



# Letter to Airmen

Honorable Michael W. Wynne  
Secretary of the Air Force

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## Knowledge-Enabled Airmen

"It is possible to fly without motors, but not without knowledge and skill."  
—Wilbur Wright

Airmen provide America with air, space and cyberspace dominance - the first and essential enduring requirement of a successful military operation. But such dominance is not a national right. It is the consequence of generations of innovative *Knowledge-Enabled Airmen* who have continued to learn throughout their careers, and have applied their increasing knowledge to develop and exploit new technologies and tactics.

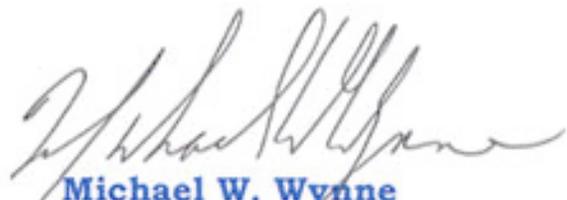
Consider the training, skill and knowledge required to execute the following OIF mission: On 29 September 2006, Lance Corporal Justin Ping was wounded, suffering from severe burns, blast injuries, and shrapnel in a leg and his right eye. He was evacuated from the battlefield to Balad AB, where he received immediate care at the USAF hospital. The doctors quickly determined he needed more care than the Balad medical facilities could provide. Brooke Army Medical Center, near San Antonio, was best equipped to deal with Ping's wounds, but he had to get there as quickly as possible. A C-17 at Balad, scheduled to fly to Al Udeid that night, was re-tasked for the duty, and a critical care air transport team was assembled. Enroute tankers from Mildenhall AB and the New Hampshire Air National Guard met the C-17 for multiple air refuelings, enabling the medical center to admit Justin into intensive care just 15 hours after he left Balad, ultimately saving the brave Marine's life.

We have all heard the phrase "flexibility is the key to airpower." I would like to add that *Knowledge-Enabled Airmen* are the key to flexibility. Take a moment to consider each of the Airmen involved in this story: Air Traffic and Base Ops controllers; maintainers; pilots, loadmasters, and boomers; the entire flying medical team; the medical personnel at Balad; the Tanker Airlift Control Center; the security forces Airmen; and the list goes on.

These Total Force Airmen all entered the Air Force either through basic military training or an officer accession source, where they established the foundation of their professional learning. Since then they have continually expanded their knowledge at technical training schools and flying training units. They've graduated from Professional Military Education courses such as Airmen Leadership School, Squadron Officer School, and the NCO Academy. They've honed their skills with CDCs, OJT, and continuation training. And they've prepared for combat in local exercises and at Red Flags. Every step taken was knowledge gained and every ounce of this knowledge was required to save Lance Corporal Ping. This success is just one example of the training all Airmen receive, and how *Knowledge-Enabled Airmen* apply their knowledge and skills daily across the globe.

I encourage each of you to challenge yourself and those around you to be the most *Knowledge-Enabled Airmen*. Take advantage of every opportunity to increase your knowledge, then develop and exploit new technologies and tactics to increase the Air Force's warfighting prowess. As Wilbur Wright taught us a century ago, our Air Force won't fly without your knowledge and skill.



  
Michael W. Wynne  
Secretary of the Air Force