



**Senior Enlisted Leader Summit 2010:
Deliberately Developing Airmen
for Global Response
Tuesday, 04 May 2010**

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Introduction

Chief Roy, thank you very much for that introduction. More importantly, thank you for your leadership and the sterling example that you set for our enlisted force. Secretary Donley and I are truly fortunate to have such a thoughtful, capable, and forward-looking leader on the team.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for attending this truly impressive summit—one that I am hopeful will yield bold and innovative but also viable and workable solutions to the many challenges that we face. I'd like to recognize the senior enlisted leaders from our partner nations, who have traveled from far and wide to be here. They are our international partners in Coalition operations—where they exhibit great bravery, skill, and commitment, and all of us here at this conference will benefit from their unique insights and perspective. So, I look forward to their ideas, and to productive discussions with them, as we work toward common solutions to our shared challenges.

I trust that you've already had some interesting discussions, after such an impressive lineup of speakers this morning; and, I am confident that you will benefit even further from the eminently qualified presenters this afternoon. With the time that I have, I would like to share my perspectives on the nature of today's Joint and Coalition operations, and then touch on some enlisted force development and force management issues. I'll conclude with some thoughts on leadership, service, performance, and excellence.

Joint and Coalition Operations: An International Posture

It is entirely appropriate that today's session is devoted to worldwide combatant command perspectives, as this sets the stage for the functional presentations over the next two days. As we progress through discussions on how best to deliberately develop Airmen for global response, we must maintain a global perspective and operational focus. Appropriately, then, the



overarching construct of our vision for success consists of maintaining and improving our ability to contribute timely, precise, and potentially game-changing air, space, and cyber capabilities to the Joint or Combined force, operating around the globe.

Equally vital is our ability to interoperate with our international partners. One of the inescapable conclusions that we can draw regarding the twenty-first century international security environment is that we are mutually interconnected and interdependent with our partners and allies. This has been reaffirmed by our national leaders, from the President to the Secretary of State to the Secretary of Defense. The international community requires the many capabilities that the United States has to offer, whether it be diplomatic leverage, economic and financial influence, informational impact, or military might. But, correspondingly, the United States cannot go it entirely alone either, and requires a concerted effort involving our international partners and allies, to collaboratively address our shared and most vexing security challenges.

Force Development

To that end, we must continue to develop globally-oriented Airmen. By this, I mean prepared and capable Airmen who can integrate unique Air Force capabilities with the strengths of our Joint and Coalition partners, across the full spectrum of operational environments.

This global posture requires that our Airmen possess a keen sense of relevant cultural and linguistic sensitivities that help them to collaborate and integrate with our international partners. This is in addition to the ongoing demand to be, in equal measure, technologically savvy and militarily skilled, and able to carefully leverage today's advanced systems toward the attainment of military objectives. Finally, our Airmen must be mentally agile. Today, more than ever, tactical effects can have strategic consequences. In many instances, operational and strategic success hinges on Airmen outside the wire, making split-second tactical decisions in a highly dynamic environment in which black



and white choices are rare, and the many shades of gray can challenge even the most brilliant and competent among us.

The development of our enlisted force, therefore, must be deliberate, balanced, and responsive, focusing on the right experience, training, and education, at the right time. With continuing fiscal constraints and the smallest active duty force in our Service's 63-year history, the case to maximize the potential and performance of each and every Airman could not be more compelling. It is the only way that we can sustain our ability to perform our assigned missions.

We must therefore be creative in our approach, utilizing a variety of ways and means to deliver the appropriate technical, cultural, or corporate information in a timely and effective manner. That means that we must innovate, from leveraging the latest classroom technologies—"smart boards," wireless networks, virtual simulators, and so forth—here at the Senior NCO Academy and other enlisted training and education institutions, to maximizing the benefits of computer-based training, or "CBTs," for our annual ancillary training requirements. Perhaps there are solutions to be found in other current and future information technologies. We old-timers sometimes tend to scoff at social networking sites, You Tube, Twitter, instant messaging, and the like. Or—who knows?—perhaps some among us are avid tech junkies, and can't wait until the next break to update their Facebook status.

In any event, the reality of today's so-called "digital natives" demands those of us, who perhaps are comfortable in our rather set ways, to embrace the potential to further connect with our young Airmen—perhaps even to go beyond, attracting other bright young Americans toward military service. As we all know, the competition for young talent is fierce. We cannot afford to categorically reject these potential treasure troves of innovation and resources for our recruiting, training, and education needs.

Whatever methods and modes that we use, however, we must remain cognizant of the objectives of our enlisted force development continuum. By focusing on our eight institutional competencies that comprise common



qualities and skill sets like leading people—and which link us all together as Airmen, in very meaningful, mission-critical ways—we can ensure that the high-tech ways and means to train, educate, and prepare our Airmen are relevant to our need. The bottom line is, deliberate development must occur from basic training through the full term of rich and rewarding career experiences for the Airman, their families, and the Air Force; and, it must be relevant from *all* perspectives—technological, operational, and cultural.

Force Management

On virtually every Airman's mind is, understandably, our imperative to manage our force toward the right number of Airmen, with an appropriate corporate-wide balance of specialties and abilities. It is a testament to the quality and importance of the Air Force that we currently have the highest retention in 15 years, with retention rates that span the entire enlisted career continuum. However, a number of career fields are overmanned at the expense of others; and thus, our force requires some rebalancing. If unabated, our numbers will exceed our authorized end strength by 5,000 or more Airmen in Fiscal Year 2012; and, if unaddressed, these imbalances will have a negative effect on our overall readiness and effectiveness.

It is important to note that there is no clear, bright line between force development and force management. We must approach this holistically, recognizing that development and management are mutually-contributing elements of maintaining excellence across the force, while remaining within our means. Our development efforts will ensure that Airmen have the appropriate skill sets at the right time; and, they will focus on the particular aptitude and strengths of each individual Airman. We must maximize the effort of every Airman, leveraging their individual strengths and determining a proper course of professional development—and, if necessary, retraining. This is not something that we take pleasure in doing; but it is necessary, and it's better to act aggressively now, rather than face a much more dire situation later.



Airmen in the Fight

And we must do this well, because wherever there is a need, you can count on Airmen to provide vital capabilities. This is true whether our Airmen are outside the wire, serving shoulder to shoulder with our Joint and Coalition teammates; or whether they are directly contributing to combat operations from their home stations. Either way, ours is a bona fide global force, with expeditionary-minded Airmen. Since 2001, we have deployed members to fill 839,000 contingency requirements. Today, there are approximately 40,000 active duty, Guard, and Reserve Airmen—around six to seven percent of the force—deployed to over 260 locations worldwide, with 30,000 to the Central Command area of operations alone. More than 4,000 of our Airmen in the CENTCOM AOR are performing Joint Expeditionary Taskings outside of their core Air Force specialty, alongside our Army, Navy, and Marine Corps teammates. And, in addition to our deployed Airmen, over 55,000 active duty personnel are permanently garrisoned overseas.

But, in what is perhaps a dramatic shift, the culture of the Air Force no longer reflects an exclusive “deploy to employ” model. We are now a Service, both at home and away, that is focused on combatant commander requirements and Joint force objectives. In addition to those who are deployed and garrisoned overseas, more than 132,000 of our Total Force Airmen execute combatant commander missions every day from their home stations. These Airmen operate and maintain our nuclear forces; provide vital space-borne capabilities; process, exploit, and disseminate remotely-gathered intelligence; protect American airspace; provide airlift and in-flight air refueling; and so much more.

Also, the Air Force has sought a greater balance between preparing for large-scale, high-intensity combat operations on the one hand, and long-duration irregular warfare on the other. Increasingly, Airmen now view the physical operating environment less as blocks of altitude, and more as a continuum of distinct but interconnected mediums, originating on the surface of the earth among our Joint teammates, and extending through low earth



orbit and into the geosynchronous region beyond. And, in the virtual realm, Airmen are among the innovative vanguard, leveraging the cyber medium for distinct warfighting advantages, while defending our ability to operate there with less interference and denial by our adversaries. Correspondingly, our resource decisions have followed suit. The growth in special operations; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and cyber capabilities are but a few manifestations of this trend.

Conclusion: The Need for Senior Enlisted Leadership

Vital to our continuing viability and value to the Joint team is the leadership that senior NCOs and NCOs provide. The role of all leaders is to recognize and inspire individual brilliance, so that we may harness and leverage our collective genius.

To that end, we must recognize that one of the most important functions of leadership is mentoring. Our Airmen are among the best in the world; but as we in this room all did—and still do—in our own professional development, our Airmen require guidance, motivation, and leadership. Some of it will involve true, old-fashioned mentoring—formal face-to-face sessions as well as less formal, spontaneous chats. Other ways, such as the internet-based “MyEDP,” will leverage technology to combine tried-and-true techniques with today’s new methods of communication—and, again, perhaps to better connect with the younger generation.

However you do it, remember this: *every* moment that you take to impart knowledge and experience to junior Airmen who look up to you, you are in fact mentoring. We all must take every opportunity to do so, ensuring that our expectations are clear, but also that our Airmen are aware that their hard work is critical to the collective efforts and capability of the Joint and Coalition force—and therefore, is highly valued.

Another way for us to lead—even more compellingly—is through the example that we set. Every act that we take and thought that we share is instructive, in various degrees, to our Airmen. When we advocate *Integrity, Service, and Excellence*, we must also live it. For example, as we select



command chiefs, we must establish an environment of *Service before Self* that is favorable to maintaining a pool of qualified chief master sergeants—willing and available to serve worldwide, wherever there is a need.

With the many challenges in force development and force management come enormous opportunities. Leaders must embrace the possibilities. It is not easy to have high expectations of performance, in balance with caring for our Airmen and their families. But, in the end, we all must remember that we are a fighting force—stewards of our Nation’s ways and means to employ armed force when called upon by our leadership. We must emphasize and inspire performance at the same time that we demonstrate genuine concern for our people. This is an enormous responsibility; but, as I meet senior NCOs here and around our great Air Force, I see leaders who embrace challenges and seek opportunities to do something important—something greater than any single one of us. So, I am confident that our senior enlisted leaders will find ways to address these challenges.

I am grateful for your professional efforts, here at this summit and also as you return to your units—and, for our international partners, to your nation’s air forces. Thank you for your ideas and deliberation over the next several days.

In closing, let me conclude with this important message: We, in our Air Force, are experiencing a surge in suicides. This includes active, Guard, and Reserve Airmen, as well as Air Force civilians and family members. We have more suicides so far this year than we did last, which itself exceeded each year before that. We collectively in this room have to act to arrest this trend. When I talked earlier about caring for our Airman, now is the time. Make it your business to identify stress and failed relationships among your people. Encourage our people to ask for help, and intervene in cases where they are reluctant to do so. Do not for a single moment accept the needless loss of a teammate as the cost of doing business. It isn’t—not now, not ever.

This is a leadership issue for our Air Force. Let’s apply—you and me—our collective will to this problem, as we do so well in our other military missions.



With that, Secretary Donley and I look forward to hearing from you—on this topic and the many others that you will address during these few days.

It remains such a privilege to serve with each of you, and to speak before you today. Let's together continue to raise the bar on consistent performance by every Airman, and on caring for our people. Thank you.