

Our Challenge: Transforming and Modernizing the Air Force

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Remarks at the 2006 Air Force Defense Strategy and Transformation Seminar Series, Washington, April 4, 2006

Congressman (Sam) Johnson, thank you. Congresswoman, thank you for spending time with us this morning. Congressman Johnson, these folks in here don't know that you were the Air Division Commander at Holloman (AFB, N.M.) when a lot of us were captains in the 49th Wing at Holloman. So when we all look at you we see you not only as a Congressman, but a great American, a great hero, and a previous boss. I don't know how many times we spent in staff meetings as a captain in the back row working issues at Holloman and the great 49th Wing that's still out there.

Barry, thanks for hosting these things and thanks for setting them up. And for all of you, it's a treat to be here this morning to talk a little bit about a joint team and talk a little bit about the Department that's transforming itself in a way that I would suggest to you will be much better in the application of force in a joint setting, alongside the great soldiers and sailors and Marines and Coast Guardsmen that are out there today in harm's way.

I want to chat with you a little bit about a couple of topics, but the first thing is the admission that this country is at war. I think it's useful to say that at every opportunity because we are at war. We've got our folks out there in Afghanistan and Iraq and across the world, doing things that we've asked them to do, and they are truly in harm's way. The chiefs spend a lot of time in the tank, working these issues, and there's one thing that is a given for all of us and that is this is a joint endeavor, a joint team, and we're all in this together.

What I want to talk to you about this morning is a little bit about how I see an air and space contribution to the long war on terrorism, and how I see air and space as a contributor to this joint team. But – the predicate to this discussion is we are at war. And I know you know this, but it's useful to remind ourselves, we've been fighting in Afghanistan longer than we fought in World War II. We're 11 months now beyond the calendar limit of World War II in the combat operations in Afghanistan. So what does that mean for us? What does that mean for us as an air and space force?

Well, the three priorities that Secretary Wynne and I have laid out as our beacon to transform and modernize the Air Force begin with this business of fighting the Global War on Terrorism, and doing it in a much more effective and a much more efficient and a much more joint manner.

The soul of an Air Force, as opposed to an Army or a Navy or a Marine Corps or a Coast Guard, the soul of an Air Force is range and payload and access. What an Air Force does for a country and what an Air Force does for the joint team is the ability to locate or find targets anywhere on the surface of the earth, to be able to range those activities or those targets, to be able to surveil them or strike them, to be able to command and control those activities and to be able to assess the effect.

From the very beginning of powered flight, I think it goes without saying that an Air Force – now an air and space force – is not limited by coastlines or river crossings or mountains or dust storms or weather. An Air Force's contribution is range and payload and access and persistence. And that's what you see now as it plays out in Afghanistan and Iraq alongside our joint team. What you see everyday is about 300 combat sorties, close air support, intra-theater airlift, refueling, surveillance and reconnaissance missions, lots of intra-theater airlift to keep trucks off of roads.

In fact, this morning – yesterday and into this morning, we're able to continue to fly inside C-130s enough equipment and enough supplies to effectively take about 350 or 400 trucks off of roads to avoid IEDs. So our joint contribution to this IED business is first just not have the truck on the road and not have our people at risk. Close air support is one of the primary missions of an Air Force and alongside our Army.

But this relationship with the U. S. Army goes back to our beginning for sure. And this tie to surface activities with divisions with historic names like 82nd, the Big Red One, the 101st, the 4th ID, the 3rd, these are big deals for all of us that had grown up in a world of Air Force and Army interoperability and operations together. And when you see Army vehicles and you see Army activities on TV and in the news media, you know that over the top of this are living several layers of A-10s, F-15s, F-16s, B-52s, reconnaissance vehicles of a variety of kinds, refueling airplanes, not to mention C-17s and C-130s.

But I'll tell you – and we were chatting about this before breakfast – one of the challenges we've got in this Air Force is we make this look so easy, that people believe that it's easy. That's a challenge for us. By culture and by tradition, just like the Army, we normally don't whine about any of this. We don't complain about any of this. We just execute the task. It's not easy to fly these bomber missions from a (deployed location in Southwest Asia) to up over Kandahar and Kabul in Afghanistan. And that distance, to do a quick geography run on you here, from (deployed location in Southwest Asia) to targets around Kabul is the same distance from Tampa, Fla., to around Juneau, Alaska. So everyday, our folks are flying B-52s out of Florida and bombing Alaska, and they make this look easy. Attendant with that are the requirements for tankers. Attendant with that is the requirement for reliable tankers, to be able to move the bombers those distances. Attendant with that also in a joint setting is to be able to pick our people up with combat search and rescue assets, regardless of who those folks are, whether it's a Navy crew, an Army crew or a Marine crew, to be able to do this at range relative to the operations that we've got in Afghanistan and Iraq.

While we're doing this – Afghanistan and Iraq and Korea and Southeast Asia – we have about 52 percent of the Air Force on any one given day that is committed to combatant commanders. We have about 113,000 folks committed to USNORTHCOM (U. S. Northern Command) and USTRANSCOM (U. S. Transportation Command) everyday in missile fields, sitting in missile silos, protecting missile fields, operating spacecraft for Air Force Space Command across Montana, the Dakotas, Wyoming, Colorado. So 113,000 Airmen on any given day are on watch inside the continental United States tasked to a combatant commander. So when you think about EUCOM (European Command), PACOM (Pacific Command), CENTCOM (Central Command), NORTHCOM, and STRATCOM (Strategic Command), well over half of the Air Force on any given day is committed to those operations.

And this business is not easy. From U.S. Space Command, when you think about the opportunities for failure at launch of spacecraft and the success rates we've had launching out of Vandenberg (AFB, Calif.) and the Cape (Canaveral, Fla.), this is real rocket science. And so those guys out there make this also look very easy. I'll remind you that the last Titan-4 launch out of Vandenberg was a 2.5 million pound rocket with a multiple billion dollar payload, and the Space Command folks put that in orbit within .01 degrees of orbital center line without a hiccup – 2.5 million pounds that launch.

And it's also not easy because aviation is inherently dangerous. Yesterday morning at about 6:45, we lost a C-5 out of Dover (AFB, Del.) with a U.S. Air Force Reserve crew, 17 people on board. Everybody's alive this morning. We had some surgery and some work on three people yesterday. The airplane at takeoff weighed 700,000 pounds -- 360,000 pounds of fuel on board that airplane. It was a channel mission from Dover to Ramstein. Airborne had an engine problem.

Kids brought it back around, got it within reasonable distance of the runway, and we'll figure out what happened after that. But when you think about 700,000 pounds at takeoff with 360,000 pounds of jet fuel on board that airplane, this is hard work. This is very hard work.

We're in the business also in this transformational stuff of moving an Air Force – an air and space force – into a much better joint team as we think about fighting the Global War on Terrorism. I'll tell you we had a session Friday with the four-stars, and we're moving out on some decisions that I think you would all agree are useful for this joint team. We've streamlined our warfighting headquarters to be able to present forces in a much more robust and much more efficient manner. We've married our numbered air forces with these warfighting headquarters in the model that looks a whole lot like 9th Air Force in CENTAF, 7th Air Force in U.S. Forces Korea, across the entire Air Force. So for PACAF and USAFE, for contributions to USNORTHCOM and USSTRATCOM, our numbered air forces now, or our warfighting headquarters that will present forces in peacetime, will be responsible for units that in wartime will be in command of forces as assigned or apportioned to the combatant commanders. So this streamlines the command and control activity and makes it look a whole lot like what CENTAF does for CENTCOM, standardizes that across the Air Force.

The other thing that we've done is formalize the A-staff. In the joint world, we have a J-Staff. We have a J-Staff, we have a G-staff with the Army, we have an N-staff with the Navy, and an A-staff with the Air Force. And to standardize and streamline these staffs so they look a whole lot like the joint world, you've seen the Navy and the Air Force and the Army move toward more of that staff function, so as we streamline the warfighting headquarters and streamline the A-staff function, now we're parallel with everything that goes on inside the joint command and control business.

In a very simplistic manner, what I've asked General (Stephen) Wood and General (Roger) Brady to do, the A8 and the A1, is make the phone books look the same. So if you pick up a phone book at Ramstein, the phone book looks a lot like the phone book at Randolph (AFB, Texas) or the phone book at Hickam (AFB, Hawaii) or the phone book for the Air Staff. So if you can't figure out who an A1 is or an A3 or an A2, that's why the phone book should be the same. So, I did go to Texas A&M, and there is some utility from being from a land-grant college.

Y'all know also that we are looking at other ways to develop and take care of our Airmen. Our folks -- whether they wear an Army uniform or a Marine uniform or a Navy uniform or an Air Force uniform -- are our most treasured asset. Moms and Dads all over this country give us their kids, and these are national treasures. General Reimer and I were talking awhile ago, and this gets a little emotional when you think about – we're asking a lot of these young NCOs and we're asking a lot of leadership in places that are very dangerous. So whether it is a technical sergeant, or whether it is a specialist, or whether it is a petty officer, or whether it is a Marine lance corporal, we're asking a lot of these folks.

We have the best people we've ever had in any military. They're all volunteers. They signed up to do this. In fact, a little over 40 percent of the Air Force has signed up since 9/11, so they knew exactly what they were getting into. And because of that, we owe them the best possible care, we owe them the best possible development, and we owe them the best possible care of their families. That is the second part of Secretary Wynne and my priorities. The first part is to win the war on terrorism. The second part is to take care of our people.

There have been some fairly exciting things that we've been able to work in this development phase. We've extended basic military training out another two and a half weeks – to be able to include more ground combat skills, to be able to include more buddy care so that each of our folks that graduate from basic military training will be closer to an emergency medical technician so that we can take care of our folks. We've got more expeditionary opportunities out there, and

we have more expeditionary exercises in basic military training to do just that.

We're also looking at revamping our tech schools. Because y'all know that every Airman that goes through the Air Force system will go to basic military training, then go to a tech school, and then go out to a unit. And so basic military training is now being refocused on expeditionary ops. Tech schools are next. We're also focusing on our NCO leadership opportunities, Airmen leadership schools, NCO academies, senior NCO academies, the same with officer accessions. We've put more expeditionary focus in the academy syllabus, in ROTC and OTS, also in the Airmen basic course, squadron officer school, Command and Staff College, and War College.

Starting next calendar year in August, everyone that goes through the senior NCO academy, Command and Staff College, or Air War College will take a language and will focus on regional skills. And the four languages are Arabic, Chinese, Spanish and French because of regional focuses in the country and opportunities to focus on a region. That's playing out very nice for us.

We're also looking at combining all of our battlefield Airmen, all of our Airmen that fight on the surface, security forces, terminal controllers, pararescue, a lot of the folks that we have living inside the Army system and living inside special operations systems, to look at a common schoolhouse and a common syllabus down at Moody AFB, Ga. So that when a dozen or so of these folks come out of basic military training and move into the battlefield Airmen career fields, they all go to Moody and they all go through a central schoolhouse with a central set of symbiotic syllabi that takes them to a place of shared common experiences, and so when they split out into pararescue or split out into terminal controller or combat controller, now we have a set of experiences that take us to a much better place in being contributors in a joint team fighting on the surface.

The third part of Secretary Wynne and my path is to recapitalize this Air Force. Fight the war on terrorism better, more effectively, more joint, take care of our people, develop Airmen, and the third step is to recapitalize and modernize this Air Force. We're operating the oldest inventory that this Air Force has operated since its beginning in 1947. The average age of our inventory is about 23.5 years. If we get everything that's in the FYDP and everything that's in the program, the average age will grow to close to 30 years. So we're going to keep some old equipment around, but we're also going to have to begin to focus on and prioritize the recapitalization. And the guiding principle for that is to be able to capitalize on the inherent attributes of air and space power.

Vantage, range, precision, lethality, speed, persistence -- those are the things that an Airman brings to the joint table, and brings those combat capabilities and the ability to derive those desired effects to a combatant commander. And so inside the portfolios of our operations, global vigilance – or global ISR – you see us spending much more money on unmanned aerial vehicles, you see us spending much more money on the ground systems that support that, you see us spending much more money on the ability to do this in a joint setting. Out with the Army's engaged divisions right now are our Airmen that are riding in the Stryker vehicles and inside the vehicle is a laptop – it's called a Rover 3 – and on that Rover 3 is the image of the UAV that is transmitting down into the laptop so that the embedded Airman inside the division has the image that is being played real-time from overhead. And on that is an opportunity with a Stylus to circle things and talk back and forth to the operator, just like you do with the John Madden opportunities on TV – in fact, it's called the John Madden mod – to be able without spending a lot of time talking, to be able to transmit that data.

Interestingly enough, the preponderance of these UAV's are flown from Indian Springs and from Nellis AFB, Nev. while the combat is being conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq. And so this reachback opportunity is a good thing when you have to reach back. We've also got the operators embedded inside those divisions, so when you don't have to reach back, you're there

on scene not only with the operations piece but with the capability to see what the UAV is seeing and to be able to strike real-time.

Our space systems – we've been challenged a bit on the acquisition of space systems, and Secretary Wynne and I are working hard to be able to streamline the acquisition process for space. We've had several meetings with Dr. Kerr from the NRO to be able to look at a much closer partnership, to be able to look at how do we streamline the operations in space, how do we streamline the acquisition of space vehicles, and how do we streamline and partnership with the intel community the tasking of the space assets. Again, all focused on bringing information down the food chain of strategic, operational, or tactical. So, a space system can provide tactical information to the warfighter at the speed of light. That's our desire. Not to have sanctuaried information but to be able to share information as fast as we can possibly get it to any number of users.

On the global mobility side, we've got the strategic mobility assets – the C-5s and the C-17s. We've got the theater assets – the C-130s. We're challenged a bit on aging equipment. We have Congressional language that precludes us from retiring C-5s, C-130E's, KC-135E's, F-117s, U-2s, and B-52s, but we're working with the committees to see about relieving us of that restrictive language so it gives us the flexibility to manage the fleet. The theater airlift – the C-130E's – are getting old. We have center wing box problems with them. We're looking at ways to fly C-130Js in a variety of configurations.

We're also looking at some very creative work with the Army now on joint cargo aircraft. I'm particularly excited about that, being able to partner with [Army Chief of Staff] Pete Schoomaker and [Army Vice Chief of Staff] Dick Cody because as the air commander for Afghanistan or Iraq, I would have loved to have that smaller cargo aircraft to be able to get in and out of places in Afghanistan and in and out of places in Iraq. And as the Chief, last summer for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and Wilma, I would have loved to have had a number of those aircraft to get in and out of Mobile and Biloxi and New Orleans. And so this business of joint cargo aircraft, we're working our way through a partnership in looking at analysis of alternatives and beginning to look at what's possible for us to closer partner on that.

The other part of the mobility portfolio that requires attention is the tanker. The RFI hopefully will be out here in the next few weeks and we can get on with an RFP. The analysis of alternatives is being released. We're looking forward to being able to get on with this program so we can field a very, very important and key enabling piece for this entire team. Everybody in this room knows what tankers do for the joint team. Whether it's extending the range of the bombers to keep them overhead targets, again flying them from Florida to Alaska, or whether it's being able to extend the range of carrier aviation because it is 600 miles from the North Arabian Sea to targets around Kabul and Kandahar. It's also 600 miles from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan south over the Hindu Kush Mountains into targets around Kabul and Kandahar. 600 miles in a fighter is not that far to fly as long as you have fuel, so this tanker business is important for all of us.

Since Desert Shield and Desert Storm, I asked the staff the other day, how many ocean crossings has the United States Air Force flown? I thought it'd be 10,000 or 15,000 because an ocean crossing is a big deal for a fighter pilot because you're strapped into an ejection seat for 10 or 11 or 12 or in some cases 15 or 16 hours. That's a long time to get across the Pacific or the Atlantic. So I thought it'd be about 10,000. Actually, we've flown 92,000 ocean crossings since Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and the preponderance of those have been big mobility assets. And so this tanker business is important for this global reach and this global mobility for the entire joint team.

The last thing is the global strike portfolio. We're looking at the opportunity build a new bomber. The QDR put a mark on the wall of 2018 for a long range strike platform. We've got some

opportunities to partner with industry on this. But at the end of the day, we're not going to be able to fly these old airplanes into the 21st Century and keep them survivable and be able to penetrate a 5th Generation threat array. We can stand off now with some of the finest aircraft ever built, the B-52 for instance, with ALCM (air-launched cruise missile) and with the CALCM (conventional air-launched cruise missile) capability. And when you control the air space you can park yourself over the top of a set of targets and hold them at risk with the B-1 and the B-52. But against a fifth generation defensive system, this is not going to work for us. We need to be able to penetrate. We need to be able to capitalize on those attributes of an Air Force, which are range and payload and persistence. So this takes us to a new bomber, 2018 is the mark on the wall so we're a little bit behind in working this. Secretary Wynne and I are on fire to be able to get an analysis of alternatives in some way and begin to look at the opportunities to build that airplane.

The fighters are working out. The F-22 is performing in a magnificent manner. Two squadrons are up and running down at Langley (AFB, Va.) – the 27th Squadron and the 94th Squadron. The 94th Squadron is Eddie Rickenbacker's "Hat-in-the-Ring" Squadron. It's been around for a while. We've got the number 41 aircraft coming off the line down at Marietta. We'll have "AK" on the tail and we'll be headed for Alaska. Two squadrons will be ginned up in Alaska, and we've got preferred options on bed-down locations. The next two ops three and ops four are at Holloman AFB and then Hawaii. And we're looking at opportunities to marry with the Total Force, with Guard and with Reserve. Right now, in Virginia, the Virginia Guard is flying with the 1st Wing. We're working with the TAG (Air National Guard) in New Mexico to see what's possible with Holloman. We have the Reserve component that will fly the F-22 up in Alaska, and then of course with the Hawaii Guard is that other preferred option for a bed-down location.

We've talked about the fighters and we've talked about a potential bomber, and of course that takes us to the last piece, which is a combat rescue helicopter. We're through the acquisition review; the RFP is on the street. This summer we'll move out on this. And I'll tell you there's nothing higher on an air commander's list of priorities than the ability to go pick up an Airman or someone at risk on the surface. The Secretary and I have spent a lot of time talking about this, and in my view, it is an ethical and a moral imperative to be able to pick our people up. If we're going to send them out, we have to be able to pick them up. We don't leave people behind. And so combat rescue and the "Jolly Green" culture inside the Air Force is a big deal for us morally, and it's a big deal for us doctrinally, and it's a big deal for us as Airmen.

Two quick stories for you -- we had an F-14 crew in the height of OIF, had an engine problem, TF30 engine, had a failure in the turbine section, lost the engine, parts went through the fuselage, took the other engine out, and the crew decided to dismount. This was in some pretty bad country when these guys left the F-14. As the first guy went up the rail after initiating ejection and triggered the beacon, our space assets had the GOF location, piped that back into the CAOC (Combined Air Operations Center), down through the rescue center. We scrambled the two helicopters. En route, we have the knee boards now, the combat rescue knee boards that you can transmit the data into the helicopter that you don't have to wait. So we scrambled the two helicopters to pick the Navy crew up. From the time the kid went up the rail until the time they were on board the HH-60 was 100 minutes -- an opposed combat rescue.

The MacKay trophy for last year – the other vignette -- is we scrambled two helicopters on a shot down Army Chinook, five people on board, southeast of Baghdad in another very bad place. As soon as the helicopter began to take fire, and as soon as it looked like we were not going to keep the helicopter airborne, we scrambled two combat rescue helicopters out of Baghdad. They fought their way through bad weather, systems failures, and into the place where the people that shot the helicopter down were living, picked up the Army crew on the two helicopters and brought them back. We gave the MacKay trophy last year to those two rescue crews. I share all this with you because combat search and rescue is a big deal for the joint

commander, and it's a big deal for Airmen.

There are the three portfolios: global ISR, global mobility, and global strike. And as we work our way through this Global War on Terrorism, and as we work our way through recapitalizing an Air Force, I would only ask you to keep in mind that this is the oldest inventory we've ever operated, and we're going to have to modernize this inventory. We're on track to do that within the portfolios with the inter-theater lift – the intra-theater lift that's so critical to the joint team, with the space assets and the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets that are so critical to the joint team, and the striking platforms that are also so critical to the joint team – the long range strike, the fighters and the combat rescue helicopter.

So let me close by saying those are the three things that Secretary Wynne and I wake up every morning realizing that that is our path. One, fight this war much better, much more jointly, much more effectively. Two, take care of these great Airmen, develop them, teach them how to live inside a joint world, and how to think through the problems of the 21st century. And the third priority is to recapitalize and modernize this aging Air Force.

So, Barry, thanks again for the opportunity. Woody, Congressman Johnson, thanks for that warm intro. I appreciate your time and the chance for an Air Chief to vent on you a little bit about what's on my mind and what's on my plate everyday. I've got my lineup card here. I don't have a flight suit anymore that I carry it in, but I do have a lineup card. I sit on it everyday and bring it out and look at it, so I know where I'm going. So guys, thanks for spending time with us this morning and thanks for this seminar.