

**Remarks of the Honorable Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force
Air Force Association Air and Space Conference
September 17, 2012
As Prepared for Delivery**

Introduction

Chairman Schlitt, thank you for your kind introduction. Good morning, everyone. On behalf of the 690,000 Total Force Airmen I am privileged to represent, thank you for this opportunity to be with you. It's an honor to be in the company of some of the Nation's foremost airpower advocates, and we are grateful to AFA's members and leadership for once again hosting the annual Air and Space Conference.

This week, we celebrate the Air Force's 65th birthday. But as we recognize this major Air Force milestone, it is only fitting that we also pay tribute to AFA, which has been around even longer, coming into existence more than a year before the Air Force was established as an independent military Service. From its early days, AFA has been a continuing presence and an unwavering source of support for our Air Force missions and for generations of Airmen, and for that we thank you.

As the Nation's youngest and most innovative service, the Air Force has embraced the technology that continues to revolutionize our capabilities in air, space, and cyberspace. We owe an enormous debt to the ground-breaking visionaries and engineering pioneers who brought to

life the technology of flight, and to the professional strategists and tacticians who imagined the military possibilities of these new technologies and propelled the science, theory, and application forward.

But while our Service enjoys an unbreakable connection to state-of-the-art technology, it is simply a fact that everything we do depends on our people, the living engine of our Air Force. Today, more than ever, the Air Force can take pride that our Service culture promotes and benefits from the know-how, determination, and commitment of a diverse group of men and women who embody our Core Values – *Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do* – while pursuing adaptive and innovative solutions for our Nation’s security.

State of the Air Force

As I report this morning on the state of the Air Force, I want to highlight a few of our Service’s and our Airmen’s significant accomplishments and go over some of the key events that have shaped the Air Force over the last year.

Next, I want to discuss some priority issues that we are committed to addressing as an Air Force family, issues that include maintaining Air Force standards and living by our Core Values, and our efforts to determine the right mix between our Active duty and Reserve components.

Finally, I want to focus on the Air Force budget and our concerns about how the prospect of sequestration and ongoing budget uncertainty impact our ability to resource a ready and agile Air Force that will meet America's security needs today and in the years ahead.

Recent Air Force Accomplishments

Airmen are making essential contributions to America's national security and performing important missions every day. Although stretched by two decades of combat, humanitarian, and stability operations, the men and women of the United States Air Force continue to provide unmatched *Global Vigilance, Global Reach, and Global Power* across the full spectrum of operations.

Let there be no mistake – America's Airmen are in the fight. And over the course of the last year, our Airmen have played critical roles as the Air Force and our sister Services marked significant milestones, including the completion of military operations in Iraq, and the initial transition of military operations in Afghanistan to Afghan control.

With the completion of military operations in Iraq last December, our Airmen successfully transferred all airspace control to the Government of Iraq. Participating in what the Secretary of Defense called "one of the most complex logistical undertakings in United States military history," Airmen

played instrumental roles in the redeployment of combat forces from 46 bases in Iraq, including more than 86,000 coalition personnel and more than 87,000 vehicles. And, just as in the first moments of that long campaign, as the last vehicles crossed the border into Kuwait, Airmen were overhead to ensure their security and mission success.

During the past year in support of our mission in Afghanistan, Airmen have flown more than 162,000 total sorties, including almost 90,000 combat sorties, more than 22,000 close air support sorties, and 15,000 aerial refueling sorties. Our Airmen transported over 1.2 million warriors and delivered 385,000 tons of cargo, including combat airdrops to remote outposts located throughout Afghanistan. Airmen also directed the largest intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance armada in Air Force history, with more than 30,000 ISR sorties.

Our remarkable Airmen completed aeromedical evacuation of nearly 3,000 injured patients, enabling an over 95 percent patient survival rate, and combat search and rescue operations also safely recovered dozens of endangered personnel.

Of course, our Airmen also accomplished a lot of important work outside of the CENTCOM area of operations, making vital contributions to Air Force capabilities and mission readiness.

We have continued to strengthen unity of command in the nuclear enterprise with the realignment of nuclear munitions squadrons (MUNS) under Air Force Global Strike Command, a task Airmen completed ahead of schedule. We also successfully completed the first Guided Test Vehicle release for the Small Diameter Bomb (SDB) and completed multiple flight tests of the Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP).

The Air Force continued the F-22's return to flight, including extensive testing and analysis, and taking corrective actions to enhance flight safety and enable operational deployments to both CENTCOM and PACOM theaters of operation. The Air Force also established the first ever Battlefield Airmen Special Operations Wing (24 SOW), recognizing the continued importance of special operations forces to meeting current and future security threats.

This was another good year for National Security Space (NSS), as the Air Force completed eight successful launch campaigns with the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV), including the first Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) GEO satellite, the second Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) satellite, and the fourth Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) satellite. And, of course, this year we're celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Air Force Space Command.

As cyberspace continues to grow in importance, we have been working on and will soon release Air Force Cyber Vision 2025, to articulate our near-, mid-, and long-term science and technology strategy. This effort seeks to ensure that the Air Force has the best force operating with the best technology in the increasingly contested and critical cyber domain.

This year has also been a time of transition for the Air Force. In August, we bid farewell to the 19th Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General Norty Schwartz, and welcomed his successor, General Mark Welsh, another exceptional leader who will also undoubtedly lead our Airmen with distinction. General Larry Spencer returned from the Joint Staff as our new Vice Chief, Dr. Jamie Morin was appointed our Acting Undersecretary, and Lieutenant General James Jackson became Chief of the Air Force Reserve. The Air Force and our Nation are fortunate to benefit from such a strong leadership team, and we will need all of their talents as we address the challenges ahead.

Recent Events in the Air Force

Looking back since this conference convened last September, the Air Force and the Department of Defense have been affected by a number of significant events. This time last year, the Budget Control Act had been signed into law for about a month, so we were beginning to anticipate what

might need to be done to achieve \$487 billion in defense spending reductions over ten years.

January brought another landmark event with release of the new Defense Strategic Guidance, developed in concert with the President, the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs, and the Services. The Strategic Guidance supports our continued Air Force presence in the Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility, where approximately 60 percent of the Air Force's permanent overseas assets are currently stationed. This guidance also reinforces the importance of long-range strike and other advanced technologies, and supports concepts like Air-Sea Battle, which will develop integrated air and naval forces to counter anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) threats to the global commons. At the same time, Strategic Guidance also provides the basis for adjusting our forces and footprint in Europe; and the mix of our force structure based on changed warfighting assumptions.

The FY13 defense budget reflects both the priorities identified in the Defense Strategic Guidance and the fiscal requirements of the Budget Control Act, and represents the culmination of a number of very tough decisions. Considering today's dynamic strategic environment and confronting serious fiscal constraints, we determined the best course of

action for the Air Force is to trade size for quality. Becoming smaller will allow us to protect a high-quality and ready force, one that will continue to modernize and grow more capable in the future. We intend to be a superb force at any size, maintaining the agility, flexibility, and readiness to engage in a full range of contingencies and threats.

Air Force Culture and the Importance of Standards

Among the issues our leadership team and our entire Air Force family need to address is strengthening our Air Force culture and community. As I mentioned earlier, our success depends on our people, and we must ensure that our great Airmen have the tools, support, and the environment they need to succeed.

From an Air Force senior leadership perspective, we know that high operations tempos and budget constraints have put our Airmen and their families under intense pressure. But whatever the intensity of our Nation's demands, in war or in peace, we have an abiding obligation to this institution that we know and love as the United States Air Force, to develop and retain quality Airmen of character – like the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year whom we'll recognize tonight, and thousands who serve beside them -- who earn and deserve the trust placed in them by the American

people, who continue to express greater confidence in the military than in other national institutions.

We must constantly ask ourselves what more we can do to develop the quality Airmen we need, Airmen who uphold Air Force standards, embrace our culture, and whose conduct reflects our Core Values – *Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do.*

I want to call particular attention to two challenges that are extraordinarily troubling to all of us. First, as a military community which values each and every individual, the incidence of suicide is deeply disturbing. We must work at doing a better job of taking care of Airmen and finding ways to prevent suicide in our Air Force family. As you know, this problem is not unique to our Service, and it is not unique to the military, but we must do all we can to strengthen Airmen resiliency, and look out for our Wingmen in order to prevent these irreversible tragedies.

Another problem confronting our Air Force is sexual assault in the military. Lately, all of us in the Air Force family and citizens across the country have been shocked and troubled by allegations of professional and sexual misconduct by basic military training instructors at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. The allegations range from violations of Air Force policy that prohibits unprofessional relationships to crimes of sexual assault.

The misconduct alleged has no place in our Air Force culture and is especially egregious when it occurs in the basic military training environment. This behavior constitutes an abuse of power and an abuse of trust which cannot and will not be tolerated.

Courts-martial have been held at Lackland, Airmen have been convicted, and investigations continue. The Air Force has taken aggressive steps to assist the victims and increase protections for our Airmen in the training environment. I expect command-directed investigations to identify any systemic failures and to develop reform recommendations to help prevent such behavior. The Chief and I, along with the commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC), General Ed Rice, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Jim Roy, and other Air Force leaders will be addressing next steps in the immediate weeks and months ahead.

But we can't overlook the fact that if all of our Airmen followed the rules and lived by Air Force standards, these crimes and policy violations would never have taken place. We hold Airmen to high standards because that's what is expected of us, and what we expect of each other – to set the example; to treat people with dignity and respect; to act promptly

to right a wrong; to protect people under our charge; and to live by Air Force Core Values.

Leaders at every level have an obligation to adhere to and enforce Air Force standards, and to establish and maintain a unit climate and culture that reflects what we stand for. This is family business. Nobody will do this for us. We must do it for ourselves, for our Airmen, and for our Air Force. And I have every confidence that we will confront this challenge, and come out a stronger and better Air Force on the other side.

Active Component/Reserve Component Mix

Another matter affecting the Air Force family concerns our efforts to develop the right mix of active component and air reserve component (ARC) forces to meet our Nation's defense requirements. In order to ensure that our Airmen are prepared and ready to take action in complex missions that call for Joint, Interagency, and international cooperation, we must first sustain a strong Air Force team. Our efforts to leverage the Total Force – the powerful combination of Active Duty, Guard and Reserve, and civilian Airmen who serve together as teammates – are more important than ever.

In seeking the proper balance of Air Force capabilities across our core functions, and among competing needs for force structure, readiness, and modernization, we made a conscious choice in our budget to protect

readiness by trading size for quality, resulting in force structure reductions that would divest 286 aircraft and reduce personnel by approximately 9,900 over the next five years.

As you know, our proposals have met resistance in Congress, particularly with regard to reductions to the Air National Guard and Reserve. While our budget is strategically and analytically based and complies with the mandates of the Budget Control Act, this does not make it any easier to accept by those impacted by proposed reductions. This FY13 budget was really the first opportunity for policy makers to see in black and white what would have to be done to program \$487 billion in defense reductions. Simply put, in beginning to program for these reductions, it is impossible to avoid impacts to Airmen, various civilian and contractor workforces, and the communities they live in.

We will continue to work with Congress and the Adjutants General as we move through the budget process. Secretary Panetta has also initiated dialogue with the Council of Governors on how best to adjust the DoD budget development process and identify requirements for Defense Support to Civil Authorities.

And as we move forward to improve communication in our Active-ARC relationships, we should not lose sight of the excellent work we

continue to do together and the positive agenda we have put in place to strengthen Active-ARC integration. An agenda that includes: supporting the Air National Guard's plan to rebalance resources and improve readiness in some 39 units; increasing the number of Active-ARC unit associations from 100 to 115 and committing to robust use of associations as we field the F-35 and KC-46; normalizing reserve component mandays; the F-16 service life extension program, and more.

As we bridge our differences in the weeks and months ahead, I have no doubt we will strengthen this agenda, and build on the successful relationships developed over many years. But to properly organize, train, and equip the Total Force, we must consider our overall program and budget, as well as our strategy for the future, on a holistic basis. We can't manage the Total Air Force in 50 separate packets; and the success of our Total Force will remain dependent on the collective success of all three components. We must move forward together as one Air Force.

Budget Priorities and Sequestration

Because crafting the federal and DoD budgets is a continuous process, we know the days ahead will call for us to fine tune our strategic decisions as we follow through on FY13 and FY14 budget planning and execution. But as the defense budget works its way through Congress, the

Air Force will stand firm on our strategic choices: trading size to maintain a quality force, and staying focused on readiness and modernization.

At this stage, the threat of sequester overhangs all budget decisions across the federal government. We have less than 4 months before sequester goes into effect, a “meat-ax approach” which would drive additional reductions of approximately \$55 billion to FY13 defense accounts.

As we move closer to the January 2013 deadline, concern about the consequences of sequester continues to grow: this is not a responsible way to achieve deficit reduction. These additional and arbitrarily applied across-the-board cuts would leave the military without a workable strategy to counter global threats. Sequestration would drive an additional budget reduction of nearly 10 percent above the first phase of cuts imposed by the Budget Control Act, and reduce Air Force funding to FY04 levels.

Cuts to operations and maintenance would reduce flying hours and weapon systems sustainment, curtail training, and shrink the civilian workforce. Procurement cuts would force program reductions and restructuring in the investment portfolio.

Secretary Panetta and the DoD leadership team have broadly communicated our concerns about the dangers inherent in sequestration.

There is great uncertainty in today's security environment, but these matters at least are under our control and should be resolved. We need Congress to de-trigger the Budget Control Act's sequester provisions before the end of this year.

Conclusion

Yes, much has been accomplished in the past year in taking the fight to al Qaeda and its affiliates, in continuing to strengthen the nuclear enterprise, to build our RPA community, in returning the F-22 to flight, in transitioning new leadership, and so much more. And, of course, much work lies ahead of us, such as strengthening our cyber capabilities, beginning F-35 flight training, keeping the KC-46 tanker and long-range strike bomber on track, addressing some very important business within the Air Force family, and continuing to refine our programs and budgets to be consistent with our strategic choices.

Every day, our active duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian Airmen are adding bright new chapters to the Air Force story, combining Air, Space, and Cyber power in new ways that add to our nation's joint warfighting capabilities. And working together in common purpose as one Air Force, there is no challenge we cannot overcome.

Looking ahead, it seems very likely that we will finish this year confronting the same two major challenges with which we started: on the one hand, an unstable and dynamic international security environment with continuing – and in some cases increasing -- demands on our military; and on the other, an overhanging economic and fiscal crisis continuing to put downward pressure on the nation’s defense spending.

And as this tension grows, as the uncertainty continues, we need to ensure that we remain well-grounded in the foundations of our Air Force. The more uncertainty there is, the more budgetary churn ahead, the more important it is to come back to basics – to the Air Force family and the central role of Airmen in the fight. Because we know that whatever challenges lay ahead, our Airmen will see us through.

America enjoys many advantages, to include generation after generation of men and women who willingly volunteer to serve our country by wearing the Nation’s cloth. This priceless advantage allows us to remain confident that our innovative, dedicated, and professional Airmen will carry on the traditions and uphold the standards of our proud Air Force heritage.

Taking care of Airmen and their families is not only the right thing to do for our Airmen, it’s the smart thing to do for our Air Force.

You are the living engine of this Air Force...and at the core of this engine are Air Force values -- Integrity, Service, Excellence --- and from this engine we generate AIRPOWER -- Airpower that ensures the success of our joint team and protects the security of our country.

I also know that wherever the future leads us, we will always be able to count on AFA to continue to be a strong advocate for our Air Force, our Airmen, and their families. Thank you all for helping us build an Air Force that future Airmen will be proud to lead and serve, an Air Force ready to fly, fight, and win in air, space, and cyberspace, whenever the Nation calls. It is an honor to serve with you in the world's finest Air Force.

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