Let me start with this. I did meet Ray a long time ago. He and Diana have been serving us a long time. Thirty-five years now, and in a very short period of time we're going to change commands of this great command and bring in another great four-star leader and we're going to say goodbye to my friend. Ray Johns has given an awful lot to this command. He's given an awful lot more to our Air Force. He was a top graduate in his pilot training class, you might not have known that. He stayed as a T-38 instructor, eventually went to test pilot school, was part of the Air Staff Training Program back in the day, what's now called the Air Force Intern Program. He was a White House Fellow. He's been a superstar everywhere he's been. He's a world champion model airplane pilot and he's a world class human being. We're going to miss you, Ray. Thanks for what you've given our Air Force. Diana, thank you for the grace you've brought not just to this job but to Ray's entire career, because he needed a little help in that area. [Laughter] We are just going to miss you guys so much. Can I get a round of applause for your commander?

[Applause].

By the way, is Ryan Thornton here? Thornton stand up for a minute, would you? Thanks. Wake up. [Laughter]. You can sit down now.

Sometimes you never quit being the commandant at the Air Force Academy. Cadet Thornton had a problem then, he still has one now. [Laughter].

Ryan was actually my son John's roommate, and I know way too much about him, so he won't give me a hard time this morning.

Next slide, please.

[Laughter].

Chief, where are you? Why don't you come up here for a minute? It looks like him, doesn't it? [Laughter].

We're saying goodbye in our Air Force to somebody else here pretty quick, before you have this event occur again. Chief Jim Roy is retiring at the end of January of 2013. He and Miss Paula have given so much to our Air Force. But you know, I became worried about him when I first got in the job. This was when he first came into the chief master sergeant of the Air Force job three-plus years ago. Every issue was a tennis ball. Life was good. [Laughter].

Miss Paula called me about a week after I got into the job and she said I'm a little worried about the Chief. I said Paula, what's the problem? She said I don't know, but you know the stories about people starting to look like their dogs? I said yeah. She said look, I'm going to email you a picture. Slide please. [Laughter]. She emailed me this picture, and actually it's an embedded video.

You'll see why she was concerned. She took this at home not too long ago. Let's run this video, if we can.

[Video shown.] [Laughter].

Next slide, please.

You can see why it's time to go, but our Air Force is going to miss him. Let me tell you something, 30-plus years, the last three-plus leading our Air Force. The closer you get to Chief Roy, the better you get to know him, the more impressed you are. He is a phenomenal chief master sergeant. He has been, in my view, an outstanding chief master sergeant of the Air Force, and better than both of those, he is an incredible human being. He and Miss Paula have helped Airmen families, taking care of both commanders and senior NCOs for the entire time he's been in this job, and we are really, really going to miss him. Chief, thank you.

[Applause].

Next slide, please.

Let's talk about us for a minute.

This is the ultimate team sport, in my view, and it's really important that all of our Airmen—everybody sitting here today, all the folks back home that you go back and talk to when you return to your units—understand exactly who we are, what we value, and why we matter as an Air Force. And so I'm talking about it a lot.

Most of you have heard of the Lafayette Escadrille. That's them in the upper left corner. This heritage that kind of started in the combat arena with them is pretty important to us.

You can't see laying on the front row there in that picture probably from where you're sitting, but those two lion cubs that are pictured in the top middle are there. Those are the mascots of the Lafayette Escadrille—Whiskey and Soda. They're an important part of your Air Force heritage. If you haven't read about them, you ought to. They used to move them around England, by the way, or around France, by the way, on public trains. They told the conductor they were African dogs. [Laughter]. I guess that works in France.

The guy in the upper right corner is Raoul Lufbery. You've all heard his name. He's standing in front of the same type airplane he died flying, the Nieuport 28. He decided he wasn't going to burn to death because he swore he never would, so he turned his plane upside down after being shot and the airplane catching on fire, and he fell out and was impaled on a fence on a French farm. He's buried under the Lafayette Escadrille Memorial in Paris, in a crypt below, along with 50 other great Airmen—two French and 49 American.

The bottom left is our only general of the Air Force, Hap Arnold. You've all heard his name. I don't know if you know what an innovator he was, how incredible he was at developing new techniques, new processes, new organizational structures to make our Air Force more efficient as it grew.

Then of course the ace of aces, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker—a hero to the entire American public.

But it all began for military aviation with a balloon like the one you see on the slide here. That balloon was actually called the "Union." It was flown by a Union aeronaut—a pretty cool term—in 1861. A guy named Thaddeus Lowe. He went up to about a thousand feet, about where the Pentagon sits today, on a tether. He took a telegraph wire with him and he telegraphed information back down to the artillery batteries below on where the confederate troops were in the vicinity of Falls Church, Virginia, about three miles away. The artillery was able to fire with impact on that Confederate force and the first indirect fire mission of the United States military occurred.

Airmen became people who thought in three dimensions. Who thought about how to go over and not through the obstacles on the battlefield. That's never changed. You think the same way. We added thinking in parallel and synchronizing effects and all those things you've learned in discussions about Air Force doctrine, but this is where it began.

Next slide.

It continued through the years. This is Major General "Boots" Blesse. I added his slide last night because he died yesterday. He was born in 1921, in the Panama Canal Zone. His father was an Army one-star general. Boots went to West Point, graduated in 1945, and became a member of the Army Air Corps. In his early career he flew the P-40, he flew the P-47, the P-51 and the F-80. When the Korean War began he was one of the first volunteers. He actually had two tours of duty in Korea. On the second one flying the F-86, he flew 121 combat sorties. He was credited with 10 confirmed kills and four probable kills. He's our Air Force's sixth leading all-time ace. He's a pretty impressive guy.

After the war he flew the F-100 and he flew the F-102. He was actually at Nellis for a while as a fighter gunnery instructor. In fact, in 1944 and 1945, he led the fighter gunnery team in the worldwide competition, the team from Nellis, and they won both years—a really unusual accomplishment in those days.

In 1955, flying an F-86F he won every individual event in the competition. That had never happened before and never happened after—pretty startling talent.

He wrote a book called "No Guts, No Glory" about fighter tactics and air-to-air combat. It was used as the bible for many people growing up in our Air Force and in other countries, also in our United States Marine Corps for a number of years. He's an impressive, impressive guy.

In total, he flew 377 combat sorties after completing his 158th in Vietnam, including 108 over North Vietnam—377 combat sorties. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross for Valor, two Silver Stars, six Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star with Valor device, the Purple Heart, 21 air medals.

He died on the fourth hole of his favorite golf course at age 91, yesterday.

He's part of your heritage. Please don't forget him.

Next slide.

This business is all about pride. It's part of our fabric. It's who we are. If we want to be good, we've got to be proud of who we are and what we represent.

This picture is cool for me because the guy on the left is my son John. Ryan Thornton's roommate. The guy on the right is my dad. When John was graduating from pilot training at Columbus Air Force Base, he asked my father if he'd pin his wings on him. Dad had been retired for 30 years. He bought a new service dress, ordered a new ribbon rack, shined up the silver—because those aren't aluminum. Interestingly enough, the only thing that's not authentically his are the colonel's rank on his shoulder. You see, the ones he had he given to me, they'd been given to him by "Boots" Blesse.

This string runs through all of us, folks.

When my dad died about four years ago I had a note from my mom that said hey, dad left this note for you. I opened it up and it says there's a savings deposit box. Here's the key, you've got to go open it up. It will give you your instructions.

I went to the bank, I opened up the safety deposit box, and sure enough there's a book that my dad had put together that even had a title. It was called "The Croak Book," which I thought was pretty good. It gave us all our instructions on what to do. What songs to play at the funeral, what to bury him in, etcetera, etcetera. The number one—one, circled and underlined—was bury me in my service dress. That service dress.

So we did. While he wore it on active duty he served in three wars. He had 9,200 flying hours, about 8,000 of those were in fighters. That's not likely to happen again. The other 1,200 were in airlift. He was a C-46 pilot. He flew a troop support squadron, a troop supply and a troop delivery squadron during World War II, stationed out of the UK. He graduated in 1943 from pilot training, number one in a class of 443. They kept him as an instructor. The FAIPs were getting you back then too.

So he started volunteering for every secret mission that came along that they kept asking for manpower for, and finally he was accepted for one. He went to the UK and they put him in a troop carrier squadron and he flew C-46s. He towed a glider across the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. He resupplied Patton's Third Army on the breakout from France. Finally, his time for a special mission came up and he flew a glider into Germany on the largest glider assault in history across the Rhine River into the town of Wesel. As the last guy jumped out of the glider with dad patting himself on the back for this great landing he'd accomplished, the guy threw him a rifle. That's the first time he thought about how he'd get home. [Laughter]. So for the next four months he fought across the northern plains of Germany with the infantry.

Dad also wears a Silver Star. He wears five Distinguished Flying Crosses, more air medals than I can count. He wears the Bronze Star with a V device. He wears five major battle stars for ground combat. He was a hero. He was also the world's greatest dad.

But what I love about him is that in my own house I had heritage. Something that made me proud to wear the uniform. Something that you share.

Next slide.

I was asked recently about why we have the Airman's Creed and who are we kidding on the core values? That's a quote. For the first time I can remember in my professional career, I went off. What were they thinking about? These core values are who we are. They're what we represent to ourselves and to the American public. They're what people expect us to be. They're what our people expect us to be. We need to live up to them.

This Airman's Creed is a new invention. I only gave it one test when it first came out. I handed it to my father. I said what do you think, dad? He read through it and he repeated a couple of lines. He repeated, "I'm faithful to a proud heritage, a tradition of honor and a legacy of valor." He repeated, "I defend my country with my life." And he repeated, "I will not fail." He said me and my friends could live with this. We'd be proud to say it out loud.

It became my creed that day. Talk to your people about it. Explain what it means. Think about the words and the commitment they require. This is a cool thing.

If you get the chance, go to Lackland Air Force Base on any Friday of the year, sit in the stands and listen to 800 young Basics become Airmen and recite this creed together at the end of the ceremony. It will curl your hair. It will make you awfully proud to be an Airman.

Next slide.

We value lots of things in this business, folks, and I'm not going to talk about gadgets much, but let me tell you one thing we should value above all that and it's family. Our personal families, our Air Force family.

This is my wife Betty. Besides being a babe, she is committed to the United States Air Force, just like Diana Johns and all of your spouses. She's been there right beside me the whole way. She's put up with a lot of nonsense. She is at least as proud as I am of being involved with this business. And she's proud of each and every one of you.

If there's ever any doubt in your mind about what comes first, the job or your family, put your mind at rest. My priorities start with family. Every day. All day long. I took an oath and when required I will go fight as long as my country needs me to fight and I'll come home when it's over. Betty signed up for that. But if I'm not supporting someone who's in the fight or if I'm not directly involved myself, there isn't any staff work I'm doing as important as she is. So at every opportunity I try and remind her. Make sure you're watching your kids' Little League games when you can. Go to parent-teacher conferences. Go see the school play. Somebody will cover for you. Make sure the people who work for you are able to do the same thing.

We can screw up a lot of things, gang, but if we convince our Airmen that we think we're more important to them than their families are, they'll walk.

Next slide.

This is a pretty cool photo. This was taken at the 2011 Outstanding Airmen of the Year Banquet. The guy on the left, Dustin Goodwin, came from the 48th Wing at RAF Lakenheath. He was one of the 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year that year. As you know, they walk with their spouses or family members typically through a line of honor as they come into and out of the event.

Dustin walked with his flight commander, Captain Gil Wyche. Afterwards, I asked Dustin why, why he didn't pick a family member. He said this is a military honor. I wanted somebody in the military I respect, somebody I admire, somebody I would follow anywhere, to walk me into that event. These two bonded in firefights in Afghanistan, providing perimeter support for an Army unit. Sergeant Goodwin was credited with repelling an attack at the point of attack in the wire by killing three people in danger-close combat. Captain Wyche was leading that fight. By the way, Captain Wyche himself is a Bronze Star with Valor winner. He was last year's Sijan Award winner for the United States Air Force.

We value leadership in our Air Force. Provide it.

Next slide.

We also value sacrifice. The business you're in calls for it. Your job is dangerous. You go into places people haven't been to, they haven't seen. They don't understand how dangerous it can be, even here in the homeland. These four great Airmen from the North Carolina Air National Guard gave their lives fighting a fire in South Dakota, something they probably never expected to be doing when they joined the Guard.

It's dangerous work. It takes special people with special talent, and occasionally they sacrifice everything. Treasure the people you do this with. Treasure their commitment and please don't forget the sacrifice of these Airmen.

Next slide.

We value courage as well. Anybody stationed at Charleston? Anybody know Scott? In 1995, Scott Kapanke was a young senior airman. He'd read all about courage and heard people talk about it but courage sometimes requires strange things of us and it comes in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes the courage to stare adversity in the eye, to face the unknown and persevere is the strongest kind of courage. Scott had a sore arm. He kind of ignored it, kept working, until finally some of his buddies said you've really got to go to the doctor and get this checked out.

When he did they found 45 tumors in his body between his neck and his waist. He went down to Wilford Hall Medical Center, they brought him in to take a look at him and he stayed there for a year. Chemo didn't do anything. They were running out of ideas. They finally decided a bone marrow transplant was the only option. Scott at this point had kind of resigned himself to the fact that he was not going to recover. He started to make peace with his family and with himself. Then the bone marrow transplants worked after the second one. The tumors started to disappear. But six remained.

So the doctors told him they wanted to do surgery. He wasn't sure he wanted to do that because he didn't think it would matter and he was at peace. But he agreed to at least do the CT scan.

They ran the CT scan, the doctor came back and said the surgery wasn't going to be required because the last six tumors had literally disappeared overnight.

After two years of recovery in Colorado, Scott decided he wanted to come back in the Air Force. The Secretary of the Air Force approved the waiver and Scott came back on active duty. He's done lots of things since then and he's done every one of them well. You can see how proud he is of his time as a Thunderbird crew chief. He's now a C-17 maintainer. I guarantee you this guy can teach us something about courage. I'm proud to be in his Air Force.

Next slide.

We value innovation in this business. In fact I think we value it more than we even realize we do. We kind of started with innovation in the Wright Brothers' lab, their workshop. This service is all about it.

If somebody asks me what my vision for the United States Air Force would be, it would be that we have the most highly trained, highly educated, most innovative Airmen ever, and that they are constantly looking for new and better ways to do our mission. The tools we give them may change, but those Airmen cannot change. And when they leave the service of their country that training and education should make them competitive in any marketplace and that conviction to our core values and that Airman's Creed should make them positive role models and citizens for this nation for the rest of their life.

That's my vision for the United States Air Force. It has nothing to do with airplanes.

You guys are innovating all the time. You saved four percent of your fuel costs, which are big. Just the fuel initiatives you run for your staff. The stuff that you guys have run on the paperless cockpit, bringing things in with iPads, etcetera, is fantastic. We have to keep pushing forward and make it more useable so we can connect it to networks, etcetera. We've got to keep pushing on this. It makes a ton of sense.

Keep thinking, keep changing, keep adapting.

Next slide.

1929, Tooey Spaatz and others flew that airplane in the upper left corner. That's the Question Mark.

A 150 hour mission in 1929. Forty-three air refuelings through that 15 to 20 foot hose there. Can you imagine that? Ten of them at night. Innovation is part of our DNA.

In the upper right, flying the Hump. Think about that airlift mission. Trying to resupply the Flying Tigers in China over the Hump in Burma. These airplanes were not high performance, folks, as you well know. The pilots who flew that will tell you that sometimes they found their way by following the wreckage on the ground from their predecessors.

The Berlin Airlift, probably the most visible airlift mission in the history and maybe the one with the longest lasting strategic effect.

What a legacy you carry here.

By the way, that other guy's not an airlifter, but he's an innovative guy. He's a new age guy. He's all about technology. He's an Air Force combat controller. Retired now Master Sergeant Bart Decker. He went in with one of the first A Teams into Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom. He's got an awful lot of technology on that horse. It's a fantastic picture, isn't it?

The most sophisticated piece of warfighting equipment in this slide is Bart Decker. He probably hasn't changed that much since the days of the Roman Legion. Neither have you.

Next slide.

I read an article about two weeks ago that basically asked the question why is the Air Force relevant in this day and age? You've got to be kidding me. Our future is an air, space and cyber future. There's no question about that. It's important that we understand why we matter. By the way, this is the National Security Act of 1947. These are the missions it gave us. In today's language, air superiority, global strike, ISR, airlift. It hasn't changed. Close air support, and command and control. We're based pretty solidly in what we were told to do 60-plus years ago, and we're still doing it. Just the tools have changed.

Next slide.

Nobody could have envisioned in 1947 the capabilities we have in space that contribute to all those mission areas. The cyber capabilities we're developing do the same thing. Or the way we put together our command and control capability to manage operations on a theater scale which our combatant commanders expect us to be able to do. And somehow, manage mobility operations on a global scale. It's actually startling if you step back from the reality that you know every day and look at what we're capable of doing in your mission area. I hope you're proud of that because you ought to be.

Next slide.

Air superiority is still a mission. This is the best picture of it I've ever seen. This is the United States Army on the way to Baghdad. They have no idea why they can do this. They don't know what goes into it. They trust their Air Force to provide it. And unfortunately, sometimes people assume it will always be there. This doesn't come free. It's not easy to do. And you ought to be proud that our Air Force does it.

Next slide.

Think about what we do in ISR these days. Twelve hundred hours just of full motion video every day. And the ability to take the collection from the multiple platforms we have to collect it, to process it and to disseminate it all over the world. Nobody else brings that capacity to the fight. Nobody. Anywhere.

Next slide.

Global strike is still at our core. We have 36,000 Air Force Airmen every day doing the nuclear mission. Thirty-six thousand. They're unbelievably good at it. We can't ever take our eye off the ball here, but you should be proud of what they accomplish. It's not just nukes. That B-2 in the center, remember Allied Force, the air war in Serbia? The first strikes were two B-2s with 16 precision guided weapons apiece. Think about what that would have taken in terms of a World War II bomber force to provide the same effect.

In fact in Allied Force one-third of the targets total were hit by B-2s flying out of Whiteman Air Force Base. You wondered if global strike's a reality, just think about that. And we've continued that in other places, most recently in Libya.

Next slide.

Then there's this one. In case you wondered, you are the backbone of the United States military's way of war. Nobody else can move as quickly. Nobody else can move in the volume you can. U.S. Transportation Command absolutely needs you for rapid response and rapid capability movement. You can do a lot of things with other kinds of platforms, but you can't do a lot of the things we need to do without this.

One point two million passengers this year, 60,000 airlift sorties. That little bumper sticker people give you about one airlift sortie launching every two minutes every day of the year? You guys kind of shrug that off. I mentioned that to the Air Force civic leaders the other day, and their jaws dropped. Then when I told them the total number of 60,000—I don't think they believed me. It is phenomenal.

Just think about what's going on today moving equipment from the West Coast and from Arizona and other places to support the Northeast. It's remarkable what you accomplish.

Next slide.

A guy named Dave Rodriguez was the commander of NATO's Joint Command in Afghanistan for a while in ISAF. I was taking to Dave Rodriguez not long ago and he told me the three things that he remembers most from the campaign that he thinks will be the biggest difference over time for warfighting in the United States military are number one, the increase in the tactical airdrop capacity to get convoys off the road and the precision airdrop systems, in particular JPADS.

That's pretty cool that he's thinking that.

The second thing was the troops-in-contact response time, getting it down to under 12 minutes from anywhere in the country. That's remarkable, folks, that we can actually do that, that we have the command and control, the rapid response capability, the aircraft in position, the weapons required to provide that. It's just incredible.

The third thing he mentioned was the aeromedical evacuation mission and the revolutionary changes in moving people from the battlefield all the way back to care in the U.S.

Next slide.

I had the opportunity not too long ago to ride in the back of a Jackson, Mississippi Air National Guard C-17 on a ride from Ramstein back to Andrews. We took this picture from on top of one of the boxes in the back end. It's a pretty cool picture.

The guy in the black and red Ohio State jacket there, is a young Airman from the fuel shop at RAF Mildenhall. He had just been diagnosed with a brain tumor and they were taking him home to Wright-Pat to get the follow-up care he needed. His family lived in that area. About six weeks after this picture was taken he died. We didn't save him, but we got him home to spend the last six weeks of his life with his family by his side.

That banner hanging on the right side of the picture there about two-thirds of the way up on the right—next slide.

Here's what it looks like if you look at the front of it. Basically it indicates there's wounded warriors onboard the airplane, and there were on this one.

This was an Air Guard airplane with a Guard crew.

Next slide.

It had an Air Force Reserve medical team onboard out of New York.

Next slide.

It had an active duty CCAT team out of Andrews Air Force Base.

This is Total Force. You guys live it every day. You are our model. The rest of us have a lot to learn about how you do it and how you can make it work quickly.

Next slide.

By the way, along the way there this young guy's father had to get up and go be with his mother who also had a tumor behind her eye and was being flown back for treatment. I was holding him and trying to save that Tootsie Roll Pop from the blanket because his mom had a stroke somewhere over the North Atlantic. That CCAT team and that medical team was busy saving her life. Think about what you do.

Next slide.

While that was going on the crew up front was pushing as fast as they could to get us somewhere to a hospital. Great Americans. Great mission. Unbelievable success story.

Next slide.

You guys know how impressive you are in air refueling. 800 million pounds of gas pumped this last year—800 million. Here's a fact that we can only think up on the Air Staff. [Laughter]. This is what I do with my time, guys. You just need to know how busy I am. [Laughter]. If you took those 800 million pounds of gas and you tried to pump them into a single hose the size of that one on the

Question Mark, that hose would be 5 billion feet long. I'm dead serious. That's enough to do four trips to the moon. That's a lot of gas. Be proud of yourself.

This of course is the Calico Wing that Ray and others have made famous talking about it at Moron Air Base, supporting Operation Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector. Actually Chad Manske stood this thing up. He was the wing commander at Mildenhall. I arrived to check up on him the day that Roy Uptegraff, or the day after I guess, Brigadier General Roy Uptegraff from the Pennsylvania Guard showed up to take over. I learned a couple of things that were significant to me about our Air Force by looking at this wing.

Number one was how fast the volunteer force can deploy when required. Number two was how impressive the type of officers we have in our Reserve component who are willing to step up because they have the expertise and the capability and can create the time to lead this kind of an effort. Roy Uptegraff is an impressive guy. Finally, I learned how incredibly capable our Total Force is when we decide to operate together.

Unbelievable success story.

Next slide.

Here's how I see tankers. I don't know how many times I've refueled in my career. I don't know how many. A lot. Not one time—not once—have I ever showed up at an air refueling point and the tanker had not been there. That's an incredible statistic. It's not one we capture well, but it's an incredible statistic. Thank you.

Next slide.

Soon we'll be using this baby and we'll replace about a third of our fleet initially and we need to replace a lot more over time. It's a fantastic airplane. Ray Johns had a lot to do with bringing this thing on board along with many of the other senior leaders here. Thank you so much for your support.

Next slide.

You might not know this. I was at Texas A&M a couple of weeks ago. There's got to be an Aggie or two in the crowd. Down on the field around half time with a bunch of freshmen Air Force ROTC cadets came running up and Betty and I got our picture taken with them. As we broke up there and started walking back to our seats, I asked a couple of them who were walking with me, what do you want to do in the Air Force. God's truth. Number one guy, I want to fly C-17s. Number two guy, I want to fly that new tanker. Number three, girl, I want to fly all over the world and see everything. So I said you want to be a mobility pilot. Mobility is cool. You guys made it that way. These guys want to be you. More of that pride thing.

Next slide.

You have answered America's call. You do it every day. You're doing it today. You'll be out there doing it at the operational end of the business tomorrow, next week, next month for as long as you're serving in our Air Force.

The nation owes you a vote of thanks. On their behalf, I'd like to offer it.

Next slide.

In case you ever doubt how important your job is, I'd like you to remember this guy's face. His name is Mike. Michael's a United States Marine. Not too long ago Michael was injured in a patrol when he stepped on an IED which triggered an ambush that brought his whole unit under fire. Michael lost both legs. He lost part of a hand. He was pretty badly injured.

I met Michael at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center. I was there trying to meet him because his family was having trouble getting information. So I went over to meet him and try and talk to him. Unfortunately he was unconscious. He was in a medically induced coma. He had a breathing tube still in. The day before he left to head back home and they'd stabilized him a little bit, his fiancé sent me an email. That's her there. And she sent me this picture. She asked me if I'd give the picture to Michael and tell him that she knew he didn't think she'd want him anymore, but that she was going to be with him every step of the way from that day until they died. This picture was her way of telling him that.

So I went to the hospital. Michael actually had the breathing tube out, but he was just coming out of surgery, an unexpected surgery. They had to go in and clean something up. So he wasn't real coherent when I was talking to him in the ICU. But he could talk, he just couldn't get his eyes open. So I told Michael I had a picture for him from his fiancé. When he heard her name he leaned forward off the bed in about a half crunch kind of position and he said, where is it? Where is it? I said I'm holding it up right in front of you, Michael. He's trying as hard as he can, but his eyes won't come open. So he starts yelling at himself, open your damn eyes, Michael. But he can't get them open. I said Michael, it's okay, buddy. It's right here. It's going to be here when you wake up. He said no, no, touch me with it. So I did. I just laid it on his chest. He lay back in the bed and he just smiled.

Just out of curiosity, anybody in here have anything to do with battlefield Airmen? If you do, would you stand up? Stand up and stay standing up. Have you ever worked close air support before? Anybody in here worked the aeromedical evacuation mission in any way, shape or form? Tactical, strategic, any of it? How many of you do airlift? Stay standing for a second and just look around the room. That ambush resulted in a call for close air support which was provided by Air Force A-10s. Michael was taken off the battlefield by a Pedro helicopter. The Guardian Angels are the ones who loaded him up. He was treated at the first aid station he reached back at the operating base by one of the tactical combat casualty treatment teams, started by this command. That CCAT team member rode with him on the helicopter to Kandahar. At Kandahar he was loaded onto a C-17 which took him to [redacted] where he was treated by Air Force medical personnel. He then jumped on another C-17 and he came to Ramstein and was treated by that great joint team at Ramstein. The medical technician kind of assigned to his room and the room next door helping the ICU nurse was an Air Force staff sergeant medic who had been injured in Afghanistan in an IED blast herself and decided to come work trauma care because she understood the effects of traumatic brain injury. I asked you to stand because Michael's family asked me to say thank you for bringing their son home.

[Applause].

You can turn the slide off, please. Thank you.

I can't even begin to tell you how proud I am to be chief of staff of the United States Air Force. I also can't begin to tell you how clueless I am about it still. Your job is to teach me. I'm willing to learn. So I'll be seeing you at your house. Don't be subtle when you ask questions. Don't be subtle when you give advice. Let me know what you think. This isn't a tough time for our Air Force—it's an exciting time for our Air Force. We've got the opportunity to shape the future. If we don't, somebody will shape it for us. I'm confident of that.

So be proud, continue to serve well, and thank you for your commitment, your sacrifice and your service to our nation and our Air Force. And thanks for your time today.