



Fellow Airmen,

Information travels instantly in today's operational environment and the battlespace includes air, land, maritime, space, and cyberspace domains, as well as the information environment. The most decisive advantage is no longer just physical or technological; it's cognitive. For members of the United States Air Force, the mind isn't simply a supporting asset, it's a primary weapon system; and like any weapon system, it must be deliberately developed, maintained, and strengthened.

One of the most effective ways to do this is through disciplined reading from quality sources. Not necessarily non-fiction, but quality literature that elevates the mind, facilitates critical thinking, and inspires growth. To encourage this habit, reading needs to be reframed from a passive activity or box to check to a force multiplier. It sharpens judgment, expands perspective, and builds the intellectual agility required to operate in complex and uncertain environments. Every book read and every idea engaged is an upgrade to the most critical system Airmen bring to the fight: their ability to think.

This commitment to intellectual growth directly affects an Airman's capacity to adapt and innovate. The future force demands more than technical proficiency; it will require discernment, creative problem-solving, the rapid synthesis of information, and the ability to anticipate and shape outcomes. Airmen who invest in self-education are better equipped to see patterns, challenge assumptions, and develop solutions that others miss. In a world defined by unpredictability, cognitive readiness becomes combat readiness.

Furthermore, our core values anticipate it. **Integrity First** demands intellectual honesty: the willingness to seek truth, question assumptions, and confront complex realities. Reading widely and critically develops the moral courage and clarity needed to make sound decisions, even when they are difficult. Integrity is more than behavior; it's disciplined thinking. **Service Before Self** requires a commitment to something greater than individual comfort. Investing time in reading and self-development is an act of service, and it strengthens the individual for the benefit of the team and the mission. Finally, **Excellence in All We Do** demands continuous improvement and the relentless pursuit of higher standards. Excellence is not accidental; it's cultivated. Through consistent learning, Airmen refine their expertise, broaden their understanding, and elevate their performance.



So why does reading matter? *Ultimately, it's about resilience. While none of us can predict the future, we know it will be complex, with challenges that are impossible to predict. Resilience isn't just about physical endurance; it's the ability to think clearly under pressure, adapt to change, and maintain perspective in ambiguity. Reading exposes Airmen to diverse ideas, historical lessons, and strategic insights that build mental resilience over time. **Our adversaries drown us with bots and disinformation, hoping we take the bait. They redefine reality, relying on algorithms monetized by fear and anger, emotions that make resilience crumble. They're working overtime to make us forget history so that we're doomed to repeat it. Learn from reliable, objective sources about mistakes of the past versus the blind adoption of sponsor-scripted perspectives, sprinkled with carefully curated truth, from trending influencers or outlets. Read, get mission briefs, ask hard questions. Don't be afraid to disagree or question, even when it's not popular. Be relentless in the pursuit of truth ... your resilience depends on it.***

As **Leaders**, our job is to foster a culture that values and makes room for continuous learning. Organizations that encourage Airmen to invest in their cognitive readiness create a force that is agile, innovative, and prepared, transforming learning from an individual effort into shared strength. As **Airmen**, our job is to be curious. Identify what sparks your interest and commit to regular reading. Make it a habit. It will strengthen your capability and resilience and contribute to the collective effectiveness of the force.

The mission of the United States Air Force is to fly, fight, and win in increasingly complex domains. Achieving that mission requires more than advanced platforms and cutting-edge technology; it requires advanced Airmen who can think faster, discern truth, adapt quicker, and innovate.

The advantage begins with the mind, **your mind ...**

DAVID R. WOLFE
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force