

Air Force Association Convention

**As Delivered by Gen. Norton Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the US Air Force,
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Joe, thank you very much for that kind introduction.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues, what a distinct pleasure and privilege it is to address this forum. To see so many long-time friends here today and truly what a fantastic venue it is. Appropriate for a brief respite from the jam-packed work schedules we all have, but also an appropriate setting for serious exchange.

Welcome to all who have come from out of town for this annual Air Force Association Convention. You know, as George Will has often said, Washington may be the only town in America, an enclave as he called it, surrounded in all sides by reality. [Laughter]. So for those of us who live and work in Washington, it is always healthy to get a dose of ground truth from those of you who reside outside of DC.

As a matter of fact last year I mentioned to Mike Dunn that he should consider taking this conference outside the Beltway, and Mike, I see that you've taken my advice in its most literal sense. [Laughter].

But seriously, the AFA as they do every year has done such a remarkable job executing a world-class conference that keeps Airmen, key officials from the Air Force, the department, and from across the federal government as well as industry leaders coming back year after year to discuss issues of importance to our total Air Force.

Before I continue, let me just go off script for a second, again to acknowledge what occurred last night. Where we all celebrated the talent and the excitement of our 12 Outstanding Airmen. If I may ask those Airmen and their spouses to stand yet again. And also to highlight that there is another group here which perhaps does not get the attention or the recognition it deserves, and that is our Four Star Commanders of our Air Force. So if the Airmen would please rise, and likewise, our Four Star Commanders.

Let me just say that it is the four star--Please, I insist.

[Applause].

It is the four star leadership, ladies and gentlemen, that truly endeavors to be worthy, to be worthy of that Airmen's talent that we saw last night. Thank you all very much for being wonderful, wonderful teammates.

This event, ladies and gentlemen, could not have occurred at a more important moment. A time when the Air Force faces two simultaneous transitions. Airmen are, as Secretary Donley mentioned yesterday, emerging from a year of turmoil. A year ago I spoke of a back to basics approach for the Air Force, a bit of triage in which we had to recalibrate in critical areas where we had lost focus. We concentrated on recapturing top to bottom excellence in the nuclear mission; on restoring the foundations of credibility in acquisition and other disciplines with OSD, Congress, and the American people; and expanding the lessons from that period to reinvigorate a culture of compliance throughout our Air Force. We navigated through a challenging but ultimately healthy period of inspection and introspection with a recommitment to a heritage of excellence. Yet we did it all while fighting a war that continues to depend on the unique and important contributions of our Air Force, a war simultaneously conducted hand to hand at global distances, a war characterized by face to face meetings with other cultures, yet also by electrons traveling through satellites 22,000 miles overhead.

I am grateful to Secretary Donley for his exceptional leadership throughout this period. With his sharp vision and steady hand we have successfully navigated through some troubled waters, and now we're looking forward and setting a long term course for our Air Force. Under his direction we have turned a corner, but leadership at the top is only occasionally decisive. Airmen at all levels stepped forward and provided the extra measure of moral and physical courage, initiative, selflessness, attention to detail and ingenuity, that brought us to where we are today. It was a thing of beauty to watch-- Airmen being Airmen.

We stand here today because of the able leadership at all levels of the total force team. Over the last year we've made tangible progress in so many areas. In the nuclear enterprise alone we invested \$4.4 billion in areas that frankly had been neglected, while standing up a fourth B-52 squadron, and establishing the Nuclear Weapons Center and Air Staff Directorate, the Nuclear Oversight Board, and yes, Frank Klotz's Global Strike Command. All stand as visible, tangible symbols of a deeper, more enduring commitment to this cornerstone of US national security.

But let me talk directly to those of you in the nuclear enterprise about the way ahead. Secretary Donley and I will not, not take the counsel of those who say that now the job is complete. Our commitment is to follow through, and that commitment should not be underestimated. We are counting on your commitment as well.

It took years of atrophy to set in and we cannot afford to stand pat on the gains of the last year by being complacent now.

As we reflect on the last 12 months it is important that we measure our progress not based on tactical events such as programmatic decisions or press clippings or even blog

entries. We must take a broader strategic view and consider what we have at least in part achieved.

We strengthened the trust amongst leadership in OSD and Congress and the American people who rely on us not only as stalwarts of the nation's nuclear arsenal, but as a fundamental provider of essential combat capabilities for the joint team.

We have reinforced bonds and become better integrated with our joint teammates who depend on us for our unwavering commitment to today's fight. We did this by making tough, sometimes painful decisions internally. Choices that set the course for our future. Choices that restored a measure of institutional freedom of action that will allow us to embark on an even more assertive journey in the coming years.

We can take pride in these efforts and in the many accomplishments that Secretary Donley mentioned yesterday. We were asked to put out some wildfires that had gotten out of control, and although we aren't off the fire line just yet, I'm here to report that the smoke and flames no longer obstruct our view of the future. While we remain resolute about the issues that remain, we can and we must raise our sights to focus on the longer term vision, an Airman's vision of constant innovation and the control and exploitation of air, space, and cyberspace.

With the help of everyone in this room and of others who share with us this vision, we can again be ambitious about charting a bold and visionary course for our Air Force. With a focus, ladies and gentlemen, on what we are for and what we want to be and less, much less, on what we're against.

As I look to the future I envision an Air Force that effectively controls and exploits air and space, and eventually cyberspace, in ways that provide even greater margins for global stability and economic vitality. We anticipate significant challenges in gaining access to the commons as our adversaries pursue asymmetric methods for thwarting our use of air, space and cyberspace.

The proliferation of precision means that state and non-state actors will continue to build sophisticated air defenses, long range missiles, and even short range precision systems that will threaten our bases and our deployed forces.

Attacks through cyberspace and evolving electronic warfare technologies threaten to neutralize some of the advantages of our strike platforms, our command and control systems, and ISR networks.

To meet these challenges our Air Force will need to work with the scientific community, our allies, our industry partners, so that we may have the capability to secure and to

protect the commons.

In the tradition of Dr. Theodore von Kamren, General Hap Arnold's Chief Scientist, our Chief Scientist, Dr. Werner Dahm, is conducting a technology horizon study to identify the most promising technologies our Air Force can adopt, to give us the flexibility to respond to the changes in all aspects of warfare--irregular, conventional, and nuclear.

We need an Air Force that continues to provide compelling conventional and nuclear capabilities that assure allies and dissuade and deter potential adversaries from attacking our nation or its vital interests. In the future this will include a next generations long range strike and reconnaissance capability that enables penetration of contested airspace so that we may range and credibly engage any target in the world.

Surely there will be greatly increased demand for overhead and air-breathing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities so that our military forces and national leadership retain unprecedented understanding of the global operational environment.

The ability to perceive and anticipate an adversary's actions and intent offers a decisive advantage in warfare and in maintaining the peace.

Our Air Force maintains the world's most advanced systems for detecting, identifying and targeting an adversary. We are currently the sole provider of the worldwide communications and precision navigation and timing capabilities that are increasingly required, increasingly required, to conduct operations in all domains.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will require that we increase our ability to monitor and detect technology transfer and weapons movements.

We are pursuing the means to rapidly place our nation's satellites into operational orbits essentially on call so that we can detect the threats and provide warning necessary to protect our nation and our allies from ballistic missile and rocket attacks. And from other, from other hard to attribute threats in the commons.

Finally in the future, an equally enduring, unique and important contribution to the nation's defense will e our ability to rapidly project and sustain joint forces anywhere in the world. Failed nations, transnational terrorists, and even natural disasters will require our nation to respond quickly with force or assistance.

Our ability to operate in air, space and cyberspace gives our nation a clear advantage in speed, range, and flexibility. And our air mobility forces are necessary for building the extensive lines of communication needed to send military or economic assistance

quickly and for as long a period as is needed.

These capabilities that I have described are what makes the United States Air Force vital to our national security. No other institution on earth provides the range of capabilities in the air, in space, or in the global command and control to integrate their use. This is our unique and enduring contribution to the joint team, and yes, it is our calling. And teamwork demands total commitment to doing our part. Whatever is necessary to help the joint team win today's fight. And letting the results speak for themselves.

As we should neither seek to out-do, nor to take credit for in the end the thrill of victory is amplified and the distress of setbacks is lessened. When we operate as a joint team together and unified in effort.

Sometimes the nature of conflict will place us in the lead and others will support our efforts as in recent decades. But the nature of today's counterinsurgency fight emphasizes the capabilities that our ground force teammates provide, and we will, without hesitation, ensure their success.

In the future we will likely find ourselves once again in an operation that emphasizes Air Force contributions, but in the mean time we will devote ourselves fully to providing the joint force commanders whatever capabilities they need to prevail, because in the end, ladies and gentlemen, there is no Air Force victory in war and no Air Force loss in war. Only the United States of America stumbles or succeeds. And while we are unsure of precisely what lays ahead, we can be sure that currently there is a growing demand for the capabilities that we provide. Air mobility, unmanned aircraft orbits, satellite bandwidth, close air support, beyond the wire Combat Airmen, and so much more. And America can always, always count on the United States Air Force to deliver.

More accurate, it is our Airmen who deliver.

Today more than 40,000 Airmen are deployed in support of combatant commanders around the world, with over 32,000 deployed to the Central Command area of responsibility. And the vast majority have served on multiple deployments with no doubt more in their future.

For a moment, let me tell you the story of just one of them. Senior Airman Danny Williams is an explosive ordnance disposal specialist assigned to Travis Air Force Base, California who while serving with the 755th Air Expeditionary Group in Afghanistan performed with exceptional valor under extremely difficult circumstances.

On the 4th of April 2009 Airman Williams witnessed an IED explosion that claimed the life of his friend and team leader, Technical Sergeant Phil Myers while they worked

together to clear a road that was used as a major casualty evacuation route. Shaken, but driven by his firm determination and mission focus Airman Williams took charge and stopped those rushing toward the still live IED who were attempting to aid Sergeant Myers, thus preventing more casualties.

Danny understood that he had to find a way to quickly de-arm the device. With the lives of fellow Airmen and teammates hanging in the balance, Danny quickly evaluated the options and concluded that he would have to remove Sergeant Myers from the lethal radius of the IED, the improvised explosive device.

Without regard for his personal safety, Airman Williams picked up his friend and carried him from the danger zone, and then rendered safe the IED.

His actions saved lives and reopened the evacuation route that was blocked by the explosives.

These accounts of heroism are as exceptional as the impeccable character that underwrites uncommon valor. We honor our heroes, and yes, we seek to emulate them for they inspire us with their rare brand of sacrifice, willful, faithful, and sometimes ultimate.

We are reminded that humble service to our country shall continue to call for the last full measure of devotion from the bravest and the most generous among us.

Danny, I know you understand this all too well. I know that you travel the high and truly admired road of humility, accompanied only by the most distinguished of our teammates, but I ask you to stand for just a moment please and accept the heartfelt appreciation for your tremendous and admirable service, and for the many heroes that you represent.

[Applause].

Ladies and gentlemen as an EOD technician, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Airman Danny Williams also represents the many Airmen in critically important career fields who have moved out of the shadows and into prominence in today's fight.

This unexpected demand for Airmen with special qualifications has resulted in a deployment tempo the likes of which we have never seen before. Today I'd like to recognize the many Airmen who only by virtue of their chosen career field have lived their lives with a one-to-one dwell for several years. These Airmen include contracting, airfield operations, intelligence, office of special investigation, security forces, tactical air control parties, civil engineers, combat camera, and of course our chaplains. We

recognize them as first among equals in the degree of commitment and dedication and we especially, especially honor your families' service and their sacrifice as well.

[Applause].

As Suzie and I travel across the Air Force and meet with Airmen, it's clear to us the impact of nearly 20 years of continued deployments, the impact that that has had on our families. Foremost in our mind is our commitment to preserving Air Force installations as close-knit and caring communities where every Airman, civilian, spouse, child and retiree feels a special bond with a larger Air Force family.

The evidence is overwhelming that this sense of community and the culture of mutual support is why families stay in our Air Force despite the hardships and despite the sacrifice. But I am mindful that our Air Force community, while sturdy, is not unbreakable, and that we have tested its resilience over the years largely as a result of efforts to downsize and economize the way we operate our installations through successive rounds of base closure. We've closed many single wings, smaller bases, where everyone knew your name, and consolidated them into mega-bases. And in the process, diminished an aspect of small-town community, small-town community life that the one wing/one boss concept fostered. We've consolidated and closed clubs, downsized dormitories, and encouraged single Airmen to live off base. And we've closed dining facilities which for decades have served as the evening dinner table for so many single Airmen in our Air Force family.

Secretary Donley, Chief Roy, and many others here today have spent a great deal of time discussing these issues, considering the second and third order effects of business decisions on our Air Force culture. Because if we lose the sense of community that makes Air Force service special and unique, we will lose many of the Airmen and the families that make this the world's greatest Air Force.

[Applause].

In order to focus our collective attention of our entire Air Force leadership on this issue, Secretary Donley and I have designated this year, as you heard yesterday, as the Year of the Air Force Family. During the next ten months we will highlight the importance of and the commitment to the entire Air Force family--all Airmen, married and single, spouses, children, Air Force civilian, extended families and retirees. We'll devote this year to identifying what we are doing right and what we need to do better to support the entire Air Force family. And to rekindle the sense of community that has been our tradition for so many generations.

Our Year of the Family program rests on four pillars which are the foundation of Air

Force family life. Health and wellness of every member of our family. Support to Airmen and families across a range of needs, and especially support to families of the deployed and those with special needs family members. Education, development and employment. And finally, Airman and family housing.

While our commitment to these pillars of community life and support have been longstanding, this year we will initiate a series of programs and assessments in each area to improve the lives of our Air Force family. A commitment, a commitment worthy of those who serve our nation so admirably in time of war.

We place a tremendous premium on this culture of family and community, as much as our core values of integrity, service and excellence--values which are instilled in our Airmen from the very moment that they arrive at basic training and which have guided our actions for a generation of Airmen.

I'm encouraged to see, and especially among our NCOs and senior enlisted leadership an emerging and deep-seated culture of excellence where achieving the highest level of job performance is not just an individual value, but a choice made or a choice I should say made by some to guide their personal conduct, but supremely valued and expected from everyone, and demanded of subordinates by supervisors at all levels. I'm extremely pleased to see this culture of excellent blossom, and I encourage all here today, all here today, to take measure of their own personal commitment and settle for nothing but the best from themselves and their fellow Airmen, including this Airman. And to install in all that successful mission accomplishment must be the driving source of our collective job satisfaction.

I see examples of this commitment every day. Men and women of impeccable character with the capacity to endure sacrifice and hardship. No Airman better exemplifies this spirit, no one, better than Technical Sergeant Matthew Sladen who served an IED explosion at a range of about two feet while performing his duties as an EOD technician in Iraq in 2007. Matt survived, but sustained critical injuries that changed the course of his life forever.

Suzie and I attended Matt and Annette's retirement just a couple of weeks ago. For those of you who have had the privilege of knowing this remarkable warrior, husband and Airman, you have seen this firsthand--the power and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity, as well as what one can achieve by looking forward and focusing on the opportunities that life offers, whatever your circumstance.

Matt Sladen and Danny Williams are men of few words. But it is not their words for which we know and honor them. They are quiet men of resounding action, living examples of the fact that words really mean very little. It is our actions that will

determine our value and lasting contribution. And we all could benefit by promising a little less and delivering a little more because in the end, only results matter.

The lesson applies to individuals, to organizations inside and out of government, all of us here today starting with me and every one in uniform as well as those representing the many institutions that support and do business with the Air Force will be judged by our ability to meet our obligations and commitments to joint teammates, especially those engaged in combat, to our combatant commanders, to our leadership in the administration and in Congress, and to the American people who watch our actions closely.

As public servants all, and especially as members of the armed services, Americans rightly judge us by the highest ethical standards. In this regard our reputation means everything. In no area is this truer than in how we conduct ourselves with respect to major acquisition programs where we are entrusted with billions, billions, of taxpayer treasure, and are expected to deliver best value for the American people, our only real constituency.

We have learned time and again that there is only one path to success and how to manage major acquisition programs, and that is the straight path. Strictly in accordance with the law and the many regulations that prevent even the perception of undue influence by any stakeholder. We've also learned that our reputation is fragile and that even a single lapse, a single lapse, reverberates for years and invites the justifiable and deserved scrutiny of those who provide oversight of our activities on behalf of the American taxpayer.

For those of us here today old enough to have lived through the years of past acquisition challenges, it is our obligation to instill this lesson in the next generation of acquisition professionals and all others in our Air Force that our reputation is everything to us, and that it is easily tarnished, and it takes years to restore. And teaching that lesson begins by setting the highest personal example. Let's do this together in our family, having made each day an example for the one that follows.

This morning I've looked mostly forward as we face a challenge of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan that will again test our stamina and our commitment to winning today's fight. But I'd like to end with a brief look back and to remember how far we've come.

Through a spirit of innovation, Americans broke us free from the ground over 100 years ago, fulfilling one of mankind's earliest dreams. Our grandparents marveled at the Wright flyer of Kittyhawk, Eddy Rickenbacker's SPAD-13, and of course Doolittle's B-25. Our parents listened in awe to radio reports of Joseph McConnell in his F-86 as he downed 16 MiGs in Korea, or honored the bravery of Rudolph Anderson in his U-2 who

gave his life to help prevent Soviets from establishing a nuclear presence in the Western Hemisphere. We watched, all of us did, Mercury 7 astronauts open up space for all humanity. It was these aviators that inspired the dreams of many in this room to become Airmen. That spectacular scene of America's first steps on the moon, standing at attention during [Duly] Summer at the Air Force Academy in 1969 has never left me. And even as my generation entered the Air Force Academy, it was the heroics of the Belleview and Rixy to which we all aspired.

Common to our heritage is the relationship between the aviator and the machine. Alone together in the vastness of sky or space. The relationship is etched into our very psyche. It is so powerful an idea that it has attracted the best and the brightest that the world has to offer to our nation's service. It is these people who made us the service of technological innovation. But today the evolution of the machine is beginning to outpace the capability of the people we put in them.

We now must reconsider the relationship of man and woman, machine and air. We must question and ultimately answer manned or unmanned in combat, in support aircraft. We must continue to evolve and embrace the culture of technological innovation which has been our hallmark. We have always and will continue to use this technological innovation to provide for the security of our nation. Technology will allow us to better execute defense when in the past only offense was viable.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's think now, let's think now of the possibilities. Think of the possibilities. Let's drive ourselves with a sense of purpose towards these extraordinary possibilities.

As my dear friend Jim Callard would routinely remind, carpe diem. Seize the day.

And as Matt Sladen so eloquently instructed all of us at the untimely conclusion of his active duty career just a few weeks ago, hold the line. Hold the line.

We can do this. And we will.

It's been a pleasure to speak with you today. Thank you very much.

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