



Air Force Association
Air and Space Conference Keynote Speech

Tuesday, 14 September 2010



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**As Prepared
for Delivery
~55 min.
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Introduction

Thank you for that kind introduction; and, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for that warm reception. Once again, it is my privilege to address this distinguished audience. And, as usual, Joe Sutter, Mike Dunn, and their team have outdone themselves with this spectacular conference. I trust that with all of the exhibits, presentations, and remarks by respected air, space, and cyber practitioners, you are all finding professional value in our annual gathering. In the time that I have, I hope to spur some thoughts, discussion, and debate, on how we—industry, academia, and government—can and must move forward together.

I would also like to thank Secretary Donley and Under Secretary Conaton. The Air Force is very fortunate to have their vision and steady leadership during this time of enormous strategic importance. Also, I want to thank the aerospace community for its valuable perspectives on national security and tremendous professional efforts on behalf of the American people. Its members exemplify the commitment, ingenuity, and service that made this country and its industrial base exceptional, and which remains very much in demand in this time of mounting challenges.

Meeting these challenges requires the collective energy and effort of our Nation's best and most committed, working together in united fashion to tackle a whole host of interdependent issues—diplomatic and military, political and legal, economic and financial, or energy and the environment. We will need great Americans, like Ron Henderson, who will very deservedly receive the AFA Citation of Honor for his leadership on Air Force Nuclear Posture Review and New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty follow-on efforts. Ron, Secretary Donley and I personally thank you, and congratulate you on this award.

Ladies and gentlemen, as an Air Force, we turned a corner last year, and raised our sights onto an agenda that's linked to a promising future. This year, we continue to look forward with confidence, conviction, and resolve. Our efforts will



no doubt require recalibration, and we might even break some glass along the way. But, as in the last few years, we will not shy away from difficult decisions. We will work through them and any uncomfortable repercussions, to do what is necessary to make our force more versatile and more ready to succeed.

As our Nation's most extensive, integrated, and reliable source of air, space, and cyber power, the United States Air Force remains an essential element in our Nation's ability to secure vital national interests, and it *will* find itself in an increasingly significant role in the 21st Century. Although we perhaps are not currently cast in the marquee roles that we fulfilled in previous decades, our leadership team and I are not threatened; because, for our entire existence, the air and space power that we provide has always been vital to our Nation's ability to influence geostrategic affairs. And, as we forge into the second decade of this new century, we will find our capabilities in even higher demand, and ourselves increasingly influential in shaping—at times even controlling—aspects of this environment. We can be certain of three things:

- first, Airmen will always be trusted and reliable counterparts to our Joint teammates;
- second, America depends on air, space, and cyber power for its asymmetric advantage, so, simply put, our Nation *will not* go to war without the United States Air Force; and,
- third, when called upon to fulfill the leading role—as was the case for operations such as ALLIED FORCE, or the opening salvo of DESERT STORM and ENDURING FREEDOM—the Air Force shall again see its flag on the marquee, and its centrality unquestioned.

In the meantime, we labor on—quietly, but with determination, and a longer, confident view. Indeed, we are focused, for we have very, very important duties to perform; and, our Joint and Coalition teammates are counting on us to deliver with precision and reliability.

Air Force Contributions to Prevailing in the Current Fight

Foremost, we will do what it takes to prevail in the current fight, while preventing and deterring future conflict, and preparing ourselves for armed hostilities, should deterrence fail. We continue to provide control of the air where



friendly forces operate, all but completely eliminating the threat of enemy attack from above. Our strategic and intra-theater airlift provides rapid and reliable transportation for the Nation, moving enormous quantities of personnel and materiel across vast distances, with unmatched responsiveness. And, as we have shifted our weight of effort from Iraq to Afghanistan, the centrality of our mobility Airmen's contributions is being demonstrated on a theater level as well. Their versatility is emphasized by the multiple roles that they fulfill—from worldwide strategic airlift and the more than three million tons of materiel that have been rapidly transported by air since the start of Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM; to life-saving and life-sustaining aeromedical evacuation of our wounded from hostile zones; to the nearly 17,500 tanker sorties in 2009 alone, that off-loaded over 160 million gallons of fuel to more than 82,000 aircraft in direct support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is a certainty that our Nation will continue to benefit from the enormous value of synergizing refuelers, tankers, bombers, and fighters in projecting global power.

Meanwhile, two of our Nation's three legs of the nuclear triad are maintained, operated, and secured by Airmen, with consistent emphasis on near-perfect performance, in a mission where there is no room for error. They ensure maximum safety, surety, precision, and reliability, every minute of every hour of every day. Above the atmosphere, our commitment to providing the Joint team with military space power is as high and lofty as the ultimate high ground itself. The recent launch of a Global Positioning System-IIF satellite reaffirms our ongoing commitment to provide precise navigation and timing for the world, even as we work to create necessary redundancies to prevail in GPS-degraded or -denied environments. And, the launch later this month of a Space-Based Surveillance System-Block 10 satellite, providing warfighters with a view of the battlespace from 200 to 23,000 miles altitude, will enhance our space situational awareness, discrimination, and threat attribution where our on-orbit systems operate.

I am also confident in our team of industry partners and Airmen who, despite the staggeringly complex calculations for getting a satellite to more than 22,000 miles above the earth's surface, are working diligently to deliver the latest Advanced



Extremely-High Frequency satellite to its operational orbit. This AEHF team, operating with enormous difficulty even on the best of days, now must also contend with less-than-optimal propulsion; but, I know—I *know*—that they are up to the task.

And, I am encouraged that our Advanced Wideband Global Satellite Communications System is online in time for us to continue our surge of remotely-piloted aircraft operations toward 50 combat air patrols by the end of 2011. By providing an order-of-magnitude increase in bandwidth, we are able to meet the voracious demand for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance information, and the capability to transmit near-real-time video. Operating both air-breathing and earth-orbiting systems, Airmen are central to the Nation's unparalleled and resilient capability, fulfilling the full range of situational awareness requirements—from decreasing strategic surprise for our national decision-makers, to reducing the guesswork for our ground-force teammates, of what is around the corner, over the wall, or through the door.

In theater, our “outside the wire” Airmen are shoulder-to-shoulder with our Joint and Coalition teammates, fulfilling timely Joint Expeditionary Taskings, and doing whatever it takes to win today's fight. Whether it is installation security by Airmen of the 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron at Bagram; or, in Afghanistan, security for convoys and Provincial Reconstruction Teams, nearly half of which are commanded by fellow Airmen; or close air support along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, by Joint Tactical Air Controllers from the 817th Expeditionary Air Support Operations Squadron, the noteworthy and tremendous efforts of our Airmen—including some non-traditional contributions—cannot be overstated, and deserve our recognition.

In short, Airmen provide needed agility and resiliency to the Joint team—resiliency that they and their families, on an individual level, possess in great abundance, even in the face of extreme hardship. However, nearly two decades of sustained conflict and frequent deployments have stressed our Airmen and their families. Mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and extended family members—they all provide unconditional love and support for those



of us in uniform, bringing deeply personal meaning to our daily professional efforts. We must therefore continue to evaluate our Airman and family support programs, and ensure that the spirit and intent behind the “Year of the Air Force Family” does not end with its official designation. We have the most solemn obligation to always care for our Airmen and their families—particularly, the families of those who make the ultimate sacrifice, like the five HH-60G crewmembers who were recently lost, on the 9th of June in Afghanistan: Captain David Wisniewski, First Lieutenant Joel Gentz, Technical Sergeant Michael Flores, Staff Sergeant David Smith, and Senior Airman Benjamin White.

And, we owe a heavy debt to our wounded warriors, such as Tech Sergeant Christopher Frost, who honors us with his presence today. In May of 2008, five NCAA coaches were visiting our deployed forces, and had the privilege of meeting Sergeant Frost. He had just lost his right leg to a 700-pound improvised explosive device that tragically killed one Soldier and injured two others in his vehicle. When the coaches asked about his prospects for the future, Sergeant Frost replied, “I’ve thought about it a lot, and I figure there are only two ways to go. I choose to move forward.”

These five words are succinctly but extremely instructive for *all* of us in the business of defending our country. “I choose—*I choose*—to move forward.” And move forward he has. Since then, Sergeant Frost has returned to duty, mentored other wounded warriors, and cycled 3,500 miles across America. He also met and married his beautiful bride, Cathy—herself a retired Army veteran, and deserving of our sincere gratitude for her service.

Recently, however, Chris learned that his incompletely healed left leg must now be removed as well. Certainly, this could be a huge setback, except for where the measure is the supremacy of a positive attitude. Ladies and gentlemen, Sergeant Frost’s yardstick is a *singularly* positive attitude. He quips that today, his artificial leg is actually his “good leg;” and, after he is fitted with another modern prosthesis, he looks forward to running again.

Sergeant Frost, you, like Ron Henderson, inspire us all. I look forward to running with you in the same way that we serve our country together: proudly,



resolutely, and side by side. In the meantime, I salute your indomitable resiliency, and ask that you please stand for well-deserved recognition.

Strategizing for the 21st Century: The Need for Comprehensive Balance

Sergeant Frost and so many others like him make us proud. They perform the mission that allows us to prevail now, and to be confident about our future, despite an ambiguous geostrategic environment. Amidst this uncertainty, allow me to provide some clarity on what will be airpower's and the Air Force's most important and enduring contributions in the remainder of the 21st Century. First is its central role in establishing control within and across the air, space, and cyber domains, and leveraging this control toward global effects in three distinct areas: precision attack, rapid mobility, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

Given limited resources, the mandate to achieve balance and versatility is, in my view, self-evident. We must prepare ourselves for a future of enormous complexity and ever-increasing rates of change, complicated by a fiscal environment of continued austerity. I recognize that the dimensions that comprise the geostrategic environment are themselves nothing new; however, the specific manifestations of their extensive interplay certainly are. Also unprecedented is the extraordinary rate of change, affording us very little time to comprehend events meaningfully before branches and sequels begin emerging to confound our initial observations. More and more actors—sometimes with adversarial, aggressive, or hostile intent—are entering the stage, empowered by advanced technology and astounding computing power that refreshes and advances every six months or so. All of this technology enables actors—even non-state entities—to influence the strategic environment that once was the exclusive domain of nation-states with substantial material resources.

For example, the technology that drives our Facebook and Twitter accounts has also empowered a private, non-state, and to date, unaccountable entity in releasing illegally-disclosed and damaging information over the Internet. So, what is revolutionizing our interconnectedness now also has the potential to threaten hard-



fought strategic gains from ongoing U.S., Coalition, and Afghan efforts—all unleashed in mere seconds by simple mouse clicks and keyboard strokes.

Technology has also narrowed the gap between off-the-shelf and military-grade capabilities, with the science behind precision, miniaturization, and mass production making widely-accessible items comparable to, if not on par with, controlled technology. As the strategic environment continues to evolve, the ongoing proliferation of advanced technology—and even events like Wikileaks—will be more spontaneous and difficult to track. And, we will be forced to constantly appraise our existing ways and means, to determine whether they are adequate for the current need and appropriate for the foreseeable future. In short, I have to ask: is the current approach of wholesale “need to share” sustainable as we go forward? I have my doubts.

Amidst all of this complexity and change, we will continue to contend with fiscal constraints and austerity. Defense budgets will continue to level or even decline, even as demands and expectations of our military increase. Last month, as we were informed of revised numbers for the annualized GDP rate for the second quarter—down from 2.4 to 1.6 percent—we were reminded of the uncertainty in the trajectory of our economic recovery. Along with trillion-dollar deficits, rising personnel costs, and decreased top-line purchasing power, we may well see this period of leanness extend further into the future, and find balance that much more elusive. As such, we will face even more difficult, potentially controversial choices. But, finding ways toward more disciplined spending and cost sharing is a burden that we *all* must bear—in both the public and private sectors.

The gravity of this situation reminds me of the old allegory of the scorpion and the frog that meet on the bank of a stream. The scorpion asks the frog to carry him on its back, across the stream. The frog, of course, requires assurances that he won't get stung. In turn, the scorpion replies that it would not be in his interest to sting the frog because he himself would also drown. The frog is satisfied with this reasoning, and together, they proceed from the bank. Midstream, however, the scorpion drives his stinger into the frog's back, and the frog immediately feels the



onset of paralysis. Gasping his last breath, the frog asks, “Why did you do that?” The scorpion replies, “I couldn’t help it; it’s in my nature.”

Now, I am not suggesting that any one of us is singly the scorpion. I am saying that sometimes, we *all* are, to the extent that we occasionally allow old habits to distract us from our common interest and shared responsibility in the defense of our country. The point is: if we allow our organizational interests and tendencies to prevail against our common cause, then we stand to cause harm to each other—and more insidiously, harm to our national security.

So, let’s take control, and get on board—together. This is a time of enormous challenge, and it calls for unity. As we hedge against an uncertain future, we cannot afford “business as usual.” I know this is hard, but the question is, to which drumbeat will we march?—the longer view of promise and likely reward, or the vagaries of the quarterly board report? You will hear this unifying theme of the need to achieve balance over and over again—not just from Secretary Donley yesterday, or from me today, but also from our Nation’s top leaders.

As we continue our efforts to balance, remember that the strength of our versatility, adaptability, and agility, is not just in our Air Force heritage; it’s in our Air Force DNA, and therefore in our future. We were “forged in fire”—always able, especially in austere times, to inspire the individual brilliance of our people, to leverage the collective genius of our organization, and to hone the cutting edge of technology in applying air, space, and cyber power to the greatest tactical, operational, and strategic advantage. This same confidence will guide us in helping the Joint team maximize its collective capability, and shaping the geostrategic environment in favor of America’s most vital interests.

Airpower Contributions to 21st Century International Security

We can also be confident, because, despite the strategic ambiguity, I expect a few features to endure. Great-power politics between global and regional powerbrokers and potential up-and-comers will continue to drive our strategic decisions. We also know that failed states and ungoverned spaces, cross-border disputes, and insurgencies will create regional volatility, with significant global implications. Radicalism and extremism will animate our military repertoire. And,



the continued spread of weapons of mass destruction and advanced weaponry will disrupt stability, placing our freedom of action in and through the global commons at risk.

Multi-Domain Control

Within this context, the Air Force will always be responsible for providing control of the air over our homeland and wherever friendly forces operate worldwide, minimizing the threat of enemy attack from above and thereby ensuring freedom of action in all warfighting domains. This is vital, for in modern warfare, control of the air is indispensable. Even where the adversarial air threat is minimal, friendly airpower constitutes an omnipresent menace to hostile surface forces. Therefore, our role in providing control of the air for the Nation is enduring.

However, as warfare itself has evolved into an endeavor that transcends distinct operating domains like air, space, and cyberspace, it is more accurate to characterize the requirement for control of operational mediums as multi- or cross-domain. Maneuvering freely and projecting power from any one of these domains is becoming ever more dependent on our ability to control one or more of the others. Therefore, our efforts to control the relevant warfighting domains—at times locally and temporarily—will continue to simultaneously focus on control of the air, preservation of our access to and initiative in space, and mission assurance to maintain our ability to operate in cyberspace. Comprising a truly global force, Airmen will always maintain this holistic perspective, because our Nation's ability to continue undertaking expeditionary power projection through the associated global commons depends on it.

Through our offensive counterair efforts and control of the electromagnetic spectrum for the last two decades, we have earned a relatively permissive air environment, with perhaps a few exceptions. Unfortunately, we are likely to face more sophisticated, more capable anti-access measures that are specifically designed to challenge our ability to project expeditionary power, consequently slowing the deployment of friendly forces into any particular theater. Additionally, we foresee increased adversary actions to oppose, limit, or even prevent our freedom of action within theaters of operations, as well as in virtual and electromagnetic



venues. As air defense and other anti-access–area-denial, or “A2-AD,” systems become more networked, accurate, and effective, we must act to confront and mitigate these significant challenges. Together, A2-AD efforts by potential adversaries can compel friendly forces either to accept higher risks, or be forced to operate disadvantaged from greater distances.

This means that as we rethink legacy force projection concepts in a cost-constrained environment, we cannot just pursue increasingly expensive advanced technologies. Air-Sea Battle is a very important concept by which we can, at more reasonable cost, ensure continued access to, and ability to operate in, these increasingly contested environments. By further integrating current capabilities of the U.S. Navy and Air Force—the Nation’s two globally-postured and strategically-oriented forces—we can employ U.S. warfighting capabilities through the air, sea, space, and cyber commons even more efficiently and more effectively. With this ability to establish compelling presence and influence strategic outcomes, our rivals are more likely dissuaded, our adversaries are more likely deterred, and our friends and allies are more likely assured of U.S. long-term commitment.

Therefore, Air-Sea Battle must develop into a permanent, well-institutionalized partnership, with organizational structure, operational concepts, and acquisition strategies that seek to maximize system commonalities and capabilities. Certainly, the enduring partnership and resultant close collaboration, integration, and interdependency that we seek have Admiral Roughead’s and my firm commitment. We seek a long-term endeavor with the strength and relevance to persist long beyond the tenures of the Sailors and Airmen who together, initially collaborated to conceive and develop the beginnings of this concept. Air-Sea Battle cannot be relegated to a mere *ad hoc*, temporary coalition, because it has far, far more potential than that. We must realize that potential.

Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power

In addition to controlling or influencing multiple warfighting domains, the Air Force leverages, on a global scale, the inherent speed, range, and flexibility of airpower, providing Joint and Coalition commanders with the full range of *rapid*, *precise*, and *tailored* air and space capabilities. The ability to see, get to, and create



effects virtually anywhere on earth—what we call *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power*—underwrites our Nation’s ability to secure its vital interests, from its diplomatic efforts, to its economic leverage, to its informational influence. Ultimately, *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power* underpins our Nation’s credible and effective deterrence of adversaries and assurance for partners.

Fundamental to this is a viable Long-Range Strike capability—an Air Force core contribution that combines multiple systems to provide the Nation with the capability to overcome area-denial measures, penetrate contested airspace and networks, and assure freedom of action to deliver air, space, and cyber power effects. Currently, the Air Force and Office of the Secretary of Defense are very carefully developing our concept of a “family of systems” that will continue to provide this capability, and ensure its maximum flexibility and longevity through a careful balance between simpler and more complex capabilities and platforms, including, we suggest, a penetrating bomber.

Certainly, a family of systems is not a new concept, as we have packaged capabilities throughout our history. However, rather than approaching this piecemeal, we want to take a comprehensive approach from the outset. This will allow us to achieve capabilities that complement one another, to provide asymmetric advantages through

- greater *versatility*, with integrated, lower-cost, and less-complex individual weapon systems that can be used across the full spectrum of conflict;
- through more *flexibility* among multiple missions such as strike, ISR, and airborne electronic attack, that can be used against a more diverse range of targets;
- through increased *survivability* with multiple systems, incorporating planned redundancies; and
- through more *adaptability over time* to meet the evolving threat environment and changing operational concepts and requirements.

Long-Range Strike will be an evolutionary approach to balance existing, evolving, and new capabilities, not a vast and prohibitively expensive multi-platform acquisition program. Think of Long-Range Strike as capitalizing on the block approach that we have used to field ever more capable aircraft, such as the F-15 and F-16. Think of the evolution of Long-Range Strike as akin to 20th-Century pre-



planning of B-52s and B-1s to be equipped with targeting pods, which now are supporting platoons in the rugged mountains of Afghanistan. Few probably envisioned this utility, but it is precisely what we are doing now, to remarkable effect. With Long-Range Strike, we are improving upon a capability that the Nation absolutely will continue to require and will find reason to employ over decades, with individual weapon systems that we can more readily afford, integrated against enemies and in places that we cannot yet precisely envision. Through balancing weapon carriage, new wave electronic warfare, penetrating ISR, and other capabilities—in and across a range of current and future platforms and subsystems—we can renew and extend our traditional Air Force competence: synchronizing diverse capabilities to deter or defeat complex and determined threats.

What all of this means—geostrategic ambiguity, Air-Sea Battle, and Long-Range Strike—lies in what the Air Force has always afforded to the Nation since World War II: the ability to see, rapidly get to, and bring effects to bear virtually anywhere on earth. Ultimately, *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power* helps to moderate provocative measures and temper aggressive behavior, thus incentivizing deliberation while discouraging escalation of a crisis.

The future will require at least the same—but probably even more—*Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power*, to keep our Nation and our partners safer than we would be, if our adversaries did not need to devote precious resources to counter our substantial capabilities. As long as there are actors that flout international norms, disrupt global order, and diminish our collective confidence, it will be essential for the United States Air Force to deliver the capabilities that stand to compel potential adversaries to pursue countermeasures at substantial effort and expense—for instance: modernizing air defenses, buying redundant systems, dispersing assets, or burying them ever deeper.

The Role of Airmen in All of Our Achievements

Certainly, we marvel at all of this capability around us; and without a doubt, we are proud of our cutting-edge heritage. But, while advanced technology underpins our progress, it is the noble efforts of our Airmen that inspire our



success. They are committed, creative, and focused; and collectively, Airmen comprise the most respected, most formidable air force that the world has ever known. Our combat air forces deliver tailored, timely, and precise effects better than any other in the business. With their commitment to excellence, their unsparing scrutiny of their own performance, and their aptitude to innovate quickly and meet emerging demands, CAF Airmen consistently provide valuable clues, through candor and genuine insight, on how to improve the family business. From quickly innovating, testing, and fielding the laser Joint Direct-Attack Munition for effectiveness against fast-moving targets; to transforming the A-10C into a precision strike aircraft, CAF Airmen are making leaps in full-spectrum capability.

Meanwhile, our space cadre maintains the Nation's initiative on the high frontier, ensuring that vital spaceborne capabilities not only are maintained, but continue to keep pace with 21st Century requirements—as with the next-generation Global Positioning System, order-of-magnitude leaps in communications bandwidth, and Space-Based Infrared Radar. And, our cyber warriors continue to assure access and action in that vital domain, providing the backbone of our ability to integrate, command, and control air and space forces, and to disseminate information at lightning-fast speed.

Our special operations and rescue communities exemplify the selflessness, industriousness, and courage that are interwoven into our Air Force ethos. The strength and value of their contributions to the Joint and Coalition teams are due more to the creativity and grit of these Airmen than of the exquisiteness of the technology that they employ. With 2,100 medical evacuation missions, 770 saves, 30 personnel recovery missions, and 1,800 assists in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2009, they ensured life-saving medical care within the so-called “golden hour.” Our Joint and Coalition teammates know of our Airmen's unique training and specifically-designed equipment, and that Air Force rescue is the only force that is routinely able to meet this standard, virtually no matter how brutal the conditions or contested the landing zone. Take it from our British partners, for example—and I quote: “Among the British combat soldiers in Afghanistan, PEDRO—[referring to our rescue Airmen]—is the only thing more popular than mail...PEDRO will come



anywhere, anytime, during any weather, and their helicopters have the bullet holes to prove it. The United States Air Force runs the only rescue service that will always be there, no matter what—no matter that there is no moon for flying, or [that] the dust is too heavy for everyone else, or [that] you are in a firefight...PEDRO rescues people every single day.”

Indeed, Airmen have always been the foundation of our strength—the lifeblood of our Service. Names like Billy Mitchell, Jimmy Doolittle, Hap Arnold, Bennie Schriever, and those of other aerospace visionaries and technological innovators, are joined on the distinguished slate of Air Force heroes by legendary pioneers like Benjamin Davis, Chappie James, Lee Archer, and Jeanne Holm, who pushed boundaries other than physical and technological, to help vanquish inequity in our institution. To them, we owe our gratitude for rich and meaningful diversity, albeit still incomplete—diversity that is a critical source of the strength and vitality of our Air Force. In bygone eras, factors such as race, creed, ethnicity, gender, and station were perhaps disqualifiers. Today, we know that these very same attributes bring vital different perspectives to bear on increasingly complex challenges. A diverse military environment is, in my mind, a military necessity, as it better prepares our people and our institution to engage in a dynamic, multi-faceted, and nuanced world. So, we must encourage the conditions for greater meaningful diversity—that which truly enhances our effectiveness.

Every day, thousands of Airmen operate around the world, in conditions that demand extraordinary courage, strength, and determination. When chaos abounds and temperatures run high, cooler heads must prevail. When fear and frustration distort our reasoning, sharper minds must refocus. And, when our natural instincts otherwise draw us toward self-preservation, our most courageous, like Chief Master Sergeant Dick Etchberger, instead run *toward* the hazard—run *into* harm’s way—disregarding their personal safety and risking their lives for their comrades. As a driver rifleman for a Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected, or “MRAP,” vehicle, Airman First Class Jeffrey Leigh exhibited all of these extraordinary characteristics in spades, during a vicious ambush by enemy forces against his convoy during an October 2009 mission in Afghanistan. Working through the pain



of his own injuries from an IED blast, and amidst withering AK-47 and automatic small-arms fire, Airman Leigh audaciously forged ahead on a 500-meter assault to locate the hostile attackers and secure a support-by-fire position. By enabling the advance of friendly follow-on forces, and providing protection for the casualty collection point, he was directly responsible for reversing the hostile force's momentum. And, in enabling the safe recovery of an Afghan government official, his tactical acumen directly influenced a strategic outcome: confidence-building with our Afghan partners. Through his heroic actions, Airman Leigh honors our timeless tradition of exceptional valor in humble service; and through his presence here today, he honors us as well. Airman Leigh, please stand and accept our sincere thanks.

Conclusion: A Promising Future

Our Service was forged out of a world war—fashioned and developed into the world's most formidable air force, and designed to help prevent the next major conflagration. Thousands of airmen lost their lives in the skies over Europe and the Pacific, to help restore order, and deliver a more enduring peace to an anxious, weary, and waiting world. In the years that followed, General Hap Arnold and his legendary team of audacious visionaries, bold pioneers, and able leaders achieved the dream of our early airpower advocates: an independent air service that leverages airpower to influence and shape the geostrategic environment—ultimately, to underwrite our national security.

The gravity of the current moment lacks comparable legendary luster—but only for the time being, and only because this chapter has not yet concluded. Certainly, it isn't because Airmen aren't making a difference in the current fight. Quite the contrary, Airmen are helping to enrich the narrative of “the next Greatest Generation”—*not* through lesser intentions to self-promote, but through motivations to humbly and reliably serve for love of country, and for fellow service members and family.

Indeed, the task before us is no less significant than it was in the post-World War II era, for even as we are committed to prevailing in the current protracted struggle, Airmen today must continue to forge the United States Air Force of



tomorrow. This responsibility bears on us even during austere times—*especially* during austere times—because while the imperative for change may be constrained by fiscal austerity, progress must be shaped by our continuing mandate to deter and prevail.

What we know about airpower is indisputable. Nearly 69 years ago, the attack against our naval base at Pearl Harbor was recorded in history as a day “which will live in infamy.” What is lesser known is that enemy aircraft first targeted our fighters on the ground, preventing them from gaining control of the air and challenging the offensive. Even then, there was universal recognition that control of the air was a prerequisite for freedom of action in the other domains. Today, the U.S. Air Force provides that air control, and continues to improve our space control and cyber initiative—all of which have become, and will continue to be, absolutely indispensable in modern warfare. But, we are operating in an environment that vastly differs from the context in which, and for which, our predecessors built our military services.

Fortunately, innovative thinking is free. It is not threatened by growing debts or shrinking budgets. Accordingly, history is replete with examples of the most brilliant creativity and inventiveness flourishing during lean times. It was during the rough economic times of the post-Vietnam War era that we began to conceptualize the Air Force and the military that astounded the world in Operation DESERT STORM. As we look forward, is there any reason—*any* reason—to believe that we lack either the capacity or the commitment to tap our ample creativity, and leverage our abundant talent, in meeting our greatest challenges? In positioning the next generation of proud Airmen for success? In shaping our Air Force and realizing our destiny? In astonishing the world yet again, in the event that our national leadership orders the U.S. Air Force to lead the way “downtown”?

I believe—I *know*—that we possess both the capacity to achieve, and the commitment to realize a bright future, even in the most tenuous of times. But, to travel this path, we must continue to be guided by an unshakeable faith in each other, and inspired by the fiercest belief in what we can achieve together. Our brightest days as the world’s most respected, most formidable air force still lie



ahead, and it is a future that we can shape; and shape it we will. This is a time for daring, and sharp vision, and bold leadership. Who among us—who among *you*—will say, “Send me”?

Peace remains our profession. We are not only one of the reasons why our Nation can prevail in war; we are one of the compelling reasons why our Nation can aspire to prevent war. But, should our national leadership direct our military to “go downtown,” you can be sure—you can be *absolutely certain*—that the United States Air Force will take America there.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to be your fellow Airman and partner in common cause, and I am grateful to all of you and your families, for your service and your sacrifice, and I am profoundly grateful for your unqualified response, with passion and commitment, to the clarion call: “Send me.”

Thank you.