



CONR - 1 AF/AFNORTH

Continental United States NORAD Region – First Air Force (Air Forces Northern)

Office of Public Affairs

1210 Beacon Beach Road * Tyndall AFB FL 32403-5549

(850) 283-8080 * FAX (850) 283-3376 * DSN 523-8080

afnorthpa@tyndall.af.mil * www.1af.acc.af.mil * [twitter@1staf](https://twitter.com/1staf) * [Facebook@AmericasAOC](https://www.facebook.com/AmericasAOC)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release 10-03-03/001

March 3, 2010

Command Chief prepares Airmen for evolving homeland defense mission

by Carol Carpenter, AFNORTH Public Affairs

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Among the top goals of First Air Force Command Chief Master Sergeant Joseph Thornell Sr., is the professional development of all enlisted service members.

Having accepted his new Command Chief position in December 2009, Chief Thornell sees his top-level post as a means to encourage and mentor young enlisted personnel.

“It’s important to develop our enlisted corps to better prepare them for the future,” he said. “I want to help increase their awareness of our vital mission and to accomplish all that we are tasked.”

Among the realities that will impact Airmen in the future are fewer personnel, smaller budgets, evolving missions and increased asymmetrical terrorist threats, the Chief predicts.

Having recently served as vice commandant for the Community College of the Air Force at Maxwell AFB, Ala., Chief Thornell has a strong belief in the power of education.



“The best way to accomplish our goals is through an emphasis on education, both on a military level and on a personal level,” he said. “Our Airmen need an increased awareness and understanding of the changes that are coming, and preparedness is a crucial step to being ready.”

Another important objective for the Command Chief is to continue building relationships with 1st Air Force’s two newest units: the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and the Air Force National Security Emergency Preparedness directorate.

He would also, during his tenure, like to personally visit every assigned unit and aligned wing associated with 1st Air Force, which are located in various states around the country and also in Canada.

Already he has traveled to and met with members of the Western Air Defense Sector at McChord AFB, Wash., and the 148th Fighter Wing in Duluth, Minn. “It’s important to have face-to-face contact with people and my goal is to get to every unit,” he said.

– more –

2-2-2 CHIEF

Having served in the Air Force and Air National Guard for more than 30 years, Chief Thornell initially became military-minded as a high school student. Having a father who was a fighter pilot during World War II, the teenager joined the Civil Air Patrol and enlisted into the Air Force at age 17.



“My father never pushed me to do that, but he was proud that I did,” the Chief said, adding that joining the Air Force was one of the best career decisions he has ever made.

During his active duty years, he worked hard to acquire both a bachelor’s degree in business management and a master’s degree in leadership.

“I’ve met people along the way who encouraged me, particularly my supervisor in 1982, Master Sgt. Bob Isebrand, a mentor who influenced me to further my education,” he said. “Fortunately, I listened to most of what he had to say.”

While he still has three more years of service to the Air Force, he and his wife, Kerry, have already begun to make plans for retirement.

They currently own and rent out a 350-acre grain farm near Sioux Falls, S.D., where they plan to live after leaving the military. There they will enjoy family time with two adult sons and two young grandchildren.

Rather than tend the farm himself, Chief Thornell will continue renting the land and teach school at the elementary level.

But for the next few years he will devote his energies to being the best Command Chief possible for 1st Air Force. In the few months he’s been here, he has learned a lot that he didn’t previously know about the organization’s homeland defense mission.

“When you are outside First Air Force and look in, it can look easy, but when you come inside, you see that we have an exceptionally robust and active mission,” he said. “It doesn’t get the attention of the American people who don’t want to think the homeland can be threatened. Unfortunately, people have become accustomed to things as they are now, but recent history shows how easily things can turn.”