



“THE USAFE-AFAFRICA WAY”

**OPERATION GRIT
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE
31 Jan 2022**



"Professional USAFE-AFAFRICA Airmen who embody the warrior ethos and Air Force core values"

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“Take away my people, but leave my factories, and soon grass will grow on the factory floors. Take away my factories, but leave my people, and soon we will have a new and better factory.”
Andrew Carnegie

INTRODUCTION

OPERATION GRIT is our C-MAJCOM's initiative to connect our Airmen to each other and reinforce our USAFE-AFAPRICA heritage and values to the broader Air Force mission. We are investing in our collective success by providing the evidence-informed content, tools, and resources to enhance personal and professional performance and promote a shared responsibility of Airmen and Guardians taking care of each other and their environments.

The Commander of USAFE-AFAPRICA laid out our priorities clearly: advance USAFE-AFAPRICA air and space capabilities, improve and leverage NATO, Ally, Partner, and Joint capabilities, compete with adversaries and demonstrate commitment to NATO, Allies and Partners. We are constantly working, traveling, building, and operating in the same locations where great leaders and warriors have stood throughout history. We are here to generate peace through deterrence; if deterrence fails, we stand ready alongside our allies and partners to prevail in conflict.

OPERATION GRIT builds an Air Force culture of professional Airmen and Guardians who strive to do What Right Looks Like, carry out the mission professionally, and understand they are an integral part of reinforcing a Culture of Trust, Respect and Connectedness. These three pillars for culture growth are the foundation to essential skills development found in the Behaviors of Excellence. As Leaders, this is our commitment to continually champion our Airmen and Guardians into a mindset of excellence.

To meet our organizational goals, Commanders and supervisors at every level must remain active with sustained engagement in their people. They remain the biggest influence in Airmen or Guardian's tenure of service. This makes emulating What Right Looks Like critical to the success of retention and readiness for our Airmen and Guardians who model their behaviors and choices of their Leaders. Their observable behaviors of ***What Right Looks Like*** being to show measurement of our effectiveness. Leaders must start with building a ***Culture of Trust, Respect and Connectedness***.



*“A prime function of a leader is to keep hope alive.”
John W. Gardner*

OPERATION GRIT is a multi-faceted integrative initiative synching a shared message across the command, while giving time and autonomy back to squadrons.



INTEGRATED RESILIENCE AND PRIMARY PREVENTION

In collaboration with Commanders, Community Action Teams (specifically Community Support Coordinators and Violence Prevention Integrators) will continue to resource and focus on offering resilience and interpersonal and self-directed violence prevention initiatives and sustainment efforts through a targeted approach based on the needs of the squadrons. Commanders are strongly encouraged to integrate these initiatives within the existing daily mission operations and not minimally meet an “additional check box.” OPRIT is part of USAF excellence in all we do. **Success is measured by observable behavior rather than time-intensive and low-result compliance accountability.** USAF’s trust in leaders doing their duty and incorporating the OPRIT initiatives are also observable by its results.

Incoming Airmen (military both enlisted and officer, and civilians) who have never received bystander training will still receive the foundational Initial Wingman Intervention Training (IWIT) through their Violence Prevention Integrators (VPI). Check-6 incorporates the “Ask, Care, and Escort” message, recognizing signs of distress, promoting resilience, and resources (refer to the Suicide Prevention Pg 2 for Check-6). This additional content helps USAF Airmen and Guardians to meet the requirement for annual suicide prevention training.

Commanders, at all levels, are responsible for OPERATION GRIT implementation. Ongoing execution of OpGRIT increases the likelihood Airmen or Guardians feel connected to the mission and experience higher levels of job satisfaction – both facilitators of retention and readiness. Additionally, connections to others (Leaders, supervisors and peers) can mitigate risk associated with multiple destructive behaviors such as suicide related behaviors (ideation, self-harm, attempt, and suicide). Consider establishing a Resilience/Prevention team within the squadron to focus on sustaining connections and morale throughout the unit through deliberate but meaningful interactions, as well as planning resilience events and community mobilizing initiatives; utilize trained Master Resilience Trainers, Resilience Training Assistants, Wingman Intervention Training Facilitators, Volunteer Victim Advocates or young Airmen and Guardians to foster innovative ideas.

COMMANDER'S OPERATION GRIT INFORMATION REPOSITORY

This SharePoint site includes the Check-6 worksheets (current and historical) as well as supporting videos and resources for facilitators. There is a comment area on the SharePoint site to post positive and/or constructive feedback so that USAFE-AFAFRICA can constantly improve the initiative for the better. USAFE-AFAFRICA OPERATION GRIT SharePoint site is located at:
<https://usaf.dps.mil/teams/OPGRIT/SitePages/Home.aspx>

COMMUNITY ACTION PLANS (CAP)

The CAP is required by HAF to ensure commands and installations coordinate efforts to assist Airmen and Guardians. USAFE-AFAFRICA OPERATION GRIT is incorporated into our comprehensive Integrated Prevention and Resilience Strategy and HQ USAFE-AFAFRICA and Installation CAPs as a united effort.

MONTHLY NO EMAIL/NO TASKER HOUR

Each wing is highly encouraged to designate one hour a month as a "No email/No tasker hour". This hour is for commanders and supervisors to interact with their unit members and teams. Each wing should determine the best/most advantageous time for their wing and ensure the day and time chosen empowers commanders to best meet the Commander's intent of strengthening trust throughout the unit. Consistently blocking this time at the wing-level conveys COMUSAFE's commitment to providing Commanders with the time and resources to continually connect with their Airmen and develop deeper levels of trust throughout their organizations.

MONTHLY CHECK-6 DISCUSSION TOOL

Supervisors at all levels will facilitate discussions utilizing the "Check 6" tool. Discussions focus on deliberate and meaningful topics to be conducted in small groups. Each topic will instill and promote the warrior ethos and our AF core values, as well as essential skill development. The MAJCOM monthly communication plan is designed to keep us focused on a synchronized message each month. However, commanders have flexibility to tailor the monthly message to best meet the needs of their organization.

Monthly Check 6 discussion tools are available on the USAFE-AFAFRICA SharePoint site:

<https://usaf.dps.mil/teams/OPGRIT/SitePages/Home.aspx>. At their discretion, Commander's may conduct Check 6 discussions during existing meetings, such as staff meeting, roll call, guard mount, shift turnover, etc. or during a separate, dedicated meeting. Commanders, at all levels, are responsible for implementation and will ensure routine, timely execution and document its accomplishment. The goal is to provide all Airmen with the Check 6 discussions.

OPGRITPLUS INITIATIVE

OpGRIT**Plus** is distinct from, though complimentary of, OpGRIT efforts. The **Plus** indicates an expansion to the classic version of OpGRIT. OpGRIT**Plus** is comprised of evidence-informed content that is our Behaviors of Excellence (BoE) towards the growth of essential skills. BoE reinforces resilience and leadership qualities in our best asset – Airmen and Guardians. This inclusion allows Leaders to tailor additional optional conversations to meet unit needs for personal and professional development. There are 19 Behaviors of Excellence presented in a similar Check-6 formatted worksheets. Leaders and supervisors can choose a BoE to focus on as a team or individually with their people. These efforts also contribute to a Culture of Trust, Respect and Connectedness and What Right Looks Like in environments and people.

By investing in the professional development of our most valuable resource – our Airmen, we will cultivate a culture of trust and teamwork across USAFE-AFAFRICA.

*“Setting an example is not the main means of influencing another, it is the only means.”
Albert Einstein*

CHECK 6 CONOPS

“Developing Professional Airmen Warriors”

Commanders are responsible for ensuring Airman development (AFI 1-2)

I. OVERVIEW:

- A. Effective 1 January 2022, supervisors at all levels will facilitate discussions, utilizing the “Check-6” tool. These discussions focus on deliberate and meaningful topics to be conducted in small groups. Each month’s topic will instill our AF Core Values to drive cultural change by investing in the professional development of our most valuable resource – our Airmen or Guardians.
- B. Check-6 may be conducted during existing opportunities (staff meeting, roll call, guard mount, shift turnover, PT, etc.) or as separate monthly meetings, at the Commander’s discretion.
- C. Commanders, at all levels, are responsible for implementation and to collaborate with their Community Action Team to focus on resilience and inter-personal/self-directed violence prevention initiatives based on the needs of the squadron.
- D. Check-6 monthly discussions replace the traditional requirement to conduct online or in-person suicide prevention training.
- E. Incoming Airmen or Guardians (both enlisted and officer, and civilian) will receive *foundational* bystander skills at their accession source and/or first duty assignment, typically at FTAC. Violence Prevention Integrators are the POC for foundational Initial Wingman Intervention Training (IWIT) presented during FTAC. IWIT can also be provided to Officers and Civ Airmen in a traditional classroom environment.
- F. The objective is for a maximum number of Airmen and Guardians to receive Check-6 each month.
 - i. Virtual delivery can be an option if COVID-19 operating requirements dictate a shift away from face-to-face interactions.

II. PURPOSE OF CHECK-6:

- A. To ensure Airmen and Guardians will have the protective systems in place to fortify our integrity, talent and readiness.
- B. To create a synergized approach to resilience and prevention (a protective factor set of skills to cope with mission and life challenges) within existing Professional Development context.
- C. To offer topic-targeted discussions to develop Airmen or Guardians, within the guidance of USAFE-AFAFRICA; application is at squadron commander discretion.
- D. To reinforce our commitment to professional development and communication.

III. COMMANDER’S TOOLS:

- A. Check-6 provides plug-n-play, adaptable development tools for commanders and supervisors to support the professional and personal growth of their Airmen and Guardians.
 - i. Suggested talking points are provided and should be tailored to best meet the needs of the squadron.
 - ii. Supervisor-led discussions will allow Airmen or Guardians to address issues and solutions unique to their work centers.

- iii. Consistent reinforcement and application of the OPERATION GRIT initiatives (OpGRIT 2022, Behaviors of Excellence, and Culture of Trust, Respect and Connectedness).
- B. Commander’s Toolkit, including Check-6 annual implementation calendar and monthly worksheets, is available on the OPERATION GRIT SharePoint site: <https://usaf.dps.mil/teams/OPGRIT/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- C. Behaviors of Excellence (optional worksheets) are evidenced-based from over 90 qualitative sources and designed to introduce and reinforce critical essential skills for Airmen or Guardians to master. An additional section of each BoE worksheet highlights the level of mastery of these essential skills for emerging leaders. These worksheets are not meant to replace OpGRIT 2022 monthly topics; rather an expansion of available tools for leader and supervisors to increase personal and professional development in their people. When Airmen or Guardians master these skills, ***What Right Looks Like*** increases in the unit and acts as protective factors against harmful behaviors.

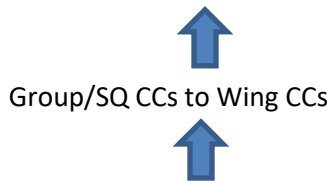
IV. CENTRAL MESSAGES:

- A. **Increased Communication**: encourage constructive feedback between all levels of the chain of command.
- B. **Connection to Mission**: grounded in research, Airmen or Guardians who feel strong sense of connectedness are more likely to feel connected to the mission and are also likely to experience higher levels of job satisfaction. Conversations about the mission can also ensure our people internalize their importance to the team and Air Force.
- C. **Personal Performance**: invests in the personal and professional development of Airmen, Guardians, and emerging Leaders.
- D. **Sense of Purpose (alignment)**: strengthens our shared identity, goals, and sense of community.
- E. **Wingmanship**: develops trust in self, team, and Air Force that contribute to resilience in individuals and teams, trust in the organization, willingness to seek help, and desire to help others.

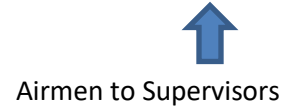
V. GENERAL FORMAT/SCHEDULE:

- A. Check-6 discussions will occur once per month, suggested 15-30 minutes
- B. Conduct during existing (staff meeting, roll call, guard mount, shift turnover, PT etc.) or as separate monthly meetings, at the Commander’s discretion
- C. Topics will be coordinated and delivered down the chain of command. Remember, this isn’t training. These are conversations that replace training, led by supervisors who know their Airmen and Guardians best.





Supervisors/Flight Chiefs to SQ/CCs



- D. Check-6 allows for adaptability but should reinforce the synchronized message at every level.
- E. Utilize the core values and common language so that all can instantly understand their application (i.e., tailor message to the audience).

VI. COMMANDERS:

- A. Are responsible for implementation and completion.
- B. This is a tool to help facilitate better discussions and reinforce sense of connectedness in units.
- C. Discuss rules of engagement; actively role model core values, and promote a Culture of Trust, Respect and Connectedness.
- D. Charge flight commanders and supervisors to take ownership in developing goals to ensure professional development conversations are happening; clearly define their solemn responsibility to lead not only Airmen or Guardians, but human beings; let them know it is their duty to elevate, coach, and mentor subordinates (and families).

VII. UNIT TRAINING PERSONNEL: UNIT TRAINING MANAGERS (UTMs), UNIT ANCILLARY TRAINING MONITORS (UATMs), OR TRAINING FOCAL POINT (TFP): UTMs are the focal point for training compliance and data integrity. Training completion for all Airmen and Guardians documented in an enterprise level system of record for portability and accountability is vital.

- A. Track and document completion of quarterly requirements for assigned unit per guidance disseminated for the operational year.

VIII. COMMUNITY ACTION BOARDS AND TEAMS:

Coordinate and collaborate to reinforce the messages and skills being developed from OpGRIT and OpGRIT*Plus*

- **Community Support Coordinator (CSC):** Include and monitor OPERATION GRIT as part of the Wing’s Community Action Plan; offer on-going Check-6 facilitator training; offer Master Resilience Training for Airmen, Guardians and families
- **Violence Prevention Integrator (VPI):** Offer ISDV primary prevention guidance to foster a Culture of Trust, Respect, and Connectedness and encourage Behaviors of Excellence in collaboration with commanders; organize community mobilizing initiatives and provide supplemental reinforcement activities
- **Equal Opportunity (EO):** Assist commanders with identifying areas of focus utilizing the DEOCS survey and CC tools to ensure OPERATION GRIT efforts are targeted and effective
- **Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC):** Provide CCs with the Air Force SAPR Talking Points and provide additional training opportunities as requested that augment OpGRIT and the Behaviors of Excellence in OpGRIT*Plus*
- **Airman and Family Readiness Center (A&FRC):** Integrate Check-6, Behaviors of Excellence, and Culture of Trust, Respect and Connectedness concepts into outreach

and education efforts including Key Spouse quarterly training (this is an effective communication tool to connect families; consider using content for emails, newsletters and as conversation starters)

- **Mental Health/Family Advocacy** (MH/FAP): Provide targeted outreach and education opportunities in support of CCs
- **Chaplains** (HC) Assist commanders with assessing spiritual strengths and overall well-being of the squadron

IX. CHECK-6 IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR OF TOPICS

OPERATION GRIT 2022 					
MONTH	TOPIC	GOAL	CORE VALUE	Awareness Month	D&I Focus
JAN	BALANCED	C,PP	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do	Stalking Awareness	
FEB	VIGILANT	C,P	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self, Integrity First	Teen Dating Violence	
MAR	ENGAGED	C,PP	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self		
APR	RESPECTFUL	C	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self, Integrity First	Sexual Assault Prevention Child Abuse Prevention	●
MAY	SUCCESSFUL	C,PP	Integrity First, Excellence in All We Do	Mental Health Awareness	
JUN	INCLUSIVE	C,P	Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do	LGBTQ Month	●
JUL	RESOURCEFUL	C,PP	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self		
AUG	DEPENDABLE	C,PP,P	Integrity First, Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self		●
SEP	CONNECTED	C,PP,P	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self	Suicide Prevention	●
OCT	HONORABLE	C,PP,P	Integrity First, Excellence in All We Do	Domestic Violence Prevention Diversity Awareness	
NOV	OPTIMAL	C,PP	Excellence in All We Do, Service Before Self		
DEC	REFLECTIVE	C,PP	Excellence in All We Do		
Months highlighted in GOLD qualify for Suicide Prevention Annual Training		C = Connection to Fellow Amn/Mission PP = Enhanced Personal Performance P = Sense of Purpose		#9: Wingman Intervention, Risk Reduction, Strategies to prevent Sexual Assault SP: Suicide Prevention/ACE/Warning Signs	

X. FACILITATOR DELIVERY PREPARATION

Messenger skills matters! Check-6 worksheets are designed to be delivered by all leaders. Discussions will be most effective if leaders spend time understanding the intent of the topic and how best to deliver the message. MAJCOM program managers are working to develop facilitator guides and videos to aide leaders in navigating OpGRIT conversations. Below are easy facilitator tips:

- Be willing to share your personal stories when appropriate. Airmen and Guardians report hearing directly from their supervisors as the most effective form of communication. **They want to hear your why!**
- Be genuine when conversing, coaching, and mentoring

- Be prepared for potential questions and how you may respond; questions should generate productive discussion
- Be engaged even with difficult groups or moments. Consider , asking certain members of the group for input on questions to aid the conversation
- Include optional videos (available in most Check-6 worksheets); if possible, consider a group location where you can use a computer/projector to play the video.

XI. EVERYONE HAS A RESPONSIBILITY

- A. **Be a Leader** – Take a sense of ownership within your sphere of influence. OPERATION GRIT will succeed if you make it part of daily conversation.
- B. **Be a Wingman** – Get to know your Airmen around you and be their support through everything. One Team, One Fight.
- C. **Persevere** - improve physical fitness, innovate better methods, and develop a resilient mindset.
- D. **Grow Daily** – Use the resources, discussions, and other material to grow daily as a professional Airman and leader.
- E. **Accomplish the Mission** – Realize your part in accomplishing the mission and do it to the best of your ability. Push your teammates to set goals and work towards them.
- F. **Remember Who You Are** – Remember your Air Force values, heritage, and remind your Wingman.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: *USAFE-AFAFRICA OPERATION GRIT is a paradigm shift from how HAF has implemented annual violence prevention training. Are we taking a risk doing something different?*

Answer: OPERATION GRIT allows for multiple initiatives to work together towards success. The Check-6 monthly discussions 1) incorporate the behavior skills we want Airmen to learn and live by, 2) are efficient and evidence-informed, 3) provide a professional development focus that contributes to protective factors for mission readiness and social interaction, and 4) gives freedom for installations to develop their own force multiplying solutions to the Check-6 message and their installation Community Action Plans.

Question: *How will USAFE-AFAFRICA ensure accountability?*

Answer: Units will conduct monthly Check 6 discussion sessions with personnel. Annual Suicide Prevention training content has been embedded in those discussions for the months that qualify for annual suicide prevention training. UTMs, UATMS, or TFP will report completions to their unit leadership and VPIs so they can respond to the quarterly Suicide Prevention completion required by HQ DPFZ/AFPC.

Question: *What exactly are the tracking requirements for conducting the Check 6 monthly discussions?*

Answer: Although ***all*** monthly Check-6 discussions are required to be delivered, for CY2022, Commanders/Directors (SQ/CC and above) will be required to track OpGRIT attendance; this will meet the intent to track and report completion of annual suicide prevention training (through the five identified months that qualify for suicide prevention training). OpGRIT attendance will be reported on a quarterly basis on the required dates as delineated in the 2022 guidance and tasked directly to the UTMs to track. VPIs will report completion numbers to HQ USAFE-AFAFRICA/A1Z on the designated dates.

Question: How can focusing on personal and professional development topics change destructive behaviors?

Answer: The focus of effort is found in introducing and reinforcing essential skills such as the ones found in the Behaviors of Excellence and OpGRIT monthly topics. Mastery of these skills and traits contribute to higher resilience in people and increase protective factors in the unit when more Airmen and Guardians are exhibiting ***What Right Looks Like***. This is different than one-dimensional training efforts offered once a year that typically serve to raise awareness of problems or focus on specific program agendas. OpGRIT is a shift away from “one-and-done” training by using an approach to develop and reinforce connections between people. It cannot be understated the importance of feeling a sense of connectedness between people in unit members.

Question: Squadron Commanders already have too many requirements - how will they have time to do this too?

Answer: Squadron commanders are overtaxed with many priority-one missions. Leaders at every level should set their example for self-development and development of Airmen or Guardians. This is the mission of every General to everyone under their command, to the Senior Airman put in charge of work detail. We can provide them the opportunity to succeed, the tools to achieve it, and see the harvest of their efforts when they embrace personal and professional development. We know that investing in our Airmen engages them and teaches them by example. Some squadrons may already be adept and natural at doing this, but good leaders will see Check-6 as a helpful tool and opportunity for coaching and mentoring.

Question: If squadrons don't participate in Check-6 monthly discussions, will USAFE-AFAFRICA be considered non-compliant with mandatory AF trainings?

Answer: Yes, we will be non-compliant in meeting and reporting our by-law requirements to DAF. Specifically, Squadrons must ensure the completion of the by-law requirements annually. For 2022, Check-6 topics have been divided into 12 monthly topics (Jan-Dec) designed to be conducted in small groups. Although monthly topics are required to be delivered, Commanders/Directors (SQ/CC and above) are only required to track completion by Airmen and Guardians of annual suicide prevention training.

Question: Can leaders delegate the responsibility of leading Check-6 conversations to UTMs or MRTs or the like?

Answer: Delegating the responsibility erodes the goal of creating connections between Leaders and their people, and lessens sustained sense of connectedness, connection to the mission, job satisfaction levels, retention, readiness, and resilience.

Question: Can OpGRIT*Plus* worksheets be used in place of assigned monthly OpGRIT topics?

Answer: The Behaviors of Excellence (BoE) found within OpGRIT*Plus* acts as a supplementary tool for Leaders and supervisors to grow essential skills in Airmen or Guardians. These evidence-based behaviors can be tailored to unit needs or individual personal and professional development. Relevancy of retaining the skill increases when tied to career or personal experiences and reduces knowledge decay. Because of this, it is more effective to leave BoE separate from OpGRIT.

APPENDIX A: UNIT TRACKING PROCEDURES

- A. Commanders/Directors (SQ/CC and equivalent) are responsible for ensuring leaders and supervisors understand the importance of OpGRIT as a method to create connectedness between our people.
- B. OpGRIT also accomplishes federally mandated by-law annual suicide prevention training. Commanders will ensure Unit Training Managers (UTMs) track OpGRIT sessions on a monthly basis.
 - A. Suicide prevention annual training is an NDAA requirement and mandated for all military and civilians. The training goal is 100% trained by 31 December 2022.
 - 1. Local national employees and contractors are not required to participate in the discussions, but are encouraged to do so.
 - B. Units will conduct monthly OPERATION GRIT Check-6 discussions with personnel. Annual Suicide Prevention training key concepts are included in the Suicide Prevention Pg 2 worksheet and should be delivered on the following months to qualify for suicide prevention annual by-law training: Feb, Mar, Jun, Jul and Sept.
- C. HQ USAFE/A1Z will task USAFE Wings via TMT to provide completion numbers for OPERATION GRIT. The tasking to track training is delegated to UTMs and the task to report completion numbers will be directed to the installation Violence Prevention Integrators.
- D. Commanders/Directors (SQ/CC and above) must document completion of Suicide Prevention/OPERATION GRIT Check-6 annual training. In 2021, USAFE-AFAFRICA ended the year at 74% trained. This year we must do better.
- E. UTMs are the focal point for OpGRIT attendance and suicide prevention training compliance and data integrity. Unit Training Personnel (Unit Training Managers (UTMs), Unit Ancillary Training Monitors (UATMs), or Training Focal Personnel (TFP)) will report completions to their unit leadership.
- F. Accordingly, UTMs will track the following:
 - 1. OpGRIT Attendance: UTMs will enter OpGRIT attendance for each month into the [U-AA1UTMTrainingChannel](#).
 - 2. Suicide Prevention Annual Training: UTMs will use MyLearning for accountability purposes to meet the federal mandate using information derived from attendance records for OpGRIT on the five months that qualify for suicide prevention training.
- G. UTMs will provide completion information to their unit commander and the installation VPIs on a quarterly basis. Unit Training Personnel will maintain training completion records for their assigned personnel for two years.
- H. VPIs are the primary office of responsibility regarding suicide prevention by-law training requirements and will collaborate with UTMs to gather completion status on a quarterly basis. Installation VPIs are responsible to report the following information to USAFE-AFAFRICA A1Z:
 - 1. Total number of personnel per installation;
 - 2. Total number of personnel who have completed training; and
 - 3. The percentage of personnel who have completed training on the following dates:
 - a. **Quarter 1 and 2**: due 08 July 2022 (Jan-Feb-Mar-Apr-May-Jun)
 - b. **Quarter 3**: due 09 Sept 2022 (Jul-Aug-Sept)
 - c. **Quarter 4**: due 07 Jan 2023 (Total for entire Calendar Year)

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND

The Air Force defines resilience as “the ability to withstand, recover, and/or grow in the face of stressors and changing demands” - Air Force Instruction 90-506 (Comprehensive Airman Fitness). This definition encompasses a broad spectrum of what “resiliency” means and works hand-in-hand with the “Total Force Fitness for the 21st Century” created under the direction of Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Intended on increasing Airman resiliency and decreasing negative behaviors, Congressional and DoD leadership, through directives issued by congressional mandates, DoD Instructions (DoDI), and Air Force Instruction (AFI), now require all airman (military and civilian) to complete annual resilience and violence prevention training. These requirements resulted in USAFE-AFAPRICA Airmen completing over 650K hours of training in 2017 (equivalent of approximately 16,500 Airman taking one 40-hour week off); however, to the dismay of leadership, the majority of negative behaviors continue to trend steadily rather than significantly decrease.

To that response, USAFE-AFAPRICA Community Action Board asked the following questions in November 2017, “Do we continue doing the same thing over and over and expect different results? Are we ok with accepting a baseline of negative behaviors because it trends alongside the public sector? How do we actually help Airman thrive?”

A few key indications led the Community Action Board to establish a Rapid Improvement Event to dig deeper and analyze our methods.

- Then Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen David L Goldfein stated, “Resilience begins and ends in the squadron” and we see a shift in focus to revitalize the squadrons
- 23 Jan 18, HAF/A1Z issued guidance to take a strategic pause with respect to Resilience and Wingman Days in order to determine the best way to move forward
- 04 May 18, Secretary of the AF, Heather Wilson, sends guidance that effectively immediately, commanders and supervisors are empowered to conduct nearly all mandatory ancillary training as they see fit

Under this guidance and authorization from HAF, USAFE-AFAPRICA senior leadership instructed the Community Action Team to develop a new way forward by compiling data from Airman across the command of all AFSCs, ranks, positions, and levels of command and analyze the effectiveness of resilience and violence prevention training. A Rapid Improvement Event was held in Feb 2018 with the guidance to breakdown the curriculum of each training, decipher what was working and not working, and what would possibly work better. In the end, this new USAFE-AFAPRICA way is a foundational effort developed by Airmen, backed by leadership, and focuses on building and strengthening all USAFE-AFAPRICA members into professional Airman Warriors.

OpGRIT**Plus** is the next phase of introducing and reinforcing **What Right Looks Like** (i.e., essential skills from the Behaviors of Excellence) at the right time, and in the right dosage and frequency. By 2023, a framework identifying when to target the Behaviors of Excellence attached to universal and variable experiences for Airmen and Guardians across their career continuum will be available to further embed sustainability of personal and professional essential skills development.

In order to connect with and motivate Airmen and Guardians, leaders and supervisors at all levels have to do things differently. The courage to professionally develop their people in the USAFE-AFAPRICA way requires assuming an element of risk. However, we believe this initiative will strengthen Comprehensive

Airman Fitness through professional development and put into action our promise to invest in and grow our Airmen.

RAPID IMPROVEMENT EVENT (RIE)

The RIE, which included members from all USAFE-AFAFRICA installations, set the stage ensuring a new way forward generated a grassroots effort wholly taking into account the ideas, feedback, and desires from Airmen across the command. The purpose of the RIE was to explore new approaches to strengthening Comprehensive Airman Fitness (CAF) while concurrently addressing feedback received from Senior Leadership at all echelons of command.

The group consisted of the USAFE-AFAFRICA Community Action Team (cross-functional representatives from across the HQ) as well as installation Squadron Commanders, subject matter experts (such as Community Support Coordinators, Violence Prevention Integrators, and Sexual Assault Response Coordinators), Airmen of all officer, enlisted, and civilian ranks, the AF Personnel Center's Resilience Operations, and the Profession of Arms Center of Excellence (PACE).

Taking the overarching guidance from leadership, the team developed the following problem statement as a starting point, "USAFE-AFAFRICA spends over 650K hours annually in training to reduce sexual assault, suicide attempts and completions and sexual harassment, yet we do not see a significant decline in self-defeating behaviors."

The 3-day event had three basic goals for the initial phase:

- Break down the curriculum for required training to identify similarities, differences, and advantages/disadvantages
- Determine the root causes for why training is not more effective
- Determine initial vision and mission statement for a new USAFE-AFAFRICA resiliency initiative

Several key observations were noted:

- A majority of Airman believe more emphasis is placed on technical competence than on Airmanship. Supervision/leadership is seen as a collateral duty resulting in Airman feeling they are "being fed to the wolves" instead of being fostered and developed
- Airman feel that leadership is more concerned with "compliance over collaboration" when it comes to professional development and training
- Leadership seems to always be in extreme reactionary mode when negative behaviors occur
- In order to get buy-in from Airman up and down the chain, the following must happen:
 - The new initiative must be a grassroots effort
 - Airman need to feel more connected to the mission and an integral part of an overall USAFE-AFAFRICA team (possible COA: create a C-MAJCOM-specific mission brief for all newcomers)
 - Commander and front-line supervisors must own the messages and lead the initiative
 - We need a common language and shared sense of purpose to make a true cultural change

Using the observations and the analysis performed, the team grouped all negative feedback into 2 root causes for the ineffectiveness of the current approach:

- An overly complicated system results in difficulty knowing which training has been completed and what messages were conveyed through the diluted/redundant delivery messages
- Lack of motivation to learn because Airmen don't connect to the message and/or the overall culture gives opposing messages

The RIE identified the problems with the current approach; however, it also established the overall desired end state of the initiative as "A Culture of Professional Airmen who embody the warrior ethos and AF core values". Moving forward, the team proposed using consistent professional development engagements, tailored discussions led by USAFE-AFAFRICA senior leadership down to the front-line supervisor, a synced, standardized message across the command, and a true "Airman First" mindset as the best way to accomplish our goals.

The consensus was a new USAFE-AFAFRICA initiative that personally and professionally develops Airmen Warriors while meeting the training requirements for resilience and violence prevention, thus reducing mandatory ancillary training.

AIRMEN FEEDBACK

In order to ensure OPERATION GRIT took into account all Airmen feedback, we tested the concepts with Airmen from across the command. There was positive feedback, as well as some skepticism. The skeptic was taken into account and helped tweak the initiative. Allowing commanders to utilize the tools for how they see fit makes this effort seem less cumbersome than those in the past. As for commander buy-in, the PACE videos and Check 6 worksheets are there to help facilitate the conversations. As we do this more and more, it will become easier over time.

Uncertain:

- Completely dependent on the Commander or Supervisor's buy-in and ability to facilitate a good discussion
- What incentivizes me to buy in to this approach versus all the others that have been presented?
- Won't work because leadership is only worried about metrics and numbers

Positive:

- This is the first time I have been able to have a conversation with this new generation
- I was able to hear what my people were saying and do something
- I think this was one of the first real conversations I have had with my people
- Gives flexibility and program control back to the commanders!
- AFSC specific approach – I love it!
- Would truly make me feel like a member of a greater cause
- I can already feel myself getting more blue as I read about GRIT
- I really like the idea of the shorter monthly sessions and that leadership is responsible to roll these out and facilitate them
- I really like this! We're so technology driven, sometimes just having leadership take the time to say good morning to you face-to-face is a great morale boost."

Nebraska Coach, Scott Frost, was doing an interview and discussed how he was going about changing the culture of the program. One key quote stood out,

"We need to train our leaders better. Once all the members of the team are holding each other accountable and the coaches don't have to do it, you've got a powerful team."

