



# AIR FORCE TECHNICAL APPLICATIONS CENTER

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## **25th AF commander immerses into treaty monitoring mission**

*By Susan A. Romano, AFTAC Public Affairs*

**PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** – The commander of 25th Air Force visited the Air Force Technical Applications Center here to meet with senior leadership, learn more about the AFTAC mission, and discuss her priorities with center personnel.

Maj. Gen. Mary F. O'Brien paid her first visit to the nuclear treaty monitoring center Feb. 20-21, and traveled with her command chief, Chief Master Sgt. Stanley Cadell, to ensure enlisted areas of concern were also addressed during the visit.

After a courtesy call with Patrick AFB's installation commander, Brig. Gen. Wayne Monteith and his command chief, Chief Master Sgt. Kimberly Vinson, the 25th AF leadership team arrived at AFTAC's headquarters building to begin their immersion into the AFTAC mission.



The first stop on their agenda was to AFTAC's Clean Room, where they learned more about how scientists prepare and split environmental samples for further analysis by AFTAC's network of laboratories that support the International Atomic Energy Agency. Clean Room operators demonstrated how technicians handle samples and the method in which radioactive particles are identified, isolated and processed for further analysis and reporting.

O'Brien and Cadell were briefed on various aspects of AFTAC global responsibilities, such as the Nuclear Debris Collection and Analysis program, the National Data Center, Directed Energy Weapons, Reactor Product and Nuclear Plant Programs, and Environmental Modeling and Simulation.

"I've been looking forward to this opportunity to get out and visit our Airmen in the field who are doing great things for our Air Force," said O'Brien. "What impressed me about the Airmen here at AFTAC was their ability to take very technical information and make it understandable for those who might not have a background in science. While I have a degree in chemistry, I haven't applied much of that degree throughout my career, and Chief Cadell, who is a maintainer by trade, commented about how well the people here at AFTAC are able to explain the significance of their respective jobs coherently and concisely."

The pair also spent the afternoon touring AFTAC's Innovation Lab to get a first-hand look at some ongoing projects and innovations. Tech. Sgt. Collin J. Pesicka, noncommissioned officer in charge of rapid development, briefed the general and the chief on current operations the lab is undertaking.

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“We highlighted to General O’Brien and Chief Cadell an ongoing project to improve one of AFTAC’s legacy monitoring systems using commercial off-the-shelf technology,” Pesicka said. “We also explained how the Innovation Lab is expediting the research and development process, while reducing overall funding requirements. The concept of rapid development not only gives AFTAC members the opportunity to fail; it also helps them apply those lessons learned to further their ideas. I hope our NAF commander and command chief walked away with a better sense of the great work our Innovation Lab is conducting each and every day.”



The tour wrapped up with a visit to the Ciambrone Radiochemistry Lab, the only one of its kind in the Department of Defense. CRL personnel analyze radioactive debris to determine if effluents from a potential nuclear explosion are present in the atmosphere.

During her visit, O’Brien presented her coin to five outstanding performers: Master Sgt. Matthew Wilkens, Senior Airman Christian Hagen, Capt. Rhonda Jones, Mr. Kevin Jensen, and Staff Sgt. Nathan Korytko. Traditionally, a commander presents a challenge coin to an individual for a job well done or for going above-and-beyond normal duty requirements. It’s also a way to build a personal bond between recipient and presenter.

“I was really honored to receive General O’Brien’s coin,” said Korytko, noncommissioned officer in charge of Count Room Operations. “It was already an honor to be asked to brief her on my role here at AFTAC, but to have her hand me her coin is really the best highlight of my time in the Air Force so far. I really appreciate her taking the time to acknowledge my work.”

At the conclusion of their visit, O’Brien took a few minutes to reflect on what she learned from the immersion.

“These Airmen are impressive!” she said. “I already had a good idea of ‘what’ was being done here at AFTAC; now I have a much better picture of the ‘who’ and the ‘how.’ Everyone we met – officer, enlisted and civilian alike – had an acute operational mindset and it’s obvious the commander is providing them with the tools they need to meet challenges and solve hard problems that impact us as a nation. There is a good mix of experience, background and leadership here.”

AFTAC’s commander, Col. Steven M. Gorski, realizes the impact an “in-person” visit from a general officer visit within the chain of command has on a workforce.

“General O’Brien and Chief Cadell’s visit to AFTAC was very much appreciated. They are extremely busy running an expansive mission providing multi-domain ISR to warfighters across the globe,” said Gorski. “We are glad they took the time to meet the Airmen executing the mission. We discussed recent successes and ideas to continuously improve on our mission to ultimately provide persistent strategic deterrence for our nation. The 25th senior leadership team observed what we already knew: the men and women of AFTAC are dedicated professionals who get the mission with done unmatched passion and innovation.”

O’Brien added, “I want to say thanks for a great visit, and I look forward to coming back to see more of the great things the Airmen are doing here.”