NOMINATION NARRATIVE

Specific Achievement or Innovation

The Air Force's Kessel Run program has quickly become the model for the DOD in the realm of DevSecOps and the Agile approach to software acquisition. The team has fully turned the acquisition world on its head by leveraging all of the tools currently available to re-shape how to execute an effective program. The transformation they have made is shattering the structured and entrenched bureaucratic norms found within the Department of Defense. This team's efforts have not only been transformational they have delivered critical capability to the warfighter at a time when we find ourselves falling behind our near peer competitors. This team's accomplishments are truly unique and the revolution they are leading is violently critical for our national defense!

The birth of the Kessel Run program came out of the ashes of a 10-year $500M effort that delivered zero usable or workable software to the warfighter in an attempt to deprecate the legacy Air Operations Center. With no path forward, Kessel Run decided to "smuggle" agile software development into the Department of Defense, an ode to the Kessel Run smuggling route made famous by the Star Wars franchise.

And that's exactly what this amazing team did. In rapid succession, the Kessel Run team quickly, efficiently, and securely delivered war-winning software to Airmen currently engaged in operations across the globe, which they have full embraced and LOVE using. A critical aspect of the successful adoption by the users is the link the Kessel Run team has made with the warfighters. Kessel Run is not working off of a static requirements document, they have embedded themselves with the warfighters, sitting in their workspaces down range to see how they work, what their pain points are so as to develop software that meets the warfighters needs not the needs of a static requirements document. This relationship with the customer and the speed of development allows Kessel Run to get direct feedback on their software, make adjustments and push updates with great speed and regularity. This responsive characteristic is unparalleled in DOD and has strengthened the confidence across the warfighting community that the acquisition machine is responsive and helping them succeed in today's fight. Starting with its tanker planning tool, Jigsaw, Kessel Run has now fielded 18 capabilities which are all in the hands of the warfighter--using agile software development, user-centered design, and lean startup methodologies. The software development is certainly "cool" but the interface and relationship with the warfighter is the game changer, empowering the speed of relevance in today's fight.

Those 18 capabilities span across the main Air Operations Centers and Targeting & GEOINT portfolios that enable a robust and modern Air Tasking Cycle, everything from a Friendly Order of Battle (FrOB), Master Air Attack Planning, Joint Targeting Cycle to modernizing the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) tools that encompass an Air Tasking Order. With the user in mind from day one, Kessel Run has had immense success in user adoption, with over 5,000 monthly users alone on their Mission Reporting tool Marauder. The true measure of success are the impacts on speed and efficiency the planning tools are enabling. With the adoption of the Kessel Run applications in the AOC, the Air Force has been able to reduce the

In the acquisition sphere, Kessel Run has awarded over 40 contracts in the last eighteen months with a small business operations team who is consistently flexible but efficient in their acquisition practices.

Kessel Run's agile acquisition impact is rippling throughout the Department. The Office of the Secretary of Defense is building a Software Acquisition Pathway, mirrored closely to Kessel Run's business model. They are changing the way the Department sees software. No longer do software systems move into sustainment; rather, there are continual iterations and additional functionality added into applications. Software is never done, and Kessel Run has demonstrated that across the enterprise. They mentor other development teams and software factories on best practices in order to continue the change they have started within the Air Force. The effects of the Kessel Run program will continue to be felt in the DoD for years to come.

Support and Alignment to DoD Priorities

Kessel Run's activities respond directly to the National Defense Strategy to build a more lethal force and reform the department for greater performance.

Without Airmen having to use spreadsheets and word documents to complete their mission, Kessel Run is enabling force readiness and lethality. The Air Force's targeting activities are more accurate and precise, to several levels beyond what was possible with the legacy, antiquated targeting development software.

Finally, all of Kessel Run's activities envelope the Department's Digital Modernization Goals. "Security first" is Kessel Run's motto; with security at the forefront of all code development and pushes into production, they have successfully received a C-ATO for their robust Continuous Integration/Continuous Delivery (CI/CD) pipeline. They are optimizing for efficiencies by having Government-led teams and the Government owning the code baseline. Most importantly, they are cultivating organic talent by teaching Airmen to code and hiring civilian top talent to continue to make the program the success it is! The accomplishments of this team are unparalleled in the department and have made them the role model others want to emulate. This is an amazing team, focused on the warfighter and producing revolutionary results. Indeed, they are the DOD's best and are worthy of this award!

CITATION

Detachment 12 of the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, more commonly known as Kessel Run, has quickly become the model for the Department of Defense in the realm of DevSecOps and the Agile approach to software acquisition. Starting with its tanker planning tool, Kessel Run has now fielded 18 capabilities using agile software development, user-centered design, and lean startup methodologies. In addition, the team joined forces with the Mad Hatter team to modernize the troubled F-35 ALIS software capability using the Kessel Run model. This team produced capabilities that are saving Air Operations Centers $13M and over 2,000 man hours per month. With the Department's first Continuous Authority to Operate, Kessel Run can push applications into SIPR and beyond in under an hour. Their Platform as a Service is utilized by 19 external Air Force applications for their deployments, with Kessel Run enabling their success. This team's agile acquisition impact is rippling throughout the department, the office of the Secretary of Defense is building a Software Acquisition Pathway, mirrored closely to Kessel Run's business model. This is an amazing team, focused on the warfighter and producing revolution revolutionary results. Indeed they are the DOD's best.