UNITED STATES ARMY

THE CHIEF OF STAFF

29 JUN 2021

Aviation Leaders,

About this time last year, I sent a note to the field highlighting increased aviation mishaps during the fourth quarter of the previous five fiscal years. This "fourth-quarter spike," identified by the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center, accounted for 40 percent of all aviation mishaps, with August the peak month of the July-September time frame. While no single cause was responsible for the spike, several factors — the hot and heavy environmental season, leadership flux with permanent change of station moves throughout the summer, execution of end-of-year flying hours, and extended daylight impacting training schedules and crew duty days — were pinpointed by the USACRC as a perfect storm of challenges that make the fourth quarter especially risky.

As always, Army Aviation picked up the gauntlet and completed FY20's fourth quarter with only one Class A mishap, contributing to the branch's lowest annual mishap rate ever. This accomplishment is the direct result of you, your subordinate leaders and your crews working together to solve the problem and ensure safety on every mission. Aviation remains the Army's risk management leader.

We are rapidly approaching another fourth quarter, the culmination of what has been a difficult FY21 for aviators and crews. After FY20's record lows, current mishap totals and rates are the highest in five years. Most significantly, the 11 Soldiers killed in aviation mishaps thus far in FY21 is equal to or greater than each of the past five years' annual totals and higher than FY19 and FY20 combined. We can and will do better for our Soldiers and their Families.

We know personnel transitions are happening, we know the environment is about to tax our aircraft and crews, and we know the fourth quarter is the riskiest time of year for aviation mishaps. We also still have time to plan for these and other issues both before and during the fourth quarter. Dynamic risk management, where we constantly reassess mission hazards using real-time, real-world conditions, will be key to turning around FY21's trends and ensuring a safe fourth quarter for our aviation formations.

Building upon lessons learned from last year, the USACRC has released an updated fourth-quarter spike communications campaign, available at https://safety.army.mil/4QS. This year's effort includes leader talking points, informative articles, and exportable training briefings focused on current mishap trends and prevention tools. I encourage you all to maximize this material within your units — knowledge and engaged leadership are the cornerstones of managing risk.

Thank you for what you do every day.

People First — Winning Matters — Readiness Through Safety!

JAMES C. McCONVILLE
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