



Combat Air Forces
Airpower Symposium Keynote:
“Win Today and Prepare for Tomorrow”
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General Norty Schwartz

**As Prepared
for Delivery
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Introduction

Good morning, and thank you, General Fraser. It is my privilege to be a part of this symposium’s lineup of eminently qualified speakers. As always, the CAF Airpower Symposium is a golden opportunity to discover and debate new ideas and concepts, and to gain the insight of the impressive members of this audience who are working on some of our most pressing national security issues. I thank you all for your commitment to this, and for your daily professional efforts. Special thanks go to the staff for all of their hard work in putting this conference together.

Ladies and gentlemen, your commitment to serve at a critical time in which our Nation requires the talent and active engagement of her best and brightest is absolutely vital. We continue to face a period of great uncertainty and significant challenges. The security environment grows ever more complex, with many facets and shades of gray that can confound even the most capable and talented among us. Over two decades of sustained operations—particularly, the last nine years of necessarily focusing on irregular warfare—have changed, and continue to change, our cognitive model of conflict. And, although today, we are engaged more in counterinsurgency and irregular warfare, we still must be prepared to conceptualize and operate across the entire spectrum of conflict.

The Strategic Environment

As you all know well, the current strategic context continues to reveal challenges that are global in scope, diffused in nature, and intractable across the environment’s many dimensions. Over the last decade, our military has had to focus mostly on irregular and counterinsurgent warfare. And, for its part, the Air Force has dedicated itself to providing warfighting capabilities that are necessary for the current conflict—intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; remotely-piloted aircraft; and special operations, for example.



However, the need to remain vigilant for other possible threats across the full spectrum of conflict persists. So, while these capabilities, tailored for COIN and IW, are required to fulfill current combatant commander requirements, the future still holds the possibility of other forms of warfare, including high-end, larger-scale, higher-intensity operations. Our outlook also includes both continued ascendancy of near-peer rivals and the potential rise of fledgling powers; and thus, the need for effective deterrence endures. In fact, in the current context, military deterrence not only continues to be relevant; it is growing in importance, and evolving from its twentieth-century construct. As we did during the Cold War, we still must at once assure our friends and our allies, while dissuading our rivals and deterring our adversaries.

But, unlike more definitive forms of influence in which an adversary's intent and action would be met with a virtually certain, mutually assured, and essentially symmetric response—as we exercised during the twentieth century—today's geostrategic environment is far more nuanced, with unprecedented complexity, fluctuating relationships, and distributed diplomacy. The many elements that affect global security—military, legal, political, social, economic, financial, environmental, and others—as well as multidimensional and cross-cutting interests, all combine to create a paradoxical interdependency in which partnerships can be more strained, while adversarial relationships can feature unexpected convergence. Added to the mix are non-state and proxy actors—which, in addition to challenging our notion of Westphalian sovereignty and primacy of the nation-state—present, on a practical level, real difficulties in our diplomatic efforts. This complexity and tension calls for more flexible approaches and less rigid responses, often articulated by necessarily ambiguous policy pronouncements.

Full-Spectrum Capability

What this means, in part, is that military capabilities that underwrite our diplomatic efforts, our economic and financial leverage, and our information influence, must be that much more credible, to the extent that our will and intent may be interpreted to be less so. And, for this strategic credibility, we require, among other things, our combat professionals to be competent, our systems to be



reliable, and our capabilities to be versatile, which is why the intrinsic value and relevance of timely, precise, and lethal combat air power remains unassailable.

We cannot diminish—indeed, we do not wish to diminish—the rise of special operations, ISR, and other missions areas and capabilities. But, let’s be absolutely clear: the Combat Air Forces aren’t resting on their twentieth-century laurels either. Indeed, the CAF have made critical contributions and amassed impressive achievements in this first decade of conflict in the twenty-first century. Wherever there has been a need, and in whatever environment, the men and women of the CAF have proven themselves reliable and trustworthy partners on the Joint team, consistently underpinning our operations with tactical acumen, operational focus and flexibility, and strategic vision that have permeated throughout the rest of the Air Force. Whether it is the emphasis on perfection in every task, large or small; the aptitude and flexibility to innovate quickly and meet emerging demands; the unsparing scrutiny to improve current tactics, techniques, and procedures; or the ability to tell blunt and brutal truths about ourselves and our performance, the CAF consistently have given valuable cues to our Air Force, helped to lead our Air Force, and provided exceptional and essential combat power for the Joint and Coalition team.

CAF contributions in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, exemplify the immutable truth that control of the air is pivotal to success in modern warfare, whatever the setting. Even where the adversarial threat from above is negligible, friendly airpower constitutes a constant threat to hostile ground forces, ultimately enhancing Joint and Coalition freedom of action on the surface.

And, where our current capability falls short, CAF Airmen have responded with their hallmark innovation, creativity, and adaptability. When our previous weapons were not effective against fast-moving targets—a problem for which they were not originally designed—the CAF quickly tested and fielded the Laser JDAM, providing a quantum leap in essential capability. Additionally, to provide a more persistent “eye in the sky,” B-1s were fitted with targeting pods, providing a new capability that has been a significant advantage for U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan, and bad news for our adversaries. Finally, we are well into the transition of the A-10 into a



precision strike aircraft—the A-10C—integrated with the Tactical Air Control Parties that enable them. For all of their roughness, toughness, and rugged lack of polish, the Warthog and TACPs continue to burnish their reputations as one of the greatest close air support teams of all time. And, our Tactical Air Control Parties are making General McChrystal’s Tactical Directive a reality.

As our adversaries have become increasingly appreciative of the centrality of the air domain, they have increased their potential to contest our access to it. We consistently see nations—large and small—seeking advanced weapons systems such as fighter aircraft or missiles, that will narrow our access to this vital global common. Additionally, explosive growth of off-the-shelf computing power, combined with the proliferation of advanced technology and precision, has minimized the differences and narrowed the capability gap between military-grade technology and that which can be bought on the open market.

Here again, CAF expertise has contributed to our response, whether in developing tactics, techniques, and procedures to counter evolving surface-to-air or air-to-air threats, or in providing technical expertise to international efforts to stem the tide of proliferating advanced weaponry, missile and rocket technology, or other militarily-critical technologies and know-how. These efforts are essential to meeting the growing challenge to our access to the air common, which, if left unaddressed, ultimately threaten our broader national security interests.

An Enduring Commitment to the Combat Air Forces

With all of the uncertainty in our strategic environment, the necessity for the Air Force’s commitment to its Combat Air Forces, as well as to our preparedness to meet challenges and neutralize threats across the full spectrum, is apparent. Our substantial investments in current and future CAF platforms demonstrate our obligation to meet this strategic imperative, beginning with the F-35, which remains the future workhorse of our fighter fleet. Next year, we will dedicate over 5 percent of our total Air Force budget, and over 15 percent of our modernization budget, to this single program. Near the end of the Future Years Defense Program, we will allocate around \$8 billion to the F-35—a figure that will be over three times the size of the next largest program—for a total of more than \$32 billion across the FYDP.



Moreover, we continue to make substantial investments in our F-22 fleet. The \$1.3 billion that we will invest next year is nearly as much—approximately 95%—as our total investments in our MQ-9, MQ-1, and MC-12 fleets combined. Meanwhile, we continue to make investments in our legacy fighter and bomber fleets to extend their service lives and upgrade their capabilities, ensuring that these combat-proven systems remain viable until our fifth-generation force is largely in place.

Toward a persistent long-range strike capability, we are making initial investments in a family of systems that can answer the immediate need more readily than perhaps completely independent, more exquisite systems can. While many questions remain—manned or unmanned; nuclear or conventional only; and speed, range, and payload tradeoffs, to name a few—we remain committed to the ability of the Air Force and our Nation to hold virtually any target around the world at risk. To that end, we continue our work with OSD and the Combatant Commanders to define the requirements, and to help determine the composition of the family of systems that will best meet our Nation’s needs for long-range strike.

In addition to these financial outlays, we will continue to invest in the human capital of our CAF. Major pre-deployment exercises like RED FLAG and GREEN FLAG will remain the best in the world, providing timely, realistic, and relevant training to our aircrews on the latest tactics, techniques, and procedures. Additionally, we will ensure that the Weapons School continues its proud and internationally-recognized tradition of producing the world’s finest air, space, and cyber tacticians.

In short, our expectations of our CAF remain high; and, we’re counting on industry to be our partner in this endeavor. The progress that we’ve made in recapturing acquisition excellence postures us for the significant amount of work that remains to be done. We are resolute in ensuring responsible, transparent, and timely acquisition of our future weapon systems. Particularly, we are focusing a very critical, very careful eye on requirements, ensuring that they are realistic, achievable, and in line with our investment potential. For example, we are currently establishing initial requirements for a light-attack, armed reconnaissance aircraft to support our efforts to build partner capacity. We have calibrated our approach to ensure that what we provide does not exceed the need or the limited resources of



our partner nations, some of which have only a developing air force and relatively few resources for operations at their disposal.

Conclusion: Preparing for Tomorrow

All of this is part and parcel of the continued need to find balance. The same contextual forces over the last two decades that are redefining our mental model of conflict have also consumed our readiness and stressed our personnel. It is within this context that we have had to make some very difficult choices—decisions that Secretary Donley and I have not taken, or made, lightly. It is understandable that some have disagreed with our decision to undertake a restructuring of our fighter forces. However, given the many emerging demands on our force to increase our contribution during this time of war—to address the rise of mission areas to which our Air Force had to respond—we came to the conclusion that this re-posturing was necessary.

The outlook for our Air Force going forward is similar—possibly tougher, quite frankly. The nuance, complexity, and ambiguity that compose our current reality will continue to unfold in uncertain ways, revealing challenges that are still unforeseen, and requiring solutions that are as yet undeveloped. And, trillions of dollars of national debt will, with certainty, restrain defense spending, decreasing purchasing power for the foreseeable future. In all likelihood, you in this room—and other talented, thoughtful, and capable leaders throughout our Air Force and our Joint and Interagency team—will be the ones who must carry the mantle of combat airpower excellence into the second decade of the twenty-first century. And, as other challenges emerge, and warfighting requirements evolve to meet them, you again will be the ones who must rise to the occasion to find these delicate balances, and discover these elusive solutions.

So, it is incumbent on you—on all of us—to think strategically, and with an economic as well as a warfighting perspective. I thank you for your steadfast leadership and faithful service. With the caliber of the professionals who currently serve our Nation, I am assured of our Air Force's and Joint team's future, and I am proud to stand with each of you in common cause. Thank you.