



## USAF Doctrine Update on Airmindedness

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What is “airmindedness”? While the term can be traced back to Brigadier General Billy Mitchell in 1921, it first appeared in Air Force doctrine in the 1992 version of Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, and was reintroduced in Air Force Doctrine Document 1 (AFDD 1) in 2011. Like the definition of airpower, airmindedness has evolved since its origins and refers today to the “particular expertise and a distinctive point of view” gained from the study of airpower, giving an airminded individual a “unique appreciation of airpower’s potential.” AFDD 1 includes some of the following ideas about airmindedness...

- Airmen normally think of airpower and the application of force from a functional rather than geographical perspective, unconstrained by operating areas. Targets are typically classified by the effect their attack would have on the adversary instead of their physical location.
- Airmen think beyond two dimensions, into the dimensions of the vertical all the way to geosynchronous orbit, and the dimension of time. Airpower can be projected from inside the US to anywhere on the globe in hours (for air operations) and even nanoseconds (for space and cyberspace operations).
- Thus, airmindedness enables Airmen to think and act at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war, simultaneously if called for.

The practical application of “airmindedness” results in the **Airman’s Perspective**, which can be summarized as follows.

- Control of the vertical dimension is generally a necessary precondition for control of the surface. The first mission of an air force to defeat or neutralize the enemy air forces so friendly operations can proceed unhindered, while one’s own forces and critical vulnerabilities remain safe from attack.
- However, airpower is an inherently strategic force that can be applied against any lawful target within an enemy’s diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and social structures. Airpower also has great strategic capability for non-lethal strategic influence as in humanitarian relief and building partnership activities and may be less culturally intrusive in many scenarios.
- Airpower results from the effective integration of capabilities, people, weapons, bases, logistics, and all supporting infrastructure. The choice of appropriate capabilities is a key aspect in the realization of airpower.
- Airpower’s inherent speed, range, and flexibility combine to make it one of the most versatile components of military power, able to exploit the principles of mass and maneuver simultaneously without natural lateral boundaries. The versatility of airpower derives not only from the inherent characteristics of air forces, but also from the manner in which they are organized and controlled.

As discussed in the Doctrine Advisory on Mission Command, airpower’s unique characteristics necessitate that it be applied according to the tenet of centralized control—by air-minded Airmen—and decentralized execution.

The full text of AFDD 1 can be accessed directly through the Doctrine tab on the AF Portal. For more information e-mail [LeMayCtr.weworkflow@maxwell.af.mil](mailto:LeMayCtr.weworkflow@maxwell.af.mil) or DSN 493-9575.

