

139th National Guard Association of The United States
General David L. Goldfein, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force
Keynote Remarks
9 September 2017

GENERAL GOLDFEIN: I don't think I've ever actually walked into that kind of a song before. I think that was kind of a cool thing. So, let me just tell you first how really truly honored I am to be here. I was talking to the Secretary of the Air Force last night and I was telling her, I think you hit it out of the park today. And she said, you just can't find a better group of people to be around than our Guardsmen.

Part of the many blessings of being your Chief of Staff of the Air Force is that I get to pick a team to be around me, the close personal team that works with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. My only criteria for those that I pick for personal staff is that they be someone I feel like could replace me someday. I want to start by introducing a couple of members of my team who are coming up now approaching the end of my first year as Chief into my second year. I want to introduce a couple of folks from the personal staff.

One of them is Lieutenant Colonel Manaal Ibrahim. Manaal is actually an F-15E Weapons Systems Officer turned ALO, and she is from the Connecticut Air National Guard. Manaal has been just spectacular on my team, not only as a primary trip planner but she's also the head of my Strategy Division in the Chief's Action Group. Manaal Ibrahim, I'm not sure where you are now, but thanks a lot for what you do as part of this team.

I'd like to introduce my Aide de Camp, Major, soon to be in a couple of weeks Lieutenant Colonel, Shaggy St. Jean from Massachusetts. Shaggy is an Air National Guardsman, Intelligence Officer Instructor from the Weapons School, and it ought to not go beyond this crowd that the individual that probably spends the most time with the Chief of Staff of the Air Force in an Air National Guardsman. Such is the nature. And he keeps me grounded and lets me know what life is actually like in our Air Force for a Field Grade Officer. So, Shaggy, thank you again for what you every day.

So, speaking of team, I know our Secretary of the Air Force had a chance to come and talk yesterday. Let me just tell you, she is the real deal. I had a conversation with a retired general officer who said you actually couldn't pick a better resume, if you think about it, to be a Secretary of a service than our Secretary of the Air Force. One of our first female graduates of the United States Air Force Academy, goes on to be an Intelligence Officer, leaves the Academy as a Rhodes Scholar, goes on to get her PhD in public policy, serves on President Bush's National Security Council doing strategy and policy, goes on to be a Congresswoman from New Mexico for nine years, and in her district, of course, is not only Los Alamos Labs, then serving on the House Intelligence Committee, and then most recently president of one of our leading STEM universities. You actually couldn't pick a better resume. I will tell you that I'm having just a great time working with her as my executive partner in this endeavor. I'll tell you, we are well-served. We won the lottery with our Secretary of the Air Force.

So, this year we're celebrating our 70th year as a service, and especially now with our Air Force

and Army Guard brothers and sisters we are the folks who led the great insurgency of 1947. And we picked a theme to celebrate this year. And this convention actually kicks off the culmination of a year's worth of activity all geared towards celebrating 70 years as a service. Our theme that we picked to celebrate we call "Breaking Barriers" because that's what we do in the military. If somebody hadn't already coined the phrase our banner might be "Bring It" because of the fact we're the ones that don't see obstacles, we're the ones that see options and opportunities in every challenge we face.

So, to kick off my talk today, let me start off with just a short video that captures this theme of "Breaking Barriers" for 70 years. Roll the video, please.

[Video played.]

So, here's what I want to spend some time on with you before we go into questions, and hopefully a few decent answers. What does the landscape look like here in 2017? What does that tell us in terms of the Force that we're building for the future? Here's how the time factor works. So, I'm privileged to be your 21st Chief of Staff of the Air Force. The Force that we're actually fighting with today is the Force that was built based on decisions by General Mike Ryan and General John Jumper. Decisions they made actually developed the Force that we are using today in the fight against violent extremism and the other challenges we face around the globe.

So, the question for me as the 21st Chief is what decisions are we making today that are actually going to be the Force that Chief 24 is going to fight with in 2030? Because if you look at the timeline, Chief 24 is on this year's Brigadier General's list. And the decisions that Secretary Wilson and I make today are going to actually frame the future and be the Force that that Chief is going to go into battle with. So, this connective tissue between what's going on today and how it informs us for what fights look like in the future, what this Air Force needs to be like, and what we're able to do for the nation is something you spend a lot of time as Chief thinking about.

So, let's talk a little bit about today. No doubt we've been talking a lot about this Harvey in the top left corner. First Cat 3 hurricane to hit the United States in 12 years. 19,000 deployed Guardsmen. This is the 123rd from Louisville, right here, in the top right and they're loading on the patients. They've got over a thousand saves credited to them. A thousand saves. And this is them loading the patients onto a Coast Guard helicopter in the parking lot of a library.

At the bottom right you see the 120th ISR Group at Otis. And Airmen are looking at imagery and they're looking at levies and they're looking at reservoirs, water reservoirs, and they're actually providing analysis to the Texas leadership and FEMA to watch and monitor so we can make decisions to avoid further flooding in that devastated area. This is just the nature of the kind of work that I know we have been talking about over the course of this convention.

And, of course, we all are watching Irma as it approaches the shoreline this morning. At one point this was the largest recorded hurricane in history, 5,000 miles wide. It will be our Guardsmen who will be there -- who are there -- to ensure that our nation can withstand and recover from the storm as it goes forward.

Not only are we focused on violence of storms in the east but we have on record right now over 1,100 fires that are now raging in the western part of the country. And we have 44,000 Guardsmen who are engaged in these fires -- 33 that have started and are new just in the last couple of weeks -- not only putting out fires here in the homeland but also engaged putting out fires and covering hotspots around the globe.

The reality of the global security environment that we face is that it changed significantly for us in 2014. Prior to 2014, we as a nation were almost singularly focused on violent extremism in the Middle East since 9/11. But what happened in 2014? Russia went into Crimea, got active in Ukraine. China started building islands in the South China Sea and militarizing them. We had this little thing called Ebola in 2014. Many of you were involved in that. Looking back on it now it we may think it wasn't as big of a deal but at the time, you will remember, we didn't know whether we were facing the plague of the 21st Century. ISIS came back and we went back into Iraq. All that happened in 2014.

So, the framework through which we look at global challenges changed. It went from about 80% focus on violent extremism in the Middle East and 20% the rest of the globe to a far more balanced approach which affected the way we build the services and offer the military instrument of power against a new framework of challenges. China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, violent extremism.

So, now for the Air Force, and for the Army, the Navy, and for the Marine Corps, the challenge we face is that as the turbulence in the world grows the demand signal on military power grows with it. So, we've got to continue to balance our ops tempo across all these simultaneous global challenges. And as the Chief of Staff of the Air Force I will tell you that there is no shortage of demand for Air Power. So, as we think about the future and the characteristics of conflict and how you build a Force now and make decisions that ensures that Chief 24 has the Force that he or she needs to be able to fight and win in 2030 you've got to think about the characteristics of conflict.

So, I'm going to offer to you very quickly -- because I covered these last year but we've matured our thinking over time on the characteristics of future conflict that I would argue that you and I have got to be prepared for and we have to build a Force for. Transregional conflict has already arrived. Doggone it, our adversaries are not paying attention to our Combatant Commander maps.

So, when we think about the Russia challenge it's actually not just General Scaparrotti that's thinking about the Russia challenge, it's actually EUCOM, AFRICOM, SOUTHCOM, NORTHCOM, TRANSCOM, STRATCOM. You get the picture. Every one of these Combatant Commanders is thinking about the Russia challenge and their contribution to a global campaign.

So, as we think about the military instrument and how we apply what Secretary Mattis calls, you know, you have the power of inspiration and the power intimidation. And one of the things the Department of Defense brings is intimidation. I would offer that what you're doing as Guardsmen in support of the hurricanes is also incredible inspiration. But when it comes to the

intimidation aspect of this, and ensuring that we provide military options to the President, as a service that brings Global Vigilance and Global Reach and Global Power, the question we continue to think through is, are we thinking globally? Are we thinking about the game of checkers or the game of chess? Are we thinking about linear activity or are we thinking about being able to bring simultaneous capabilities to bear in ways that would become the deterrent factor of the 21st Century because we're able to overwhelm our adversaries at a pace they could never match.

Fights of the future are going to be multi-domain. That's not one domain supporting another domain, this is the fact that we sense the globe in six domains: air, land, sea, space, cyber, I would offer, undersea. And as we sense the globe how do we create a common operational picture that allows us to achieve decision speed at a rate that our adversaries can never match? And perhaps just as importantly, how do we then create effects from those same domains through a resilient network so that when some portion of that network may be taken away from us our response is, "Got it. I've got all this other capability that I can bring to bear." So, understanding the business of multi-domain operations as Airmen and growing leaders that understand how to knit together air, land, sea, space, cyber, undersea, all the various components together is an essential aspect of future conflict we're going to have to be ready for.

I talked about multicomponent. We are more interconnected today as four services and the Coast Guard than we've ever been. It wasn't that long ago that joint operations were actually deconflicted and sequential operations. I mean, I remember in Kosovo as an Airborne Forward Air Controller we actually divided the country in half; Navy go east, Air Force goes west, never the two shall meet. But today we actually have perfected, I believe, this business of combined arms where air, land, sea, space, cyber are all operating at the same time. Where mission commanders today actually have to think about the integration of both kinetic and non-kinetic fires. Sometimes the kinetic fire is actually not the primary fire or effect; sometimes the kinetic activity is there to supplement the real activity which is not kinetic. Our young mission commanders today understand this.

So, how do we ensure that in the true business of Jointness and Combined Arms that we as Airmen are building the leaders we need that understand the business of multicomponent operations? Our strategy of by, with, and through allies and partners actually is fairly clear. And if you think about this as our primary strategic asymmetric advantage against all of our potential adversaries -- China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, violent extremism -- then this is an area that we've got to invest in and think about differently. When you think about potential adversaries and ask yourself the question who are their allies? Who are their alliances that they can count on? The answer is we have them, they don't. So, the question for us in future conflict is how are we thinking about this? There's no place that I can point to, that perhaps is more powerful in this business than our State Partnership Program. There's no better advocate, by the way, for that than Director of the Air National Guard here, General Rice. As a matter of fact, I talked to the Secretary last night and she said, "Sky? I thought he was Catfish."

The State Partnership Program and how we think about merging and thinking about allies and partners is going to be absolutely critical for us in the future. It means we've got to think about information sharing in a different way. I would submit to you that most of us have grown up

asking the wrong question. This is a bigger challenge for us culturally than it is technologically. We could actually solve this technically. But you and I have to think about this differently, culturally, because we've grown up in an era where the youngest Airmen, the youngest soldier who has access to a mouse, with a click of the mouse can make a decision on the classification of any document that comes across their desk. Secret, no foreign, click, decision. And it takes the Chief of Staff of the Air Force to reverse that decision, often through a rather laborious process.

So, the question we've grown up asking is what can I share? It doesn't take long in that discussion when the answer is, probably not much. We've got to change the question. We've got to ask the question, what can't I share? Show me where it's written. Coalition warfare has got to be at the core of what we do and you won't find a bigger fan for me than the State Partnership Program that brings that all to bear.

We've got think about speed in a different way. Let's acknowledge the fact that we actually had the luxury of controlling the pace of conflict over the last 16 years. I mean, think about this statement: We are going to retake Mosul in October. Announced seven months prior to the operation. There is no better indicator than that that we felt, rightly so, that we had total control on the rheostat of time because there's nothing they can do to stop us. Future conflict may not allow us that luxury, so how do we think about this business of time, and adaptability and agility, and decision speed, and a common operational picture that allows us to stay in front of our adversary, and what Force do we build to ensure that we can fight and win in the future?

So here are a few areas I'll just share with you where we have been focused over the course of the last several months. And I know Secretary Wilson laid out for you the five priorities that we've rolled out, and every one of these priorities is linked directly to how to fight and win in the future and how do we, within the United States Air Force, ensure that we're building joint warfighting excellence in all those missions that the joint team relies on us to be accomplished.

I'm sure she talked to you about restoring readiness to the Force. This is something that everyone is focused on. I will tell you that just coming back from the Middle East, you want to see high morale in the United States Air Force, you go down range where readiness is high. You want to see low morale in the Air Force you go back and see the bill payer that got to that level of readiness downrange. What readiness level you can find at Kunsan right now. Someone's the bill payer for that and it tends to be home station. And you and I don't have the luxury of looking at the conflicts that may come in the future in a sequential way because as soon as Vince Brooks, the Commander of U.S. Forces Korea calls and asks for more forces on the peninsula I can guarantee you that General Lori Robinson is going to call for more forces to defend the homeland. It's the same Force that's going to be tugged in both directions.

So, how do we ensure that we restore the readiness of the Force with the United States Air Force? I will tell you that it begins and ends in squadrons. That's where Airmen arrive when they come out of basic training. It's where we inculcate the culture of being an Airman. So, we've been at this now, we have a team led by a general officer, they've been up to 25 bases, they've been to Active, Guard, Reserve bases, we've got 18,000 inputs from across the Force, we're already acting and the Secretary and I have got our axes out and we're swinging away at as many irritants as we can. But the most important thing we're doing is we're pushing decision

authority back where it belongs. Because what has happened across our Air Force, as we got smaller as an Air Force we did what organizations normally do, you consolidate and you move up in the organization. So, we took intelligence officers at one point and we started moving them out of the squadron. We took admin support, we move them out of the squadron. We took various entities out of the squadron. What happened was we consolidated out of the squadron but we left the duties behind, and then what unintentionally happened was decision authority moved up.

So, where we are focused right now is to ensure that the Air Force understands that the organization chart of the United Force has me and Secretary Wilson at the bottom and squadron commanders at the top and our job is to make sure that they have what they need to succeed. Because that's where the mission of the United States Air Force is either going to succeed or fail.

We're building a new course for the squadron command teams which consists of a continuum of learning to first identify and prepare squadron command teams for this most essential level of command, where we're going to succeed or fail as a service. So you're going to see us continue to focus on this in the future. This is going to be a four-year effort to make sure that we emerge from this with healthy squadrons that are resourced to accomplish the mission.

Part of this we're going to look primarily across the active duty, but to a small extent perhaps in the Guard, is to look at, okay, how many squadrons can we actually sustain that are healthy? Because if you look over time and you see the number of airmen that have actually left the Air Force over time, upwards of 50,000, we actually didn't take down any flags, we added flags and squadrons while we took down the number of Airmen. So, we've got a little bit of a mismatch right now which is that we've got too many squadrons for the amount of manpower to keep them healthy. So we're doing a look across the Air Force to make sure that squadrons are healthy for the future.

I love these pictures. The tools of warfare have changed over time, ways of conducting warfare have changed over time. But here's what has never changed: trust and confidence. Trust and confidence at the tactical level, at the operational level, at the strategic level. This is George Marshall and Hap Arnold. You go back and look at history, it's one of the most important relationships of trust and confidence that ever occurred. These same relationships are being built on the battlefield today. It's not only being built between components, it's also being built internationally.

I love the story of Major Mike Hostage and Major Mohamed Al Ayesh, Royal Saudi Air Force, who actually flew in formation together during Operation Desert Storm. And they grew up over their careers. Their families got to know each other, they kept in touch, they were friends, they'd fought together. And then they emerged at the end of their careers as the Air Component Commander and the Chief of Staff of the Royal Saudi Air Force. That was a relationship of trust and confidence that had been invested in over time. Those same relationships are being built today.

But for Airmen, when we walk in to a room and we sit down at the table with our joint teammates, let me tell you something, they actually don't know what our badges mean. They

don't care. They don't know whether these are flight wings, or space wings, or cyber wings, these are internal badges for us. They're important to us but they're not important to our joint teammates. When we walk into a room and sit at the table what they see is the United States Air Force. You understand air and space, you understand integration, you understand how to integrate joint fires, you understand how to integrate air and space power with land and maritime power. And of course you CFACCs of the world, of course you would be the space coordinating authority because you're an Airman. You own the ultimate high ground. That's the expectation of our joint teammates.

We're looking at our development programs and our campaign of learning that we have to ensure that all of us understand the operational art of air and space and how it comes together with the other components of our joint campaign planning.

We're rebuilding our JTF capacity within the United States Air Force. At 9th Air Force today we're actually building a Joint Task Force with a core headquarters that we can then place in the global response force to be able to have an offering to go forward to respond to crises as they occur. This is something that over 16 years of not being asked for we traded away a bit so it's time for us to build it back. Not to be in competition with anyone but so that we can fulfill our commitment to the joint team so that when a crisis occurs they can look at any of the services for JTF resident capacity to be able to go in and handle the crisis. And we're looking very hard at how we build joint leaders of the future to ensure that we fulfill our obligations in the kind of conflict that I described for you in the future.

Innovation. So, what I've got on the slide here are three commercial innovations that are actually fascinating when you look at them through the lens of military application for the future. Top left, show of hands, how many folks have ever done Uber? My security team hates it but I do it. Think about Uber. Uber is fascinating. It's a common operational picture displayed on your iPhone and it's real time updated. You can actually pick what kind of modal transportation you want, immediately get feedback on the individual, the driver, the license plate, the kind of car, you can get a rating on how others have rated that individual, they can get a rating on you. Once you select you can actually get a common intelligence picture of the battlefield as that driver actually drives all the way up to your location. It's fascinating technology. My question for you is, is that personnel recovery in the future? Are we going to be able to Uber out? Why not.

Middle picture, Virgin Galactic. Virgin Galactic has determined that the highest cost of a rocket to go into orbit is actually from the surface to 50,000 feet because that's where you've got to have most of the fuel and that's where you have to have the rocket engines to be able to emerge away from the atmosphere into orbit. Let's launch it at 50,000 feet. Sounds a little bit like the Bell X 20. So, they've created a mothership. And they're within a year or two years away from being able to launch a small vessel into space with seven individuals that can then return from space at a low-earth orbit. What would that look like if we put seven Special Operators and we now have the capability militarily to get to anywhere on the planet in 45 minutes? Anywhere on the planet in 45 minutes. This is not Buck Rogers. This is here.

The question for us is as we are working innovation of the future how do we partner with industry on this really exciting technology? We just launched the X37 on a SpaceX rocket into

space. Elon Musk and SpaceX has determined that the highest cost of a rocket is the rocket motors in the first state where the fuel is. So, rather than dump it into the water like we have done over the years they fly it back to the original point and land it one football field away from its original launch location. Having been out to Cape Canaveral and watching this in action I'll tell you it's fascinating. Eight seconds before that thing hits the ground three legs pop out and it lands a perfect pinpoint landing one football field away from where it launched. They lower it to its side, they wheel it away, put it on a train, put it in a warehouse, refuel the rockets. They're going to get ten launches out of that. Ten launches. The question is what are we really looking at here? Are we looking at payload management with hypersonic reentry anywhere on the planet? Is this the next C17? Why not.

So, this partnership that we have with industry, as I look at the Air Force in the future, 2030, I predict that we'll be a Force that is flying, fighting in space, that's operating in space. So, how do we ensure that we build the Force now?

Then modernizing and strengthening our allies and partners, this business of Multi-Domain Command and Control, this really comes down to how do you connect the sensing grid that I talked about and an effects grid and have that common operational picture and that decision speed that allows you to be able to produce so many dilemmas for your adversaries that it in itself becomes deterrence in the 21st Century?

Many say that we already do this and that's absolutely true. We already combine those together. If you've ever been to the Air Operations Center in Al Udeid, and many of you have served there, I will tell you it is state of the art, there is no parallel on the planet, and it's far too slow for the future. We have got to think about this in new ways. How do we share data at the speed of light so that we can produce options that no adversary on the planet could ever match?

The Rubik's Cube is not a bad way to think about this. There are 18 -- I forget the term -- like 18 zeros associated with the number of options available on a Rubik's Cube. So, if every one of those colors was a military capability, if every one of those colors represented a domain, if every one of those colors represented a platform and a sensor the question for us is how do we now build so many options that when you combine capabilities together in new ways, old things in new ways, new things in new ways, how do you combine these things in ways that a resilient network can share information at speeds that allows us to get to the decision speed we need? And the center of that Rubik's Cube has got to be a common architecture. It's got to be a way that we share data. It's going to be more and more about the data.

I'm actually considering it, in discussions right now, on whether we as an Air Force ought to stand up software squadrons of coders. Young folks who actually understand how to manipulate code in real time, immediately, and whether we actually need to look at IT, information technology in completely new ways. Because the old way we would acquire IT as though it was a thing. In the new ways you actually acquire it as though it's a journey. This is a journey that never ends. It's a journey that requires you to be able to update it in real time and manipulate the data in real time. So, this business of being able to share data to a produce common operational picture and then decision speed and effects is going to be the centerpiece of warfare in the future for us to be able to fight and win.

And we can never forget our moral obligation as Airmen. Any Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine on the ground, whoever hears jet noise overhead, they should never look up, because they know it's us. That's an obligation that we have got to make sure we can continue to fulfill.

Admiral Richardson has coined a great phrase where he says we ought not to be talking about Anti-Access Area Denial because it actually gives you a visual that somebody can put a block of wood over their country and we can't get in. The reality is no one can put that over their country. The best they can put over their country is a block of swiss cheese. And like swiss cheese there are holes and it's our job to understand how to exploit them and get in and hold targets at risk and create dilemmas for the adversary. Air Superiority has always got to be job one of the United States Air Force. And to our Soldiers in the room, you can count on that from us.

And let me just finish on this final story. This is a great story just to tie it all together. So, this is a Slovenian vessel, 800-feet long, that was delivering coal from Baltimore to Slovenia. About 1,500 miles off of the east coast of Long Island there was an explosion onboard the vessel. Two individuals died and several others were severely wounded. The Air National Guard Unit out of New York got the call. They ended up flying out but because of weather they couldn't jump out at the normal altitude of 3,400 feet, they had to jump out at 1,400 feet, inflated their zodiacs, got onboard the vessel, had to do surgery because the airway of one of the victims was closing and they had to open the airway with an immediate emergency tracheotomy. All of those victims survived to tell their tale.

But here's the fascinating part of the story. This was playing on social media throughout Slovenia and the mother of the president called the president of Slovenia and said is there any chance, is there any hope? The president of Slovenia said, mom, if anybody can get there the Americans will.

Putting out fires, taking care of the homeland, it's what you do. So, as your Chief of Staff of the Air Force let me just say I could not be prouder of this Total Force team. And as we go into the future I couldn't be more excited about the technologies industry is producing and the talent we have in our young Airmen, like the great team that I have the privilege to work with, that General Rice offered up. For the United States Air Force the sky is no longer the limit. Thank you very much.