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General Norty Schwartz

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Introduction

Thank you for that kind introduction. And, thanks to the National Press Club for hosting this very important event. It is my honor to address this audience for the first time. Thank you for the opportunity today to share a few thoughts, and hopefully to add to the public discussion in which you all play a very important part.

Geostrategic Complexity

Ladies and gentlemen: “Old international patterns are crumbling; old slogans are un instructive; old solutions are unavailing...The world has become interdependent in economics, in communications, in human aspiration.”¹ These are the words of a prominent statesman, Dr. Henry Kissinger. While it may not be surprising that he would share this sentiment, what is perhaps interesting is that he made this statement not recently, and not even in the last decade, but in 1975, as the U.S. Secretary of State, in a speech titled, “A New National Partnership.”

He was stating then, as it is now, that geostrategic complexity constantly evolves. It remakes itself, revealing new patterns of cooperation, competition, and conflict, while dismantling old paradigms that have guided our priorities and decisions. Therefore, although geostrategic interconnectedness is itself nothing new, the current manifestations that we face certainly are; and, they are presenting profoundly unfamiliar challenges.

The rub is, of course, we can only estimate the nature of future threats, the capabilities of potential adversaries, or the topography of future operating environments. We are not afforded with complete certitude in such things. And, as we continue to be faced with trillion-dollar deficits and compounding national debt, our purchasing power in the Department of Defense is likely to continue to diminish.

¹ “A New National Partnership,” speech by Henry A. Kissinger at Los Angeles, January 24, 1975.



This means that we cannot just commit substantial financial investments to prepare for an infinite variety of contingencies. For our Nation's military, this suggests that we must be more *flexible* across a wide but far from infinite range of contingencies, and more *versatile* and *efficient* in everything that we undertake.

The need for versatility means, among other things, that we must balance today's needs with tomorrow's challenges. The likelihood of threats and the severity of the consequences inform our decisions on how to prioritize, how to balance, and for what to prepare. We must carefully anticipate future requirements, and implement a selective and incremental approach of modernizing legacy capabilities, acquiring limited-capability systems as stopgaps where necessary, and procuring next-generation technologies where fiscally possible and responsible. The greater versatility that we require is enhanced broadly by the inherent speed, range, and flexibility of air and space power. With it, we are able to respond to different, multi-spectrum requirements. And, leveraging this advantage is the "family business" of the United States Air Force, to which I will return and elaborate a little bit later.

In addition to versatile means, we must also be more *efficient*—in our processes, our procedures, and our operations. An important strategy is to reduce overhead operating costs, create more savings, and shift them directly to force structure and modernization, and to warfighting needs. Being more efficient also requires more interaction and interdependence between U.S. government organizations, toward a whole-of-government approach, including Joint and Interagency, and executive and legislative branches.

For example, Admiral Roughead and I are fully committed to a more robust Navy–Air Force partnership—known as "Air-Sea Battle"—wherein we create efficiencies and collaboration to assure our Nation's continued ability to project expeditionary power. Air-Sea Battle will focus on three levels of Joint cooperation between the Nation's two strategically-oriented and globally-postured military services:

- *institutionally*, with dedicated organizational constructs that normalize Navy and Air Force collaboration;
- *conceptually*, with institutional agreement on how Navy and Air Force systems will integrate and operate together; and



- *materially*, with interoperability among current systems and integrated acquisition strategies for future Joint capabilities.

Air-Sea Battle is one promising way in which we will further increase our teamwork, enhance our Joint partnerships, and amplify our Joint effectiveness, making it that much more difficult for potential adversaries to keep pace with what is already the gold standard of inter-service cooperation and collaboration.

Role of the U.S. Air Force in the 21st Century Geostrategic Environment

Indeed, the United States Air Force is a proud Joint partner that will look to further enhance the ways in which it will make its enduring and central contributions. First and foremost, Airmen provide control of the air and space over our homeland and wherever friendly forces operate, and they ensure freedom of action in all the domains by minimizing the threat of enemy attack from above. In modern warfare, such control, even when localized, is a prerequisite for success. And, because freedom of action in any warfighting domain increasingly depends upon control of one or more of the others, our efforts increasingly include some measure of interrelated control of multiple domains.

Second, the Air Force leverages this air and space control, as well as mission assurance in cyberspace, to bring desired effects to bear on the most serious challenges to our vital interests. Airmen provide *Global Vigilance, Reach, and Power*—the ability to see, rapidly get to, and create desired effects almost anywhere on the planet—through air and space power’s speed, range, versatility, and flexibility, which are inherent, unmatched, and undisputed. The Air Force, not uniquely but substantially, translates these inherent characteristics into rapid, precise, and tailored warfighting effects, as required by our combatant commanders around the world.

And, as we continue to do everything possible to prevail in today’s fight, we are also vigilant for emerging threats, and anticipating associated requirements. The Air Force will therefore continue to identify the ways in which air, space, and cyber power can further bolster the collective capability of the Joint team. Most recently, we have seen a rise in Air Force special operations; high-end personnel rescue; Joint



tactical air control; remotely-piloted systems; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance from both air-breathing and earth-orbiting systems. We are very proud of our Airmen who are being trained specifically for these roles, as well as non-traditional duties such as convoy operations, installation security, and reconstruction of war-torn regions.

But, we also continue to provide our core contributions in precision strike; tanker and airlift support; space-borne communications, early warning, and precision navigation and timing; and so much more. And, as we remain vigilant and ready for threats of today's security environment, we are cognizant of the possibility of higher-end, larger-scale conflict; for as "near-peer" competitors and other potential up-and-coming adversaries increase their capabilities, they may seek to challenge us in ways that will require a somewhat different mix of Air Force capabilities in response, such as what we provided in Operation ALLIED FORCE.

We would hope that this can be averted, but in the meantime, our guiding principle will continue to be to stand with our Joint teammates and Coalition partners, and to deliver the fullest possible range of air and space power effects. If we were able to look forward to budgetary growth or lesser urgency for more disciplined spending, our task of accommodating this uncertain future would be much easier, as we could just invest more money to ensure a wider range of capabilities and greater operational flexibility. But, the reality is, defense budgets will likely continue to flatten, even as we contend with rising personnel, operations, sustainment, and acquisition costs. Even with declining purchasing power, we still will have to do more with the same or fewer resources, squeezing every last bit of capability from our current and future weapon systems. To do this, we will continue to be innovative with our tactics, techniques, and procedures in employing our various capabilities in an ever-widening variety of settings.

Conclusion

In short, we must be more efficient, versatile, and flexible with both the ways and the means at our disposal, to create the desired, tailored, and decisive air and space power effects that are the trademark of our Air Force. We are proud to make these vital contributions to the collective strength of the U.S. military, which allows



our Nation not only to be prepared for future contingencies, but to aspire to prevent future war. Our efforts to prevail in conflict have the accompanying effect of enhancing our deterrence posture and our ability to disincentivize the escalation of crisis into armed conflict, and armed conflict into larger-scale war.

As we look to the future, control of the air and space; holding at risk practically any target on the Earth; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; airlift; and command and control of air and space capabilities will remain the Air Force's most fundamental, most enduring core contributions. And, our Airmen and fellow service members, bolstered by the unconditional support of our family members, will help to ensure that the plentiful blessings of liberty and opportunity shall remain a birthright for future generations of Americans.

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today, and I now look forward to your questions. Thank you.