

CSAF Gen. CQ Brown, Jr. at Global Air Chiefs Conference, 14 July 2021

Title: **Winning in a Highly-Contested Environment in 2040 – Building International Partnerships While Modernizing the US Air Force**

Topics:

- Opening
- Welcome
- Security Environment
- AF's Strategic Approach
- International Partnerships
- Closing

Opening

- When I think about where my Air Force needs to be in 2040 and how to get there, I look back through history for inspiration...
- In 1945, as World War II was approaching its end, 850 delegates from 50 nations met in San Francisco to discuss the future of forging international partnerships
- At its opening, *President Truman* shared a simple yet powerful vision of mutual respect and dignity among nations saying...

"All will concede that in order to have good neighbors, we must also be good neighbors. That applies in every field of human endeavor"

- Over the next two months, these nations would build what we know today as the United Nations, the model for international partnerships and peace
- This rules-based international order... founded on the ideals of freedom, security, basic human rights, and the pursuit of prosperity for all nations, regardless of their size or might...
- Has prevented great power wars for more than 70 years...
- But, in an era of strategic competition, characterized by nations testing the bounds of responsible behavior and international law
- It is vital that we strengthen the bonds between like-minded allies and partners to deter aggression and to preserve peace.
- For the last three decades airpower has been the decisive advantage in nearly every conflict around the world
- But for it to remain the decisive advantage in 2040, we must be good neighbors, adapting to the future operating environment and modernizing our Air Forces together

Welcome

- I want to thank the Air and Space Power Association, the Global Air Chief's Conference, Air Chief Marshal Wigston for giving me the opportunity to be here today ... and to Air Vice Marshall Edwards for the introduction
- To my fellow Air Chiefs, it's an honor to serve side-by-side with each of you

- Although we all had high expectations to meet in-person today, I'm pleased that we can all at least come together virtually
- It also makes me happy to know that this forum open to the public...
- It is a strong reminder to me of why we serve, who and what we all work to protect... the citizens of our respective nations and the ideals of freedom

Transition

- I have spent the last decade-plus in joint positions overseas, and/or supporting operations in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and most recently in the Indo-Pacific...
- With this context, I have been able to look at the employment of airpower from varied perspectives, learn from Air Forces around the world, and know the true power of rock solid partnerships...
- And now, as the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, I'd like to share with you...my perspective... how I view the international security environment, where the US Air Force is going, the power of innovation, and why building partnerships is the key to our collective international security

Security Environment

- The 2018 US National Defense Strategy and more recently, the US Interim-National Security Strategic Guidance have both made it clear...
- The global national security picture is changing
- We are returning to long-term strategic competition that challenges international norms and institutions, threatening our collective security
 - China's advancements in military capabilities has set it to be our pacing challenge
 - And Russia, continues to challenge state sovereignty
- Furthermore, the ongoing technology revolution is changing the character of warfare itself... future conflict will be different
- We will be contested everywhere, on every level and in every domain...
- Modern warfare will be a contest among operational systems, not individual units or platforms

Need for Change

- To meet evolving security picture, the US Department of Defense and the US Air Force must change
- US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin III said recently, that we've "spent most of the last two decades executing the last of the old wars".¹
- This has resulted in building an Air Force that is good enough for yesterday, good enough for today, but not good enough for tomorrow

- If we continue on a path of incremental change... our advantage erodes and losing becomes a distinct possibility over the next two decades
- We must modernize our military capabilities to backstop our diplomats² and do so with our allies and partners

Accelerate Change or Lose

- As I came into my current position nearly a year ago, I developed my strategic approach for the U.S. Air Force: *Accelerate Change or Lose* to articulate why we need to change
- I authored this to be the catalyst... to transform the Air Force we are into the Air Force we need to be for the future
- Because our advantage is eroding and good enough today... will fail tomorrow
- Without change, we risk losing our:
 - Competitive advantage to win in a highly contested environment
 - Credibility with our joint teammates, allies, and partners
 - Quality Airmen and families
 - Ability to defend our national interests

Action Orders

- To guide how we change, I also wrote Action Orders...A, B, C, and D
- Airmen... we need to educate, train, develop and retain on our Airmen, because I believe they are the backbone of our success
- Bureaucracy... we need to reduce Bureaucracy and eliminate redundancies that add little value
- Competition... we need a renewed emphasis on Competition...requiring a deeper understanding of our competitors and the geostrategic environment
- And lastly, Design Implementation... we must Design a force with the required capabilities over the next two decades and start Implementation today so tomorrow we can compete, deter, and win

AF's New Mission Statement

- Our Air Force recently updated its mission statement... *"To Fly, Fight, and Win... Airpower Anytime, Anywhere"*
- In order to execute this mission, now and into the future, we must transition our Air Force and our operational concepts from today to tomorrow... and from platform-centric to capabilities-focused
- Our future Air Force must be agile, resilient, and connected, with the ability to generate near-instantaneous effects anytime, anywhere... not just *sometime*, in *some places*... but anytime, anywhere.
- Our Air Force provides our joint teammates, allies, and partners the assurance of Air Superiority, the advantage of Global Strike, and the agility of Rapid Global Mobility... through a range of capabilities.

- Additionally, the Air Force's ISR and Command and Control capabilities provide the ability to sense, make sense, and act
- To be ready to meet our responsibilities to our joint teammates, allies, and partners... and to ensure our national security, we must change... faster than we have in the past.
- Moving forward, the Air Force is making the hard choices... modernizing and accounting for the changing character of war, emphasizing agility and technology³ through innovation in... an enterprise level approach to decision making, digital design and development, and connected systems with open architectures

Airmen and Innovation

- I always keep in mind that our Airmen, at levels well below me, already have many of the innovative solutions we are looking for to drive modernization
- And if they don't have the solution yet, they will be the ones to discover the solution and drive the monumental changes to existing processes, uses, and functions
- Therefore, my goal is to empower them to solve problems at their level because it will often be the best, quickest, and most out-of-the-box creative solution
- I often think we try to develop complex and exquisite answers to problems that our Airmen may have already solved or can solve given the right environment
- This is why I strongly believe in an organization of ours called AFWERX
- AFWERX empowers our Airmen to collaborate with commercial innovators and leverage their know how and investments to solve military problems
- Through AFWERX, our Airmen can connect with commercial innovators, identify and prime nascent technology in the commercial markets, and help accelerate commercial technologies applied in the military sector

Enterprise Level Approach

- Because we realized the US Air Force has unnecessary bureaucracy that enables and incentivizes stovepipe decisions, we have also revamped our processes that prioritize our efforts and allocate our resources
- This approach ensures that our tough resourcing choices are the right choices for the entire Air Force and not right choices made in isolation for a specific community or platform
- This organizational change, is allowing us to modernize capabilities that are relevant to our future force design of 2040
- For example, this past year, we have developed what we are calling "Deep Dives" with my senior leaders
- This process is an opportunity to take a more holistic look at how we allocate resources informed by our national strategic documents and the threat
- The first of the Deep Dives was on our Fighter Force, which informed our decision to transition from a fleet of 7 different fighters to our 4 plus 1 fighter fleet construct

Digital Design and Development

- Our acquisition program is leveraging digital engineering and development technology to make our procurement of the future force iterative and agile
- With this technology, we can make the first physical production of a new weapon system the thousandth iteration
- Where the first 999 digital models work out the design and development flaws before bending metal
- Not only will this save money, it will allow us to iterate and modernize our fleets more often keeping pace with advancements in technology

Connected Systems

- And because we realize that modern warfare is a contest among connected operational systems, not individual units or platform,
- Our Air Force must be able to communicate and operate with each other near instantaneously and in some instances autonomously
- This is why we have dedicated time and significant resources to our Advanced Battle Management System
 - ABMS will sense, process, and integrate massive amounts of data from all domains, shortening the data loop from days and hours to minutes and seconds.
- In the future, the software we use will be just as important as the hardware we fight with
- The platforms and systems we are designing and connecting today must be developed using an open architecture mindset
- We need to start thinking of data and software as consumables
- For example, when was the last time any of us paid any attention to our phone's operating system
 - Chances are that you probably didn't because you knew the software update was going to be automatic and make your phone better
 - We need to have a similar software upgrade approach on our weapon systems

International partnerships

- As excited as I am with where my Air Force and Airmen are going...
- The emerging complexities remind us that we can't do this alone... we must work together with our allies and partners because...
- Growing, strengthening and sustaining partnerships:⁴
 - sharpens our competitive edge
 - secures common interests, and
 - promotes shared values

- The US Air Force does this through deliberate lines of effort that ensure we are strategically-driven in our engagements, balance exportability of key defense systems, and focus on interoperability⁵
 - First... we are seeking opportunities for future force investment with our allies and partners
 - Second... we are developing command and control technologies and have updated our mission command doctrine so our Airmen can thrive in a highly contested environment
 - Our Air Force is committed to working with our allies and partners to develop and protect our command and control infrastructure, and, in the event our direct communication is challenged, it is important that our Airmen know our intent
 - Third... we are modernizing the Foreign Military Sales program that result in significant savings and increasing interoperability
 - Fourth... and most importantly... we are building close and personal relationships between our militaries and their service members

Relationships and Challenge

- It's in this effort that I have spent most of my 36-year career doing... working with military members from around the world and building relationships...
- In doing this, I have seen that military to military relationships are rock solid
- The bonds built serving in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and the Indo-Pacific remain unbroken and fruitful
- Over the years, I've made it a point to communicate with our allies and partners on a regular basis
- Not just calling or sending notes on special occasions, but calling just because...and listening much more than speaking
- I challenge my staff and I challenge you, pick up the phone and connect with each other periodically...
- And we must promote this across all ranks... because increasing the frequency of interactions between our nations and our Air Forces solidifies our relationships
- We can build the networks of allies and partners at our level that keep our comparative advantage to address any security challenge that comes our way

Closing

- For the last several decades, the U.S. Air Force has been focused on the Middle East and have done so in close partnership with many of you
- But the global environment is changing... we are witnessing a return to strategic competition and a challenge to the international order
- For airpower to remain a decisive advantage in 2040, we must adapt to the future operating environment and modernize our Air Forces together

- As the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, I'm focused on moving our Air Force to where it needs to be to face this challenge... and to do it faster than we have in the past.
- But my Air Force is only one piece
- To meet the rising challenge to the international order, it will take a united effort by our like-minded allies and partners to preserve the peace
- If there is one thing I want you to remember from today... is... strength through partnership building from our national diversities and forming connections will protect the rules-based international order
- *As Winston Churchill once said, If we are together, nothing is impossible –*
- Together, we will succeed.