that both accomplishes the mission and fosters personal growth. During our discussion, Smart focused on two key leadership elements: relationships and balance. His insight on these two topics can help Airmen gain a deeper understanding of effective leadership.

At the outset of the meeting, Smart directed the conversation to relationships. He pointed out his players would not truly be open to his coaching unless he earned their trust.

Admittedly, the student athletes in his organization, who are aged late teen to early 20s, communicate and operate very differently than he does.

Smart stressed the importance of meeting his players "where they are." The previous coaching staff at UT recruited most of the players on this year's team. Similar to many Air Force leaders, Smart inherited an existing group of personnel. He stressed his first and most important task was to get to know his players.

He did this through time spent together, texts, social media, via assistant coaches – essentially through all means at his disposal. Coach Smart made developing these relationships an intentional act and a high priority.

Coach Smart's approach resonates closely with an ongoing Harvard study. For 75 years, Harvard's psychology department has been conducting the "Study of Adult Development." This endeavor is extremely unique due to the length of the study and sample size of participants.

The study's fourth director, Dr. Robert Waldinger, recently gave a talk at the popular TED symposiums. This epic Harvard study discovered a clear message; good relationships make humans happy and health.

Additionally, Waldinger lists three key lessons learned. First, strong social connections are critical to good health while loneliness has an opposite, toxic effect. Second, study participants who were happy at age 50 tended to be very healthy in their 80s. Finally, the memory capacity of study participants with good relationships stayed sharper, longer.

So if relationships are critical, how should Air Force leaders respond?

Again, Smart's leadership style provided insight and as we observed the team's practice, several techniques became evident.

First, Smart used a specific and tailored means of interaction with each individual player. His relationship building provided insight that allowed him to coach each student in a way that best enabled their learning.

Next, Smart always "circled back" to a player he corrected. When a spot correction or feedback was required, he would give it – sometimes with gusto. However, later in the practice he found time to encourage the previously critiqued player both one-on-one and in front of the large group. He never provided evaluation without an equal or greater amount of coaching.

Finally, Smart used peer-leaders to help. He stated how critical it is to have players on the team to accept leadership roles and then commit to helping make their teammates better.

The military parallels with these three techniques are clear. As leaders, we must get to know our people so we can tailor their training. When giving feedback, it is important to separate evaluation from coaching. After giving good, well-thought-out feedback, leaders must follow up at a later time with continued coaching. Military organizations are the perfect structure for effective peer leadership. Higher echelon leaders should empower junior members to lead from within.

Another important topic Smart addressed is balance. He acknowledged a balanced lifestyle is one of the most difficult leadership skills to master. Smart took an interesting and applicable view on balance. In order to be the absolute best at something, one has to make it the focus of their life.

Unfortunately, being elite often leads to an unbalanced lifestyle. One means of mitigating this challenge is to understand and consider your current season of life. Are you new to the Air Force or your career field? Are you recently married or have you recently become a parent? Are your family members in a key phase of life?

The idea of "balance" conveys the need to effectively manage your time, energy and focus across the things that matter most, right now and in the long term. Your approach to achieving balance will differ throughout your adult life. Sometimes a surge at work may be appropriate. At other times, more focus at home provides the solution.

Unfortunately, there is no cookie cutter approach to achieving balance. Each Airman's unique situation requires a unique solution.

In my own experience, two key events stand out as turning points in my family's attempt to achieve balance.

See RELATIONSHIPS P3

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Army, Air Force collaborate on education, innovation

By Capt. José R. Davis
Air Education and Training Command
Public Affairs

Gen. David G. Perkins, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command commanding general, visited officials from Air Education and Training Command Jan. 7-8 to collaborate with Air Force leaders on advancing education and innovation within the respective military services.

Perkins spoke with Lt. Gen. Darryl Roberson, the AETC commander, and Air University leaders at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., broaching on several subjects affecting both commands, from the future of recruiting to the emergence of new technologies.

TRADOC is the Army counterpart of AETC.

"As you deal with a very fast changing world, everybody wants to innovate so you want to be at the cutting edge," Perkins said. "One of the keys to innovation is a wide-level of collaboration. Those units that collaborate a lot tend to innovate a lot."

Army and Air Force leaders discussed employing technologies to train and educate Soldiers and Airmen, not just in the classroom, but in perpetuity when they return to their units. Leveraging new technologies for continual education is vital to reach and recruit younger generations entrenched in an information-saturated world.

"We talked about things like leveraging the Cloud and personal devices," Perkins said. "The generation of Airmen and Soldiers we're recruiting are very comfortable in doing things on their personal devices. They want the information right there in front of them; they want to be able to customize how they receive information, so we have to change our education systems to facilitate that."

Recruiting is a challenge, as industry, colleges, and the military services vie for the same pool of potential applicants, Perkins elaborated. Numbers for those who qualify for both the Air Force and Army have decreased in recent years.

AETC and TRADOC officials are adapting to the changing recruiting environment by directing recruiters to actively educate potential recruits on the many opportunities offered through military service.

"The challenge in many ways in the recruiting environment is that as the military has gotten smaller, fewer and fewer Americans have any personal contact with the military whatsoever," Perkins said. "They don't have any firsthand experience, so many folks don't think of it as an option. They don't know about the professional development, leader development, and the educational opportunities offered in both the Army and the Air Force. So, we have to get our recruiters to spend time educating parents, as well as recruits, about these opportunities."

Perkins also traveled to Austin, Texas, meeting with retired Adm. William H. McRaven, the University of Texas chancellor, to start a dialogue on the similar challenges each faces in administrating a large, complex university system. They shared ideas on developing learning tools that can be distributed in a very diverse manner, Perkins explained.

One of the topics of interest discussed between Perkins and AETC leaders was the relatively new Army University.

Army University officials integrated 70 separate TRADOC internal school programs under one university system while syncing instruction with a variety of other TRADOC institutions. Air University is similar in structure.

Last year, Army officials began a process to understand, visualize and describe ideas framed by the Army Operating Concept. The ideas in the AOC are foundational for shaping the strategy for the future of the Army, which includes developing adaptive and innovative leaders and officers. Army University plays a huge role in that respect, Perkins said.

"What we need are adaptive leaders who are critical thinkers and can exploit the initiative," Perkins said. "We not only have to train them to do certain tasks, but we have to educate them on how to learn, because the world is changing so quickly. Great organizations are learning organizations. When people graduate from Army University, we don't want them to leave Army University; we want them to take Army University with them to their unit."

RELATIONSHIPS from P2

My wife is a veteran who served on active duty for eight years. She was enjoying the makings of a stellar Air Force career. However, life supplied us with a challenging scenario. With two young daughters, a lack of an effective joint-spouse solution, and an active duty service commitment for me, my wife decided to separate and join the Reserves. During the process, we discussed our options extensively.

In the end, our communication allowed us to overcome preconceived notions each of us held and we found that our goals were actually aligned. My wife wanted to be home with our girls and I wanted her there. Not only did we achieve balance, but our relationship grew as a result.

The other event is not such an easy success story. One day I asked my wife what I could be doing better. The response I received startled me and changed my life. She lovingly but sternly told me she wished I worked as hard at home as I did at work. I initially balked. I believed I was putting in so much effort at work "for our family." I had a blind spot and my career progression was not as important to my family as I thought. Since then, I constantly seek updates from my wife on how I'm doing. Work still requires work – the Air Force's mission is critical. But I now strive to work even harder at home than I do on the job.

Balance and relationships are important topics for Air Force leaders. The session with Smart provided a deeper understanding of these two themes. Not only do strong relationships make us happier and healthier, they also promote the mission.

Smart is already leading UT to success with a number of signature wins. His relationship building is producing results.

The same can be true for Air Force organizations. Leaders that embrace building effective relationships and promote balance will not only grow their people, but also improve their unit's mission effectiveness.

Although my blood still runs University of Michigan maize and blue, I have a new affinity for the burnt orange due to Smart's impressive leadership and obvious regard for his players.

'Saddam Hussein has no idea what's coming.'

Looking back at Desert Storm, 25 years later

By Senior Airman Hailey Haux
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

Twenty-five years ago, the Air Force participated in Operation Desert Storm, the largest air campaign since the conflict in Southeast Asia. The campaign's purpose was to drive the Iraqi military out of Kuwait, release the country from Saddam Hussein's invasion and re-establish its sovereignty.

On the morning of Aug. 2, 1990, Iraq invaded nearby Kuwait. In less than four hours, Iraqi forces occupied the capital, Kuwait City, and Hussein soon annexed the country as the 19th province of Iraq. The U.S. government initiated Operation Desert Shield in response.

Several months later on Jan. 16, 1991, following Congressional concurrence with United Nations efforts to enforce a resolution that demanded Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, Desert Storm was launched.

"The real mission, the immediacy of that mission … was to deploy as many forces as possible to deter further aggressiveness by the Iraqi military and of course the Air Force was the first on the list, along with the Navy and the aircraft carriers, to deploy in the region," said retired Lt. Gen. Bruce A. "Orville" Wright, a Desert Shield/Storm veteran. "It was a rapid deployment of forces from the continental United States (and some forces from Europe) to put enough airpower in place so the Iraqi military would be discouraged, if not deterred.

"We took out their eyes and ears, their control capability," he continued. "The entire ground operations lasted about 100 hours and that's a credit to the joint coalition airpower that was employed against the Iraqi military. We were all excited, that's what we trained for our whole career. To take 24 F-16s and a squadron of very capable highly-trained pilots and maintenance professionals … and defeat what was then the largest ground force."

U.S. Air Force archive photo

F-16A Fighting Falcon, F-15C Eagle and F-15E Strike Eagle fighter aircraft fly over burning oil field sites in Kuwait during Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

The air campaign marked the initial phase of the war and for the Air Force, air superiority was the goal. With more than 68,800 total force Airmen being rapidly deployed in support of Desert Storm, there were approximately 69,406 sorties flown by 30 different types of aircraft.

"I remember thinking, 'Saddam Hussein has no idea what's coming,' and after the first 60 minutes of the war, he will be largely disconnected from his tactical forces and he was. They tried to reconnect, but in many ways we began the decapitation of the leadership within the first 15 minutes of the war," said Maj. Gen. Paul T. Johnson, an operational capability requirements director and Desert Shield veteran. "I really hope we can remember how we came together as a joint and a coalition team, nations from all over the world, all of the services supporting each other, generating effects for one another to achieve an effect in an incredibly short period of time."

Desert Storm marked the first conflict in history to make comprehensive use of stealth and space systems support capabilities against a modern, integrated air defense, allowing the Air Force to succeed in their endeavor of air superiority.

"Over time I have come to understand the enabling capabilities that came to us from space, came to us out of stealth (and) that came to us out of new weapons and ammunitions that allowed us to do things in ways that we hadn't done them before," Johnson said. "Our ability to dynamically command and control across an entire theater there were things that, looking back now in hindsight, fundamentally began the transformation of airpower. There are so many things that we take for granted today … that saw their beginnings in Desert Storm."

As with any mission, operation or task, there are lessons learned. Desert Storm taught the Air Force that being on the cutting edge of revolutionary technology is critical to success.

"That was the first time the investments, that had been made in some cases a decade or two decades earlier, came together on the battlefield and for the first time the world saw what the United States Air Force could do," said Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James. "Looking back and learning from Desert Storm, it is more important than ever before that we continue to modernize our force, gaining the advantage to defeat any adversary we may face in the future."

On Feb. 28, 1991, following six weeks of air attacks and 100 hours of a ground campaign, President George H.W. Bush declared a cessation of operations and announced that Kuwait had been liberated.

"The memories and lessons learned from Desert Storm continue to define today who we are," Wright said. "We have the ability to defend the nation that's founded on, not just the history of Desert Storm but the history of airpower from World War I to World War II to Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and today. We have been in this fight now for 25 years and those Airmen who are out there today are critical. They are critically important to the safety of our fellow citizens and critically important to the future of the United States of America."

AIRPOWER STARTS HERE

From Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs

Air Education and Training Command officials released the command's 2016 Strategic Plan today, designed to advance the First Command's vision of "forging innovative Airmen to power the world's greatest Air Force."

"The 2016 Strategic Plan links all Airmen – military and civilian – to core AETC missions that directly impact Air Force operations worldwide," said Lt. Gen. Darryl Roberson, AETC commander.

The plan aligns activities across the command, complements Headquarters Air Force imperatives, and focuses on mission success while supporting Airmen and their families. The plan highlights four strategic vectors: Motivational Mission Accomplishment, Know Our Airmen and Families, Innovation, and Leadership.

"Airpower starts here in the First Command," said Roberson. "We are foundational to everything the U.S. Air Force does. This plan clearly articulates how we can be successful today and agile enough to meet future challenges to keep America's Air Force the strongest on the planet … and it all starts with our extraordinarily talented Airmen."

Roberson stressed that the 2016 AETC Strategic Plan is designed to be practical and useful for all Airmen across the command.

"This plan is intentional – it intentionally aligns our mission to Air Force imperatives and it's intentionally short. Our Airmen's time is valuable and the guidance we give them must be clear, concise and usable," he said.

"I encourage every AETC Airman – military and civilian – to take a few minutes and look through it. Our continued success depends on everybody's involvement and commitment."

The command will establish a framework for assessing its progress toward meeting the strategic goals. An annex with measurable objects will be released in the Spring of 2016.

For more information, visit http://www.aetc.af.mil.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarayuth Pinthong

Lt. Gen. Darryl Roberson, commander of Air Education and Training Command, discusses his philosophy on safety and mishap prevention during a Nov. 23, 2015 interview at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

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JBSA, community officials adapt to city growth

By 2nd Lt. Avery Larkin
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Public Affairs

Every day, more than 80,000 people go to work at one of 11 military locations across Joint Base San Antonio, which has become a key part of the San Antonio community.

San Antonio has grown substantially in the past 10 years, spurring rapid development that is consistently edging closer to the boundaries of its military bases.

"As communities around military locations continue to grow, the military has to make sure training is still effective when considering development and land use in the local area," said Meg Reyes, JBSA installation encroachment manager. "Things such as bright lights or bird attractants close to military boundaries can hinder certain types of training and possibly affect sustainability of the military's long-term mission."

Both local and military officials are already working to find mutual solutions. JBSA recently worked with specialists from Marstel Day, a conservation and consulting firm, to host training on the Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program Jan. 11-15.

The program is a tool used to reduce incompatible development near military locations by helping to resolve land use conflicts that threaten military capabilities. The program accomplishes this by working with local organizations, businesses and governments to find innovative solutions that benefit all parties involved.

Attendees at the training included representatives from the Air Force Civil Engineering Center, 12th Flying Training Wing, 502nd Air Base Wing, the city of Schertz, Bexar County and several Texas conservation organizations. Throughout the week, participants worked together to develop solutions that address land use concerns across JBSA.

"This training is one of the first steps to finding long-term solutions. Success for everyone involved really comes down to communication. The only way that everybody wins is if the military and community work together," Reyes said.

Photo by 2nd Lt. Avery Larkin

Lt. Col. Robin Baldwin (left), 12th Flying Training Wing Community Initiatives director, briefs participants on encroachment issues at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Jan. 13 during a training workshop at the Alamo Area Council of Governments in San Antonio.

Courts-martial, crime and punishment at Joint Base San Antonio

From the 502nd Air Base Wing Legal Office

The Joint Base San Antonio Judge Advocate General completed four Air Force courts-martial during the month of December 2015. The results of a court-martial are not final until the clemency and/or appeals process is completed.

Senior Airman Benjamin C. Todd from 93rd Intelligence Squadron at JBSA-Lackland was tried by general court-martial Dec. 2, 2015. Todd pled guilty to three specifications of possessing child pornography in violation of Article 134 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The military judge sentenced Todd to reduction to airman basic, five months confinement and a bad conduct discharge.

Staff Sgt. Leonardo E. Aguirre-Obregon from the Air Force Medical Operations Agency at JBSA-Lackland was tried by a general court-martial consisting of a military judge Dec. 8, 2015. Aguirre-Obregon pled guilty to three specifications of assault of a child under the age of 16 years in violation of Article 128 of the UCMJ. The military judge sentenced Aguirre-Obregon to reduction to the grade of airman basic, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, 24 months confinement and a dishonorable discharge.

Staff Sgt. Raymond L. Oliver III of the 341st Recruiting Squadron at JBSA-Lackland was tried by special court martial consisting of a military judge Dec. 29, 2015. Oliver pled guilty of one specification of wrongful use of methamphetamine in violation of Article 112 of the UCMJ. The military judge sentenced Oliver to reduction to airman basic, two months confinement and a bad conduct discharge.

Airman 1st Class Tyler S. Gibson of the 624th Operations Center at JBSA-Lackland was tried by summary court martial Dec. 18, 2015. Gibson pled guilty to one specification of wrongful use of marijuana and one specification of wrongful use of Xanax in violation of Article 112 of the UCMJ. The summary court officer sentenced Gibson to reduction to airman basic and 30 days confinement.

After sentencing, members can request clemency. In some cases, this can change the outcome of their case and/or sentence. All courts-martial are open to the public. Visit the U.S. Air Force Public Docket website at http://www.afjag.af.mil/docket/index.asp.

During December 2015, JBSA commanders administered 16 nonjudicial punishment actions under Article 15 of the UCMJ.

The punishments imposed reflect the commander's determination of an appropriate punishment after considering the circumstances of the offense and the offender's record. A "suspended" punishment does not take effect unless the offender engages in additional misconduct or fails to satisfy the conditions of the suspension. The suspension period usually lasts for six months unless a lesser amount is specified.

Aggravated sexual contact – An airman in technical training touched through the clothing the buttocks, inner thigh and groin of another technical training student. The member received a reduction to the grade of airman basic, 45 days restriction, 45 days extra duty and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – A technical sergeant failed to properly submit the beginning and ending of his leave on several occasions. The member received suspended forfeiture of $713 pay and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – A staff sergeant failed to adhere to a no-contact order given by the squadron commander. The member received a suspended reduction to the grade of senior airman, forfeiture of $1,225 pay and a reprimand.

Damage to government property – An airman first class in technical training unlawfully caused damage to a window by striking it with his fist. The member received forfeiture of $911 pay, 10 days restriction, 10 days extra duty and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – An airman first class was accused of providing alcohol to a minor. For this misconduct, the member received a reduction to airman, forfeiture of $867 for two months (suspended), and a reprimand. The member's suspension of forfeiture of $867 for two months was later vacated after the member was found smoking while in technical training.

Absent without leave – An airman first class in technical training failed to stay at his appointed place of duty. The member received a suspended reduction to the grade of airman, 14 days restriction, 14 days extra duty and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – An airman was accused of cheating during a test in technical training. For this misconduct, the member received a reduction to airman basic, forfeiture of $773 for two months (one month suspended) and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – An airman basic in technical training entered into the dormitory of the opposite sex without the proper authority. The member received forfeiture of $773 pay per month for two months, 45 days restriction, 45 days extra duty and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – An airman first class in technical training failed to stay inside the dormitory during the hours of 8 p.m. and 4 a.m. The member received 14 days restriction, 14 days extra duty and a reprimand.

Dereliction of duty: willful – An airman first class in technical training possessed and consumed alcohol while under the age of 21. The member received 14 days restriction, 14 days extra duty and a reprimand.

AETC Command Chief culminates 31 years of service to Air Force, people

By Tech. Sgt. Beth Anschutz
Air Education and Training Command Public Affairs

Chief Master Sgt. Gerardo Tapia, Air Education and Training Command command chief, retires today after a 31-year Air Force career.

Before his final salute, Tapia took a moment to reflect on his time as an Airman and what he will miss most about serving his nation and taking care of Air Force people.

Tapia, an El Paso, Texas, native, started his career in Basic Military Training at Lackland Air Force Base in 1985, after which he completed the Basic Personnel Course at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss.

Tapia said he appreciates his humble beginnings, filing paperwork as the "A through G guy" in a military personnel flight at Travis Air Force Base, Calif., because it set the stage for his career. After cutting his teeth in the file room, Tapia served as an accessions clerk with the 3507th Airman Classification Squadron at BMT. It was here he gained confidence and learned the importance of standards. At the age of 19, he was responsible for in-processing briefings for groups as large as 150 people. As a representative of his squadron and because of the proximity of basic trainees, young Airman Tapia was held to high standards.

"Our shoes were shined. Our uniforms were sharp and our haircuts were clean," Tapia said. "To this day, I will not bring home an Air Force uniform that has not been tapered or without the pockets sewn down. These standards have stayed with me for my entire career."

Tapia went on to hold duties in personnel management offices at the base and major command level. He worked for the Air Force Personnel Center and held a joint duty assignment at Headquarters Alaskan Command.

Tapia said each assignment helped him expand his experience and knowledge in his field, but it was his opportunities to help people that gave him the tools to be a leader.

During an interview for his first command chief position, Tapia was asked if his personnelist background would hinder him in a fighter wing, surrounded by flyers and maintainers. He told them what he knew.

"I said, 'Sir, after 23 years, no one has ever asked me for my opinion on whether a block 52 [engine] or a block 40 is better on an F-16, but every single day people ask me about people'," Tapia remembered with a smile.

According to Tapia, it was this understanding of how to care for people, combined with a tour as a special assistant to two chief master sergeants of the Air Force, that set him up for success as command chief.

"There are a lot of people in the maintenance field for 20 plus years, when they become a command chief, who have to learn all of a sudden how a Basic Housing Allowance is set or what happens in a promotion board, or how to manage dormitories, or how the assignment system works" he said. "But for me, that was all second nature. My background helped to propel me in the right direction."

Tapia joined the AETC team in January 2013 after tours as command chief for the 49th Wing at Holloman Air Force Base, N.M., and then at 12th Air Force at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. He said he did not take his new responsibilities at AETC lightly; he was coming on board at a critical juncture for the command.

"I knew, coming into this position, my number one priority would be to restore the nation's trust and confidence in our institution and especially in our Basic Military Training," Tapia said. "At the end of the day, I needed to give parents confidence that we would take care of their sons and daughters."

Tapia was instrumental in two significant changes to BMT during his time at AETC – the shift of military training instructor duty from a volunteer force to a vetted, Developmental Special Duty, and the institution of Airmen's Week.

As a member of the Enlisted Board of Directors, a round table of MAJCOM command chiefs and selected chiefs from the Air Staff who support the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, Tapia was able to participate in key working groups instrumental to the transformation of BMT. One of those groups focused on the Developmental Special Duty process.

"We recognized there are some special duty assignments, like military training instructors, recruiters and military training leaders, that require a little more service and sacrifice from Airmen," Tapia said. "We worked to change how we manned those positions, so we can find the individuals who have the right attributes and disposition for those jobs."

Tapia said that finding the right people for these jobs meant a lot to him, as AETC owns the majority of these influential positions.

"AETC owns almost 4,000 technical school instructors, 547 MTI positions, 1,200 recruiter positions, 650 MTL positions," Tapia said. "It is our responsibility to vet, assign and train the leaders of tomorrow."

Tapia also was a critical force behind the creation of Airmen's Week, which is the first training Airmen receive after graduating the previous Friday from BMT. Tapia said a review of BMT identified "white space" during the eight weeks of training that equated to a week of time they could re-invest in our newest Airmen. The Airmen's Week is spent reinforcing the Air Force core values and what "integrity, service and excellence" mean in the daily life of every Airman.

"We are going to see the payoff to Airmen's Week for years and years to come," Tapia said. "This is not the last week of basic training; it's the first week of the rest of these Airmen's Air Force careers."

Tapia's hope for Airmen's Week is that it fosters the moment when Airmen buy-in to what it truly means to be an Airman. This sentiment hits home for Tapia. He often tells the story of how he actually "joined" the Air Force in 1989, four years after he first signed on the dotted line. He found himself on the verge of not being able to re-enlist, but one leader gave him a second chance.

"If I told you that 18-year-old, Airman Basic Tapia would have seen himself sitting here after a 30-year career, I would be lying. I was literally a signature away from being back on my mom's couch," Tapia said. "My best advice for Airmen, if they really want to go far in this Air Force, is don't let four years go by where they're not in. You've got to be in from day one."

Tapia said he has many fond recollections from his career, but it is the simple moments spent with fellow Airmen that hold a special place in his heart.

"Because of where I've worked, I've had some incredible experiences. I've been able to ring the bell to open a day of trading at the New York Stock Exchange. I've been on Air Force One. Some people never get the chance to do these things," Tapia said. "But those experiences pale in comparison to the time I've spent with Airmen. Those are my most cherished memories and those are the things I will miss the most."

Always Airman Tapia, the chief signed off with his promise to all Airmen, not just those in AETC.

"I will continue to serve however I can," he said. "From this point, I have to stop coming into work, but I will never ever stop being an advocate for you. I'm going to move from the field to the stands and I will be your biggest cheerleader, your biggest advocate and the person who will be thinking and praying for you every single day."

Photo by Staff Sgt. Mindy Bloem
Chief Master Sgt. Gerardo Tapia, command chief of Air Education and Training Command, speaks to members of the 149th Fighter Wing during an all-call Oct. 21, 2015, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland.

"From this point, I have to stop coming into work, but I will never ever stop being an advocate for you. I'm going to move from the field to the stands and I will be your biggest cheerleader, your biggest advocate and the person who will be thinking and praying for you every single day."

Chief Master Sgt. Gerardo Tapia
Air Education and Training Command command chief

Courtesy photo
Then Senior Airman Gerardo Tapia walks down the aisle with his wife, Alice, at their wedding May 26, 1990, in San Antonio.

Courtesy photo
Then Senior Master Sgt. Gerardo Tapia confers with then Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Rodney McKinley in October 2006 during his duties as McKinley's special assistant.

Circa 1985

Circa 2015

JBSA Sexual Assault Prevention, Response

To report a sexual assault, call the 24/7 Joint Base San Antonio Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Hotline at 808-7272 or the Department of Defense Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247.

Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph News Briefs

Snow Fest today at JBSA-Lackland

The 502nd Force Support Squadron turns the Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Amphitheater into a snowy downhill slope today from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The free event includes two snow slides, a large snow pit, a climbing mountain, an interactive obstacle course, a bouncy house, a K9 demonstration, a fire truck display and entertainment.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Federal Employee Program

A representative from the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Association will be at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph for a health benefits site visit from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jan. 29 at building 399, Pitsenbarger Hall, in the second floor conference area, room 222.

Enlisted commissioning briefing

Enlisted members interested in obtaining a commission while on active duty are invited to attend a brief 2-3:30 p.m. Feb. 16 at building 5612. The brief will provide an overview of available enlisted commissioning programs and their respective application processes. The class is limited to 42 openings. To register, visit the following share point link at https://cs3.eis.af.mil/sites/OO-ED-AE-15/default.aspx.

Street construction planned

The 502nd Civil Engineer Squadron will conduct a repavement project on 5th Street West, including replacement of existing pavement, curbs and sidewalks from F Street West to C Street West. Demolition and construction will occur in various phases and will require street and parking closures on 5th Street West for the time periods below:

- Saturday and Sunday: Asphalt will be milled off the roadway from F Street to C Street.
- Phase I, Monday through Feb. 26: 5th Street West will be closed from F Street to E Street.
- Phase II, Feb. 29 – April 1: 5th Street West will be closed from E Street to D Street.
- Phase III, April 4 – May 13: 5th Street West will be closed from D Street to C Street.
- Repaving, May 21: 5th Street West will be closed from F Street to C Street for paving.

Detour routes will be marked.

For more information, call 652-1224.

Golf Road construction delayed 30 days

A 30-day delay has pushed the estimated completion date of the South Gate/Golf Road crossover project to March 3. All access to the area will continue to be restricted, directing all South Gate traffic to East/West perimeter roads. During this time, motorists are encouraged to use the Main, West and East Gates.

Construction staging for the project is located on the crossover road intersection of Golf Road, North of Taxiway Echo and Delta and South of Taxiway Foxtrot and Delta.

The West Perimeter Road detour for drivers is located on the second left entering the South Gate. Traffic exiting the South Gate will also use West Perimeter Road as a detour route. Traffic to and from Randolph Oaks golf course is accessible from the South Gate and West Perimeter Road. Airfield traffic is not affected by the project.

The outbound lane being used for early morning traffic is closed from 6-8:30 a.m. until construction is completed. The jogging path close to the construction is also closed until the end of the project.

Heroes at Home financial event

The Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Military & Family Readiness Center is one of 10 military installations selected to host the Heroes at Home financial event tour from 9-11 a.m. Tuesday at the JBSA-Lackland Gateway Club. The event is a free entertaining, engaging and educational event that encourages military families toward life changing financial freedom with top-level financial advisors.

Special guest speakers, financial experts and award-winning authors include Ellie Kay, with "Living Rich for Less," reviews ways to set up a workable budget, pay less for more, money talk with your family, and stretching dollars for vacation and entertainment; Gerri Detweiler, with "Smart Money: Five Ways to Improve Your Credit" discusses free ways to monitor your credit, pay down debt and improve your FICO score; and Ingrid Burns, with "Saving for the Future You Want", provides strategies to start saving early and ways to stay committed.

Service members, families, retirees, Reservists and JBSA civilian employees are welcome to attend. To reserve a seat, call 671-3722.

JBSA Tax Centers open Feb. 1 to assist military, family members, retirees

From the Joint Base San Antonio Public Affairs Office

Tax centers at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, JBSA-Randolph and JBSA-Fort Sam Houston will open Feb. 1 to provide free tax preparation and e-filing of federal and state income tax returns for junior military taxpayers and family members of all deployed members. Services will be available for military retirees on a limited basis.

All tax centers will be open for business Feb. 1 through April 15.

The JBSA-Lackland Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Center is located in Room 41 in the basement of the 37th Training Wing headquarters, building 2484, located at 1701 Kenly Ave., across the street from the Gateway Club and adjacent to the parade field.

Service members and their family members in the ranks of E-1 through E-4 and O-1 through O-2, can call the tax center at 671-1001 to schedule appointments for one-on-one tax return preparation beginning Monday. Appointments will be available for the spouse of any deployed member regardless of rank.

The tax lab will be available for walk-in self-service tax preparation on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. to all eligible beneficiaries. The program requires registration and creation of an account upon arrival.

Any unfilled appointments will be made on a space available basis starting Feb. 1.

The tax center will service E1-E4 and O1-O2 on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. In order to meet the active duty requirement, retiree appointments will only be available on Thursdays. By March, service availability for active duty members will expand to include appointments for NCOs and 0-3s.

The JBSA-Randolph Tax Center, located next to the Legal Assistance Center in building 202, is open Tuesdays, 8 a.m. to noon; Wednesdays and Thursdays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and Fridays, 8 a.m. to noon. The center is closed on Mondays.

LaMarr Queen, JBSA- Randolph Tax Center tax program coordinator, said service members and retirees have been scheduling appointments since Wednesday, by coming by the center or calling 652-1040. The center will be open until April 15, the deadline to file income taxes with the Internal Revenue Service.

The tax center will have two stations, each with a volunteer, to help active-duty service members, retirees and their dependents prepare and file their taxes. People who are getting their taxes prepared must bring their tax forms, such as the W-2, and Social Security cards. For the first time this year, filers will need to bring their 1095 form, required under the Affordable Care Act, which provides information on their health insurance coverage.

Queen said service members should bring their December 2015 Leave and Earnings Statement. He also said the tax center will have 23 volunteer tax preparers who are certified in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program sponsored by the IRS.

Photo by Joel Martinez

LaMarr Queen (left), Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Tax Center coordinator, assists Staff Sgt. Nelly Hensley in preparing her 2015 income tax returns Jan. 15.

By getting their taxes done at the Tax Center, Queen said active-duty service members and retirees will be able to get their taxes prepared and filed free of charge by a group of experienced and knowledgeable volunteers. He said the volunteers have between five to 20 years of experience preparing and filing taxes.

At JBSA-Fort Sam Houston, there will be two tax center locations, both of which will start taking appointments Feb. 1. The first is located at 2414 Stanley Road, building 131, while the second is located the basement of the San Antonio Military Medical Center, Room L44-06.

Hours at both locations are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. Active duty members, their family members and military retirees are eligible at both locations. For appointments, call 295-1040 for the Stanley Road location or 916-1040 for the SAMMC location.

In accordance with Internal Revenue Service regulations, the tax centers are limited to preparing simple tax returns during one-on-one consultations. The tax center is not equipped to prepare complex tax returns.

Service members must bring all necessary documents, including last year's tax return, a cancelled check for direct deposit, a military identification card and a Social Security card for each payer and dependent to the appointment.

Members who are married, or filing jointly, will both need to attend the appointment, unless there is a power of attorney.

Tax preparation can take anywhere from 30 minutes to a few hours and customers are reminded to arrange for child care during the appointment.

Finally, here are some military-specific tips that may apply to you:

For those deploying, it may be helpful to designate someone to represent you on a federal tax matter. To do this, fill out and sign IRS Form 2848, Power of Attorney and Declaration of Representative, and provide it to the person you want to file your taxes. Forms can be downloaded at http://www.irs.gov.

For military members serving in a combat zone, the IRS automatically extends the deadline for filing tax returns, paying taxes, filing a claim for a refund and taking other actions related to federal income tax.

Members may apply for a deferral of taxes owed if they can show that their ability to pay taxes was adversely affected by their military service.

Members who prefer to self-prepare and e-file taxes may do so at http://www.militaryonesource.com.

Keystone Club members bond as family, grow as leaders

By Robert Goetz
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Public Affairs

Courtesy photo

Members of the Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Keystone Club stand behind gifts collected for adaptive grandparents at Carol Ann's Nursing Home.

Whether they're serving the homeless or providing gifts for children from abusive homes, the high school students who belong to Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Youth Programs' Keystone Club are positioning themselves as tomorrow's community leaders and productive members of society.

The Keystone Club, a Boys & Girls Clubs of America teen leadership program founded more than 50 years ago, meets students' needs for positive group experiences, and allows them to grow as leaders by making decisions and serving others.

"Keystone Club members are the leaders of tomorrow," said Andrea Black, JBSA-Randolph Youth Programs coordinator and Keystone Club sponsor. "Keystone promotes character and leadership in its teens so they're able to serve their communities, achieve academic success and prepare for their careers."

The club, which consists of some 20 members, meets Wednesdays at 5 p.m. at Youth Programs, where they plan upcoming events and fundraisers, listen to guest speakers and address a variety of topics.

Community service plays an integral role in the club's activities, which include monthly visits to a San Antonio nursing home and special projects

Last year, members participated in their own "Hope for the Homeless" project.

"For six months we collected items for a 'street survival kit,'" said club president Bryttney London, a 17-year-old senior at Randolph High School. "We filled more than 100 gallon-size zip-lock bags and filled them with toothpaste, toothbrushes, deodorant, lotions, soap, lip balm, granola bars and water."

The survival kits were distributed to homeless members of the San Antonio community during a spaghetti dinner in March at Travis Park United Methodist Church.

"Keystone members cooked the dinner and served more than 75 homeless folks," Black said. "They took part in prepping and serving all the food, providing fellowship and passing out the survival kits. It was a very eye-opening and humbling experience for all parties."

Club sergeant-at-arms Amber Bigio, who is also a 17-year-old senior at Randolph, found the spaghetti dinner an emotional event.

"After sitting there with our guests, I realized it can happen to anybody," she said. "I also saw that they really appreciated what we did."

Some of the club's other past projects include donating scarves and hats for cancer patients and contributing $250 to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston; purchasing Christmas gifts for 25 children who were removed from abusive homes and hosting a holiday party for the children; collecting more than $4,000 in clothes, games and toys for children at the SAMMinistries shelter; and buying and designing rubber bracelets and water bottles with the message "Luv>H8" for their "Operation Be a Friend" project at last year's Youth Programs Famaganza. For "Operation Be a Friend," participants were asked to pledge to be bully-free and help to stop bullying in their schools and community.

One of the club's fundraising avenues is their snack bar at Youth Programs, where hot dogs, Frito pies, baked goods and pickles are available. The snack bar is open during Youth Programs' hours of operation and on weekends when games are being played at the center.

Keystone members are currently looking forward to events in the next few months.

"February is Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month, so our students will be attending seminars, writing essays and taking part in a public service announcement about teen dating," Black said.

Youth Programs will be the site of two forums during Teen Dating Violence Prevention Month.

Club members are also busy preparing for the National Keystone Conference March 17-20 in Dallas. The club will play a prominent role since London is serving on the conference steering committee. London, Bigio and Darian Elkins, a 17-year-old senior at Steele High School, have also been selected as teen ambassadors to the event.

During the conference, more than 2,000 members worldwide socialize with their peers, explore relevant issues and develop skills to enhance their local efforts.

Keystone members agree the club has played an important role in their growth.

Bigio said she was not happy when she first came to Randolph, but with Black's intervention and a subsequent introduction to London, her attitude changed.

"Bryttney introduced me to Keystone and told me it would be cool there," she said. "I'm proud of the person Keystone has allowed me to become."

London said Keystone helped her develop her voice.

"I started speaking up more and was able to become a leader," she said. "When you're in Keystone, you have respectability. People take you seriously."

Elkins said membership in Keystone changed her from a "control freak to a real leader."

"It showed me how to deal with other people," she said. "I made friends and became more self-confident."

Black said JBSA-Randolph's Keystone Club, which has achieved Legacy Society status, Keystone's highest club category, is "like a family."

"They look out for each other," she said. "What they do matters – they know how to make good choices. When they're out in the community, I beam with pride."

Spurs general manager visits 435th FTS

Capt. Jeff Nelson (right), 435th Fighter Training Squadron instructor pilot, shows the cockpit of a T-38 Talon to R.C. Buford, San Antonio Spurs general manager, Jan. 15 at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph. Buford visited the 435th FTS to discuss successful leadership strategies.

Photo by Airman 1st Class Stormy

JBSA-Randolph running club seeks people who 'hate to run'

By Robert Goetz
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph Public Affairs

A running club for people who "hate to run" is gaining traction at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph.

The "Runners-Haters" Club, also known as the RHC, is still in its infancy, but it's drawn the interest of more than 200 active-duty members and civilian employees throughout the JBSA location.

It's not what Tech. Sgt. Winsome Culley, Air Force Personnel Center NCO in charge of retirements, expected when he first sent out an email to AFPC team members two months ago looking for people to join the club, but he's more than pleasantly surprised.

"I wanted to get a small group together," he said. "I expected a small response, but on the first day I had 138 hits, so I knew it would be bigger than I thought."

Culley's email set the tone, asking recipients if they hate running, but know it's good for them – or their job security – and want to make it less painful.

"How about starting from scratch with others like you who hate to run just as much? In a team atmosphere!" he said.

Culley said the brisk response prompted him to reach out to Karl Leonard, JBSA-Randolph Human Performance Resource Center exercise physiologist, whose gait analyses have helped hundreds of Airmen and civilians achieve proper running technique at JBSA and at Altus Air Force Base, Okla., where he was previously employed.

"I realized that maybe we have a fitness opportunity that is capturing a larger audience than I expected," Culley said.

Culley is also seeking coaches to assume leadership roles within the RHC so that running groups can be created within the club. Physical training leaders and anyone with a current love for running are prospective candidates.

"Every group ideally should have five or six runners per coach – the smaller, the better," Leonard said. "That way the runners will get more attention and will be able to absorb more information."

One of the fledgling club's first activities was a briefing Dec. 4 in Fleenor Auditorium that was highlighted by a motivational address from Steve Brown, University of Texas at San Antonio running coach. More than 60 prospective club members and coaches attended the session.

Culley said one of the club's concepts is to "train the trainers."

"Mr. Leonard trains the coaches, and our training is continuous, based on the needs of the HRC," he said. "We will provide weekly feedback to Mr. Leonard."

In addition, Leonard is developing a standardized training regimen for the runners, Culley said.

"I imagine the training will be upgraded in phases based on the progression of our runners," he said. "An example is a webinar that we offered to all of JBSA-Randolph Dec. 11. The webinar covered everything the interested runners need to know about the program and information covered during our coaches' briefing."

Leonard said the program "starts with the basics of running."

"It helps those who haven't been running, starting those individuals from scratch," he said. "It gets people to enjoy running by teaching them the proper steps mechanically and building the proper aerobic foundation for building stamina and endurance using a heart-rate monitor.

"Most people associate running with pain and agony," Leonard said. "I'm teaching the opposite. Our goal is to make running more enjoyable."

Leonard said he has been helping runners since 2006 with his gait analyses.

"At Altus, 1,000 people were assessed with great success," he said. "It helped Airmen's careers and cut health care costs. Many Airmen were able to get off profile with just one or two visits.

"I came here in 2013 and picked up where I left off at Altus," Leonard said.

In addition to training coaches, Leonard will be available to help runners, Culley said.

"He also briefed everyone during the webinar on the essentials of running and the mandatory items need to get started," he said.

Plans call for running groups to meet in the morning, at lunchtime or in the evening two days a week – Tuesdays and Thursdays. They will also run on Saturdays with runners in the San Antonio community.

Culley said those who wish to join the club will require a metronome, a heart-rate monitor and the proper footwear for running. They will also need to fill out a medical questionnaire to see if there any health concerns.

"We want to take people who hate to run and turn them into individuals who love to run," he said.

For more information, call 565-2327.