

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

AIR FORCE ESPORTS & GAMING

PURPOSE: To provide information to the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) on recruiting through eSports & Gaming, and establishment of a USAF eSports team to enhance Air Force Recruiting Services (AFRS) marketing campaigns

DISCUSSION

- Gaming and eSports has ballooned over recent years with millions of followers. There are now nationally televised (cable) video game competitions, livestreaming matches, a large number of gaming channels on YouTube, and even cable channels dedicated to egaming and esports as well as a plethora of other social media sites promoting gameplay.
- Gaming is a powerful channel for reaching our target audiences and AFRS has developed and fielded a variety of games across a several platforms to engage with prospects and inform/educate/entertain, such as our ever-evolving “Airman Challenge” game and the Oculus Rift technology used on our mobile recruiting assets; in addition to “AF Special Operations: Nightfall” on Sony Playstation 4 Virtual Reality.
- The Air Force is the category exclusive sponsor for ELEAGUEs eSports tournaments and has partnered with ELEAGUE and popular team Cloud9 to create custom content. Other gaming partnerships include Playwire, Drone Racing League, Blizzard Gaming, ESL Gaming Network (formerly Electronic Sports League) and HSBE (aka Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment)
- Cyber themes are also found within our fleet of mobile assets, in some of our major partnerships (FIRST Robotics, USA Science & Engineering Festival, Major League Hacking, PAX South 2018, etc.), in our digital media site selections and in local/regional recruiting events
- The Air Force Academy (USAFA) also has a competitive eSports team, which has just completed its first year competing in the Mountain West Conference, finishing second in the Conference Finals. One streaming service, unverified, claims there were over 200 million viewers.
- At the recommendation of our marketing agency, GSD&M, AFRS has decided against sponsoring an eSports team for recruiting purposes. There has been no relevant data to suggest that fielding an eSports team comprised of Airmen will increase an applicant’s propensity to consider military service. Additionally, our overall investment in Gaming and eSports has delivered over 48.8 million impressions and created numerous engagement opportunities with our recruiters, so we think we have adequate coverage in that part of the market.

SUMMARY

- AFRS aggressively seeks out emerging technologies and industry best practices to enhance our marketing efforts
- The eSports industry could be an emerging market to inspire those interested in computer and cyber technologies to look to the Air Force for opportunities in the future

RECOMMENDATION: Information only.