



**39th Annual Tuskegee Airmen, Inc.,  
National Convention  
Saturday, 31 July 2010**  
  
**General Norty Schwartz**

**As Prepared  
for Delivery  
~17 min.  
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## **Introduction**

Thank you for that kind introduction and warm welcome. General Davis, thank you for hosting this magnificent event. It recognizes the worthy endeavors of Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated, and pays proper tribute to our legendary namesake airmen.

Speaking of whom, we are truly privileged to have original Tuskegee Airmen here tonight. They are among the most storied on the roster of revered and unforgettable Americans, achieving remarkable feats despite challenging and unfavorable circumstances, and inspiring an ever-growing audience notwithstanding the passage of years.

Among this audience are young people—talented, energetic, and quite literally, our future—many of whom are here tonight. Take note of this, ladies and gentlemen, for we have assembled together: those who were among the most courageous trailblazers of America’s “Greatest Generation,” and some of the most promising of our next generation of leaders. This is a genuinely encouraging and heart-warming sight—one that should inspire hope and confidence in all of us.

## **Tuskegee Airmen and Today’s Airmen: “A Cut Above”**

Indeed, these two generations—the airmen whose courage and sacrifice helped to preserve the freedoms that we enjoy today, and the youth who soon will inherit the mantle of leadership for the Nation—embody the theme of this year’s convention: “A Cut Above.”

Through exceptional service and demonstrated potential, the scholarship and award recipients have proven themselves as extraordinary young men and women. And, without a doubt, the awe-inspiring story of the Tuskegee Airmen proves for all time their standing as “A Cut Above.” It is a story that today, informs our efforts and inspires our commitment—a tale of intrepid heroes with supreme spirit and patriotism, who fought against the fielded strength of fascism overseas while opposing the insidious effects of intolerance at home.



Today, one of two U.S. Air Force wings in Iraq, the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing, is a proud—rightly, *very* proud—descendant of the fabled 332nd Fighter Group, led by General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Like the Tuskegee Airmen they honor, the men and women of the 332nd are serving with distinction in hostile skies, operating a variety of weapon systems: F-16 fighters, C-130 transporters, HH-60 helicopters, and MQ-1 remotely-piloted aircraft, among others. They have been a mainstay in delivering full-spectrum airpower in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM since Day One. By all measures, they represent the living legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen.

It delights me to acknowledge that several of the original Tuskegee Airmen have visited the 332nd at Joint Base Balad, Iraq. We are sincerely grateful for their support. Under the motto, “The Legend Continues,” the 332nd has performed with distinction across the spectrum of operations. For instance, the 332nd includes 1,100 Airmen who fulfill Joint Expeditionary Taskings. Working far “outside the wire,” they partner with their Joint and State Department teammates in locations across Iraq, training and mentoring our Iraqi partners in myriad functions required for national stability—sound logistics, policing, and infrastructure, just to name a few activities. Demonstrating extraordinary flexibility and readiness, when volcanic ash disrupted air routes around the world this past April, the 332nd Expeditionary Medical Group geared up in less than a day to serve as the worldwide hub for all aeromedical evacuations, providing life-saving and life-sustaining support for casualties, from Afghanistan and elsewhere.

## **The Living Tradition of the Tuskegee Airmen**

In other words, to appreciate the tradition of excellence that was inspired by the airmen of Tuskegee, Alabama, one can look both to the past, at the heroic exploits of the original Tuskegee Airmen, as well as to the present, at the deeds of the 332nd at Balad. The Airmen there—and many, many other service members across the United States Armed Forces—harness their inspiration from the likes of the Tuskegee Airmen.

Furthermore, you can also look to the future, thanks to the generous and supportive efforts of Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated, which has its own noteworthy history. Some 30 years after V-E Day, when Tuskegee Airmen incorporated as a



nation-wide veterans' organization, that designation did not suffice for these heroes who thought that the charter was too narrow to meet their goals of service and support. So, in three short years, they recast themselves as a "charitable and educational organization," embarking on the higher purpose of providing more hope, promise, and opportunity, for more people. How entirely fitting, as these attributes are so quintessential to the American Dream for which they had fought so valiantly, so selflessly, so many years earlier, in the skies over Europe and Africa.

Remember, ladies and gentlemen, that when these airmen stepped forward and served almost 70 years ago, it was at a time when no one asked them to fly; and in fact, some actively discouraged their endeavors. Talk about boldly undertaking the highest of purposes. As the Tuskegee Airmen helped to restore liberty for a waiting and grateful world, they also began the worthy and necessary struggle to vanquish segregation in our society.

Today, of course, we all know that they and their herculean achievements are the stuff of legends. And, Tuskegee Airmen International is lauded for its tireless dedication to preserving and teaching that history. But, it is also renowned for equal commitment to introducing young people to the world of aviation and science. Through annual scholarships and awards to groups that share these goals, and also directly to the brilliant young minds who will become tomorrow's scientific and aerospace leaders, this organization honors the living legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen while assuring opportunity for a better future. And, their advocacy is not just for aviation and science, but rather carries broad applicability in a multitude of settings—from corporate board rooms to academic lecture halls, from private non-government organizations to government agencies. Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated encourages solid leadership; and, in today's climate of uncertainty and daunting challenges, that is vitally important to our common cause.

## **The Enduring Need for Leadership and Public Service**

Therefore, I am proud tonight to represent the U.S. Air Force, where leadership is constantly tested and developed—and is highly valued. We firmly support Tuskegee Airmen Incorporated's efforts to encourage and inspire our Nation's youth



to dedicate themselves to an exciting life of scientific discovery, and of air and space innovation.

I would further submit that advocating public service, in all of its forms, helps to provide perspective as we prepare our youth for future leadership. Indeed, President Obama's clarion call to service could not resonate more convincingly; because now, more than ever, our Nation faces challenges that require the collective effort of all Americans. Lucrative opportunities and worthwhile endeavors certainly exist in the private sector. And, the promise of opportunity often is accompanied by the allure of material wealth. While certainly, it is not an invalid aspiration to accumulate some measure of affluence, the notion of public service provides for a different type of richness—that of personal reward and gratification from setting aside pure self-interest in favor of higher purposes, and of pride in being a part of something larger than one's self.

This wealth is intangible. You cannot deposit in a bank, or hide it under a mattress. But, it is most definitely real and substantial; and, it is very much needed. In the Air Force, we are proud of our technological heritage and the increasingly complex weapon systems that have grown from decades of creativity, vision, and bold leadership. We will continue to nurture a tech-savvy workforce, with education, training, and backgrounds in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. But, we will also require innovative professionals who can meld scientific and technological innovation with operational requirements, because winning today's fight is very much about leveraging the right technology, to provide the appropriate capabilities—to achieve a broad range of tailored effects, at the right place and right time.

For the young, up-and-coming leaders in the audience who have an interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics: If this sounds exciting to you—and it should—then I encourage you to stay focused on target. You could be a part of an exciting future of Predator and Reaper remotely-piloted aircraft, which provide unprecedented situational awareness of the battlespace; of F-35s and F-22s, which will be unparalleled in airpower capability; of advanced space-based capabilities like



that from the Wideband Global Satellite Communications System or the next-generation Global Positioning System, or “GPS.”

## Conclusion: Leaders Wanted

But, more importantly, our Air Force looks to a future of capable leaders—those who find a calling in inspiring and harnessing individual brilliance, so that they may develop and leverage collective genius. In the finest tradition of the Tuskegee Airmen, your Air Force will continue to afford opportunity and empowerment to individuals who will help make our military even better. In true reverence to the Tuskegee Airmen, we will continue to seek those who are “A Cut Above,” and to demand from them impeccable character, unwavering excellence, selfless service, and unmistakable optimism.

And, your Air Force will continue to be a place where talent, dedication, and, yes, a bit of fortune can take one a long way, irrespective of one’s original station—in my case, a lot of fortune, for the son of a typewriter salesman. I encourage you to look up the “Tuskegee Airman of the Week” program at the 332nd, and note how the list of winners includes Airmen from all backgrounds, all heritages, and all beliefs. Note how race, color, creed, or gender is eclipsed by the recognition of true *Integrity*, *Service*, and *Excellence*—our Air Force Core Values. I am proud not only that the strength of diversity is showcased at the 332nd at Balad; I am proud that it is but a microcosm of our Air Force and our military—a great place to work, serve, and grow.

To the original Tuskegee Airmen: *this* is your legacy, and we thank you.

Again, I am truly humbled and honored to have spent this time with you. I will always cherish the warm camaraderie that we shared together tonight, and I wish you the very, very best. Thank you.