

Gold Star Family Discussion Guide

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Gold Star Family video is to honor those families whose loved ones have made the ultimate sacrifice; and to remind commanders and Airmen to continue to embrace Gold Star families as members of the Air Force family.

This discussion guide can be used in conjunction with the video to hold group conversations to help educate Airmen, civilians and families about the Air Force Families Forever (AFFF) program and specifically, Gold Star families.

DESCRIPTION

This video is part of the Heritage Today Identity Series. The voiceover in the video is that of Mrs. Linda Ambard a Gold Star spouse. Linda's husband, Maj. Phil Ambard, was one of eight U.S. service members killed on April 27, 2011, when an Afghan pilot opened fire at an airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. Linda is currently a Violence Prevention Integrator at the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. Linda and Phil have five children, four joined the military and three are still active duty Air Force.

GUIDANCE

“Of all the important undertakings as commander, taking care of the families of our fallen heroes – our Gold Star Family members, is at the top.” – General David L. Goldfein, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF)

- The Air Force Families Forever program is a long-term aftercare program for survivors of fallen Airmen.
- Gold Star Family members are further defined as survivors of service members who lost their lives during any armed hostilities which include deployment in support of military operations against the enemy or during an international terrorist attack.
- Commanders should deliberately and periodically reach out to Gold Star Family members, in a very personal way, to show that the Air Force cares for them and will continue to embrace them into the Air Force community.
- The Gold Star Family program is about continued, life-long support of those whose loved ones have made the ultimate sacrifice.
- Gold Star families want their loved ones' names to be remembered always. Many want to share their stories and still feel connected to Airmen serving today. Commanders should make families aware of Gold Star installation access cards and are encouraged to invite, and include, Gold Star families in installation events including Fourth of July celebrations, air shows and the like.
- Every installation has a program specialist assigned to the Airman & Family Readiness Center (A&FRC) that provides extended care and support to family members where they live or relocated.
- Commanders should provide Gold Star Family members opportunities to come together and network at organized events.

EMPLOY

BEFORE VIEWING:

Talk with your squadron or small group about what a Gold Star Family is and the sacrifices they have made. The following are examples of questions that could be asked to get the conversation going:

- Do you know what a Gold Star Family is?
- Have you served in a unit that has previously lost a member during a conflict?
- How important do you think it is to keep the memories of our fallen Airmen alive?

AFTER VIEWING:

Lead a group discussion after viewing “Gold Star Families” video to discuss what Airmen thought about the video. Below are examples of questions that could be asked to continue the conversation:

- After having viewed the video, what is your initial reaction?
 - There is a line in the video that states “If you’re on gate duty and see that gold star on the back of our pass...” How many of you knew about the Gold Star Family installation access card? (This is particularly important for Security Forces Squadrons)
 - What impact do you think keeping our Gold Star Family members involved has on the Air Force?
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**AIR FORCE
FAMILIES
FOREVER
PROGRAM**

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List of Fallen included in the Gold Star Video (individuals are in the order in which they appear in the video):

Tech. Sgt. John Chapman, Medal of Honor recipient

- Sergeant Chapman was an Air Force Combat Controller. He was posthumously awarded the MOH August 22, 2018, for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty.” He is the 19th Airman to receive the MOH and the first recognized with the medal for heroic actions occurring after the Vietnam War.
- Sergeant Chapman was killed during the Battle of Takur Ghar, Afghanistan, March 3, 2002.
- For more information: <http://static.dma.mil/usaf/medalofhonor-chapman/>

Capt. Mark Weber, U.S. Air Force Academy graduate

- Captain Weber was a Combat Rescue Officer from the 38th Rescue Squadron, Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.
- Captain Weber and six other Airmen died March 15, 2018, when their HH-60G Pave Hawk crashed in Anbar Province, Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Bryan Berky, Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician

- Sergeant Berky was killed Sept 12, 2009, near Bala Baluk, Afghanistan, of wounds he sustained from enemy fire while supporting combat operations.
- Sergeant Berky was deployed from the 28th Civil Engineer Squadron, Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota; and was on his second deployment to Afghanistan. He is a native of Tampa, Florida, and joined the Air Force in 2002.

Maj. Troy Lee Gilbert, F-16 Pilot

- Major Gilbert was an F-16 pilot who was killed November 27, 2006, 20 miles northwest of Baghdad, Iraq, when his plane crashed while engaging the enemy. Upon his crash, Major Gilbert’s remains were captured by insurgents and were not returned for 10 years.
- Major Gilbert was assigned to the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing in Balad Air Base, Iraq, and was deployed from the 309th Fighter Squadron at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. He joined the Air Force in 1994.

Tech. Sgt. Herman Mackey III, Air Refueling Technician

- Sergeant Mackey, was killed May 3, 2013, in Kyrgyzstan, in a KC-135 Stratotanker crash near Chon-Aryk, while serving during Operation Enduring Freedom.
- Sergeant Mackey was assigned to the 93rd Air Refueling Squadron at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington. He is from Bakersfield, California, and joined the Air Force in 2001.

Staff Sgt. Jacob Lee Frazier, Tactical Air Control Party

- Sergeant Frazier was killed while working with U.S. Army Special Forces when his convoy was ambushed March 29, 2003.
- Sergeant Frazier was an Air National Guardsman assigned to the 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Illinois. He enlisted in the Guard in 1997.

Captain Derek Argel, Special Tactics Officer

- Captain Argel died on Memorial Day (May 30th) 2005, in the crash of an Iraqi Air Force aircraft during a training mission in Divala Province, 80 miles northeast of Baghdad.
- Captain Argel was assigned to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Florida; and is from Lompoc, California.

Capt. Victoria A. Pinckney, KC-135 Pilot

- Captain Pinckney died May 3, 2013, in a KC-135 Stratotanker crash near Chon-Aryk, Kyrgyzstan, while serving during Operation Enduring Freedom.
- Captain Pinckney was a native of Palmdale, California, and was assigned to the 93rd Air Refueling Squadron at Fairchild AFB, Washington.

Staff Sgt. John Michael “Mike” Teal, Flight Engineer

- Sergeant Teal, HH-60 Pave Hawk flight engineer, was killed March 23, 2003, when the aircraft crashed while on a mission to pick up two injured Afghan children.
- Sergeant Teal is from Nacogdoches, Texas, and was assigned to the 41st Rescue Squadron from Moody Air Force Base, Georgia.

Airman First Class Elizabeth Jacobsen, Security Forces

- Airman Jacobsen was killed while providing convoy security from Camp Bucca, Iraq, when her vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device on September 28, 2005.
- Airman Jacobsen is from Orlando, Florida, and was assigned to the 17th Security Forces Squadron at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas; but had deployed as part of the 586th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron. She entered the Air Force in 2003, and was the first Security Forces member, and first female, to die in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Capt. Tomas J. Gramith, Weapons Systems Officer

- Captain Gramith was killed July 18, 2009, when his F-15E crashed in Afghanistan while supporting U.S. Soldiers near the Pakistan border.
- Captain Gramith is a native of Eagan, Minnesota, and was assigned to the 336th Fighter Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., at the time of his death.

Senior Airman Jonathan Vega Yelner, Bomb Loader

- Senior Airman Vega died April 29, 2008, of wounds he sustained when his vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device. A bomb loader by training, Airman Vega had volunteered for the in-lieu-of tasking as a Humvee driver for the Kapisa and Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team.
- Airman Vega is a native of Lafayette, California, and was assigned to the 28th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota.
- His mother, Yolanda Vega, is represented in the video.

Maj. Phyllis Pelky, U.S. Air Force Academy

- Major Pelky died October 11, 2015, after the helicopter she was traveling in crashed. She was on her way to a meeting with an Afghan force development colonel when the crash of the British helicopter occurred.
- Major Pelky was assigned to the U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, as the aide-de-camp to the Academy's superintendent, at the time of her death. She was from Rio Rancho, New Mexico, where she had formally taught humanities at Rio Rancho High School before joining the Air Force after 9/11.
- Her sister, Cathy Berlin-Obregon, is represented in the video.

Tech Sgt. Phillip Myers, Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician

- Sergeant Myers died April 4, 2009, near Helmand province Afghanistan of wounds suffered from an improvised explosive device.
- Sergeant Myers was assigned to the 48th Civil Engineer Squadron at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, in the United Kingdom. He is a native of Hopewell, Virginia.

Captain Jordan Pierson, C-130J Pilot

- Captain Pierson was killed October 2, 2015, when the C-130J he was piloting crashed near Jalalabad Airfield, Afghanistan.
- Captain Pierson was assigned to the 39th Airlift Squadron at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. He is a native of Abilene, Texas.

Maj. Philip Ambard, Foreign Area Specialist

- Major Philip Ambard was killed when an Afghan pilot opened fire at Kabul International Airport, Afghanistan, on April 27, 2011. He was working with the NATO Air Training Command in Afghanistan and assigned to the 460th Space Communications Squadron at Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado, before his death.
- Major Ambard was an immigrant from Venezuela and from Edmonds, Washington, before he entered the Air Force in 1985.
- Major Ambard's wife, Linda Ambard, voiced the video and is also represented in it.

Captain Mark "Tyler" Voss, KC-135 Pilot

- Captain Voss died May 3, 2013, in a KC-135 Stratotanker crash near Chon-Aryk, Kyrgyzstan, while serving during Operation Enduring Freedom.
- Captain Voss was assigned to the 93rd Air Refueling Squadron at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, at the time of his death; and is a native of Boerne, Texas.

1st Lieutenant Joseph Helton Jr., Security Forces

- Lt. Helton died September 8, 2009, near Baghdad, Iraq, of wounds sustained when enemy forces attacked his vehicle with an improvised explosive device.
- Lt. Helton is a native of Monroe, Georgia; and was assigned to the 6th Security Forces Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

Captain Lance P. Sijan, U.S. Air Force Academy graduate

- Captain Sijan is the first U.S. Air Force Academy graduate to receive the Medal of Honor. He died January 22, 1968, in the Hanoi Hilton, in Vietnam, after having been captured by the Viet Cong.
- Captain Sijan ejected from his aircraft on November 9, 1967, and evaded capture from the Viet Cong for 46 days, dragging himself along the jungle floor until being captured.
- Captain Sijan is a native of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Captain Jeremy Jeff Fresques, Special Tactics Officer

- Captain Fresques died on Memorial Day (May 30th) 2005, in the crash of an Iraqi Air Force aircraft during a training mission in Divala Province, 80 miles northeast of Baghdad.
- Captain Fresques is from Farmington, New Mexico, and commissioned in 2001. He was assigned to the 23rd Special Tactics Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida, during his deployment.

Tech. Sgt. Matthew Schwartz, Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician

- Sergeant Schwartz died on January 5, 2012, from injuries he sustained when his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device.
- Sergeant Schwartz is from Traverse City, Michigan, and enlisted in the Air Force in 1999. He was assigned to the 90th Civil Engineer Squadron at F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming.