

AIRLIFT / TANKER ASSOCIATION
Remarks by Gen. David L. Goldfein
U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff
26 October 2017

GENERAL GOLDFEIN: Thank you, and good morning,

AUDIENCE: Good morning.

GENERAL GOLDFEIN: Or as they say in my home state of Texas, howdy.

AUDIENCE: Howdy.

GENERAL GOLDFEIN: Let me just tell you that I could not be more honored and excited to be here as your 21st First Chief of Staff, and I especially want to thank General Everhart, General McNabb, so many, Chiefs Wright; so many of my mentors that are here today for setting up this conference. Because when we gather together at times like these it gives us an opportunity to do, I think, three things: re-blue, reconnect, and recharge.

Some of you are serving in joint duty; some of you are in school; some of you are doing things outside the Air Force, and now have come back; and now is your opportunity to re-blue a little bit on where we are as an Air Force and where we're headed. And I'll talk a little bit about that today.

This is also an opportunity to reconnect. You know, we all join the Air Force for different reasons, perhaps; but there's one value proposition I think we can all, personally connect to; and that is when we came into the Air Force we wanted to meet and work with the most amazing people; get married-up with the most incredible technology; and change the world. That's the value proposition of being an Airman. And this is an opportunity to gather together to reconnect a little bit. So, I'll give you an assignment. Walk out of here with five new email addresses, snapchat, Facebook, whatever you want to call it, of your peers that you've met while you're here that you can connect with because you all are going to grow up together, and someone in this room, maybe a few, are going to be sitting in the front row some years from now.

And it's an opportunity to recharge, because it's that I'm going to talk about the global security environment that we operated in. Very often -- and it happens at every level to include the Chief of Staff and the Commander of Air Mobility Command -- very often we get trapped by the urgent, the alligators that are swarming the boat; and every once and a while it's actually good to step back to raise the radar and think more strategically about the environment that we're operating in and what we as an Air Force, and as an air component, do for the nation.

So, this is an opportunity to recharge your batteries; and I hope you'll leave here even more excited about the value proposition of why we join and why we serve together at this time when our nation needs us the most. And today's an opportunity for me to say thanks. To say thank you, personally; and to say thank you as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, because throughout my entire career, I've been the recipient of what you bring to the table.

Now, you take a look this is a -- I'm going to tell a little bit of a story because each one of these connects your Chief to you. At the top left is Captain Dave Goldfein, 26 years ago deploying to Operational Desert Shield/Desert Storm; and I know what you're thinking -- 26 years ago, you haven't changed a bit. [Laughter] Yeah, right.

So of all the nights of Desert Storm, here's the one I remember the most. Night three. The Iraqis woke up; started actually shooting missiles at us; and we had a target that was fairly deep in enemy territory; and we were jinking and jiving a lot of SAMs that night. And many of us had to punch off our tanks; and a couple of the young folks in my formation as a flight commander, had used a little bit more gas jinking and jiving than we had planned for at that point, and we were low on gas. And as the mission commander, I called for tanker support; and without a second's hesitation, a KC-135 crossed into Iraqi territory, went straight into the SAM rings, hooked us up and dragged us home. So, as a young aviator, let me just say, thank you. And this is what you've continued to do for 26 years.

The next picture -- As a CFACC deployed -- during the time frame I was deployed as the Air Component Commander for Central Command, we had 170,000 Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. This was during surge operations. We were sending folks horizontal home every day; and there's no more honorable work than to take care of one of our fallen Soldiers, Sailors, Airman, and Marines and bring them home to their love ones. And I remember travelling into Afghanistan and meeting with each one of the Regional Combatant Commanders -- the RC Commanders -- and one of them, by the way, RC South, was a guy named Major General Abe Abrams. And I remember sitting in his office in Kandahar and saying, "it is our honor to do this, and you're going to do this right. We're going to do this right for the fallen, and we're going to do it right for our families." We've been doing this now for 16 years, and we get it right every time; and so, as your former CFACC, thank you.

Ebola -- as a Director of the Joint Staff, I remember sitting in the room with Chairman Dempsey and the leadership team when we had the Ebola scare that came up in Nigeria; and while, we may look back on it now and say it wasn't that big a deal -- let me tell you for those of us who were going through it at the time, and many of us in this room went through it -- we actually didn't know whether we were facing the plague of the 21st Century. And so, as we were in the Chairman's office, and working through, how did we actually get through to putting 750 folks on the ground there to bring the capability we need, to be able to stem this; take care of it; bring the non-government organizations -- the other medical capabilities to bear -- against this terrible threat. And in that conversation, there was never one moment where anybody ever questioned our ability to get those folks where we needed to get them. So, as the former Director of the Joint Staff, thank you for what you do.

And when I talk about our Air Force, sometimes we are challenged to describe what it is that we do because in many ways we're a conglomerate. We do leaflets to nukes, and everything in between. We operate from 100 feet below the surface in a missile silo, to the outer reaches of high-elliptical orbits, and every domain in between, and you can't find a mission that an Airman's not involved in and responsible for contributing to its success. I have yet to find a joint mission that an Airman is not involved in. So, when I describe the Air Force to others, I tell them, you've

got to actually look through two lenses. You've got to look through a lens which is that which we do here in the homelands to defend the homeland, and project power abroad from the homeland; and then you've got to flip that lens and look through that which we do when we're deployed or based forward to project power and global reach with our allies and partners.

And so, let me walk you through just some of the missions that we do every day -- 24/7, 365 -- that we as an Air Force perform; and the first lens starts with the Nuclear Enterprise. And we as an Air Force are responsible for two of the three legs of the nuclear triad and most of the nuclear command and control. On our worst day as a nation, our job is to ensure that we have the President, the Commander-in-Chief where he needs to be; when he needs to be there; and connected to the Nuclear Enterprise.

Much of the information that the Commander-in-Chief needs to be able to make decisions comes from space; and we as an Air Force are responsible for flying all of the constellations in space that provides everything from secure communications; to indications and warnings; to the GPS signal that's on your phone when you walk out of here. And someone has got to take all the information we collect and turn it from ones and zeros into decision-quality information; and that, very often, falls on Airman, and are Distributed Ground System that's looking at all the ones and zeros and turning data into information. And like all services, we're contributing cyber teams to be able to protect the nation and take action in cyber.

And, finally, if you hear jet noise taking off from Andrews, or Jacksonville, or McChord, or other places, it may be aircraft taking off to protect the critical infrastructure of this nation, working for General Lori Robinson in Operation Noble Eagle. That's just what we do from the homeland to defend the homeland.

Now, you've got to look at what we do abroad, and that begins with Air Superiority -- freedom from attack; freedom to maneuver. We never want a Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine to look up, hear jet noise, and ever question who it is; we want them to know it's us. And once we achieve Air Superiority, we operate on a network of bases from across the globe, and every 2-1/2 to 3 minutes an Air Mobility aircraft is taking off or landing somewhere on the globe delivering critical supplies or personnel where they're needed.

And I can't give you a better example of holding targets at risk than two B-2s from Whiteman that take off; fly 32 hours round trip; hit 80 individual targets with precision-guided munitions, 10 seconds from their planned time-over-target -- 10 seconds from their planned time-over-target. What's not often understood is that there were 16 Air Refuelings that were required to accomplish that mission -- 10 seconds from their planned time-over-target.

And in the battle against ISIS, we're dropping over 100 munitions a day, as we have been for the last several weeks. But make no mistake, the fight against ISIS, first and foremost, is a tanker war; and we could not get those munitions to their intended targets if it wasn't for the array of aircraft that we put overhead.

So, as I walk through all those missions, here's the common thread. This community is in every one of those missions; every one of them is a growth industry; every one of them is a no-fail

mission; and you're in every one -- so as your Chief. Having explained this to the highest level of our government, let me just say, thank you.

Never underestimate the importance of what you do. I would submit to you that we are a global power because of global reach. So, I asked Public Affairs if they could capture 70 years, 70 years of history. Now, we are the youngest service. Some of you heard yesterday from General Abrams -- they're a little bit older, so I can -- for all of us -- we need to be kind to them.
[Laughter] [Applause]

So, let's watch 70 years in 70 seconds; let's roll the video. [VIDEO PLAYS]

That's better than a cup of coffee right there. [Laughter]

So, let's talk about the world that we live in and our role as Airmen; and I'm going to offer you some thoughts on where I'm focused as your Chief, but also issue some challenges to us as a group because, as it was said yesterday, this is a professional development forum.

The world changed in 2014. Prior to 2014, as the Director of the Joint Staff, I prepared Chairman Dempsey to go to the White House. I actually kept a little log of what topics we were preparing him for. Prior to 2014, I will tell you, it was about an 80/20 split -- 80 percent Violent Extremism in the Middle East, 20 percent, the rest of the globe; and we had the luxury for all those years of focusing as a nation almost singularly on Violent Extremism in the Middle East. And then what happened in 2014, China began building islands and militarizing them in the South China Sea. Russia went into Crimea and got active in Ukraine; Ebola took place; ISIS came back; we went back into Iraq. All these things happened in a single year; and so, we changed our focus and shifted it as a nation from an 80 percent Violent Extremism in the Middle East to a far more balanced approach on what we call the 4+1 framework. The threats that you and I have got to be prepared to counter and offer military options to the Commander-in-Chief are China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and Violent Extremism as a continual condition that thrives in under-governed spaces.

So, as the world change, it's important for us to change, and to think about our role as Airmen, as members of this joint team and what the air component brings to the fight. We defend the homeland; we are responsible for owning the ultimate high ground -- air and space superiority; and we're responsible for projecting power forward with our allies and partners. And so, if you want to know where I'm focused as your Chief, where I am singularly focused as your Chief -- it's three words -- Joint Warfighting Excellence.

What is it that we need to do to prepare ourselves for conflict that will be different than what we've experienced over the last 16 years; because we've had the luxury of actually controlling the rheostat of time in conflict, over the last 16 years. I mean, think about it. We announced months before going into Mosul; exactly when we were going in, and there was nothing the adversary could do about it. I don't believe we're going to have that much control over conflict in the future, that's going to have different attributes that we have to be ready for. And I don't know many things as your Chief with absolute, 100 percent clarity; but this one I know for certain; we have from this moment to get ready. From this moment until it occurs to get ready; and you and

I ought to be treating every week like the last week of peace and an absolute blessing. And this is commander of business -- preparing our force for conflict.

So, under the heading of Joint Warfighting Excellence, there are three areas that fit perfectly under our five priorities that the Secretary and I rolled out where we're focused on achieving Joint Warfighting Excellence in a continuum improvement as we go forward. You each have gotten papers from me on each of these, and I spoke about them extensively over the past year, to include the last at AFA, so I'm not going to go into a lot of detail; but I'm happy to talk about them during the Q&A.

But let's talk first about squadrons? Why squadrons? Why are we idolizing squadrons? Why do I call it the heartbeat of our Air Force -- because that's where we succeed or fail. That's where the mission of the United States Air Force and everything we do as members of the joint team succeeds or fails, and it's important. To me, it's a war fighting imperative that we push decision authority down across our Air Force so that squadron commanders who are entrusted with the mission of the United States Air force have the ability to make those decisions so that not only do we train like we fight, but perhaps, more importantly, that we fight like we train.

And in the next kind of conflict against peer competitors, we have to have our squadron commander core -- feeling, and trusting, and enabled to make the kind of decisions that are required, especially if they get cut off from higher headquarters. You may have seen a memo that I rolled out some time ago pushing decision authority for crew rest down to wing commanders, and recommending that they even push it down further to squadron commanders. Ladies and gentlemen, this actually wasn't about crew rest. I think we have that about right. This is about decision authority so we can be making those decisions at the right level so we're prepared for conflict in the future that's going to be much faster than what we've been used to.

This is about the organizational chart of the United States Air Force that has the Secretary and I at the bottom, and our squadron commanders at the top; and the recognition is that our job is to ensure that they have what they need to be able to accomplish the mission of the United States Air Force. Part of what the Secretary and I are doing is we're swinging away at those things that are actually impeding and reducing our readiness as opposed to increasing our lethality. And you've heard us talk about computer-based training, AFIs that are prescriptive in nature, and trying to legislate common sense, that we're trying to get rid of -- additional duties -- all of those things, the Secretary and I are going after. And we're going to keep swinging away at this because this is a journey not a destination.

I have a daughter that's in the Air Force. It's awesome to have a daughter in the Air Force that keeps me grounded as Chief, right. She gives great feedback. [Laughter] So, one of the things she told me that I love, she says, hey, dad, you know, I don't know what hell looks like, but if I ever find myself there, here's how I know I'm there. She said, first of all, I've got to file a voucher on DTS to get out [laughter] [applauds], right; and then while I'm waiting for that to be completed, I've got to do 60 hours of computer-based training. That's actually pretty good feedback to have as the Chief of Staff.

So, the Secretary and I are swinging away at this; but if you hear one thing from me for all the squadron commanders in the room, know this, I completely trust you. We hired you because we trust your gut; and the second part of that is because I trust you, don't wait for me. When I was squadron commander I'm not sure I knew exactly who the Chief of Staff of the Air Force was, and I sure didn't need him running my squadron. So, move out.

Strength and how we build joint leaders and teams -- when we walk into a room and we sit down at the table with our joint teammates, they actually don't know what our badges mean. These are important to us, and we work hard to earn them, and we're really proud of them; but let's acknowledge the fact that to our joint teammates, they actually don't know what they mean, and they actually don't care. What they see is big blue; and if I was wearing ABUs, my tape would say U.S. Air Force, and that's what they see. And what they expect is that you and I understand the operational art of bringing together air, space and cyber capabilities to create effects and how we marry those up with land and maritime capabilities to be able to design a joint campaign.

Every service has its own culture. We do our best work when all of those cultures are represented; and we could build the creative options and the solutions for our Secretary and our Commander-in-Chief that has the Airman's viewpoint in the dialogue; and so, when we talk about building joint leaders and teams, it's understanding that it's no longer about our badges, it's about our obligation.

So, as the Air Component Commander for Central Command, one of my first meetings I had with my new boss, then General Jim Mattis, the CENTCOM Commander, he said, hey, good to meet you Goldfein; you're my Space Coordinating Authority. Of course, I was his Space Coordinating Authority; I'm an Airman. General Mattis didn't know what the heck these were. It's time for you and I to own the space, and it's time for us to make sure that as we do our continuum of learning from early entry into the Air Force Academy; through Basic Military Training and tech school; through ROTC; to OTS, that we have a continuum of learning that continues to expose us to the joint planning environment and the joint operational environment so that we understand and can offer that Airman's viewpoint in the business of campaign design.

The third one is this business of Multi-Domain Command and Control -- that's actually the hardest one to explain and to get your mind around. But here's why it's so important. Here, I just mentioned to you, right; we operate as an Air Force from 100 feet below the service to HEO; we do leaflets to nukes; we do so many missions; we have an incredible number of different kinds of platforms, and sensors, and weapons; and here's the Air Force of today, and let me describe for you the Air Force of tomorrow. We're going to be old and new; we're going to be manned and unmanned; we're going to be conventional and unconventional; we're going to have some things that penetrate and some things that stand off; we're going to be precision and non-precision; we're going to be attributable, we want them to know it's us; and we're going to be unattributable, we want them to be guessing.

If you look at the vast array of capabilities across our Air Force that operate both vertically and horizontally, the question for us is how do we connect it together; how do we connect together capabilities, sensors, weapons, people in ways that we can accomplish the three key requirements

for success in the 21st Century, in warfare that I believe, is no longer wars of attrition but wars of cognition.

And I would offer that there are three key requirements for success. The first one is we've got to understand more than our enemy. We have to have a better common operational picture of the environment than our adversary; and based on that common operational picture, we've got to be able to decide faster than he can; and then as we make decisions, we're going to have to be able to create effects from all those domains simultaneously so we overwhelm him, because that's what global powers do and that's what global militaries do.

And so understanding more than our enemy; deciding faster than our enemy and creating effects that he can never counter, sounds to me like OODA Loop, version 2.0. John Boyd was right. So, tying together and thinking about the information domain in different ways is central to what we do as Airmen.

Again, as the Air Component Commander and Central Command, I actually went into the job thinking my primary responsibility was to marry-up air capability with ground force commander requirements; and we certainly did that. But actually what I did for Central Command was provided the only regional command and control; the only truly multi-domain command and control capability at headquarters to ensure all the components were represented.

This is the part of who we are and what we do. And, so, when you think about joint war-fighting excellence, each of these are tied together -- fix our fighting formations, squadrons -- build the leaders that we need to be able to contribute to campaign design and lead in future; and tie together our capabilities so we can bring decision speed and effects at a level that no adversary could match.

So, because this is a professional development forum, now let me offer us a few challenges to think about as we go forward.

Squadron Commanders. How many of you are here -- show of hands? For our young folks, how many future squadron commanders do we have; show of hands? All those hands better go up.
[Laughter]

Let me define for you what I believe are the four elements of a successful command tour. And when I come out and I visit, and I come see your squadrons, this is what I'm looking for -- mission, culture, family, and fun.

Mission -- you exist as a squadron to accomplish the mission, and you ought to be able to recite it; and you ought to be able to understand two up and one down, because your mission as a squadron commander fits into a group commander, that fits into a wing commander; and you've got to understand the connective tissue; and you've got to understand the one level below you, and how your subordinate commander -- your flight commander -- fits into your vision. So, making sure that we understand how we fit, and what our mission is, is job one for squadron commanders.

Second is culture. Here's the question for you. What does it mean to your Airmen when they walk into your squadron? Because you set the culture of that organization as a commander; and when I think about command teams, the command team is the commander, the senior NCO, and a lead spouse. When Airmen come into the squadron -- this is where we inculcate them with the culture of what it means to be an Airman. This is where Airmen and families thrive, and this is where the mission succeeds or fails. So regardless of what the name of your squadron is, the question I ask you is -- what's the culture of that organization, and what does it mean to your Airmen when they walk into your squadron. Are the right things easy; are the wrong things really hard? You set the culture.

Family. Taking care of families is command responsibility, and whether a commander spouse is involved or not is not the issue. The issue is -- how is the commander taking care of those families. Our families exhibit such an incredible special kind of courage when they endure the long hours, the hardships, the separations, the continuous moves that are so much a part of military service, and especially in military service at war. So, we have got to take care of them; and so, family is a central element of a successful command tour.

And the last one is fun. We have some challenges with retention in certain areas, and we can't buy our way out of it. So, go back to the value proposition -- amazing people, greatest technology, make a difference, give meaning to my life. When it comes to having fun in a squadron it may be one of the most important retention tools we have. Now, I am not talking about having fun at anybody's expense, or having fun that's exclusive of our teammates because that's where we've gone wrong in the past. This is about celebrating together the opportunity we're given right now to serve. Go find in the mall -- next time you're out -- a few retirees sitting in a corner talking. They're easy to find, right, because they've got a vest, and hats, and buttons, right. I've already got my vest on order as a retiree in training. [Laughter] But, you ought to kind of sort of saunter up to them and sort of listen in on their conversation -- and these are folks who served 10, 15 years, 20 years, who knows, right, they went on to, you know, start businesses, became grandparents, wildly successful, and here they are talking. What do you think they're talking about? Do you think they're talking about the family; you think they're talking about the kids and what have you -- they might be? But here's what they're probably talking about. They're sharing war stories. They're talking about the time they were most alive. Where the value proposition was front and center; and very often as they went forward into civilian life, they didn't find the same kind of camaraderie that they found in the military. There's a difference between a job and a calling; and I would offer what we do is a calling. So, let's celebrate that together -- mission, culture, family fun -- four central elements of the successful command tour.

I said before, you and I have got to own space. The nation expects us to own the ultimate high ground.

Keep bringing up the next slide; thank you. Here're some technologies that are going to be here within the next three, four years. These are going to be here before we know it because space has become profitable. That's a good thing for us. So, on the left is a mothership from a company called Virgin Galactic; and they determined that the highest cost of launches from the surface to 50,000 feet, because that's where you have to use the most rocket motor and thrust to

be able to escape gravity; but if you can actually launch at 50,000 feet, it significantly reduce costs. I think Chuck Yeager figured that out some time ago. So, the question is what does it look like for us as a United States Air Force that does global mobility if we can get a small payload anywhere on the planet in less than an hour in Low Earth Orbit to a precision landing? What does that mean if I can get a special operations team anywhere on the planet in less than an hour? Ladies and gentleman, it changes the game. Space is a place; mobility is a mission. It's time for us to take ownership of space regardless of our badges.

On the right, Moon Express -- this is a company that is focused on mining moon rock; but to actually mine moon rock and bring it back, you have to be able to refuel in Low Earth Orbit. So, the first thing they're tackling is actually putting refueling stations in space. Space is a place; air refueling is a mission. It's time for us to take ownership of space.

Next slide, please. Next challenge -- the "I"s have it -- innovation, invention, ingenuity. I talked about connecting in new ways. So, what you see on this slide is Tesla. We'll talk a little bit about networking. Every Tesla car has 75 sensors on it, and it's connected to every other Tesla car in the network. If a Tesla on the road hits a pothole, and the Tesla behind you is in auto-drive mode, it will automatically avoid the pothole. If it's in self-drive mode it will automatically, immediately adjust the shocks based on where it is, so if it hits the pothole, it won't have any affect. When there was flooding in Florida, they went through their network and adjusted the battery life of all the Tesla cars that were in the region so they'd have enough battery life to get out; and then provided them directions over the network on how to get out. So, what does that have to do with us?

Next slide. This is just a few of the bases that we operate on as a network in Mobility Command. This is just a few of the places and the routes that we fly. What would it look like if we were networked together in new ways going forward? See a pothole, automatically avoid it; see jamming, automatically avoid it; COMM jamming, switch frequencies. Get the picture? That's my challenge to you. It's time for us to be thinking in new ways as we innovate for the future, because it's like the Rubik's Cube. Think about every colored square on the Cube as a different capability, a different sensor, a different weapon, a different platform; and just like the Rubik's Cube -- for me, that was the smarter kids that played with that; I didn't play with that. I was the guy that was actually peeling the little colored labels off, [laughter], and eating crayons. But think about that, there're 18 quintillion options in a Rubik's Cube -- 18 quintillion; you can't have that many zeros. There are that many options available to us. What does a C-17, plus an RQ-4, plus a B-52, plus an Aegis Cruiser equal? And the answer is: whatever you want to make it equal -- if only we can connect it in new ways.

So, let me finish with a final personal story. Some of you may know that, unlike probably most of you in this room, I have an odd number of takeoffs and landings. So, the 2nd of May in 1999, I brilliantly intercepted an enemy missile with my aircraft -- probably not my most astute mission. But here's what happened next. For the 2-1/2 hours I was on the ground as we were orchestrating the rescues from Serbia, there wasn't a moment that I didn't hear jet noise overhead. Because even though I had just gotten shot down by a surface-to-air missile, guess who came in - - all these years later -- again, for now Lieutenant Colonel Goldfein, the tankers; and they kept folks overhead the entire time. And when we made our way out, and we flew our way past, we

had top-cover the entire sortie as we were getting shot out on the way out. We actually took about five rounds in the helo as we were taking off; and -- it was interesting. So I got these big pararescue guys, right; and they're all in full body armor; and they grab me, and they throw me in the helicopter; put me on the floor, and they all pile on top of me because we're taking rounds. I remember laying there thinking, man -- because they had body armor on, I didn't have it, right -- and I remember thinking, man, these guys are heroes. These guys are big heroes. And then it occurred to me, we're getting shot at from below. [Laughter] They'd got body armor for them. Then I get into Tuzla, and guess what's waiting for me -- a beautiful, C-130 to take me home; take me home to my family.

And so, never underestimate the importance of what you do every day. This community makes us a global power because of global reach, and I, for one, could not be prouder to stand here as your Chief of Staff.

God bless you all; and thank you very much. [Applause]