

Reoptimizing for Great Power Competition: A Senior Leaders Discussion

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Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Wow, as I'm getting my breath back, it has much more to do with this unbelievable force that we all see before us. What an honor to be on the stage today and, with all of you, send a strong message to those who might ever challenge this great country and certainly our Airmen and Guardians. It's a true honor to introduce our next panel. These four incredible leaders are doing tremendous work leading our Department of the Air Force through truly evolutionary times. During our September Airspace and Cyber Conference, Secretary Frank Kendall announced a sweeping review of the department's readiness. That review was intended to reoptimize our Air & Space Forces for great power competition against a peer adversary such as China, which is always growing in strength and has been growing in threat capability. Today, we will find out the results of that review, and there will be an opportunity that I'll help facilitate for audience questions later. But first, Mr. Secretary, over to you, and I'll get outta the way. Thanks, sir.

Frank Kendall:

Good afternoon. Thank you, Orville, and thanks once again to AFA for bringing us together for what I know will be a valuable and significant conference. I want to give a special thanks to you personally, Orville, for your many years of service in and out of uniform. You've made an enormous and lasting impact. Let's give Orville another round of applause. Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to ask you all to join me in a moment of silence. We have recently lost eight Airmen in a V-22 training accident. The Navy lost two SEALs at sea during an operation. The Marines just lost five people in California in a training accident. The Army recently lost three soldiers in the Middle East enemy fire. Young men and women who wear the cause of our country in all services put their lives on the line for the American people every day. Please join me in a moment of silence in honor of their service and that of all our men and women in uniform. Thank you. These tragic losses remind us all of the real world stakes that are at risk and of the bravery of our men and women in uniform. We owe it to all those who have the courage and commitment to volunteer to fight for our country and our values, to give them every advantage that they need to succeed.

With that in mind, I bring us to the most pacing challenge that we have ever faced, China, China, China. Ladies and gentlemen, we are out of time. We are out of time. We are out of time. Why do I say that? It's not that I enjoy sounding like a broken record. It's because, for at least two decades, China has been building a military that has designed purpose built to deter and defeat the United States if we intervene in the Western Pacific. Some of you had a chance to hear the classified threat briefing earlier today. I don't have to explain to you why time is my biggest concern. War is not inevitable, and deterrence, integrated deterrence is working so far. Our allies are a great strategic asset, and together, we can take on any challenge. It's great to see so many of 'em here today.

We're glad to have you with us, but unfortunately, the potential for a conflict at any time is real. AFA titled this conference "Preparing for Conflict." The United States does not seek a conflict. We have every hope that one can be avoided. We are, however, involved in a competition, an enduring competition that could turn into a conflict at any time. We can no longer regard conflict as a distant possibility or a future problem that we might have to confront. The risk of conflict is here now, and that risk will increase with time. Our job, our fundamental mission, the reason we exist is so that we can be ready now and always. The name of the game is deterrence, but deterrence rests on strength and the will to use it. Xi Jinping has told his military to be ready to take Taiwan by force by 2027, even if the US intervenes. He recently told President Biden directly that China will, in his words, "reunify Taiwan with China." He reinforced this to the Chinese people in his recent New Year's statement. He regards, again, his word reunification of mainland China with Taiwan as, quote, "inevitable." We don't know what China will do or when it will do it, but 2027 is just three years away. General Allvin will still be chief of staff of the Air Force then. General Schneider, who just took command of Pacific Air Forces, will still be in command. Freshmen at both the Air Force Academy and those entering ROTC units will be commissioned in 2027. But conflict could happen at any time, even if it is not imminent. It can happen through either intent, miscalculation, or an incident that escalates out of control. We must be as ready as we can be at all times.

Right now, China is watching events in Ukraine where Russia's testing our resolve. If we allow Russia to prevail, and there is a real risk of that if our financial support does not continue, China is almost certain to draw the conclusion that the U.S. lacks the will to preserve the international norm against naked aggression, the norm that we fought to establish 75 years ago. We abandoned Ukraine at our own peril and substantially increased the risk of future conflict both in Europe and the Pacific. Over two years ago, I came into this job knowing that we had to move out on modernization. We started to work on seven operational imperatives. The seven operational imperatives were designed primarily to inform our investments in the future Air & Space Forces. That work had a major impact on the FY '24 budget that was submitted a year ago. We're still, by the way, waiting for the Congress to appropriate the FY '24 funds that we need now to modernize the Air & Space Forces and to defend the nation. Congress, if you're listening, an FY '24 appropriation would be very welcome, and once again, please do not subject us to a disastrous year-long CR and sequestration. On a personal note, it would be very disappointing to me to have been in office for an entire administration and have never received any of the needed resources to be competitive, resources that we identified in the first six months I was in office. The operational imperative and cross-cutting operational enabler work we have started will continue, and it will inform future budgets. Both China and Russia are actively developing and fielding more advanced capabilities designed to defeat US power projection. The need for modernization against capable, well-resourced strategic adversaries never stops, but modernization isn't the only thing we need to do to be competitive. Today we are announcing 24 key decisions we have made to improve both the readiness of the current force and our ability to stay competitive over time, "to continuously generate enduring competitiveness," to use General Saltzman's phrase. After my comments, the other members of the Department of the Air Force senior leadership team will each discuss the changes we have decided to make and why we reached those decisions. The undersecretary will announce three

changes in the Department of the Air Force Secretariat. General Allvin will discuss 15 changes in the Air Force, and General Saltzman will discuss six changes in the Space Force. All of these are intended to make us more competitive and to do so with the sense of urgency. We are out of time.

Over decades, the Air Force adopted to both an austere budget environment and the counterinsurgency counter-terrorism mission. This has moved us away from optimization for the requirements of great power competition. Four years after its creation, it is time to reevaluate the Space Force and how it is postured to provide forces with the ability to compete and to win in space against a peer competitor. Within the department of the Air Force Secretariat, the Department of the Air Force lacks some of the decision support and management tools that are needed for great power competition. To our Airmen and Guardians from the total force, including our Guardian Reserves, you did what your nation asked of you. You deployed to austere regions of the world, combated terrorism and violent extremism, and made the homeland safer. Well done, but as CMSAF Jo Bass says, "What got us here won't get us there." What do we need to be both ready now and to compete over time? We need fully capable units with all the assets they need to fight China or possibly Russia on short or no notice. We need units fully ready to either deploy or conduct operations in place, also on short or no notice. We need mechanisms to ensure these units are in fact ready and address any shortfalls that may be found. We need the right mix of Airmen and Guardians with the skills necessary for high-end combat and to ensure in technological superiority. We need organizations focused on the readiness of the current force, and we need organizations that are focused on the future and ensuring that we have enduring competitive advantages, and we need an efficient and effective pipeline of technologies flowing continuously into more competitive capabilities for our highest priority missions. In short, we need to transition to a great power competition-focused enterprise, and we need to do it now.

For the last four months, we have worked intensely on defining needed attributes and on lines of effort addressing these needs. I'm very grateful to all those who led and participated in this intense effort. Out of that work, we ended up focusing on our four aspects of our enterprise, our people, our readiness, power projection, and capability development. Our decisions are grouped into these four categories. The 24 key decisions we're about to discuss are not the entire story. There are a number of additional steps that we will be taking, and there will be more changes to come. As General Saltzman has noted, we must be focused on competitive endurance. As General Allvin has emphasized, we are going to follow through. We are at an important point in the journey, but we have a long way to go. We have to go forward together as one team ready for one fight and for any fight.

This is a lot to take in. Here's a way to think about the big picture of the changes we will be making: first, existing war fighting units and organizations are going to focus on current readiness; second, we'll create new organizations focused on future competitiveness and future capabilities; third, we are going to enhance and elevate our capacity in key areas critical for success in great power competition; and fourth, we're gonna strengthen our most precious asset, our people.

What's going to happen next? The top-level decisions have been made, but we have a lot of details left to work. We have identified the leaders for the planning and execution of each of these decisions. Each decision will have a timeline for planning and execution consistent with the nature of the decision. Timelines will vary from immediate to over a year. The intent is to avoid disruption or cost imposition consistent with timely and effective execution. Successful execution of these changes will be the Department of the Air Force's and all senior leaders' top priority. The team you see before you will be ensuring that we move out with a sense of urgency, act on, and complete the execution of all the decisions we have made. There is no time to waste. We are going to turn this enterprise and point it directly at our most challenging threat. We are going to follow through on the decisions we are announcing today. We are going to do so with a strong sense of urgency. Change is hard. Losing is unacceptable.

I'm going to turn it over now to the undersecretary to talk in more detail about how we got here and about the changes we'll be making in the Department of Air Force Secretariat. She'll be followed by General Allvin and General Saltzman and then we will take your questions. Thank you. God bless our Airmen and Guardians and all of those who serve.

Kristyn Jones:

Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for that introduction. Thank you to AFA for hosting this incredibly important event, and thank you to our Airmen and Guardians who are defending our freedoms around the world every day. The secretary talked about what's going to happen next and how the implementation of these decisions is a top priority for all of us, but I'd like to first, before I talk about the Secretariat changes, take a step back and discuss the deliberate and robust planning process that got us here.

After the fall AFA, we got to work, and I just don't mean we. I mean the royal we, including the assistant secretaries, the MAJCOM and FLDCOM commanders, the joint staff, Air and Space Force, our total force. We were all engaged in this together. Over 1,500 Airmen and Guardians, along with change management experts from industry, strategic advisors, and others worked together. We embraced best practices, leveraged premier data and business tools, conducted IPRs, TTXs, multiple stakeholder engagements, and daily touch points with all of us. Our approach was expedient, and today marks the end of our initial sprint, but it was equally thoughtful, deliberate, and well informed, and I wanna give a big thank you to everyone who's participated in this planning process so far. Many are not here today, but quite a few of you are, and what I'd like to do is ask anyone who's contributed to this effort so far through our LOE efforts, through our TTXs, through the various things that have happened, if you could please stand up so that we could recognize your accomplishments. Thanks very much.

So did we get it 100% right? I'm not sure yet, but we don't need to be perfect. We need to be effective. We need to be agile. We need to be learning from the initial implementation and being adaptable to the changing threat environment. So because of that approach, we're confident that the changes that we are putting in place will move us forward, and we'll adapt where needed. So the secretary's asked me to outline the changes that we're making to the

Secretariat. Many of you have worked there, but many of you haven't. So what is the Secretariat? It's led primarily by government civilians, our senior leadership that advises the secretary helps to guide the budget, the policy, and the strategic direction of the Air Force. And what did we look at as part of this effort? We analyzed the department's operating model, our processes, our systems, our structure, and so on against the outcomes that we needed for great power competition, and we identified several areas for improvement. We realized that we needed more enterprise solutions, deliberate integration. We needed to prioritize mission success over function, and we needed to make sure that we were doing all of that for one department with two services. So now I'm going to talk about what were some of the things that we're doing and the new organizations that we're standing up.

So first of all, the secretary mentioned the operational imperatives, which are not going away. We're building on those efforts. But in establishing the operational imperatives, the need for integration was clear, integration across programs, across PEOs, across major commands, across our services. We needed to pair operators with technical professionals, and when the secretary wanted to focus on closing the gaps for these operational imperatives, there was no organization that existed. We created a pickup team in order to move forward in these initiatives, and we've had great success in that. We still need our budget, but we've made a lot of progress in identifying the capabilities that we need for the future, and this has led to huge leaps in progress in our ability to communicate with the DOD and on the Hill. But to capitalize on the progress so far, we need to make a permanent office, which we're calling the Integrated Capabilities Office. We'll be looking at capabilities across our services, not in stovepipes. We're enabling end-to-end creation of effects. This organization will help us to prioritize our investments and will be responsible for working with us to determine the next iteration of operational imperatives.

Another thing that we recognized through this effort was that we noted that critical capabilities for integrated deterrence were disaggregated across the department. We needed an effective way to develop, integrate, and synchronize these functions. We needed to increase our competitive advantage and align our efforts with the rest of DOD with our COCOMs and other partners. To address this, we're creating the Office of Competitive Activities, a single organization focused on maintaining competitive advantage across the continuum of operations. Central to integrated deterrence, we'll support our ability to share information with our joint and ally partners while protecting sensitive information.

Another thing that we learned along the way is that we need to consistently improve our ability to resource our strategy through improving our programming and our budget process. We need to be able to better integrate and prioritize across two services and have one departmental narrative. What I've learned so far in my time with the department is that the demand for our capabilities in the Air & Space Forces are continually increasing relevant to the strategic environment, but we're operating in a fiscally constrained environment. So in response to these challenges, we're creating the Office for Program Analysis and Evaluation. The goal of this office is to enable us to better see ourselves using analytically based approaches. As President Biden has said, "Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value."

We need to elevate our processes and our decisions from the MAJCOMs to enable enterprise-wide decisions. We need to fully define the fully burdened cost of our capabilities, bigger than just the platforms or the acquisition programs but everything that's needed to provide those capabilities across the entire spectrum. Many of you know that as DOTMLPFP. We need to assist in gathering the data to align our resources with our priorities and help to make those trade-off decisions, especially when resources are tight as they are right now.

At the end of the process, we need to assess how successful we were in accomplishing what we've planned. So that's the PA in the organization that we're standing in. In addition to that, we also looked at other aspects of our operating model, and we realized that we needed to adjust our governance and the oversight of many of our processes and functions. We needed to enhance those systems and the data that underpins our decision making. We're also implementing enterprise risk management so that we can make better informed enterprise decisions calculating risk throughout the process.

And finally, we're updating our roles and responsibilities of key positions to align with the functions that we need to manage for great power competition at the enterprise level. So why do you care? These changes at the Secretariat will help us to make the needed changes to stay ready and to be more effective. This effort is not about efficiency or doing more with less. Over the last 30 years, we've been incentivized for efficiency and for counter VEO conflict, but the world has gotten more dangerous. Our battle space is increasing, technology is advancing, our decision space is shrinking, the pace of our adversaries is accelerating, and all of this is driving our need to change.

So what will this look like for you? These changes will allow better integration to help us to have more effective interfaces and to operate with other systems. We'll be putting operators into the process early, which means systems will do what you do or what you need them to do when they're fielded, not years later. Improving our analytics means we'll spend the money, time, and effort on the things that we need to be effective and less on those that we don't, and changes to our operating model eliminate delays and barriers for timely access to resources, information, and the support you need. In this strategic environment, you will face incredible challenges, but we know that you will adapt and overcome in a way that our adversaries cannot match. You, our people, are what make us the greatest Air and Space Forces in the world, and the driving purpose behind these changes is empowering you to be successful, to ensure you have the resources, equipment, and training that you need to be successful.

So one final thought before I turn it over to the chiefs. Change is hard, harder than maintaining the status quo, less comfortable than doing what we know. I happened upon an appropriate quote for what we can expect. It might be a little hard to read, but I'll pick on some of the highlights. So this is a picture that's actually a quote from General Allvin's office. It hangs on his wall. The secretary has a very similar one at his home, and in it, President Theodore Roosevelt explains, "The credit belongs to the man," or woman, "who is actually in the arena, who strives valiantly, who spends himself in a worthy cause while daring greatly. It does not belong to the critic in the stands." So I've been in and around government for quite a while, and I know that

organizational change management is always difficult. There's no shortage of individuals that will criticize and question the need for the changes that we're making without ever getting in the arena. We have no time for that. We need to move out. These changes will move us in the right direction.

As the secretary says, "Change is hard, but losing is unacceptable." So my charge to all of you is join us in the arena. Bring your ideas, your feedback, your perspectives. Do so shoulder to shoulder with your teammates, not from the stands. We are out of time, and we must move purposely with a sense of urgency as one team, one fight. We must follow through. So General Allvin, over to you.

Gen. David Allvin:

Thank you, madam secretary, Secretary Kendall. Thanks also to the entire AFA team for providing this platform for us to share this important work with you today, and good afternoon to everyone. I'll tell you as I look at this, what we have to share with you today, I wanna make one thing perfectly clear to everyone in the audience and to everyone watching. Your United States Air Force is the best Air Force in the world, and it's not even close. But what we're talking about here is something different. So for those of you who really loved the Super Bowl yesterday and are already having withdrawal symptoms that the season is over, let me put it in that parlance for you. Imagine you are a championship team, a dynasty team, but you have been optimized to run the I formation that was dominant in the 1980s. But since then, the game has changed, the rules have changed, the players have changed, and everybody's running the spread offense. If you're still running that I formation, it's gonna be harder to win championships. And, oh by the way, the rules favor that. The opponents know that. They're adapting to that, and they're getting better faster. That's what this is about. That's taking this Air Force that has the best talent, the best teamwork, and reoptimizing it to be able to dominate in this game the way it's gonna be played now and into the future. That's what this is about.

So as we look for our United States Air Force, the decisions I'm about to share with you, I wanna pick up on what Secretary Kendall said. These, again, are the four areas that we sort of were bucketed into when we looked at some of the key things we needed to do in the developing people, generating readiness, projecting power, and developing capabilities. We're trying to do two things at the same time, folks. We need to both be ready today with the force that we have. We need to approach that with a sense of urgency. So in the areas that I talk about, the projecting power and the generating readiness, that is about getting our force ready today to project power in the manner it needs to be for the fight should it happen sooner than anybody wants, but we also need to update, reoptimize, dare I say, the processes, the policies, the authorities, and, in some cases, the structures to be competitive for the long term. We need to do both of these at the same time, and that's the goal of these decisions. I'll leave you with one other thing before I get into the decisions. You will see within some of these decisions the word integrating. This is a key word. There's a key theme here. When we set about this, we looked at some of desired attributes for the Department of Air Force that you would want, and many of those terms are like mission over function, enterprise solutions, deliberate integration. With the

pace of change of both the adversary and technology, we can no longer afford to move slowly, and if you wanna move fast and coherently, you have to be in unison. You have to be integrated.

So let's start with the most important part that makes our Air Force successful: our people. One of the key decisions that we are going to expand the role of Air Education and Training Command and rename it appropriately Airman Development Command. We have a loosely integrated form of force development in our Air Force in that we provide the policy, and then we disseminate that largely into the functional areas and different areas disparate throughout our force, and we expect those leaders to be able to interpret it in the way that we intended, but without an organizing construct, a way to align the general direction that we're sending the force, those interpretations largely start to divide and become divergent to a certain extent. This is what we want to rein back in and hold one commander accountable for the alignment of the force development activities, whether that be putting coherence behind our PhD programs and fellowship programs and making sure that they're targeted towards the challenges that our Air Force faces now into the future or, even more importantly, the learning tools that are used throughout the different functions in our Air Force. The Airman Development combatant commander will be the sole commander responsible for integrating the requirements to ensure that, when an Airman goes from one part of our Air Force to another part of our Air Force, they don't need to relearn the systems and the tools, and they can develop faster. By integrating this under Airman Development Command, we believe we're gonna have a more coherent force, single Air Force that can move rapidly through the future in a more coherent manner. We're also reinforcing mission-ready training.

Now make no mistake, our Airmen will be ready for any mission that we train them on, but we have to adapt in that not only teaching the Airmen that come into BMT and our tech training just the technical skills but also an appreciation of the environment that they're in and appreciation that they're gonna need to do things just beyond their own narrow functional specialty. And to their great credit, Air Education and Training Command is already starting this. We're seeing the changes in basic military training and in the tech school. This is something we need to proliferate through all the institutional training so our Airmen know what they're getting into from day one. This also extends to our pre-commissioning training, in our ROTC and OTS, but specifically looking at the Air Force Academy. We have an opportunity to upgrade and advance the cadet experience to ensure that those cadets, once they throw their hats in the air, are ready to lead in in a complex environment. Ladies and gentlemen, we're talking about a doctrine that we say we believe in that's about mission command. It's about empowering at the lowest competent level. If we expect those young Airmen to lead in this complex environment disconnected, solving complex problems in small teams, we need to ensure that providing them that training so they can do it as soon as possible 'cause we're gonna need them as soon as they come into our force.

We are in a competition for talent, and we understand that technical talent is gonna be so critical to our success as an Air Force in the future. We have developed within our officer corps and our enlisted corps tech tracks. We're looking into those to enable those in our enlisted force and officer force to pursue the technical path without having to choose between that and the

leadership path, and we think that's gonna take great strides, but we need mass, people. We need to be able to have technical talent of a very specific variety now and into the future. So we're gonna engage in developing a warrant officer program specifically for cyber and IT professionals to be able to ensure that we have that technical talent now and into the future. Why are we doing this here? We know there are people who want to serve. They just wanna code for their country. They would like to be network attack people and do that business, but everybody needs to see themselves into the future beyond just this assignment or the next. So developing that warrant officer track for this narrow career field we anticipate will drive that talent in and help us to keep that talent. And there's something specific about this career field, why it's attractive and it's a nice match for a warrant officer program. The pace of change of the cyber world, the coding world, software world, it is so rapidly advancing. We need those Airmen to be on the cutting edge and stay on the cutting edge, so we're gonna pursue that, all those in the area of developing our people.

Now when projecting power, we've seen what the threat is doing. We see what the operational plans are requiring. We have a joint war fighting concept. We have an Air Force future operating concept, all these and a force design in the future that tell us how we need to present those forces to be able to fight on day one. Now our current paradigm in how we deploy forces often is that we'll take one of the mission elements, your fighter squadron, bomber squadron, and tankers, what have you, and that we'll take the rest of the forces and sort of crowdsource it from amongst our Air Force, and they will meet in theater. That does not work against the pacing challenge. So we need to ensure that our combat wings are coherent units of action that have everything they need to be able to execute their wartime tasks. Now that could come in the deployable combat wings where they need to pick up, deploy, employ, generate, and sustain power in theater. There are some of our combat wings who do that in place, and we need to ensure that where they reside, where they project power from in place, they have all that they need not only in the current environment but, should the balloon go up, and we anticipate it'll get more complicated, they need to be able to execute that wartime mission in place. And a third type of a combat wing is a wing that we may not expect to deploy as a wing but still needs to provide combat power that can plug into those combat wings so we can have integrated air power for the combatant commander. So when I talk about this ability to project power in a flexible way, this is what we mean. These wings, these combat wings are gonna be standardized in that they will all have these three layers, as we call them, and there's a modularity here. There's a command-and-control layer, which is the commander and the staff, the ability to be able to execute, plan and execute the wartime tasks. The mission layer is the mission generation we're familiar with, so the ops and the maintenance, generating that combat power, and then there's a sustaining layer that ensures that where they're engaged in combat, whether it be in place or deployed, they can sustain with the ability to protect, to have the force protection, to do the logistics, to do the intel, all of those things that will enable that to happen. Now when we talk about modularity, here's what I mean. What if the combatant commander wants different combinations of air power to come and support a particular crisis or conflict? So let's say, for example, we're gonna deploy an F-15E wing. That deployable combat wing needs to be ready to take those forces and deploy forward with all the C2 and all the sustaining. But what if we also would like an F-35 squadron as well? Well, that F-35 squadron should be able to plug

into that unit and go. What if we wanna use tankers to be able to generate sorties or or C-130s to be able to have theater airlift in there? Those mission layers at the squadron layer should be able to plug into this deployable combat wing. This gives you the flexibility of providing that air power to the combatant commander without having the brittleness and the high cost when we tried to do this with composite wings in the 90s. So that modularity provides forward flexibility with coherency at home. In this future fight, we cannot expect that there will be a benign environment in the installations that are here after the deployed wing is gone. We have to be able to not only fight forward but understand what it takes to continue to defend and operate the base at home where we can expect disruptions, perhaps cyber attacks, things to where we need to be able to ensure that we can continue to project that power and push that combat power forward or continue in the in-place combat wings to support that.

Fighting the base is gonna be different than it used to. We need to understand that, and yet the deploy wing commander, we want him or her focusing on that deployed mission. So we are gonna have a severability between a deployable combat wing and the base command. Make no mistake, that base command is gonna need to support that deployable combat wing getting out of town. The primacy is on that combat wing, but we need to ensure we know what's left and it's coherent and it's able to fight the base, so that's the part of the severability between the wing command and the base command. And finally, it's important that we have an alignment with our service component commands and the combatant command in our most critical areas, and one of the more notable ones will be we're elevating AFCYBER from being underneath Air Combat Command to being a direct service component to CYBERCOM. This reflects the importance that we understand that cyber is gonna take in future warfare, and it also enables that direct relationship and for us to better understand and articulate the risk and also develop capabilities within our Air Force to be able to continue to support that. That's projecting power. Now that we know how we wanna project power, how we generate the readiness to be able to do that? We are going to reorient ourselves to more large-scale exercises rather than the smaller scale that have been a product of the last two to three decades. Large scale means multiple weapon systems, multiple capabilities coming together in a combat-simulated environment and showing our ability to execute the mission that's gonna be expected of us in the high-end conflict. Now this is not like we're waking up from zero. On their own, the exercise that we have been undertaking are getting bigger. Red flag has really advanced. Our weapons school integration exercise are moving beyond just what they used to be. So the force gets this. They're doing it organically. They're doing it sort of on a handshake. We're seeing Bamboo Eagle just happen, and it was one of the better joint exercises that we just had, but it wasn't designed from the top down. It was at the level of the weapons officers and the tacticians saying, "We need to do this."

Our Air Force needs to institutionalize this, and we're going to do that. We're targeting FY '25 for our first sort of run at a large multi-combatant command support, which you never support just one combatant command, and there are tensions there that we need to exercise and stress, and we're looking to do that in conjunction with a single AOI targeted at INDOPACOM. These are not designed to be distractions. They're designed to be reinforcements and have enhanced deterrent value as well. This is where we're heading in exercises. Now when we're exercising

large scale, we need to understand what a good exercise was and then what a bad exercise was. Right now, we measure our readiness in C1, C2 ratings of squadrons to be able to execute their mission essential tasks according to their doc statements. That's how we do it. I do not have in front of me a document or a schema that says we know exactly how well we are able to execute part of our Air Force reoperating concept, which is, you know, the fight to get outta town and a fight to get into theater and a fight to get airborne. Those involve multiple parts of our Air Force that we haven't really put together a schema on which we assess readiness for that. In our inspection cycle, we'll follow in on this as well, but we are gonna reorient towards this. Only when you have assessments can you really find out the details and put resources against them. And the secretary mentioned this in the opening. We want the commands who are accountable for the readiness to be able to focus on readiness, and I believe this is probably gonna play an outsized role for Air Combat Command because if you don't know, Air Combat combatant command commands the lion's share of the service retained forces that we have, and for the forces that that command doesn't have underneath their command, there needs to be unity of effort to deal with those other forces that are combatant command assigned to STRATCOM or TRANSCOM. The idea that someone can be accountable to synchronize and oversee these large-scale exercise to look at Air Force readiness, not just individual readiness of units, that's gonna be very important to understand this comprehensive readiness, and we anticipate an outsized role in Air Combat Command to be able to do that. Once we know that, find the shortfalls in our readiness, whether it's readiness in our ability to deploy or employ or sustain, this is where we wanna put our prioritized readiness, again, prioritized support against.

Folks, we don't have the money, and peanut butter spreading it to share the pain is not the way we need to do it. We need to understand those critical capabilities, those critical vulnerabilities. We only know that through exercising 'em and assessing 'em, and then we can make sure that we have the health on the shelf for the right things we need to do to employ whether agile combat employment scheme or generation of combat power at a tempo that's faster than what we can do now. That's where we need to put our prioritized support. This is all in our generating readiness category, and develop capabilities. I mentioned that we're gonna have an outsized role for Air Combat Command, and we're gonna have those commands that are accountable for readiness focusing on readiness. The way we have it right now, those commands need to focus on today's readiness and, at the same time, focus on tomorrow's capabilities, and when you do that, by your nature, you are intentionally or you are deliberately making internal trades because you're trying to manage the risk of each, which means you're optimizing for your current function, your part of the Air Force. You are not optimizing for the whole Air Force, but we ask you to do both. We're not doing that anymore. So what we are doing is we are going to stand up a three-star command, Integrated Capabilities Command. It's just what the name infers, is that the capabilities will be integrated. We need the expertise that comes from the current MAJCOMs that understand about the future, but they will design and they will put the requirements in and test one Air Force, not some of our functional Air Forces and we have to put 'em together later. That's important.

We have a force design, and we wanna ensure that we develop an Air Force that can improve upon that force design or test that force design, and this is one of the things that Integrated

Capabilities Command will do. This is where the operators will test operational concepts against our force design. They will also ensure that, when we have modernization initiatives, those are rationalized to ensure our current force gets to the future force in a way that makes sense. So we do not unintentionally put modernization on platforms that really don't have a long-term play in the future force design. That wastes money. We don't have money to waste. We don't have time to waste. That will be one of the roles of this Integrated Capabilities Command, not only to look into the future but to make sure we can get to the future through a prioritized set of requirements that supports one force design for one Air Force. Now in order to do that, they need a counterpart, and this is an entity that will fall under Air Force Materiel Command. So replicating some of the successes that we had with the operational imperatives in which we looked at it from the operator's perspective and we also looked at the technical feasibility, and through that, through that partnership and relationship and back and forth, we developed these operational imperatives, developed capabilities that made smart modernization decisions. We shouldn't have to stand something up like that up ad hoc. We need to institutionalize this, and this will be one of the parts of the relationship between this Integrated Development Office and the Integrated Capabilities Command. Additionally, the Integrated Development Office under Air Force Materiel Command will appreciate having a single demand signal. After these modernization priorities are assessed and developed for consideration and decision, then that comes as a single demand signal rather than multiple demand signals to Air Force Materiel Command, one signal, one Air Force in the future. These two will work very much very closely together.

We're making a couple other changes within Air Force Materiel Command. To account for the fact that nuclear business is our business, has been since we stood up, basically, and always will be, we need to ensure that we don't take our eye off the ball. Has been wont to happen in the past. We're not there now, but we need to make sure the organization helps us to stay on focus here. So we're taking our Nuclear Weapons Center and we're elevating it to a Nuclear Systems Center, in which case it goes beyond just its current remit and is vested with additional authorities to drive integration across the nuclear material management enterprise to make sure it is a true center of excellence that can have a coherent nuclear management, material management enterprise that is responsive to what we know should and is a demanding customer in Air Force Global Strike Command, and we're elevating that rank to three star, appropriate to its importance. In the case you haven't checked the papers lately, we're in the midst of one of the largest recapitalization of the nuclear enterprise or perhaps a recapitalization in Department of Defense history right now. And that's not gonna go away in a couple years. It's gonna be with us for a long time. So we're elevating the program executive office for ICBMs to a two star, appropriate to the task and the scope of responsibility. In addition to that, we're standing up an Information Dominance Systems Center. Throughout the years as we would develop platforms that were parts of functional Air Forces that made up our entire Air Force, some things sort of got dropped off the table. Electronic warfare, C3 battle management, some cyber, those things didn't always make the cut because they were sort of, if not afterthoughts, they weren't the main thing. These are gonna be central. When we are evolving into an Air Force in which systems should have a predominance over platforms, we get the systems right, we attach the platforms to it rather than we build an Air Force around platforms.

This needs to take center stage. C3 battle management took an unnatural act to be able to get it integrated into a system that is now starting to catch fire, but having this system center puts these together and makes sure they're integrated and sends a single, again, a single demand system to our force design to ensure that integrates with these systems. So this will be established, and we will have a run by a three star as well.

Now some of these capabilities on either one currently reside in Air Force Lifecycle Management Center. So we are appropriately renaming it really what it is, which is it's really looking over the platforms and the munitions, so we're just basically renaming it the Air Dominance Systems Center. These are within our capability development piece. These are the 16 key decisions, 15-plus key decisions we're gonna make.

I will tell you a couple things before I hand it over to General Saltzman. We are committed to these. We do not have them exactly right, and I'm unapologetic to stand here in front of you and say I do not know the exact final destination, and here's why, because if we wait to move to have those final answers, we will be too late. We have to have trust and confidence that the analysis we've done has put us on the right path, and I'm fully confident in that. We need to move. We have the right vector, and we can adjust once we get on course, but you have to be moving to be on a course to adjust course, and that's what we're gonna do. And as the undersecretary said, "Let's do it together," cause those from the sidelines don't help. We got work to do, and I'm looking forward to moving out. Let me turn it over to General Saltzman.

Gen. Chance Saltzman:

Good afternoon. How's everybody doing? Batting fourth in this lineup is terrible. It's like home run, home run, home run. Now the pressure, I'm standing there at the plate sweating. Orville, thanks for everything. Thanks for all you've done for the Air & Space Forces and for this association. It's tremendous. I went to my first Air Force Association conference when I was a cadet in college, and I have no idea what was said on any of the stages, even though I was at a lot of those sessions. What I remember is the after parties, the hospitality suites. So just to tell you how long ago it was, I got adopted by the command chiefs of SAC, TAC, MAC, ATC, and they shepherd me around to all of the hospitality suites, and I think I learned more about the Air Force in those evening events with them than I did in the three and a half years in ROTC. But like I said, I don't remember much of what happened on the stage, so I'm a little daunted here by addressing, seems like 6,000 people, knowing that they're more excited about getting to the after parties than maybe listening to me as their last speaker today.

But some important things do happen on the stage. For instance, I got a poster when I was a cadet at the AFA Convention that said the YF-22 beat the YF-23 in the fly-off, which turns out was a big deal for the Air Force. I don't know. So I think if you pay attention to the activities that are being described here, you're gonna see the course of your Air and Space Forces for probably the remainder. Who's the youngest in the crowd? Who thinks they're the youngest in the crowd? Raise your hand. You're not. Who else? You're gonna see these changes play out for the rest of your career, I promise, and these are fundamental shifts because we have to get ready. We must reoptimize for great power competition, and it occurred to me as I was listening to

these presentations that this idea that we must reoptimize is one way to say it, and another way to say it is we get to reoptimize for great power competitions. Imagine the alternative where leadership wasn't too excited about what was going on in geopolitics and with the threat environment, and you've probably got the resources you need. "We train ya. Just go do your job and get better at it, and we'll address the threats as they come." That is not an Air or Space Force that I wanna be a part of, and we get to reoptimize because this leadership team is telling you, "You're gonna get the resources. We're willing to change fundamentally everything about our services so that we can get after the pacing threat, the PRC and the challenges they face." What a tremendous opportunity. Now before I really talk about the activities that the Space Force is engaging in, let me kind of set the stage 'cause there's no question that the Air Force and the Space Force have the same goals when it comes to reoptimizing. We know what we need to do, we know what the challenges are, but we are coming from very different perspectives and very different places in our history, and I think that's gonna challenge us even more on both sides because we have to team together. We have to be integrated.

But if you'll go to my next slide, the idea that space is like any other war fighting domain. It is evolving, and it has evolved. Way back when I was attending AFA conferences as a cadet, we talked about space in terms of the strategic importance. There was a tiny number of space-faring nations. It was basically the US versus the Soviet Union. Space capabilities were being used for strategic purposes, for competing narratives in the Cold War, for providing our most senior decision makers up to the president of the United States, critical strategic intelligence, and that was the capabilities that the space brought to military organizations. But it didn't take long after the Gulf War to realize how much more space could offer, and after the Gulf War, we started to see the value that space capabilities could bring to the tactical edge, what it could do for precision, what it could do for over the horizon communications. We talked about things like Blue Force tracking from space. We talked about putting data in cockpits to cut the timelines between what it took to get from sensor to shooter. We invested heavily in trying to build the networks, the data link structures to bring space to the tactical edge, but primarily, that was about just providing the services that made what the joint force did a little better.

The next evolution, unfortunately, over the last decade or so, what we've seen is now we have to recognize that space is a fundamentally different domain. It is a contested domain. Now if we're gonna be successful in meeting our military objectives, we have to fight for, contest the space domain, and achieve some level of space superiority if we're gonna continue to provide the services that the military needs, that the joint force needs, and, at the same time, make sure that we have the capabilities to deny the adversary, the PRC's ability to target our joint force with their space enabled capabilities. They have built a network of sensors that has both increased the range and accuracy of their weapon systems. We have to be able to deny that. That shift to an operational phase where we have to now build and gain and maintain space superiority in order to continue to provide the services that the force has come to count on is what the real transformation is.

And so if you'll go to the next chart, let me just explain maybe by analogy what that effort looks like. In some sense, we are trying to convert a Merchant Marine into a Navy, and Secretary

Kendall's used this analogy. I think it's a good one because it can be used in so many different ways to explain what we're trying to accomplish here. When you're using a Merchant Marine, you're basically taking advantage of a safe and secure domain to provide services in the most efficient way you can, the most efficient way you can, and to some degree, that's what your military space organizations were charged with. The space domain was relatively secure, it was pretty safe, and our job was to provide services to the joint force from that domain, and we did it very well and we did it very efficiently. And now we find ourselves in a contested domain where the charge to the force is much different. Now as a part of a joint force, we have to be able to contest. We have to secure the domain so that we can continue to use it and protect the joint force from space-enabled targeting. Now think about what that analogy means. The Merchant Marine is very good at what it does, but you can't just tell the marine that they need to have a warfighter spirit. They just need to think like warfighters and they're gonna be successful in contesting the domain. They don't have the right equipment. They don't have the right training. They don't have the right operational concepts to do the task that they've been given, and I feel like that's what we have to embrace. We have to understand that we have to transform this service if it's gonna provide the kinds of capabilities to include space superiority that the joint force needs to meet its objectives. That's the transformational charge that's at hand.

Next chart. I believe every warfighting endeavor should start with our people because it's one of our biggest asymmetric advantages. We may not have as many as other nations do, quite frankly, in their domains or in terms of the other services here, but we punch well above our weight. But we have to be able to give our people the training, the education, the experiences that they're gonna need to be successful in the high ops tempo, the high tech environment that they're gonna face. And the legacy process that we had, the legacy developmental opportunities were good, but they weren't sufficient for this new charge. Again, we can't just tell the Merchant Marine, "Do a better job, be more like a warfighter." We have to give them those experiences. One of the activities that we're gonna pursue initially as a part of this is redesigning the officer training course, the initial skills training of our officers.

It's my contention that it is very difficult to separate satellite operations, cyber operations, and the intelligence that you need to understand to deal with the domain into these stovepipes that we've traditionally come and grown up around. If the satellite operator doesn't understand the networks that disseminates the data and doesn't understand how to provide that data in a threat environment, they are not gonna be successful, likewise with the other disciplines. So we are building an initial training course that gives our officers all of those fundamental training, all of those activities. I believe that a cyber operator will be far better at their job defending the network if they understand the satellite operations and they understand the intelligence and the threat and how to ask the right questions to facilitate performing their job better. Likewise with intelligence. If you've been through the training as a satellite operator, if you understand the networks, imagine how you view the foundational intelligence that's required. You can ask better questions. So we're gonna start with new career paths, we're gonna start with new training, and we're gonna start with the officers, but that's not gonna stop there. We have to recognize that all of our operators and all of the Guardians are gonna need similar kinds of

training and experience different from what they've had in the past if they're gonna be successful in this high ops tempo, very technically demanding environment that we're facing in the future.

Next. It really comes down to readiness, and I thought General Allvin did a great job of talking about, you know, what we're trying to get ready for and what changes that has to make. When I think about readiness, I go back to my squadron commander days, and I think about the four elements of readiness that I had to report on every month, and for those that have been through that experience, you kind of have 'em memorized. It's the people, it's the training, it's the equipment, and it's the sustainment, and those are still true for the Space Force. Those are true for any force, no matter how you describe it. But the legacy force that we had, our roots, again, in that Merchant Marine model were built around efficiency, built around a benign environment. So the standards for readiness that we kind of held our forces to was different. It wasn't built for the domains that were facing a contested domain. So we have to look at our personnel. Do we have the right mix of officers, enlisted, civilians in our units to be able to do the kind of work that our workforce needs to do to be successful? Is our training, which, for years, it was sufficient to say that procedural training, procedural competency in operating the weapon systems is sufficient. That was what was necessary to safely and efficiently operate our systems on orbit. As soon as you put a Red Force in the mix, as soon as you put a threat in the mix, it radically changes your training. You have to have advanced training. You have to have tactics training. You have to understand how you work together in comm, outta comm with other units in order to continue to achieve the kinds of effects in a contested domain when an adversary, a capable adversary is doing everything they can to stop you from being successful. That's a different training proposition. So we need to build that training infrastructure, the test infrastructure to validate our tactics and give the reps and sets to our operators so that they'll be successful against this adversary that we know we're probably gonna face.

Our equipment. As I talked about, the Merchant Marine didn't have the right equipment to be a Navy. Likewise, the systems that we've built were designed for a benign environment. We have to redesign our architectures, redesign the systems to do our mission so that they're resilient against an adversary. We have to understand that they have to be resilient under attack. They still have to be able to perform that mission, and if you go to the sustainment piece, a lot of our systems have to be available continuously, 100% availability in some cases, even knowing that that's probably impossible to achieve. The sustainment models have to be there. So when we talk about parts for ground-based radars, it's gotta be there. When we talk about how we're gonna do upgrades to change algorithms in our decision support software, that sustainment's gotta be fast because the algorithms are gonna need to change fast because the threat is changing fast. All of that are new standards. We have to rewrite the standards for readiness centered around a contested domain, and then once we've written those standards, once we put the forces through that kind of training, those kinds of generation drills, then we have to figure out whether we're ready. We have to be able to assess, and that's from the individual all the way up to combined operations in a joint environment. Are we doing the drills, the assessments, the evaluations, the multi-unit exercises, the rehearsals, the war games, the joint

integrated exercises, all for a purpose, a specific purpose, building as we go to assess whether or not we are ready to engage an adversary like the PRC?

Next chart. Now we get to one of the more critical aspects of this. The sustainment portion of equipment is kind of a near term. It's like flight line maintenance. We have to be able to enhance our capabilities quickly, but that's not the large changes, the big changes. Are we developing capabilities for the long term to continue to have advantages and maintain those advantages for years to come in the future? Are we evaluating the future operating environment? Are we evaluating the missions that we're gonna be asked to take on? Do we know how we're gonna accomplish that? And over the first four years in the Space Force, we focused on some of the systems. We focused on maybe a resilient architecture and the kinds of systems we thought were gonna be necessary for space superiority. We didn't really have the mechanisms to evaluate all the other components that have to be in place. What's the MILCON requirement? What facilities do we need? How many SCIFs do we need? How many units are gonna be required to perform that mission? How do these units work together? What's the operational concepts? That is what a futures organization can provide for you. So we are going to establish a Space Futures Command that is combined of three centers that starts to ask these fundamental questions, that puts together a force that we can offer to combatant commanders that doesn't just have the systems. It has the tactics, the training, the operational concepts. It is leveraging the right technologies to be successful.

The first center will be a concepts technology center. It will evaluate the future operating environment. What's the threat gonna look like? What are the technologies that the adversary's gonna use and that we need to be able to use, and how is that fundamentally gonna change the nature of our operations? How do we combine our tactics into operational concepts? Think about the type of space domain awareness that we're gonna have to do out to XGO, cis-lunar. How are we gonna do that as we start to collect data on moving target indications? What's the battle management process that your Space Force will use to make sure that the data from the sensor gets to the shooter on an operationally relevant timeline? This is the kind of thought process that's gonna go through this Concepts & Technology Center. And when we have some ideas, we're gonna have to figure out whether those ideas are good, whether they need to change, or we need to scrap 'em. So we're gonna build a Wargaming Center that helps us evaluate technologies. It helps us experiment with new technologies. It'll help us validate concepts through war games, through tabletop exercises. We'll throw away the bad. We'll learn quick. It's a learning campaign to make sure we put all this together effectively. And then the third center I hope you're more familiar with because we are gonna leverage the work that's been done at the Space Warfighting Analysis Center for years now. It is the data-driven analytics that takes these ideas, puts them through the system, and allows us to use physics-based models, modeling and simulation, high-end data analytics with PhD-level analysis that says, "Here's the right options to pursue. Here's the most cost-effective way to do this. Here's something that can work in this future operating environment," and we're gonna take all those together, and that's gonna inform our objective force, the force design. What is it that the Space Force is gonna need now, in the near term, and in the long term to maintain that competitive endurance?

And the last capability, the last part of this is projecting power. This is about presenting the right kind of forces to our combatant commanders so that they can be effective with the tasks that we give them. It's gonna come in two basic flavors. One is the combat squadrons and combat detachments that become our units of action. Now, in the past, we've had mission squadrons. You might be familiar with Second Space Operations Squadron that flies the GPS constellation, right? It has all of the responsibilities in the past of doing the day-to-day operations of the constellation, as well as all of the organized training equip functions, and that worked fine when you weren't in a contested domain. But now that we're in a contested domain, we have to increase the capacity of those units so they can do the advanced training, do the high-end enhancements that are gonna be necessary. So it became important for us to separate out what the unit of action was from the service responsibilities of keeping that unit effective, and so combat squadrons becomes our unit of action. It is the employed in place concept that says, "This is what you get, combatant commander, to do the day-to-day functions that are required." But we are gonna retain some capacity in our mission squadrons to do the high-end advanced readiness activities, and we will rotate them through a force generation model so that the people on the ops floor are both ready if we have to fight tonight against the high-end adversary but also can respond to those day-to-day taskings.

And then the second part of this is we are going to establish service components in the combatant commands as the receiver of these forces, as the command-and-control element, as the experts inside the combatant command's domain that allows them to operate at that commander's ops tempo with that commander's priorities and be able to integrate effectively all of the space capabilities into the plans. Rather than being added on after the fact, we are gonna be there every single day inside those combatant commands dealing with the priorities, the challenges, the opportunities that the combatant command has to wrestle with. Only through that detailed integration do we think we could effectively present the kind of forces and effects to optimize for great power competition.

And then my last chart simply rolls this all together and says what we're really doing is building combat-ready forces. That's at the top of the chart because if we can't do that, if we can't build combat credible units, we have no chance of deterring a very capable and determined adversary. Next, what we have to do is make sure that we are pursuing the right kinds of technologies, we are exploring, we are validating, and we are fielding the kinds of technologies that are gonna allow us to maintain our advantages in space. And then finally, it's about the people, making sure that our people have combat competencies. They understand what it takes to fight and win in the space domain against a great power, and that's gonna be a redesign of the career paths, a redesign of training, education, and experiences to make sure they're ready for this fight. We're out of time. We have to be ready, we have to be ready tonight, and tomorrow's gotta be more ready than today, and we gotta keep looking at enduring advantages into the future.

So with that, I challenge all of you to jump on board. We get to reoptimize for space. It's not that we must reoptimize for space or for a great power competition. We know that. We get to

reoptimize. This is the opportunity of a lifetime to shape these forces against the threat that's gonna challenge our country the most. Thank you for your time.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Mr. Secretary or Undersecretary Kristyn Jones, General Allvin, General Saltzman, thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I think you all recognize there's a great deal to unpack from the past four incredible presentations, and no doubt this crowd has a number of questions. I promise we'll do our best to get to you over the next few minutes. The amount of change here is obviously significant, and it feels a bit to me like the biggest change possibly since the Air Force stood up in 1947. Mr. Secretary, you came into office with a list of seven operational imperatives. Can you review and reinforce a bit and help us all understand better how those operational imperatives will be affected by what we now know as GPC reoptimization?

Frank Kendall:

Yeah, there's been a little unintended confusion maybe about all this. The idea behind the operational imperatives was to organize work on solving operational problems that needed to be solved to stay competitive from the modernization perspective. So what they were all about was solving the problems of finding the most cost-effective solutions to that list of seven operational problems, basically, and they were designed to form investments that would lead to the future forward. Some of them were a little more near term, but generally speaking, that was the intent, and they sort of got interpreted as being the thing we were doing across the department. That really wasn't the intent, but there was no real harm done by that, I don't think. As we moved on, we learned that there were more operational problems we had to solve and address, you know, threats to our mobility assets that we hadn't taken into account initially, expanding EW threats, things like that. So we created the cross-cutting operational enablers to address some of those. But it is all a learning process, and as I interacted with the chiefs and others and visited units, it became clear that we needed to do some other things as well, and in a lot of conversations that the changes that you heard about today and that you'll see in the literature we're gonna provide, gonna lay out the next set of steps we need to do that are focused on the current force. These are things we're gonna do quickly, and they're gonna reorient us towards better preparation, if you will, for conflict that just might happen, and we need to be as ready for it. We owe it to our men and women in uniform to be as ready, to get them as ready as possible in case a conflict happens. So that's the distinction between the two. The operation aren't going away because the need for modernization isn't going away. They'll probably evolve depending upon what are the most severe problems we have to solve at the moment, and they already have. That'll continue. You know, we're in a sprint to get better and improve our readiness posture, but we're also in a marathon to stay competitive over time. We got a lot of hard work to do. This is the most difficult, intense, focused threat that I've ever seen us face, and we're just gonna have to respond accordingly, and that's gonna require a lot of work in a lot of different areas.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, thank you, sir. To get the questions rolling, we have public affairs professionals, Air Force and, I guess, Space Force Public Affairs professionals walking around with mics. As you take the

mic, please try to make your questions, all of which I'm sure we know are important, as succinct as possible so we offer multiple opportunities for the questions. Again, please make your way to, or one of our professionals will hand a mic out to you if you'll please raise your hand, and the questions will be answered on a first come, first served basis. I'll do my best to moderate here, and unfortunately, time really does not allow for followup, so one question, please. We'll start, I think, over on my right if we could bring the lights up a little bit. Our leaders here on the stage will be able to see you, I'll be able to see you, and we'll see if we can manage this to be as effective as possible and get as many questions answered as possible. Please start here on the right.

Audience Member:

Good afternoon. I'm Senior Airman Kailey Viator from the 3rd Audiovisual Squadron. My question is for General Allvin. Sir, are MAJCOMs as we know it going away, and, if so, can you elaborate what that will look like?

Gen. David Allvin:

Here's the awesome thing. A junior Airman is asking that sort of a question, which means our Airmen are engaged. Our Airmen are interested. I appreciate that. I love the question, too, quite frankly. What's in the name? So I actually, I saw this, you know, got a little bit of hubbub before and this idea of MAJCOMs, and I actually did some research about the history of MAJCOMs, and it's not pure. MAJCOMs have had different meanings attached to them throughout our history, major operational commands and then we're supporting commands beneath them. To directly answer your question, what we are doing is we are trying to rationalize our command structure against what we do so we can understand that. We have two types of commands. One command is a service component command. So, for example, USAFE-AFAFRICA is a service component command. That's the Air Force service component command to those two combatant commands. PACAF, the same thing with INDOPACOM. AMC, some people go, "Is that a service component?" Yes, that's AFTRANS, is a service component command to the combatant command. So if the question is will the current structures go away, the answer is no, but we are going to have or understand a naming convention that are service component commands. By the way, Global Strike, same thing. They're abstract. They are the service component to the combatant commands. We have service component commands that are responsible for the readiness and for forces to present to their combatant command from that service. There's another type of command, basically an institutional command. Air Education and Training Command, soon to be Airman Development Command, is an institutional, why? Is accountable for the institutional development of our Airmen. Air Force Material Command, institutionally responsible for the acquisition and sustainment of the capabilities, the equipping of all of our Air Force. We're about to have another one called Integrated Capabilities Command, which is gonna be accountable and responsible for developing the capabilities into the future, force design the capability development of our future force for the entire Air Force. And then Air Combat Command is also an institutional command because it does not have a direct service component to a combatant command, but it is accountable for those forces that are service retained, and we are gonna have it be institutionally responsible for synchronizing the readiness of our overall Air Force mission. So will AMC go away? Nope. Globe Strike? Nope. If those are

the questions, then those actual entities will still exist, but I think we need to recognize 'em for what they are. Major, minor, mid-level, I think the names are what I think people might be getting caught up in. The actual institutions will remain with one addition, and that is gonna be Integrated Capabilities Command, but actually understanding to ourselves and to the joint world and externally, this is what we do. We've got some stuff institutionally, and we've got some stuff that supports the combatant commands, and so that is how we envision the future of those highest level of commands in our Air Force.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Thank you, General Allvin, and if we could please go to the left for the first person with a microphone in their hand, thank you.

Audience Member:

Thank you. My name is Ken Ousley. I'm a proud lifetime member of the Air & Space Forces Association, and I'd like to hear what are your thoughts or maybe even your requirements on the industry side with how you change. What would you like to see from us? Thank you.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Mr. Secretary?

Frank Kendall:

That's an interesting question. It's a tough question. I guess one of the things I would like from industry, and there's a burden on us to help you do this, I think, is more assistance in solving our operational problems. We were talking about this a little bit earlier in an earlier meeting. There's been a tendency in the industry to kind of wait for an RFP, and that once the government defines its requirements, and the government's sort of worked that way, too. We sort of said, "okay, we'll figure out over here in the government side what we want, and when we're ready, we'll tell the industry what to do." My experience going back to the Cold War was in a much more cooperative relationship between government and industry where we worked together to solve operational problems, and it was advantageous to industry to be part of that process because they could influence requirements. They could, from the government's perspective, make them better, but they also helped the government understand what industry had to offer, where individual members of the industry could be more competitive. So I think a better working relationship where industry works more to help solve our problems, and I'd also, quite frankly, like to see more industry investment, more investment in IR&D. Now again, we need to reward that by the way we do business, but the defense industry tends to buy back a lot of stock, dividends I have no problem with, but our industry investments in IR&D are relatively small. You know, we pay for R&D generally with industry, and there are good reasons why that's the case. It's very risky to do all of new product development on the industry side 'cause the uncertainty of what the government will do. We need to try to help with that, but on the other hand, the industry can go a lot further in maturing technologies and getting ready than they currently are. They make relatively modest investments in that area. So I think those are two of the things that would be top of mind in terms of better cooperation and better working together as a team.

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks, Mr. Secretary. On the right, and it's okay to direct your question to one of our panelists, please, on the right.

Audience Member:

Thank you, sir. I am Airman Carlisle from Cannon Air Force Base, and my question to General Allvin. Since October 1st, we lost five members who took their lives, and it affects everyone heavily. I would say that our commander, he's very well aware of the situation, and he and chief, very supportive, very caring. I didn't see them yet, but I would like speak highly of them. Last week, we had quality of life event, and in the end, we had Q&A sessions like this one, and one question from online was, "Can we make two-year control tour to Cannon to all E-1, E-4 as those who didn't develop their mental capacity yet?" Because I'm sure that being high-ranking individuals, you know how to persevere. You know how to not give up after another failure, and I would like to say that it's very important for E-1, E-4 to also have a chance to develop those mental capacity and be strong. Honorable friend Kendall, he started his presentation talking about those who lost their lives, and ma'am, you talk about that we have to be effective. We have to be agile. It's hard to be effective after another all call where commander with a heavy heart regret to inform us, and so General Saltzman, he talked about using this opportunity of lifetime to speak up, and sir, I kindly ask you from all my heart, please consider this change to make two years control tour for all E-1, E-4 to Cannon, because losing our Airmen is unacceptable. Thank you so much.

Gen. David Allvin:

Thank you. Thank you. That took some courage as well. Thank you very much for that.

Audience Member:

Sir, you cannot imagine what's going on inside of me. Adrenaline here.

David Allvin:

And I don't pretend to, but that speaks to the passion that you have for your fellow Airmen. I will tell you that your leadership is very engaged at Cannon, but I understand what you're asking for. You're asking for a larger enterprise change. There are so many things that go into the pros and cons of who gets stationed where and when and for how long. But here's what I will promise you. We'll get back to you, and we will be able to describe the rationale why we do what we do. There are Airmen who are serving in very difficult places, and I will tell you that Cannon is a fantastic mission, but it takes some resilience there. And so trying to find the right combination of access to care, of support activities, as well as the right duration to ensure that we can develop our Airmen in many different skill sets throughout, that requires a delicate balance. But I will tell you, I've heard you, and I do understand that when tragedies such as this strike, it hits and it hits not just the immediate family, but it hits the entire base in the wing. So thank you very, very much. I will not give you an answer today, but I will tell you I know who I'm going to ask, and I know they're already taking down the notes. That is a promise to you. Thank you very much for that question.

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

And if we could please move back to the left, and again, please direct your question, if you wish, directly to one of our panelists.

Audience Member:

Hi, Bruce McClintock from the RAND Corporation. I wanna say thank you, first of all, to the DAF leadership for the initiative here. It is incredibly important, and I appreciate General Saltzman's view that this is an opportunity that needs to be seized. Question for Secretary Kendall. Is this all revenue neutral, and how are you gonna convey the importance of this to Congress if it's not? And then a social question so I stay within one question for General Saltzman. How do your initiatives relate to space command and the Army vision for the future of space? Thank you.

Frank Kendall:

Orville, could you repeat it? I didn't quite get it about the army's futures command. He asked about the comparison of the Army's futures command? Is that the question?

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

I think so. Please.

Audience Member:

You need me to restate it? So I'm not trying to get two questions here. I was gonna talk to General Saltzman later about how his vision relates to what the Army is saying about the future of how they're going to essentially create organic space electronic warfare units through their war fighting mechanism. But more important question for you, sir, is, is this revenue neutral?

Frank Kendall:

Yeah, I'm having a hard time hearing the question. I'm sorry.

Kristyn Jones:

Revenue neutral.

Frank Kendall:

Revenue neutral. Ha! I can do that. Okay. We set out to be not cost imposing with all these changes that we just talked about. We knew going in that we were unlikely to succeed, but that was the goal we set. I lived through the Army, went through a major reorganization where they formed brigade combat teams years ago, about 20 years ago, and it was a huge costing position in the Army, led to a lot of moving of units around, and so on. We're not gonna do that. We can't afford it, first of all, and we don't think it's necessary. We're gonna minimize disruption in general. So we are forming some new headquarters. You heard about some of them. We're gonna try to put the headquarters where the people are instead of some other way of doing it, and we're gonna try to do things in a way which does not impose a lot of cost. Now there's the financial cost of doing things, there's also the disruption associated with doing things, and then there's a political difficulty of doing things in some cases. So we're gonna keep all those in mind

as we work through this. Mission's gonna come first. We really need to put the capabilities we talked about together, but I think we can do so in a way which minimizes cost. We have nothing in the '24 or the '25 budget for any of these changes. If we need any funds in those periods, we'll do it through reprogramming. There's a possibility that we'll have some funds in '26. We've got a few more months to work on that, and as we do the detailed planning of implementation, we'll try to identify any needs there. But I think, generally speaking, these changes are gonna be done within existing resources, which, in some cases, is probably gonna mean we'll have to stop doing some of the things we're doing now, and part of the planning process would be try to identify those. I'll let the chiefs maybe add a little bit to that or the under. She's been working this pretty hard.

Gen. David Allvin:

Secretary, to add to that, I do believe that when I think about the most likely near-term costs, I believe that, if we're gonna do a major large-scale exercise, that may be something where we go and look within our, because that does cost money, and I believe we need to look at where that might be in our existing exercise funds or O&M funds, but those are pretty thin as well. So that becomes one of the first challenges, and, again, if we can get with Congress and have them understand the value proposition behind that, I think that may be our best chance. When it comes to the reorganization pieces of it, and the secretary said exactly right, we're trying to put the headquarters where the people are. But when we're talking about pulling the futures requirements out of many of the different major commands, this is the details. That's gonna require some skill and understanding how much physical movement cause we don't wanna trip any bracket thresholds or notifications. Dialogue with congress throughout is gonna be critical. To what extent might we have to work them virtually and then put them together, all of these things are part of a crawl, walk, run implementation, but getting the functions changed, getting the Integrated Capabilities Command stood up and functional has to happen as soon as possible. So whatever it takes to make that functional, and then we sort of clean up the battle space and make it pure later, that's the key. Solve 'em for agility.

Gen. Chance Saltzman:

And chief, I'll just add that analogy I used about going from Merchant Marine to, I think it's important to realize that we have not yet established all of the requirements and capabilities that are necessary to be that. We gotta—

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Stand by just a second, general, we'll get you a backup.

Gen. Chance Saltzman:

Can you hear me now? All right. The Space Force hasn't been completely established yet to accomplish the space superiority mission that we know is required, and so we are still on a growth path to build the kinds of capabilities that the nation needs to support those missions. So I think the activities that we talked about here may not be where the growth is in the Space Force, but it's all a part of optimizing for great power competition. So, I mean, I'm splitting hairs

a little bit there. The initiatives you see, not high dollar costs. The idea of building a Space Force capable of accomplishing those missions is still gonna require some resourcing.

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, thank you, and over on the right please, and speak relatively loudly into the microphone and possibly I can hear you, too.

Audience Member:

All right. Good morning, sirs. Good morning ma'am. I'm Sergeant Young. My question pertains to Air Force talent management and expertise development. What metric are you guys using to see if the warrant officer program is successful, and then how long would the implementation timeline be until that's rolled out to other AFSCs and we have like parity with the sister services with regards to warrant officers?

Gen. David Allvin:

Well, as I mentioned, the first thing is we have to try in this particular career field, and before we even consider rolling out to, you know, across the Air Force to other career fields, we need to understand that we're still a force that develops leaders, and so we're not gonna relegate the entire force to warrant officers. We still have to have professional development leaders because this is one of our, especially in our enlisted corps, our professional enlisted corps is the envy of the world, and it scares the bejiggers out of the adversary. We need to make sure we retain that. But this particular career field, when we talk about what the success metrics are, we may have to do a longitudinal to understand, and some of it may start with surveys, but other we'll start with what do we think the cohort is that comes in? What are their skill sets. How long do they stay? And so that is gonna be something that will take a number of years, but that metric is gonna be the level of talent, assessing that level of talent, being able to increase productivity and effectiveness in the cyber and IT arenas within the squad. But we are going to be a cautious before we broaden this beyond this one particular career field because we wanna make sure what we're doing is fit for purpose and specific to the need that we have before we sort of broaden it into other career fields.

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks, General Allvin, and again on our left. Thank you.

Audience Member:

Hello. Senior Airman Jonah Tort Peterson from Hurlburt Field. I'm an emergency manager and AFWERX SAGE fellow. My question is for the whole panel in general because it's involving the joint program of the JSLIST. If you're unfamiliar, the JSLIST is the CBRN gear you put on for the CBRN defense course. With the new agents coming out like Fentanyl and Novichok that was used as recently as 2018 for the Salisbury incident and the JSLIST being known not to protect against solid, liquid, or aerosol release, what are we doing to prepare for these CBRN threats and hazards that China and Russia are developing? Because the UIPE still hasn't been approved, and it's been 23 years, and it was not designed to save lives. Thank you.

Gen. David Allvin:

There's a reason we're sort of all looking at each other. This is the conscience. I will tell you, it is a great point, and we had a briefing this morning that talked about some of the capabilities and that our adversaries are developing those capabilities. This is a cop-out, but I'm gonna tell you right now, but it is a matter of resources and applying the scarce resources, and in your world where you have to be able to fight through that and recover from that, we recognize that when we think about the last time we were in great power competition, it was common for us to be able to, you know, suck rubber and have to go through all those drills. We walked away from that. So thank you for being the conscience. Right now, we are treating it as part of, you know, where the joint force is sort of a mitigation and management, not necessarily the entire joint force as not leaned into how we aggressively respond to it and be able to fight through it. Those are starting to emerge in our bureaucracy. It's emerging slowly, but you are correct in that this is one of myriad threats that we need to be able to counter better than we are right now.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks, sir. We have time for, I think, two more questions if we can make 'em relatively succinct. On the right, please.

Audience Member:

Sir, Staff Sergeant Hubbard, 50 Rims. This question is for General Allvin. How do we ensure that non-cyber units are aware of their cyber dependencies and that they're prepared to continue their mission in cyber-contested environments?

Gen. David Allvin:

I think I heard that question right if it's how do we know that non-cyber units understand their vulnerabilities?

Audience Member:

Yes sir, and how do they continue operating in contested environments?

Gen. David Allvin:

It's a great point about awareness, the idea that there are many of us throughout the United States Air Force and Space Force that are operating without the great situational awareness of just what is on our networks, and I think some of that has been a diffusion of the responsibilities throughout the Secretariat to the air staff, to the lead MAJCOM, lead agency. The understanding of what's on our network is something that is gonna be part and parcel to the Secretariat optimization and looking at the CN taking accountability for some of those particular aspects. Now the education just has to be across the Air Force to understand where the threat is. I think it's a broad educational undertaking that has to happen. I think we're getting better because, quite frankly, not all the professionals know right now either. So it's beyond just the cyber units. It's a general awareness across our Air Force, and this is why this elevation of cyber, it's not only to be able to better serve cyber command, but it's to have us wake up as our Air Force as well to understand the centrality of cyber and the vulnerabilities that we face. So I think this is part and parcel to the expansion of cyber awareness and sort of cyber literacy throughout our force.

Gen. Chance Saltzman:

And if I could just real quick, that's exactly why we were talking about changing our training model for officers. I can't imagine a unit commanded in the future Space Force where the commander of that unit didn't have a complete appreciation for the cyber network vulnerabilities in order to accomplish the mission. It's that critical to everything that we do. And so from the outset, I want them to be armed with the formal training that allows them to understand the vulnerabilities, the opportunities, the key requirements to make sure that's capable, that we're continuing to be capable.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, I'm gonna ask the last question, and that doesn't mean we at AFA don't wanna keep all of you involved. So please continue to flow your questions, and I know we'll get them Secretary Kendall and his staff. So it's #DAFGPC, and there'll be opportunities also for the next year or two to take a picture with or to really have, and these folks are not shy, these leaders are not shy, be happy to talk to you one on one with those questions.

But since I get to ask the last question of the last AFA event I'll probably ever attend at this level, acting Undersecretary Jones, you know, you work very closely with the secretary of defense and the deputy secretary of defense. Could you share just a few of your perceptions on how, as we reoptimize for global power competition and we support secretary of defense and national command authorities' vision as the next national security strategy, national defense strategy rolls out, please take just a couple minutes and talk about that experience. I think many of us would find it enthralling.

Kristyn Jones:

Sure, great question, and I would say right now there's tremendous alignment from our national security strategy, national defense strategy to the things that we know we need to do to support the joint force. For those who joined us this morning, we talked about our joint warfighting concepts, and many of the most critical capabilities that are needed for the joint fight are provided by the Air and Space Force. So I have the responsibility for representing our needs at the Deputies Management Action Group where we talk about our resourcing strategy, and it's clear, based on all of the OSD staff, the joint staff, and the combatant commanders, how much they need the capabilities we provide. So that's one of the challenges in a fiscally constrained environment is there's more demand than we can provide, but some of the efforts that we talked about will be key to looking at how we integrate and prioritize those capabilities to support the joint warfighter.

Lt. Gen. Bruce "Orville" Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Well, thank you so much.

Frank Kendall:

Orville, can I piggyback on that real quickly?

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Absolutely, please.

Frank Kendall:

When we set out to do all this, and this is good management advice for people in the room, if you're gonna make some major changes in your organization, even if you have all the authorities you need to do them, it's a good idea to tell your boss before you do. So I went to both the deputy secretary and the secretary and basically briefed them. I also briefed my counterparts in the other military departments. There was not a single question asked about the appropriateness of anything we were doing. It was essentially a, "Thumbs up, you're on the right path. Go get it done," and that's where we're going to go. We're gonna move out on this stuff. So thank you all for everything today.

Lt. Gen. Bruce “Orville” Wright, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks, sir. Please a round of applause for the leadership of our Department of the Air Force.

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