

# SUSAN THORNTON

ASSOCIATE, DAYTON AEROSPACE, INC.

## PROFILE

Proactive executive with over 35 years of acquisition, engineering, and program management experience focused on innovation, creating lean teams, managing risk and leading change. High-performing leader of large technical organizations with expertise in building and optimizing organizational processes, developing human capital, and delivering technology. Results-oriented professional with exceptional record of developing successful, innovative, cost effective, strategies for complex weapon systems, software and cyber capability, and advanced technology. Adept communicator with cross-cultural communication proficiency and experience leading international teams to negotiate solutions that meet diverse needs in a global environment. Senior Executive Service (SES), Department of the Air Force (DAF) (Retired).

## PRINCIPAL AREAS OF EXPERTISE

### Acquisition Program Management and Systems Engineering

Promoted competition and small business capability. Unlocked opportunity for 100 new vendors to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) exploitation capability using open architecture approach on \$3.6B Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS). Steered OSD, US Air Force (USAF), Navy, and SOCOM team to reduce DoD reliance on single Common Data Link contractor for 30,000 users. Resulted in small business competition and a 40% cost savings on terminals. Engaged stakeholders to migrate three vital defense business systems (over \$1.3B resource) to common infrastructure laying foundation for the digital USAF. Engineering leader on numerous aircraft, space, and cyber weapon systems across the acquisition and sustainment lifecycle.

### Innovation Strategy Development and Change Leadership

Key strategist for the USAF high priority Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS) to meet the National Defense Strategy (NDS). Testified to Congressional House Armed Services' Subcommittee on USAF decision to pursue this pioneering strategy and secured over \$3B. Accelerated cyber agile software delivery to support USAF cyber and US Cyber Command operations and rapidly field high-impact capability to secure 2018 mid-term elections. Led Enterprise IT as a Service risk reduction strategy transforming how the USAF acquires multi-billion-dollar IT capability and impacting over 600,000 users. Directed team to overhaul 21-year-old Clinger Cohen Act software certification process. Radically reduced program documentation to cut certification by 14 months and save over \$100M. Drove stand up of multiple DevSecOps efforts and created first-ever cost metrics. Applied to critical DoD cyber program initial independent cost assessment—innovative approach set USAF cost accounting standard for agile software programs.

### International Capability Development

As Chair, NATO Air Forces Armament Group, steered 30 nations to deliver capability to NATO forces and ensure interoperability. Led a \$1.7B program to stand-up the NATO RQ-4 aircraft program. Resolved impasse over more than 600 airworthiness artifacts between NATO program, contractor, and Italian authority preserving the NATO Force Commander's operational ISR capability. Guided USAF manned-ISR vision for unique US/UK cooperative RC-135 Rivet Joint reconnaissance program through 2035, safeguarding over 9,500 hours/year of vital mission capability.

### Workforce Advancement

Championed workforce development. Initiated first-ever mentoring programs at two locations, Kirtland AFB and Hanscom AFB, resulting in enduring mentoring cultures at both. Directed a USAF-wide, highly selective development program to prepare 50 mid-level management candidates for senior leadership resulting in 23 people being promoted to the Senior Executive Service. Personally mentored and positively affected the careers of over 1,000 DoD civilians. Crafted first-ever USAF Engineering Enterprise Strategic Plan—a comprehensive plan for the 15,000 science and engineering workforce, propelling the \$67B research, acquisition, sustainment and test enterprise.



## DAYTON AEROSPACE

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## EDUCATION

### MPA, Public Administration

Harvard University, JFK School of Government

### MS, Aerospace Engineering

University of Dayton

### BS, Systems Engineering

Wright State University

### Strategic Enterprise Perspective

Alan L. Freed Associates, Inc.

### Executive Excellence

Carnegie Mellon University

### Defense Systems Management College (DSMC)

## KEY POSITIONS

### Director, Information Dominance Programs

Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (AT&L)

### Chair, Air Forces Armament Group

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

### Director, Engineering & Technical Management

Air Force Materiel Command

### Director, Engineering & Technical Management

Electronic Systems Center (ESC)

### Director, Directed Energy Directorate

Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL)

### Director of Engineering, Airborne Laser (ABL) Program

Missile Defense Agency (MDA)

## CERTIFICATIONS & RECOGNITION

### Acquisition Professional Development Program (APDP)

Systems Planning Research, & Engineering, Level III

Program Management, Level III

### Lucius N. Littauer Fellow

Harvard University, JFK School of Government

### Department of the Air Force Decoration for Exceptional Civilian Service

June 2020

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## WORK HISTORY

### **Associate | Dayton Aerospace, Inc.**

**2020-present, Dayton, OH**

Provide technical and program management consulting to government and industry clients in all phases of the acquisition and sustainment life cycle. Specialties include developing innovative strategies; leading change; growing international capability; advancing workforce development; and providing systems engineering, cyber and software advice and expert testimony.

### **Director, Information Dominance Programs | Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (AT&L)**

**2016-2020, Pentagon, Washington, DC**

Directed USAF, Joint and international acquisition and modernization activities including, program directives, acquisition strategies, budget submissions, and congressional testimony for over 100 command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance & reconnaissance (C4ISR) and cyber programs worth \$21B. Provided Secretary of the Air Force direction and guidance for combat systems and architectures to Air Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Joint Staff and Congress. As the Executive Agent for the DoD Common Data Link (CDL), steered budgets, standards and all execution activities for CDL.

### **Chair | NATO Air Forces Armament Group**

**2016-2020, Washington, DC**

Led 29-nation group reporting to the NATO Council of Armament Directors to enable delivery of interoperable aerospace military capabilities to improve NATO forces' effectiveness for current and future operations.

### **Director, Engineering & Technical Management | Air Force Materiel Command (AFMC)**

**2012-2016, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH**

Directed overarching systems engineering and technical management policy and practices focused on attaining aircraft fleet operational safety, suitability and effectiveness (OSS&E) across \$60B in USAF programs. Provided trusted technical advice to AFMC's four-star Commander and other senior leaders. Directed development of new human resource initiatives designed to improve the recruitment, retention, and career management of AFMC's 12,000 military and civilian scientists and engineers.

### **Director, Engineering & Technical Management | Electronic Systems Center (ESC), now part of AFLCMC**

**2010-2012, Hanscom AFB, MA**

Developed and implemented standard engineering guidance/processes in support of USAF command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR), cyber, and combat support programs with an annual budget over \$5B. Managed workforce of 1,800 military and civilian engineers, contractors, and support personnel.

### **Director, Directed Energy Directorate | Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL)**

**2007-2010, Kirtland AFB, NM**

Provided pervasive, world-class directed energy and imaging research and technologies for users across the USAF and DoD. Led 800 military and civilian scientists, engineers, contractors, and support people and executed an annual budget over \$300M.

### **Director of Engineering and Chief Engineer, Airborne Laser (ABL) Program | Missile Defense Agency (MDA) 2001-2007, Kirtland AFB, NM**

Supervised, directed and oversaw the engineering and technical management of all phases, including design, development, and test of the \$7B ABL high-energy laser weapon system program.

### **Prior to 2001**

- Chief, Plans and Programs Branch, Engineering, Aeronautical Systems Center (ASC), WPAFB, OH
- Technical Specialist, Systems Engineering, ASC Engineering Directorate (ASC/EN), WPAFB, OH
- Chief Engineer, Combat Talon II, Special Operations Forces (SOF) SPO, ASC, WPAFB, OH
- Chief Systems Engineer, CV-22, SOF SPO, ASC, WPAFB, OH
- Lead Propulsion Engineer, SOF and Aircraft SPOs, ASC, WPAFB, OH
- Lead Engineer, F119 Engine, F-22 SPO, ASC, WPAFB, OH
- Multiple lead and project engineer positions, ASC, WPAFB, OH

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