

# Air Force Association Strategic Plan 2010 – 2014

## Background/History:

The idea of an Air Force Association can be traced to Billy Mitchell who saw the need for a national civilian society devoted to airpower as a great national asset, dedicated to national security, the betterment of all mankind and having deep 'grass roots' strength. In late 1944/early 1945 General Henry H. Arnold began the process to form an association of former officers and enlisted members of the Army Air Corps. On January 24, 1946 the formation of the Air Force Association was publicly announced with Lt Gen Jimmy Doolittle as National President. The purposes/bylaws have changed somewhat over the years, but have remained remarkably similar right up to today. The original purposes included:

- To preserve and foster a spirit of fellowship
- To assist in keeping the Air Force adequate, strong, and powerful for the defense of our country
- To educate its members and the public on airpower
- To commemorate the memory of those who have given their life in defense of our country
- To perpetuate the traditions of the Air Force

**Strategic Plan:** The Air Force Association prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by establishing a process of Strategic Planning to ensure the mission, vision, and core values of the Association are properly reflected in its actions and programs at all levels of the organization. The Air Force Association Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2013 sets the direction for the Association and updates and builds upon previous annual planning cycles. It is the responsibility of AFA as an Association (National, Region, State and Chapter), as well as every member of AFA, to ensure the AFA Vision is realized and the AFA Mission is accomplished through the concepts set forth in the Strategic Plan.

**Mission:** This is the reason we exist as an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit association. The Air Force Association mission is to:

- ***Educate the public about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation***
- ***Advocate aerospace power and a strong national defense***
- ***Support the United States Air Force, the Air Force family and aerospace education***

We *educate* the American people to create an informed public armed with the knowledge to participate and advocate in the national debate over essential resources. An educated public is also aware of the necessity and contribution of aerospace forces; it is a public who will support and encourage the public who volunteer to serve in those forces. (As used in this plan, the term 'aerospace' should be considered synonymous with air, space and cyberspace). AFA provides public awareness programs, education and financial assistance to further America's aerospace excellence. This is accomplished through open forums, publications and professional education opportunities. An educated public is essential to ensuring an understanding of the needs of the Air Force – a force built on technological superiority. The US Air Force has reiterated the critical need for the Air Force Association's assistance in creating a better understanding of the 21<sup>st</sup> century US Air Force role and missions by the public, elected leadership and sister services.

We *advocate* because we live in a nation founded upon the principles of democratic participation. Our country makes its most important decisions in a forum of free and open public debate. The wisdom of our political system is the recognition that a free people will raise their voices to demand those things that will preserve and enhance the nation. We believe that *aerospace power* and a *strong national defense* are essential to maintaining this nation that we love. Included in a strong national defense is homeland defense, which has been reemphasized in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 attacks on our country and the continuing Global War on Terrorism. Our status as an independent, professional source of credible information allows us to make our case in places and ways denied by statute to our uniformed military leaders. It is our duty as an organization of committed patriots and aerospace professionals to carry the banners of aerospace power and the need for a strong national defense to every level of our grand society. We must speak for those who cannot.

We support the total Air Force, the Air Force family – active, guard, and reserve; veterans and retirees; Air Force civilians; cadets; the families who share their sacrifices; and Aerospace Education. We recognize that aerospace power and a strong national defense rest in the hands of the people, who have chosen to serve, whether in uniform, or the private and public sectors. We acknowledge that service in our armed forces constitutes the highest form of citizenship. Without the dedication of those people our nation could not prevail. AFA support contributes to strengthening these critical defense capabilities by providing educational scholarships, recognition activities, and quality of life programs. In addition, AFA supports programs to encourage aerospace education in related science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and to recognize excellence in the teaching of these subjects.

**Vision:** Our vision is similar to that of the United States Air Force, in that we ‘aim high’ to become ‘simply the best.’ In our case that means:

*To be the premier professional military association in the United States -- dedicated to Aerospace Pre-Eminence and a Strong National Defense.*

Our *professional* nature emphasizes a purpose not associated with individual gain but to service to our society as a whole. We aim to be *widely recognized* to enhance our credibility in advocacy, our effectiveness in support and the quality of our educational message. Our goal is to be beyond ‘best,’ to be *premier*, in other words, an association to which ‘Nobody else comes close!’ We are an association that strives to be relevant to its members and others that we serve; agile in responding to changing needs of the Air Force and our constituents; effective advocates for aerospace power; and responsive to the needs of the nation and the Air Force that we support.

*Aerospace Pre-Eminence* should be viewed in its broadest context. Pre-eminence signifies that we should be superior in all aspects of the technologies associated with aerospace. It encompasses all military operations associated with air, space and cyberspace. We believe that a strong industrial base is essential to all military activities. Therefore, Aerospace Pre-eminence includes the industries and academia that support these activities; as well as industries associated with commercial applications of air, space, and cyberspace. This then provides a membership base of individuals that have in the past or are now pursuing careers in these defined areas. We strive to be a nationally recognized advocate for aerospace excellence through education.

The Association’s dedication to a *Strong National Defense* is to focus aerospace power in the attainment of national strategic objectives. AFA is therefore committed to advocating that sufficient national resources are allocated to meeting these objectives and to further explain the value of aerospace power to enhance the overall effectiveness of the nation’s defense. This entails a dedication to ensuring that military personnel, now and in the future will have the quality life and the required systems and training to perform the mission.

To us this means our association will be characterized by:

- A strong and broad membership base.
- Strong financial position.
- High credibility with the Air Force, the Congress and the public at large.
- Outstanding *Air Force Magazine*.
- Effective communications.
- Effective aerospace education programs.
- Superior Professional development Programs.
- Strong field performance.
- Shared professional values with the Air Force.
- Top quality products and services.

**Core Values:** We embrace the Air Force’s core values, all of which have special significance for our Association, our mission and our vision. We must serve both the public and the Air Force Family by living the **Core Values** on a daily basis to set an example for society to follow.

- **Integrity First** is the foundation of credibility, which is the first requirement for effective advocacy or education. As an independent, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, we have been granted privileges of discretion, access and respect – these are matched with the responsibility to validate the public’s trust by operating in a manner that reflects the highest ethical standards. As with the Air Force that we support, in all professional and personal affairs AFA must individually and as an association conduct ourselves to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
- **Service Before Self** reflects our continuing commitment to serve our nation in as many ways as our time and talents allow. An association of volunteers, we execute AFA’s mission without expectation of any personal gain, but in the belief that service to our nation is an honorable pursuit, worthy of our best efforts.
- **Excellence in All We Do** is our constant goal because we recognize the importance of our mission and the bedrock requirement to “get our message right.” We educate ourselves first to enhance our own credibility; we mentor and develop other members to assume leadership roles in the association; and we make every effort to ensure our products reflect the highest standards of accuracy and balance.

**The Planning Context:**

Our Nation, Air Force, and Air Force Association are at critical junctures in their respective histories. The Nation, including both government and the defense industries, recognizes we are no longer educating sufficient people in the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) to maintain our technological competitiveness in the global marketplace. For the Air Force, legitimate concern for the increased resources needed by the land forces to prosecute Overseas Contingency Operations has diverted attention from the equally pressing need to recapitalize an Air Force whose average aircraft age has reached historic highs. Insufficient budgets produced increased effort and expense to nurse the aging fleet to meet continuing wartime commitments, while cutting personnel to stay within budget ceilings. At the same time, the personnel remaining in the Total Air Force are being asked to perform a more complex array of missions at an increasingly high OPTEMPO. In the case of the Air Force Association, membership has continued to decline and there is significant concern for the leadership and vitality of operations in the field. Partially as a result of these challenges, this is also a time of strategic opportunity for the Air Force Association.

The top leadership of the USAF recognizes the unique role AFA can play in articulating Air Force requirements, and it is likely that Air Force members will come to recognize both the importance of continuing professional education and the value of an independent advocate for their well-being. There is now a national focus on improving STEM education at all levels to enhance our national competitiveness. Federal agencies such as DOE, NASA, NIH, FDA, EPA, and others are embracing STEM as an integral part of their respective workforce development programs. Other agencies are bringing students and teachers into their laboratories and facilities to give them first hand experiences in the outcomes of STEM expertise. The Air Force has advantages that other agencies envy – their ROTC program, including JROTC, and potential partners like the Civil Air Patrol, are established conduits to promote aerospace education. Moreover, Air Force bases, including Air Reserve and Air National Guard facilities, and our laboratories provide a ready venue to demonstrate exciting technology applications.

The Air Force Association, as an IRS 501 (c)(3) organization, must reach out and exploit these opportunities. Credible professional development and support opportunities for our uniformed constituencies and increased outreach to civilian educators can provide a potential source of new members. Partnering with government, industry, and academic organizations through a network of committed State and Chapter organizations, “forward deployed” throughout the country, can extend AFA’s reach even further. Finally, our new tax status offers us increased opportunity to obtain resources for our mission through greater emphasis on philanthropic development.

This plan outlines six broad *strategic themes and related objectives* for the organization that directly support the Air Force Association mission, vision, and values. The Staff, Committees, Councils and Field organizations frame their Objectives, Goals, and Metrics for 2009 – 2013 within the Strategic *Themes and Objectives* established below:

All of the Strategic Objectives are essential to the Association's ability to accomplish its mission. The Association is already doing a fine job in meeting many of them. However, due to their critical importance during this Strategic Planning Period, there are four Strategic Challenges the Association needs to focus on to be more effective.

- ***Increase AFA efforts in educating the public and the nation's policymakers of the criticality and uniqueness of aerospace power as a crucial enabler and asymmetric strength to US national Defense.***
- ***Become a more effective and active advocate for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Air Force, its capabilities and its members by telling the Air Force Story better, both nationally and at the grassroots, especially where the Air Force cannot.***
- ***Reverse the Association's declining membership.***
- ***Grow the Association's financial resources to more fully support the AFA Mission.***

Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
<b>1 – Educate the Public about the critical role of aerospace power in defense of our nation.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conduct programs to educate the public and AFA members about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation.</b></li> <li>• <b>Produce publications, media products and all types of written and electronic communiqués that educate and inform the public and AFA members about the important contributions of aerospace power to our nation's security.</b></li> </ul>
Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
<b>2 – Advocate aerospace power and a strong national defense.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formulate a legislative agenda to credibly and objectively advocate the short and long-term aerospace needs for National Defense and the U.S. Air Force.</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhance AFA's ability to successfully pursue its legislative agenda through national, state, local initiatives and relationships with members of the U.S. Congress and staffs.</b></li> <li>• <b>Support efforts to increase national funding for aerospace education.</b></li> </ul>

Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
<p><b>3 – Support the Air Force, the Air Force family and aerospace education.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Conduct programs to recognize and/or support Air Force active duty, Guard, Reserve, and Air Force civilian personnel at the national and field levels.</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct programs to recognize and/or support dependents of active duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and Air Force civilians achieve their educational goals.</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct programs to recognize and/or support veterans and retirees at the national and field levels.</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct programs to recognize and/or support U.S Air Force Academy, AFROTC, AFJROTC and CAP cadets at the national and field levels.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop strong relationships with Air Force senior leaders at both the national and field levels.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop and maintain a strong relationship with Industry Leaders at the national and local level.</b></li> <li>• <b>Conduct Professional Education Programs for the Total Air Force family.</b></li> <li>• <b>Sponsor or support education programs that emphasize the need for study in aerospace education in related science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) subjects.</b></li> <li>• <b>Sponsor programs to recognize educational excellence in the teaching of aerospace curriculum related to STEM.</b></li> <li>• <b>Promote the awareness of STEM as a national security issue.</b></li> <li>• <b>Facilitate and encourage programs that inspire America’s youth to pursue careers in aerospace related STEM.</b></li> </ul>

Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
<b>4 – Strengthen AFA Field Operations.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop leaders that have the knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm to implement the mission and vision of AFA.</b></li> <li>• <b>Grow the percentage of chapters operating above an established minimum performance level.</b></li> <li>• <b>Provide a net membership gain by increasing field recruitment.</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhance grassroots mission effectiveness by improving internal communications within and between the Field and AFA Headquarters Staff.</b></li> </ul>
Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
<b>5 – Create a Tradition of Giving.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increase number of donors and sustained donors.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop new philanthropic sources of revenue through grants and corporate giving.</b></li> <li>• <b>Establish and execute viable annual, major gift, and planned giving donor programs.</b></li> <li>• <b>Develop recognition programs for major donors, planned and sustained annual giving, and member contributions to AFA and AFMF.</b></li> <li>• <b>Make Development/fund raising a key consideration in planning all activities.</b></li> <li>• <b>Educate the membership about philanthropic support of AFA mission.</b></li> </ul>

Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
<b>6 – Achieve AFA Operational Excellence.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enhance the management of the Association’s physical assets and grow its financial resources.</b></li> <li>• <b>Grow the net membership of the Association.</b></li> <li>• <b>Increase personal value of AFA membership by expanding and improving AFAVBA products and services to enhance member recruitment and retention.</b></li> <li>• <b>Enhance the overall marketing efforts of the Association.</b></li> <li>• <b>Establish a continual self-assessment process to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Association.</b></li> <li>• <b>Foster an appropriate visitor environment which honors the service of all Airmen, sponsor and support events, and develop heritage programs to increase the number of yearly visitors at the Air Force Memorial.</b></li> <li>• <b>Improve the Communications connectivity and outreach to our external customer sets and our AFA membership and Field Leadership.</b></li> </ul>