



**The Atlantic Council:
“Prospects for Air Force Partnerships
and International Cooperation”**

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**As Prepared
for Delivery**

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Introduction

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Fred, thank you very much for that kind introduction and for the invitation to speak to this distinguished audience on this pleasant Washington spring evening. I am very pleased to be here, representing the men and women of your United States Air Force. Each and every day, Airmen and their families nobly serve our Nation; and each and every day, I have the distinct honor of serving alongside them as they attain noteworthy accomplishments in their daily professional efforts.

Your Air Force and Armed Forces have completed yet another busy year, and despite many uncertainties, Airmen and their Joint teammates look forward to what I am certain will be another important year. We continue to monitor many events of geostrategic importance, from a potential weakening of a brutal regime in Syria, to a new North Korean leader with as yet undetermined intentions, to an entrenched Iranian regime with a penchant for erratic behavior. All the while, we will contend with ongoing budget pressures, particularly if sequestration, pursuant to the Budget Control Act, is actually triggered.

If one aggregates these geostrategic and fiscal circumstances and their effects, with our efforts to work out details on the broader Defense Strategic Guidance that was unveiled earlier this year, and on the President’s budget request that was released last month, one can easily see that we have our work cut out for us in the weeks and months ahead. One also can be confident, however, that the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces remain, as always, dedicated to service and ready to perform, whatever the circumstances.

Defense Strategic Guidance

With the foregoing as a broad scene-setter, it becomes very evident that we will need to be efficient while we strive to ensure our effectiveness across a wide range of potential contingencies. In such a circumstance, we must reevaluate and



reprioritize our national security interests and objectives, and accordingly, take an inventory of the ways and means at our disposal—both current and those that we anticipate—toward the attainment of those interests and objectives, all within budgetary constraints. After many months of a comprehensive, Defense Department-wide evaluation, this is exactly what our new Defense Strategic Guidance provides.

One of the ways in which we can achieve much-needed efficiencies, as we ensure maximum preparedness and effectiveness, is to continue teaming with global partners with whom we share like interests and can act in common cause. As budgetary pressures continue to increase, it is a near-certainty that we will not be able to maintain either an all-encompassing portfolio or excess capacity. Instead, we are trading some capacity for sustained quality.

And to that end, we are managing our personnel and materiel, and associated training and sustainment requirements, to avoid a hollowed-out force, and instead, are striving to ensure maximized readiness within resourcing constraints. We are structuring our Total Force, across active and reserve components, to be able to implement the new defense strategy. And after a long procurement drought beginning in the early 1990s, we are prioritizing our acquisition investments to ensure a modernized future force that is sustainable over the longer term.

Part of this broader strategy is to seek, wherever possible, productive global partnerships to compensate for tailored—in many cases, decreased—capacity, by pooling capabilities toward collective effects. The new Defense Strategic Guidance describes geostrategic recalibrations that will inform how we will view and pursue our global partnerships, both existing and developing. We are looking to rebalance our resources toward the Indo- and Asia-Pacific, where we anticipate that many strategic, economic, and diplomatic opportunities will become even more vital to our core national interests. We certainly will sustain our hard-earned foothold in and around the broader Middle East and South Asia, which remains the primary locus of violent extremism. And we will tailor our commitments in Europe, strengthening through smart partnerships the long-standing transatlantic alliance that, in the 20th Century, prevented a cold war from becoming hot, and which, as we continue



into the 21st, will remain a key partnership in ensuring stability in a dynamic and uncertain world.

International Engagement and Global Partnerships

The U.S. Air Force and Armed Forces currently undertake global partnership efforts that, at the broadest level, bolster mutual linkages, particularly military-to-military; harmonize outlooks on global and regional peace and stability; mutually enhance respective and collective broad-spectrum military capabilities; increase overall capacity; and ultimately, increase the likelihood of achieving mutual security goals. These strategic linkages are established and developed through specific activities and arrangements, generally with different levels of effort and comprehensiveness, depending on the maturity of the particular relationship.

The level of effort for some activities, however, can be constant across a range of developing and developed relationships. These include:

- combined professional development, wherein various U.S. Air Force courses and programs educate and train nearly 12,000 members of partner air forces annually;
- development and utilization of U.S. security cooperation Airmen around the world, helping our partners to develop indigenous capabilities;
- multinational and bilateral exercises with more than 60 partner nations each year, toward mutual benefits and enhanced interoperability in real-world coalition efforts;
- bilateral and multilateral engagements, at all levels, from senior service leadership to unit-level working groups;
- and initiatives to strengthen preventative medical care and humanitarian and disaster relief capabilities and capacity of partner forces.

Other activities that are more complex, particularly those that involve the sharing of sensitive technologies or information, will vary greatly in terms of effort and comprehensiveness, relating directly to the level of the partner's need and the quality of its security practices. Arrangements such as information sharing and technology transfers and disclosures are handled on a case-by-case basis, largely depending on the subject, technical support, the end user, and proposed end use,



as well as our ability to balance potential risks to information and technology security with the potential benefits in interoperability and enhanced partnership.

Irrespective of this complexity, all of these activities work together to establish new relationships and to strengthen and deepen existing ones. So, for example, when we invite airmen from partner air forces to attend our undergraduate academy, or our command and staff or war colleges—or when we send our Airmen abroad to undertake similar activities with foreign partners—we mutually receive huge dividends over the longer term, establishing relationships that typically last decades. When airmen from, say, Bulgaria, Hungary, Sweden, and Poland, during a period of several years, each attended the Air War College, and formed lasting relationships with each other and with their U.S. counterparts, and then went on to become the heads of their respective air forces, we gained a distinct advantage in efforts such as forming the twelve-nation C-17 consortium in Europe, known as the Strategic Airlift Capability.

The July 2009 activation of its operating unit, the Heavy Airlift Wing, was an auspicious beginning to this capability. Two months later, the Heavy Airlift Wing executed its first mission to Afghanistan, and then proceeded to deliver more than 2 million pounds of war reserve materiel in six months of supporting the coalition mission there. During that surge, the Heavy Airlift Wing also responded with life-saving and life-sustaining humanitarian aid to Haiti, landing in Port-au-Prince seven days after the devastating earthquake.

All told, in its first year of operations, the wing amassed more than 4,000 flying hours, and transported nearly 14,000 tons of cargo and over 6,000 passengers to six different continents. This C-17 consortium will continue to benefit its 11 European partner-nations by providing a shared capability, with modest underwriting and without having to either contract airlift on a case-by-case basis, which is more costly, or to procure their own aircraft, for which they may not have a requirement commensurate to the purchase expense.

Moreover, this capability saves the United States, as a member nation, nearly \$130,000 for each C-17 leg that our Air Force does not have to fly across the Atlantic. But perhaps more importantly, the Strategic Airlift Capability has



benefitted more than its member nations. Just ask the recipients of humanitarian and disaster relief supplies in Haiti and Japan, or coalition warfighters during the 2009 Afghanistan surge.

Similar to education and training efforts, we commit ourselves heavily to exercises that enhance our interoperation with partner air forces and other military forces. Exercises like RED FLAG, in Alaska, boost our effectiveness in tactical air combat, helping to ensure our readiness to perform in real-world operations such as ODYSSEY DAWN and UNIFIED PROTECTOR, the U.N.-directed enforcement of a no-fly zone over Libya last March. Our operational success there can be attributed also to our strong and long-standing relationship with the air forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and also to our cooperation and joint training and exercises at our Gulf Air Warfare Center in the United Arab Emirates. In the Libya operation, the contributions of the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and Qatar were particularly noteworthy.

And in the Asia-Pacific, our active participation in exercises like COBRA GOLD will be increasingly important across a wide range of military cooperation and interoperation. As the preeminent regional military exercise, COBRA GOLD, which has been hosted annually by Thailand for some three decades, and which last year included Japan, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, and Malaysia as participants, will continue to enhance multinational air-to-air engagements, staff coordination, humanitarian civic assistance, and field training exercise events.

Again, for those endeavors that involve more intricate requirements and arrangements, our level of effort must be tailored according to the level of development of the particular foreign partner. But where we formalize assurances for safeguarding sensitive information and technologies, and where we can manage potential associated risks, these arrangements can lead to very productive partnerships wherein we can leverage science and technology investments, and achieve economies of scale to reduce costs for involved parties.

A fitting example of this is our effort with Australia on the Wideband Global Satellite Communications system, which provides us with an order of magnitude increase in high-data rate, global communications, over that which was provided by



its 1970s- and 80s-era legacy system. In addition to the U.S. Armed Forces, other users such as the White House Communication Agency, the U.S. Department of State, and international partners depend on this capability to provide a wide range of needs, from command and control to voice and video communications. With our Australian partner's investment in the sixth spacecraft of this constellation, representing a significant cost-sharing measure with the United States, the entire WGS system will increase its capability to benefit us and other WGS participants: Canada, Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. And this sixth satellite will afford Australia with 100 percent of its wideband communications requirements.

It is important to emphasize that the productive and mutually beneficial relationships that the U.S. Air Force sustains do not always have to involve advanced technology and weapon systems. Recall that I began this global partnerships discussion with a vignette about four partner air force students at the Air War College. Many of these interactions, in fact, begin even earlier in a career timeframe, with lieutenants and captains who train and operate together today, and thereby will be better prepared to lead broader multinational efforts as the colonels and generals of tomorrow. A similar sort of individual relationship-building occurs in our enlisted ranks, too, with training and education, exercises, and personnel exchanges.

It should be very clear, therefore, that we place a high premium on individual relationships, which often are just as important as aircraft, spacecraft, and weapon system interoperability and high-tech effects. Our Airmen often train their counterparts on important aviation-related activities such as preventive aircraft maintenance, airfield management and security, and enhanced logistics—all to maximize utility of precious assets, particularly in times of escalating operations and maintenance costs amidst declining defense purchasing power.

In Nigeria, for example, we recently secured a Foreign Military Sales arrangement to provide military working dogs and associated support, all toward increased security. Nigeria also is a partner to whom, in 2009, we provided not advanced hardware and weapon systems, but rather, depot-level maintenance at a



facility in Lisbon, Portugal, to overhaul engines and propellers, and refurbish cockpits and avionics, of their C-130 aircraft. The U.S. State Department then provided funds to help keep the aircraft properly maintained after depot maintenance, and our Airmen provided extensive training and education to enhance their Nigerian counterparts' sustainment capability and the airworthiness of their newly overhauled aircraft.

This is but one noteworthy example of a U.S. interagency effort to benefit an international partner, and to secure benefits for the United States as well—in this case, a strengthened partnership and a potential hub in western Africa. Rest assured that there are many other similar examples. This is also, by the way, another example of gaining benefits from carefully-cultivated, decades-long relationships—in this case, with the Nigerian air chief, who graduated from our Air Command and Staff College some thirty years ago.

Conclusion

In short, through activities such as expanded dialogue, combined training and exercises, and practical cooperation, we stand to deepen and broaden our strategic partnerships, making them even more comprehensive and mutually valuable. Grounded in common interests, these partnerships in turn bring people and even entire nations closer together, helping to bolster security ties, increase capacities, and focus future cooperative efforts that rally around newfound collective capabilities. In a time of continued fiscal austerity, these efforts will be even more crucial for their potential to improve efficiency, contain costs, and consolidate capabilities toward mutually beneficial effects, because under current economic circumstances, it is less likely that any single one of us will become a truly full-service, all-inclusive, completely autonomous air force. Rather, as we have done in the new Defense Strategic Guidance, even we are prioritizing according to current trend indicators, anticipated demand signals, compressed budgets, and the most likely of future contingencies.

I want to thank you for your time this evening, and again, for the kind invitation to participate in tonight's events. I will be happy to take your questions now.