



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF
WASHINGTON, DC

Wednesday,
August 23, 2006

Letter to Airmen: Shaping and Transforming the Force

To the Airmen of the United States Air Force

We're at a critical juncture for the United States Air Force and the Department of Defense - a transition period that will shape the nation's security for a generation or more. Tomorrow's Air Force must be and will be more agile, more compact and more lethal than ever - ensuring global air, space and cyberspace dominance for the United States as we enter the 21st Century. We're working hard to put the right people, plans and programs in place to transform and re-shape the Air Force, while continuing to lead the Department of Defense's transformation from an "industrial" to an "information" age force - all while heavily engaged in a global, long war on terrorism. We've got a lot on our plates!

We are at war! And winning this global, long war on terrorism remains our number one priority, followed closely by developing and taking care of our Airmen and completely recapitalizing and modernizing our air and space inventories. Today's Airmen are engaged in a dizzying array of missions from operating satellites in deep space, to applying Air Power to the surface battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq, to maintaining required air defense from the skies over the United States, to launching an Air Mobility Command aircraft every 90 seconds, 24/7, 365 days a year, to directly supporting the hurricane-ravaged communities along the Gulf Coast. Yes, we've got a lot on our plates these days. Let me take a moment to layout and explain how we're moving the ball on these above priorities.

Improved Warfighting Capability. The Air Force exists to deliver decisive effects through the domains of air, space and now cyberspace -to fly, to fight and to win our Nation's wars! Because this global, long war on terrorism requires a level of interdependence in equipment and in tactics, techniques and procedures that's higher than ever, our initiatives focus directly on increasing our ability to operate in joint and coalition environments, while looking to achieve even higher levels of access, agility and lethality. To streamline our decision process, we're making strides to reduce and flatten our "Cold War-era" headquarters staffs and support structures. And, as you know, we've fully operationalized the A-Staff and Component War Fighting Headquarters constructs. We also expect our Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century (AFSO 21) programs to further optimize our daily business practices and processes to get at eliminating unnecessary or non-value added work. The objective here is to allow us to work smarter, not harder, and to cut contract and operating cost and translate these savings directly into increased combat capability while freeing more resources for recapitalization and modernization.

Re-capitalizing and Modernizing our Equipment. Our enemies and potential adversaries are not standing idly by; they're working day and night to devise new ways to confront American air, space and cyberspace power. And yet, we operate the oldest air and space inventories in the history of the United States Air Force. It's therefore absolutely imperative we modernize and replace these old aircraft and spacecraft to ensure our dominance across those warfighting domains. The "bottom line" is we cannot afford to not develop, upgrade and field: new space systems across the board in all space mission areas (navigation, ISR, weather & communications); a new aerial refueling "tanker;" a new combat search and rescue (CSAR)

helicopter; the Predator and Global Hawk UAVs; the V-22 and other modernized special operations (SOF) forces; the right number of C-130Js and our expanded inventory of F-22As to flesh out our air dominance squadrons. We'll do this all while looking at options to develop a light cargo aircraft to support our theater intra-theater airlift requirements and welcoming the F-35A into operational service and beginning work on the newest, state-of-the-art long range strike aircraft to meet the Quadrennial Defense Review's (QDR) 2018 timeline. Within the Department of Defense, it is the Air Force's unique responsibility to provide the Nation true Global Vigilance, Global Strike and Global Reach. At the end-of-the-day, our job as Airmen is to fight the ongoing global war on terrorism while being able to reach anywhere on the planet with strategically dislocating effect. To continue to make this happen for the 21st Century ... we need the new equipment!

Developing Airmen. Of course, Airmen will fly, operate, maintain and support this modernized, more lethal air and space equipment. Our people are the most cherished and important piece of the equation. And our Airmen's families are the baseline of supporting our combatant personnel. Each and every family is critical to our mission success, so we are continuing to look for ways to ensure the highest quality of life standards for each of our bases' military family housing and facilities. Many of our warfighting enhancements and initiatives are directly designed to improve the ways we train, prepare for combat, care for our families and continue to look for ways to better develop our most precious resource - Airmen! We will continue to explore ways to balance our career fields and reduce the number of existing AFSCs to better meet the needs of the 21st Century. We can flatten our existing personnel structure and cluster similar AFSCs into expeditionary groupings focused primarily on combat duties. We can also better integrate Civilian, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Active personnel into a much more seamless, deployable "Total Force." We can re-energize and re-focus our professional military education (PME) efforts into providing the necessary warfighting skills we see for the future - to include much more robust, regional and cultural understanding and foreign language skills. And we will continue to emphasize educational opportunities, offering bachelor's degrees for select enlisted personnel or advanced academic degrees as required for both officer and enlisted members. These enhanced educational opportunities provide a force of Airmen better equipped to think, brief, write and prevail in the "globalized" world we're operating in today. And finally, I've tasked Air University to not only continue to refine our PME syllabi to ensure relevance, but also to provide a wider set of "distance learning" opportunities that match our expeditionary mindset.

Secretary of the Air Force Mike Wynne and I have made the decision to reduce our manning levels by 40,000 "full-time equivalent" billets over the next five years. Since the previous, post-Cold War 40 percent personnel drawdown of the early 1990s, the Air Force has been driven to sacrifice its future to keep manpower constant. The result has been a decades-old decline of investment accounts which provide the "seed corn" resources to buy new satellites and aircraft and new warfighting capability- across the board. Since the early 1990s it has become a vicious cycle of aging and less capable equipment and diminished resources with which to buy the more modern, more survivable and more lethal systems. Secretary Wynne and I have decided to change that equation - to focus on the future of the United States Air Force. To stay within our allocated budgets and to increase our investment accounts, the reality is we have to draw the force down.

This current 12 percent drawdown is realistic and certainly doable. Today's Air Force is fighting an expeditionary war as we transform into a leaner, meaner force. And the facts are clear ... since the beginning of OEF in October 2001, only about half of the overall force has deployed for combat operations and today, only about 85 percent of our Air Force is even aligned within an AEF "bucket." This is a sobering set of percentages of our force that has been deployed since we've been fighting in and over Afghanistan -- which is longer than the United States fought in World War II! So, we can do better with the numbers of people we'll have. Even

with the 12 percent reduction in manpower, we can get more of the Total Force in the AEF "buckets." We can get more combat-focused and trained. We can get more deployable and more expeditionary in every thing that we do! We owe that much to the country.

So, with your leadership and commitment we can and will succeed. We will recapitalize and modernize our warfighting equipment inventories; we'll streamline our structures and processes; we'll integrate better as a Total Force; we'll develop a cadre of Airmen even better prepared for the future; and we'll continue to deploy, fly, fight and win our Nation's wars! I'm extremely proud of the efforts we've made to build on our Air Force heritage and I see a limitless horizon before us thanks to your disciplined combat focus, diligence and hard work. I'd also like to thank each of you for what you do every day to improve the combat capabilities of the United States Air Force in defense of our great nation!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Michael Moseley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

T. MICHAEL MOSELEY
General, USAF
Chief of Staff