

## Strategic Vision and Core Competencies

Remarks by Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman  
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It's great to be back here in Los Angeles, and have the opportunity to report to the Air Force stockholders on the West Coast.

As you know, we've just kicked off our celebration of the Air Force's 50th anniversary. This commemoration honors all members of our Air Force team—active duty, civilians, Guard and Reserve, retirees and our partners in the aerospace industry—for helping make the United States Air Force the world's most respected air and space force. I hope that you will join with us at some of the many events taking place around the country as we celebrate this special occasion.

As we look back with pride, we are also preparing the Air Force for the future. Last week at the Corona conference [meeting of four-star generals], senior Air Force leaders met to develop a strategic vision for the first quarter of the 21st century.

During our discussions, we addressed a wide range of issues—from alternative futures, emerging threats, national security objectives, Joint Vision 2010, and air and space capabilities to officer, enlisted and civilian career paths for the future. We spent a great deal of the time talking about people, values and the sense of community and professionalism in the Air Force because these values will be vitally important in the force of the future.

While these meetings were vital and well intended, I recognize that all this activity generates some anticipation and, perhaps even nervousness, both within the Air Force

total force team and our partners in the aerospace industry. But in my view, it was crucial that we make this effort. The world has changed too much for us to stay static, and the Air Force has a responsibility to change in order to meet the needs of the nation.

We've already made some dramatic changes from our Cold War posture. When the Berlin Wall came down and the national security strategy changed, the Air Force leadership responded by focusing on how we could better support the nation in the post-Cold War environment. The result was the Air Force's strategic architecture for the 1990s, "Global Reach-Global Power." We were the first of the services to produce a post-Cold War vision. This document drove the way we restructured and reorganized the Air Force, and it shaped our modernization priorities.

It has been a good strategic vision for the Air Force and for the nation, but we began building it seven years ago. We know a lot more about the post-Cold War world now than we did when "Global Reach-Global Power" was written. In many ways, its view of the world was right on target. In other ways, it was not so good.

Recognizing this, about 18 months ago we decided it was time for us to look into the future and develop a follow-on vision to move the Air Force into the 21st century, prepared to support the nation's priorities.

Our national security strategy of engagement and enlargement calls for our nation to be engaged around the world with the objective of enlarging the family of democratic nations. This strategy depends on maintaining a strong defense and ensuring that America's military forces are ready to deter, fight and win wars. At the same time, we are reducing the number of forward-deployed forces and putting increased emphasis on expeditionary, mobile forces that can deploy quickly. Airpower is well suited to meet these requirements and offers the nation a broad range of capabilities to support its security strategy.

At the same time, we recognize the Air Force will be part of the joint team. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs recently published "Joint Vision 2010," his vision for joint warfighting in the future. The four operational concepts behind this vision—dominant maneuver, precision engagement, full dimensional protection and focused logistics—

provide a way to think about joint warfare in the future. This is a good vision, one that depends on and highlights the contributions of airpower. The Air Force is already developing many of the systems required to support Joint Vision 2010. As we looked into the future at Corona, we used these operational concepts to help guide our thinking about the Air Force's strategic vision.

This vision will support the national strategy and the joint vision by recognizing the reality that in the first quarter of the 21st century, it will become possible to find, fix or track and target anything that moves on the surface of the earth. This development will bring a new understanding to what air and space forces mean for this nation and others.

Our vision is based on the premise that only air and space power provide the nation the ability to find and hit strategic centers of gravity directly as well as the ability to operate at operational and tactical levels of war.

We are calling the product we developed at the Corona conference "Into the 21st Century: A Strategic Vision for the Air Force." It sets out the basic guidelines and principles for preparing our service for the first quarter of the 21st century. In addition, it helps us communicate, both to the people in the Air Force and to external groups, how the Air Force contributes to the nation's priorities. Secretary [of the Air Force Sheila E.] Widnall and I are committed to sharing what we did at Corona. So let me tell you a little bit about our vision and its underlying principles and goals.

Our strategic vision captures the global nature of the United States Air Force. We operate in a medium that encompasses and touches 100 percent of the earth's surface and population. This provides air and space forces with unparalleled access and global awareness. This is not a new idea. As Gen. Carl Spaatz, the first Air Force chief of staff, said 50 years ago, "Airpower is global ... in its nature and its application."

The global nature of modern air and space power also incorporates the speed with which we project power—the ability to respond quickly to a crisis. In other words, it is the combination of speed, range, precision and lethality that makes airpower such a powerful force.

All of these characteristics make air and space power a formidable force for the nation, one capable of dominating enemy operations in all dimensions of warfare—land, sea, air and in the future, space—across a spectrum of time and conflict.

This is not to say that that airpower will do everything. Warfare both now and in the future will be joint warfare. But as the nation's air and space experts, airmen must understand the totality and potential of airpower in order to provide the United States leadership the full range of options needed to protect and defend our nation and its interests around the world.

Our new strategic vision will also help us communicate the unique capabilities airpower provides the nation through the ability to exploit air and space and gain powerful advantages in time, mass, position and awareness.

Part of the problem in the past was that while we had developed a clear vision of what airpower could do, it was never easy to describe and analyze how airpower "acts." In 1956, Gen. Omar Bradley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, offered this insightful and compelling assessment of airpower when he said: "Airpower has become predominant ... both as a deterrent to war, and in the eventuality of war, as the devastating force to destroy an enemy's potential and fatally undermining his will to wage war."

But such vision and understanding have been rare. Acknowledging the problem, Winston Churchill remarked, "Airpower is the most difficult of all forms of military force to measure, or even to express in precise terms."

I applaud the decision to make core competencies the focus of this symposium as a way to deepen our understanding of airpower.

On the academic level, the Air Force considers a core competency to be the combination of professional knowledge, specific airpower expertise and technological capabilities that produce superior military outcomes. A particular core competency may or may not be unique to a service. What distinguishes the Air Force's core competencies is the speed, flexibility and global range of our forces along with the strategic perspective of airmen.

Said another way, core competencies are one means of expressing our unique form of military power and understanding how the various aspects fit together. They should help us focus on our strengths and guide us into the future.

The long-range planning effort by senior Air Force leaders has convinced us we need to make some adjustments to our core competencies, and after much discussion we arrived at the following:

Air and space superiority;

Global attack;

Rapid global mobility;

Precision engagement;

Information superiority; and

Agile combat generation.

In keeping with our nature and focus as a global force capable of employment at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war, and in view of the continued integration of capabilities in space, we've combined air and space superiority into one core competency. This change reflects the transition to an air and space force and the need to control the entire vertical dimension—the domain of air and space power.

Control over the air and space environment assures a fundamental benefit to American forces: preventing adversaries from interfering with our operations and allowing our forces freedom of action. In short, air and space superiority provide freedom from attack and freedom to attack.

Gaining control of the air over both friendly and enemy territory has been one of the constants of warfare in the last half of the 20th century and will continue to be so in the future. Simply put, air and space superiority is the key to winning wars with the fewest losses.

Accomplishing these tasks quickly and efficiently will allow us to gain air dominance—the ability to completely dominate an adversary’s airspace. Air dominance allows friendly forces to take away the enemy’s sanctuaries and strike his forces wherever they may be—the ultimate in superiority.

A core competency we’ve added is one we elected to call global attack. There are two aspects to this core competency. The primary aspect of global attack is the ability of the Air Force to find and attack targets anywhere on the globe using the synergy generated by air and space assets to operate at the strategic level of war.

The other aspect of global attack is the expeditionary nature of our force. We have demonstrated this capability through a CONUS [continental United States]-based air expeditionary force. As the United States continues to reduce fixed, overseas bases, the Air Force will use expeditionary forces to support the nation’s priorities. These will consist of a rapidly deployable force tailored to the needs of the theater commander. Depending on the situation, that force can include both lethal and nonlethal elements. This expeditionary capability will be key to rapidly providing tailored air and space capabilities to the regional CinCs [commanders in chief] in the future.

Because our forces will need to move quickly and lightly, we reaffirmed rapid global mobility as a core competency that will remain critical into the first quarter of the 21st century.

Rapid global mobility provides the ability to bring forces forward for combat operations, peacekeeping or humanitarian efforts. As we have seen since the end of the Cold War, we can expect our mobility forces to be on call and in use every day ... as far into the future as we can imagine.

We call the ability to apply selective force against specific targets to achieve decisive effects precision engagement. This Air Force capability is at the heart of the operational concept of precision engagement spelled out in Joint Vision 2010 and has a long legacy for airmen. Its origins date back to the 1930s at the Air Corps Tactical School, and it’s a capability that has grown in reality from then until the present.

For many years, our vision of what precision employment could accomplish outpaced our technological capabilities, but we have made great strides in this area. Today and in the future, our forces will be more precise and more effective, at day or night, in good weather or bad, whether delivering food or lethal ordnance

This ability will allow airpower, with its strategic perspective and ability to attack the enemy with precision, to sharpen the usually blunt instrument of military force for national leaders. In the 21st century, precision engagement will bring together the global awareness of objectives and priorities with the ability of air and space forces to apply overwhelming power.

To achieve success in the 21st century, we will rely more and more on our ability to use and protect our information technology. The core competency of information superiority is not the sole domain of the Air Force. Indeed, all of the services must develop their own capabilities in this area. But as a service, we have moved out to build impressive offensive and defensive information capabilities.

As the executive agent for battle management/command and control, the Air Force has the charter to be the integrators for the joint force. This ranges from providing the joint force commander of the 21st century with a picture of the entire battlespace—that includes air, space and surface forces—to facilitating real-time control and execution of air and space missions.

Among the tools we will exploit are unmanned aerial vehicles for surveillance and communications missions. In the future, we'll employ them for the suppression of enemy air defenses and see them evolve into attack vehicles.

Additionally, information superiority must include aggressive efforts at defending our increasingly information intensive capabilities from enemy attack.

Air and space power also rely on a myriad of combat support activities that occur on the ground. This vital part of what the Air Force provides the nation is highlighted by a core competency called agile combat generation. The concept of focused logistics in Joint Vision 2010 was derived from the pioneering work done in the Air Force with

"lean logistics." Agile combat generation reaches outside of pure logistics to include functions like security police, engineering and other combat support functions.

We adopted this core competency at Corona with the view of making our forces more expeditionary in nature, so that we will continue to be the instrument of choice when the national leaders want to engage quickly and decisively, anywhere on the globe. We must never allow ourselves to get in the embarrassing position of having to rely on a contractor (or other less agile forces) to put combat forces in the field. Our force balance and force mix will be important.

These core competencies—air and space superiority, global attack, rapid global mobility, precision engagement, information superiority and agile combat generation—provide one construct for thinking about air and space power. But they are not written in stone. They will change over time to reflect advances in technological capabilities, expertise and varying political realities.

What must be understood and what must endure is the vision of air and space power as the decisive force for the 21st century.

The United States Air Force is focused on providing the nation the ability to exploit and control the air and space environment. We will continue to field the forces that can operate in air and space with the demonstrated capability to dominate operations in all mediums—land, sea, air and space. This vision will serve the nation well as we enter the 21st century and search for new ways to deter, fight and win our nation's wars.