



CHIEF's Sight Picture

The Culture of our Air and Space Expeditionary Force and the Value of Air Force Doctrine

We have come a long way in the difficult process of defining, refining, organizing, deploying, and employing our Air and Space Expeditionary Force (AEF) concept. Despite being involved in three major operations (Operations ALLIED FORCE, ENDURING FREEDOM, and NOBLE EAGLE) during the transition, we continue to make steady progress in the manning, equipping, and training of the dedicated forces and in the force flow management that is so critical to their success.

Now I need your personal attention and support in two absolutely vital areas if we are to finally bring the AEF concept on-line in the challenging days ahead. The first area is the adoption of the AEF expeditionary mindset across our Air Force, and the second is the embracing of our doctrinal precepts in the organization and employment of air and space power.

Concerning what I call “The Culture of the Air and Space Expeditionary Force,” everyone in the Air Force must understand that the day-to-day operation of the Air Force is absolutely set to the rhythm of the deploying AEF force packages. Essential to this cultural change is our universal understanding that the natural state of our Air Force when we are “doing business” is not home station operations but deployed operations. The AEF cycle is designed to provide a rhythm for the entire business of our Air Force, from assignment cycles to training cycles and leave cycles. That process needs to be the focus of our daily operational business. We must particularly work to change processes within our own Air Force that reach in and drive requirements not tuned to the deployment rhythm of the AEF. That means that when the 90-day vulnerability window begins, the people in that particular AEF force package are trained, packed, administered, and are either deploying or sitting by the phone expecting to be deployed. There should be no surprises when that phone does ring, and no reclaims that they are not ready. More important, there should be no reclaims because someone other than the AEF Center tasked people in the AEF for non-AEF duties.

So I need your help. Wing commanders should be looking at a slide in daily staff meeting that tracks the training progress and availability of each unit type code (UTC) preparing to deploy just like we track flight mission capable (FMC) rates. We should all know what AEF we are in and when we are vulnerable to deploy. You may ask, “What about units that don’t deploy?” The answer is that some parts of almost every unit in the Air Force is or will be in a UTC that deploys in the AEF cycle. The purpose of the new

Combat Wing Organization is to make some parts of every wing trained and ready to be expeditionary.

The second issue we need to focus on is understanding and adhering to our doctrine. Just as important to the expeditionary culture is the fundamental understanding that we organize, deploy, and employ using organizational principles based on doctrine, not ad hoc command arrangements. Doctrine is not the opinion of the most senior officer present. Years ago we found we had nearly lost our way, and although we were and are magnificent operators, we were wasting time and energy in organizational structures that didn't make sense and were not understood by our people. Neither were they understood or supported by the joint commanders we were sent to support. Worse, this lack of doctrine was causing a "lost patrol" syndrome as we stood up small organizations or deployed with no coherent command and control structure. Since 1996 our focus on doctrine has given us the tools we need. We created a Doctrine Center and took the time at every senior Air Force level to codify what we had experienced in joint and combined planning, deployment, and employment. We agreed and codified those lessons as our best practices and issued them as our first comprehensive and integrated set of doctrine. Chief among those documents were AFDD-1 and AFDD-2, which laid out not only what we believe about the proper application of air and space power, but also the proper way to organize, present, deploy, and employ air and space power. We continue to institutionally review and improve those concepts to ensure they stand the test of time as well as to make sure that we transform with the times.

Two principles -- Unity of Command and Centralized Control/Decentralized Execution -- are the key pillars of our doctrine. We believe that airmen work for airmen and the senior airman works for the joint force commander. These precepts have served us well over time, but we airmen are plagued by bad habits -- over the years we have not formed good habits in reading and practicing our own doctrine. When I review our laydown of forces in recent contingencies and exercises, I see some improvement, but not what we should expect from Air Force leadership that understands and enforces our doctrine. Despite the fact that AFDD-2 provides us with a clear view and ample examples of how we should best organize and present our forces, I still see instances where we have not established a Commander Air Force Forces (COMAFFOR), where we have deployed multiple squadrons to the same bases with no Air Force command element and no clear line of Air Force authority to any commander. Additionally, even in our permanently based force we can still point to units quartered on the same base or geographically separated units (GSU), but reporting up separate chains, some even linked to functional stovepipes rather than to a commander. In most cases we don't even notice doctrinal negligence because our airmen are such superb operators -- we'll get the job done even in a lousy organization. We need to fix this for them. We know how to do it right: we've taken the time to argue it out, write it down and publish it.

I realize that doctrine is by design authoritative but not directive; however, if we haven't read it, it is neither. In the normal circumstance doctrine is the best way to proceed and if we must deviate, there should be a clear and compelling operational reason. I need you to help me bring discipline to the system and the way we deploy and

employ our forces. The basics are simple: when we deploy we should be in a Wing, Group, Squadron or Flight. There should be a clear chain of command to a Commander of Air Force Forces. A deployed expeditionary unit should look like the Combat Wing Organization we are a part of back home. We should read AFDD-1 and AFDD-2.

An expeditionary mindset across our Air Force and an in-depth understanding of our force presentation doctrine are fundamental to the success of our AEF if we are to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. I will count on you to be out front with me in getting these messages clearly explained and understood across our great Air Force.



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