



THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE
CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC



Airmen

APR 24 2008

This past Monday, the Secretary of Defense delivered an address at Maxwell AFB to the students of our Air War College and Air Command and Staff College. Initial press coverage of his remarks misrepresented the tone and content of his address. Whereas some press reports characterized Secretary Gates as making a singular critique about one Service's commitment to the Global War on Terror, his remarks were instead focused on the need for innovative thinking from all the Services.

As Secretary Gates himself explained: "... I think if you read the text of the speech, you'll see that it's not a dig at the Air Force at all. In fact, a significant part of the speech was full of praise at what the Air Force had done in the Middle East and Iraq and Afghanistan and the whole theater." Secretary Gates challenged his entire Department and the leaders of every Service "to think out of the box" in continuous pursuit of better ways to deliver what is needed for the joint force in harm's way. The Air Force is well suited for that innovative pursuit. Every Airman should take Secretary Gates' comments to heart and strive to find more and better ways for the Air Force to contribute to the War on Terror.

It is important for all Airmen to know Secretary Gates applauded Airmen for their significant contributions to the Long War, just as he has praised America's Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines. It is also important for Airmen to know Air Force contributions are making a difference, and that Airmen continue to do everything possible to support the Secretary of Defense's priorities. He has asked all Services to accelerate transformational initiatives like those in the Quadrennial Defense Review, and the Air Force is doing just that.

In short, Airmen are "all in" to fight today's war on global terrorism. From strategy to tactics, the Air Force has leaned far forward to deliver instruments of national power in a rapidly changing world. Every able-bodied Airman--Regular, Guard, and Reserve--is fully deployable. Indeed, Airmen have filled over 524,000 deployments since the war began. Today, 24,000 Airmen are delivering a full spectrum of air, space, and cyber power to the Joint Force Commanders conducting operations in USCENTCOM, every hour of every day.

Air Force engagement in CENTCOM's AOR is only the tip of the iceberg. About 200,000-plus Airmen are in direct support of Combatant Commanders around the clock and around the globe to provide all with critical air, space, and cyber capabilities. Airmen are in the most dangerous places on the planet tonight to protect America. Airmen have been vital to the success of the Joint team in this critical Global War on Terror, while at the same time providing the global strength and deterrence that keep our enemies at bay and our friends assured.

The Air Force was born of an innovative spirit and a willingness to question the status quo. Airmen are applying that spirit daily to address America's challenges. In sum, our Air Force is 'in the fight' to win, and is deterring any aggressor from doing us harm while we succeed in the Global War on Terror.

We are proud of the hard work that you ... America's Airmen ... undertake every day. Secretary Gates has challenged us to continue to honor our heritage of innovation. The Airmen of the United States Air Force will succeed in meeting his charge.

Handwritten signature of Michael W. Wynne in blue ink.

Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force

Handwritten signature of T. Michael Moseley in blue ink.

T. Michael Moseley
General, USAF
Chief of Staff

From one Combined Air Operations Center in the AOR, Airmen daily command and control a fleet of hundreds of US, allied, and coalition aircraft which provide every Joint Force Commander complete air coverage across a 27-country theater. Airmen produce and fly over 300 sorties a day over Iraq and Afghanistan, delivering precision strike, close air support, mobility, ISR, air refueling and aero-medevac. Just this past week, the Air Force surpassed one million sorties flown in the Global War on Terror. The Air Force has nearly 300 aircraft stationed in the CENTCOM AOR today, and Airmen operate out of over 60 locations. Intelligence reports indicate the enemy's worst fear is US airpower; indeed, the majority of the dead or captured enemy leadership have been taken off the battlefield using the airpower capabilities provided the Joint Force Commanders. In addition, Airmen are operating 68 Air Force satellites providing overhead intelligence, communications, and positioning continuously to every Joint Force Commander. Every 90 seconds, Airmen launch and fly an Air Force mobility aircraft from somewhere on the globe, providing vital combat logistics for the GWOT. Inter-theater assets have airlifted 2,500 MRAPs to the CENTCOM AOR. Also, Airmen operate intra-theater airlifters that keep more than 12,000 people and 5,000 vehicles out of harm's way each month. Moreover, in less than 10 months, Airmen developed and fielded a Joint Precision Airdrop System, allowing forward-based ground warriors in Afghanistan and Iraq to receive vital supplies daily with pinpoint accuracy in all types of weather to any remote location.

In the area of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance, Airmen have pushed every available UAV to the AOR. The stated requirement is to provide 21 Predator Combat Air Patrols (CAPs) to CENTCOM by 2010, and Airmen beat that timeline by two years and with greater numbers--today we have 23 CAPs over Iraq and Afghanistan, . . . and we'll have 25 CAPs by Jun, and 31 CAPs by Apr 09. General Petraeus, Commanding General, MNF-I, this month: "I don't know who the Predator pilots are here, but the Predator teams have just been doing unbelievable work down there and in Baghdad as well. And, I think there's some path-breaking work on going here....It has been really impressive." In October 2007, Airmen fielded the first MQ-9 Reaper, with nearly twice the performance of Predator and 6 times the payload. In another example of Airmen enhancing the kill chain, the Air Force developed, fielded, and put in the hands of ground force commanders over 3,000 sets of ROVER technology which provides real-time video situational awareness and pinpoints enemy positions. It is this very development that is driving ground force demand for added coverage, and the Air Force is responding.

Airmen are also fulfilling other warfighting tasks in the AOR, as nearly 6,000 Airmen currently perform full-time duties in areas such as Detainee Operations, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, and Convoy Operations. Saving lives, Airmen operate combat surgical hospitals that are saving 97% of the wounded warriors that are airlifted to their operating tables--more than 50,000 since 2001. Building partner capacity, Airmen have built from scratch, in less than 2 years, a nascent Iraqi Air Force and Afghan Air Corps which now operate in combat alongside Iraqi Security Forces and the Afghan National Army. Embedded training teams filled by Airmen are performing such tasks as building the Afghan National Army's Logistics Command. Provincial Reconstruction Teams are being manned by Airmen; indeed, half of the US-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan are commanded by Airmen.

Finally, often overlooked are the Airmen ensuring America's Air Sovereignty every day, now having exceeded 50,000 sorties flown over our skies defending the homeland since 11 Sep 01.