



## **Air Force Enduring Contributions to National Defense**

**Thursday, 21 May 2009**



**General Norty Schwartz**



Thank you for that kind introduction. It is a pleasure to join you today at this important event. This forum provides an excellent opportunity to spend some time considering strategic issues central to National defense, and I think it is important to consider these issues as we prepare for the Quadrennial Defense Review. I appreciate each of you for working, thinking and writing about National defense strategy and the requisite ways and means. We benefit from the ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas, and I am grateful for the opportunity to join the conversation.

Today I would like to begin with some thoughts on the role your Air Force plays in defense of the Nation and some of the enduring elements of our strategic contribution. I consider these enduring aspects of our Service to be a kind of intellectual framework around which we should design our ways and means. For it seems any consideration of National defense strategy should theoretically begin with some definable end state in mind, followed by the thoughtful orchestration of the ways and means necessary for achieving those ends. Likewise our consideration of any Service's role in National defense should begin with the contribution expected of the Service and how that contribution integrates with the other Joint Services and our Interagency counterparts to support National strategic objectives.

Once we reason through the nature of the desired contributions and the process of integration, we can then turn our attention to the ways and means we require—and perhaps more importantly, those that we can afford. This intellectual process therefore demands that we begin with a clear conceptualization of exactly what the Air Force contributes to National defense, both historically and in today's strategic context. I think this understanding assists us greatly as we look to the future--not in some predictive sense pretending that we can say with any certainty what the Nation will demand of our Service. I agree with the words of the late Admiral J.C. Wylie, who wrote that “planning for certitude is the greatest of all military mistakes.” This he referred to as “...the hazard of the Maginot mentality, ashore, afloat, airborne or chairborne.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. Wylie, *Military Strategy*, Rutgers Univ. Press, 1967, p. 72



Instead, we should understand the enduring contributions our Service has made in concert with the others as we seek to anticipate the general ways our Service will likely be expected to contribute in the future. You will hear our leaders refer to this as “balance.” This suggests Services prepared and equipped to provide sets of capabilities designed to contribute to National defense, integrated together in ways that directly correspond with reality--in today’s fight and in future challenges--across the full spectrum. The ultimate aim of these integrated capabilities is to provide the Nation with a military instrument that builds legitimacy while exercising an appropriate level of control.

If we consider all of these notions carefully, we can look at the past, along with the present, to distill enduring Air Force contributions. These provide an excellent starting point in anticipating what America’s Air Force can and should contribute to our Nation’s defense in the future.

We should remember that the early days of airpower were marked by recognition of the speed, range and flexibility of air assets relative to their counterparts on the land and at sea. As the technology matured, those distinctive aspects became significant advantages in both civilian and military contexts. In the military context, airpower offered significant advantages in lines of communication, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Therefore, as in other domains, freedom of action in the air soon became a contest for control in strategically significant locations--until that freedom of action emerged as a *sine qua non* of military action—an essential condition for success in combat.

This does not suggest that airpower offered limitless strategic potential, or could win every war on its own, but the airpower advantage held conventional forces at risk as speed, range and flexibility translated to efficiency and lethality. That meant some degree of control in the air became necessary for any reasonable hope for success in conventional military contexts in other domains. We can look back, therefore, and see emerge the enduring contributions that the Air Force provides the Nation--and, by extension, sophisticated utilities relevant in the space and cyberspace domains as well.

The primary enduring contribution, therefore, is the Air Force’s ability to establish and maintain friendly freedom of action in the air. This air control both enables our ongoing use of the air domain and keeps friendly forces on the ground and at sea free



from enemy air attack. This contribution, however, is not an end in itself but rather the means that offers a variety of benefits. Some of the benefits are likewise enduring Air Force contributions that incorporate air, space and cyber capabilities applied across the spectrum of conflict:

The ability to conduct persistent global intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations;

The ability to deliver both kinetic and non-kinetic effects at global distances, serving to dissuade, deter or defeat adversary efforts;

The ability to command and control U.S. and Coalition air, space and cyber assets to achieve Combatant Commander objectives;

And the ability to assess Joint effects across the globe, reinforcing ongoing friendly freedom of action in any domain.

These are contributions your Air Force proudly makes today in accordance with the distinctive heritage of those Airmen who went before us, building on the foundation they established--even as we keep an eye on the horizon for new threats, new technologies and new concepts--so that future Airmen are equipped to contribute in similar, relevant fashion.

The necessary ways and means for doing so are up for consideration, both with the QDR and with each year's budget as we seek an even-handed strategy that is fiscally sound--in the interest of making the best use of the taxpayer's dollar. I think we are doing this effectively in the current budgetary process. Our corporate efforts are certainly focused on doing so, and I thank each and every one of you for all you have done and continue to do in the discussion on what the outcome should be.

As you do so, I ask you to consider our current plans for making these enduring contributions--integrated with Joint and Interagency capabilities--and at an acceptable cost for the Nation.

Think of the systems we now field, and those we continue to innovate, in order to deliver on this promise, as your Air Force makes compelling contributions in today's fight in defense of the Nation. A new generation of America's Airmen proudly delivers modern examples of these enduring aspects of airpower. From advanced F-22 and F-



35 aircraft that serve to secure freedom of action in the air and hold targets at risk on the surface, to current C-17, C-130, C-27 and refurbished C-5 airlifters able to deliver rapid global mobility for Joint force projection and support, coupled with advanced precision airdrop capability.

Think of the Airmen of the 50th Space Wing who recently won the Aldridge Trophy for their crucial space support to the Joint warfighter in today's fight, leveraging advanced space assets that integrate U.S. forces around the globe--providing combat effects from space for Joint expeditionary operations. Effects that also help ensure our revolutionary unmanned aircraft systems piloted from Creech Air Force Base provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities for Joint commanders in the field half-a-world away.

Think of the Airmen at 341st Space Wing at Malmstrom Air Force Base who recently won the Blanchard Trophy for Best Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Wing--a positive example of our reinvigorated nuclear operations effort that directly supports America's deterrence policy. Think of our Airmen who deliver advanced long-range strike capabilities with advanced systems able to range targets in highly non-permissive environments. Think of our truly global command and control capabilities designed to integrate Joint and Coalition efforts seamlessly for Combatant Commanders, connecting Air Force Joint Terminal Attack Controllers on the ground alongside their Joint teammates with world-class close air support aircraft covering their every move with precision weapons. This is an example of enduring effects tailored for irregular warfare to help build partnership capacity and U.S. national legitimacy around the world--along with our ongoing innovations to deal with emerging strategic threats in space and cyberspace--defending the ultimate high ground as well as the virtual realm upon which our forces have become so dependent.

Let there be no doubt, America's Air Force is "*All In*"--ready to contribute in any way necessary to win today's fight--even as we prepare for the challenges of tomorrow. For the ways and means with which we make our contributions are changing and will no doubt continue to do so. But our enduring contributions to National defense have achieved unprecedented success in several ways. Consider that no U.S. ground forces have been killed by an enemy aircraft attack in over 50 years. Consider that our global airlift capability rapidly delivers humanitarian assistance to those in need around the



world. Consider that our precision Global Positioning System today is both a convenient aid to the average American's commute and a sophisticated aid in avoiding civilian casualties in combat.

These examples are a continuation of the benefits of our enduring contributions to National defense, and there are many more. To advance these benefits, we must keep pace with a security environment whose rate of change is faster than ever before. We must innovate and adapt our ways and means to correspond with this turbulent unfolding reality so that our Joint partners can count on the Air Force to make these enduring contributions with precision and reliability. We will keep the promise, delivering Global Vigilance, Reach and Power for America. This is why events like this one are so important as we consider together the changing ways and means necessary to continue our distinctive heritage as the world's finest Air Force and the world's finest Joint Force. Thank you once again for allowing me to join you today. It is an honor to be here. It is our honor to serve with you. Thank you.