



**CHIEF OF STAFF  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
WASHINGTON**

**Strengthening Joint Leaders and Teams ... a Combined Arms Imperative**

This paper is the second in a series to share my thinking behind three key CSAF focus areas over the next four years. As stated in the first paper, “Revitalizing Squadrons – the Heartbeat of the Air Force”, these ideas are neither revolutionary nor a significant vector change. Each align with our Air Force Future Operating Concept and Strategic Master Plan -- our strategic vision documents. They also nest perfectly under Secretary James’ three priorities: Taking Care of Airmen; Balancing Readiness and Modernization; and Making Every Dollar Count. Said another way, these ideas are about evolution ... not revolution.

Today’s national security challenges come from a combination of strong states that are challenging world order, weak states that cannot preserve order, and poorly governed spaces that provide sanctuary to extremists who seek to destabilize world order. From China’s actions to militarize the South China Sea ... to Russian aggression in Eastern Europe ... to Iran’s continued malicious activity ... to nuclear aspirations of an increasingly unstable North Korea ... we have returned to the era of state-on-state competition even as we counter violent extremism in the Middle East, prevent its spread to other regions, and disrupt attacks worldwide.

Given we will be facing the challenges listed above for the next several years, it is essential we strengthen the development of Airmen who are not only steeped in the business of Airpower, but also knowledgeable in how to optimize every component as part of a Joint Task Force (JTF). Airmen, leveraging the same leadership used to blend joint and coalition partners into a synergized air campaign, must be ready to lead and work in JTF HQs designed to synergize all components. Airmen, embodied with the global perspective natural to the speed and range of airpower, have much to contribute through leadership at the highest levels of joint command.

To better prepare our officer, enlisted, and civilian force to stand up, lead, and support a JTF, we must reinvigorate our development to purposefully and systematically gain proficiency in joint warfare earlier in the careers of Airmen. Our Airmen should continue to serve in joint positions, both on the staff and operationally, and capitalize on joint experiences, education and training. Our culture must value those who serve in these joint positions. We then must promote what we value and invest in Total Force Airmen who are joint warfighters.

In parallel with the development of Airmen to lead joint operations, we must evolve the composition and training of our organizations to deploy as a JTF HQ. We’ll start our

training with 9 AF and the AFCENT missions co-located at Shaw AFB and certify the commander and staff as a core JTF HQ. Under the leadership of COMACC, we'll learn from this effort and then look to expand it to selected Component Numbered Air Force (C-NAF) HQs. As wings across our Air Force generally report to NAF Commanders, I'll expect NAF Commanders to bring the language and battle rhythm of a JFC HQ into the daily rhythm of our wings as we exercise missions in support of a Joint Commander. I'll also expect Wing Commanders to educate Squadron Commanders on the value of joint comprehensive readiness. To support this, our education and training programs will also provide the right Joint training at the right time for our leaders. These changes will naturally influence how we exercise and inspect NAFs and wings to further solidify the business of joint warfighting and JTF leadership across the Air Force. This is about instilling joint warfighting expertise into our formations and Airmen at all levels to include combat and combat support.

We'll also look at how we present forces to a Combatant Commander. Historically, JTFs stand up within days or weeks of a crisis with little fanfare or warning. While intended to exist only for the duration of the crisis, they often become enduring. Therefore, with little time to prepare before the formation of a JTF, it is critical that we have Airmen trained and ready to provide the crucial airpower component and JTF leadership whenever and wherever needed.

It also means we need to reset how we deploy Airmen to a fight. Over the past 15 years, we migrated from deploying as teams to often deploying as individual Airmen. Throughout our history, we tend to do our best work by training, deploying, employing, and re-deploying as teams. We'll never be the component that sticks rigidly to a fixed team size for deployment (i.e. a set squadron or flight) because the Nation needs its Air Force to be more flexible. However, over the last few years, more Airmen have deployed into combat as individuals at the expense of Airmen and unit readiness.

With 15 years behind us in this fight ... and likely 15 more years ahead ... this is important, timely, and worthy work. Strong leadership is required to train together, deploy together, fight together, and return together. This is especially important for our Guard and Reserve Airmen who often return home without a main operating base or unit to share their combat experiences.

Over the next four years, I look forward to working with our Secretary, MAJCOM Commanders, and Air Force leadership to strengthen our joint warfighting leaders and teams. As always, I am proud to serve with you.

Fight's on!



DAVE GOLDFEIN  
General, USAF  
Chief of Staff