



**U.K. Royal Air Force
Air Power Conference 2010**

Friday, 18 June 2010



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**As Prepared
for Delivery
~30 min.
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Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my distinct honor to address this highly distinguished audience. Group Captain Byford, thank you very much for that kind introduction. I join my friends and colleagues—Air Chief Marshal Dalton, General Palomeros, and General Bernadis—in the conviction that airpower’s centrality to modern military success not only endures but will continue to endure. While its most fundamental nature—its inherent characteristics of unmatched speed, range, flexibility, and versatility—remain unchanged, the employment of airpower and its translation into tailorable, timely, and precise effects must continually be reevaluated and recalibrated in the context of current wartime requirements. Similarly, our personnel and equipment must also be appropriately postured to ably respond to the strategic environment and the constantly evolving, multi-dimensional challenges that it presents.

The corollary, then, is that military strategists must always be attuned to current realities and trends. This awareness and appreciation help us to prepare for expected future threats while we remain focused on our effectiveness in current operations. The conundrum is that our strategic environment appears to grow increasingly ambiguous. With new features of the environment constantly evolving and revealing new requirements, roles, and responsibilities, the strategist’s task of interpreting and planning will certainly remain a significant challenge. Moreover, fiscal constraints and reduced purchasing power, stemming from a worldwide economic downturn, will continue to result in a leveled, if not smaller, defense portion of our respective national budgets. This will have a further exacerbating effect on our ability to balance today’s requirements and tomorrow’s challenges.

In short, this confluence of *complexity*, *uncertainty*, and *austerity* requires us, as partner air forces, to consider what roles our services will play—and what roles we *should* play—in the defense of our respective nations, and in our collective security.



Ladies and gentlemen, I am privileged to have some time today to offer my thoughts on the U.S. Air Force's role in these endeavors; on how the need for balance, across numerous dimensions, becomes increasingly compelling; and, on how an evolving and complicated strategic environment, converging with constrained national budgets, will make such balance ever more elusive. Airpower certainly will play a prominent role by presenting more strategic alternatives to our national leaders, thus affording, as Sir Stephen will intimate in his much-anticipated speech, greater "political freedom of maneuver."

And, as our nations recalibrate our instruments of effective statecraft, we, as a community of airmen, must consider the best ways in which airpower can and should contribute, to inform our national discussions accordingly; and, we must also contemplate the ways in which we, as partner air forces and partner nations, should move forward together in this endeavor.

Strategizing for the 21st Century

Formerly familiar elements of the 20th century international security environment have given way to new dimensions of political, socio-economic, financial, legal, environmental, informational, and military interconnectedness. While these elements are themselves nothing new, their specific manifestations and mutual interactions are converging in a strategic setting that is very different from the one for which our air forces were built.

Making matters more challenging are stressed and struggling economies worldwide, which have forced governments toward flattening budgets, with the effect of decreasing our purchasing power. Accordingly, we in the defense establishment can expect to see our share of our respective national budgets either level or decline for the foreseeable future, making our strategic choices more difficult—and likely controversial as well.

Therefore, not only must we, in the profession of arms, recalibrate our cognitive model of warfare; we must also appreciate the consequence of this evolving complexity. The United States will maintain its interests in advancing security and prosperity, broad respect for universal values, inherent regard for the rule of law, and an international order that promotes cooperative action. To that end, we must



increase our economies of scale by addressing these multi-faceted challenges with a whole-of-government approach, and a carefully considered, thoughtfully balanced, and meticulously integrated blend of national instruments of power—each mutually complementary. It is the very essence—indeed, the very genius—of what Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of Defense Gates have posited as “smart power.” If Carl von Clausewitz suggested the link between politics and military power, then today’s thinkers would argue an unassailable nexus. Interconnectedness of the instruments of power is an axiom in the current and future geopolitical environment.

But, I would also suggest that a whole-of-government approach is not enough. Rather, I see a whole-of-*nation* effort—involving government, industry, academia, and other influential national elements—as being required to surmount our challenges. Our collaboration with universities and other academic institutions, and our discourse at forums such as this airpower conference, have been fruitful in producing novel ideas and devising innovative and workable strategies.

And, our partnership with private industry—especially when we work in common cause—has been a wellspring of creativity, innovation, and progress. However, as trends in industry point toward, among other things, a smaller number of firms, more multi-national corporations and subsidiaries, and increased financial and operational risk and complexity, leaders in government, military, and industry may have to rethink old paradigms to achieve the balance and integration that are relevant to the current setting. Otherwise, it will be difficult to leverage the emergence of new growth markets and new customers, the benefits of wider talent pools, the efficiencies of a more global supply chain, and the scale of increased economy and stable costs.

Even with a whole-of-nation approach, however, a U.S.-only effort is not sufficient. Our respective governments must also engage in mutual cooperation and support with international friends, partners, and allies, with whom we share common aspirations and objectives, and face common challenges. Indeed, President Obama, in the recently released *National Security Strategy*, focuses on collaboration



with long-standing allies and newly-emerging partnerships, as did our report on the Quadrennial Defense Review that we released in February.

Moving forward, we will be driven to even more difficult decisions toward an ever-elusive balance—one that exists on several levels; for example:

- the balance between current requirements and future capabilities;
- between projecting power worldwide and defending our homelands and regions; and
- between focusing on the current irregular threat and a future of possible higher-end, larger-scale conflict.

Acting individually, we will find that balance to be much more difficult to achieve. Collectively, however, we stand a much better chance. Although we strive for “full-service” capabilities, the fact remains that not all of our air forces and capability sets will be equal. But, if we complement each other—each with maximized flexibility for multiple mission areas and methods of employment, and maximized versatility for parallel effects at all levels of conflict—then shortfalls can be met through teamwork.

Indeed, we have seen this sort of Coalition collaboration and teamwork with remotely-piloted aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles; space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; Tactical Air Control parties and close air support; special operations forces; combat search and rescue; intra-theater airlift and air refueling; and much more. These successes suggest that we must continue to work together toward achieving even greater interoperability and synergy, ultimately increasing our strategic options while reducing risk and potential liability.

Leveraging Airpower in Support of National Strategy

Indeed, as prominent air forces, we must always ask ourselves: How can airpower continue to contribute to these whole-of-government and international efforts? What are those distinctive roles that airmen must fulfill to provide our Joint and Coalition teammates with freedom of action on the battlefield, and our national leadership with the ability to maneuver diplomatically? Certainly, our air forces will be consequential in the multi-faceted strategic environment that I just described—but, in what ways?



The United States Air Force, for example, is particularly suited, capable, and postured to perform with our Joint and Coalition partners in four particular areas: control of the air and space domains, as well as maintaining a substantial ability to operate in cyberspace; global precision attack; rapid global mobility; and worldwide intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, or “ISR.” In all of these mission areas, the U.S. Air Force strives to maintain a global perspective, leveraging the unparalleled speed, range, flexibility, and versatility of airpower on a global scale.

Control of the air, for example, must be present wherever friendly forces operate so that they may maintain their freedom of action with minimal threat of attack from above. Even where the adversarial threat from above is negligible, friendly airpower constitutes a constant threat to hostile ground forces, ultimately enhancing Joint and Coalition freedom of action on the surface.

Being a global force, then, means that the Air Force must be prepared to secure control of the air and space wherever our national leadership decides to implement the military option, and to project military power, underpinning our diplomatic efforts, informational influence, and economic leverage. And, insofar as our ability to exert control and project power from any one of these domains is becoming increasingly dependent on our ability to operate freely in the others, our mission-assurance efforts must also be cross-domain to maintain our national advantage.

For instance, consider how we operate in theater. We exploit airpower for mobility, strike, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance. We derive vital enablers from space—for example, precision navigation and timing, satellite communications, weather, early warning, and ISR. And, we unlock the potential of cyberspace to empower our information dissemination and virtually all of our command and control. And, while Navy and commercial ships carry the preponderance of materiel into theater, Joint logisticians on land execute the final miles of the critical supply chain. These are but a few manifestations of the distinct but interconnected operating mediums, originating on the surface, and ascending through the air and into space, with effects that are integrated, commanded, and controlled by cyber assets.



Clearly, we rely on cross-domain assurance. Most recently, we have largely been unchallenged in these realms; but, as these domains grow in importance and interdependence, they will also become more contested. Our rivals and adversaries already appreciate the centrality of these commons. We can expect challenges not only from so-called “near-peer” rivals; other non-state elements with interests that are inimical to our own can also rise to contest our access to these currently permissive environments. One can reasonably conclude that, with looming challenges from hostile entities, deterrence against aggression or adversary actions to deny our access to the global commons will continue to be prominent in this century. The proliferation of advanced technology—particularly, the explosive growth in computing power—has effectively lowered barriers to entry, and allowed potentially hostile actors to exert some degree of domain control. Consequently, even individuals and non-state actors can influence the strategic environment where once, only nation-states with substantial resources could prevail.

And deterrence, by the way, isn’t a nostalgic notion. We must be able to continue to dissuade our rivals and deter our adversaries, while assuring each other, and our other friends and allies, of our commitment to global stability and security. Along with our nuclear forces, combat airpower that facilitates our ability to conduct global attack remains a cornerstone of this strategic deterrence, both for the United States and her allies. So, our commitment to both our Combat Air Forces and nuclear enterprise remains among our top priorities.

Toward a persistent long-range strike capability, we are making initial investments in a family of systems that can answer the more immediate need—more readily than perhaps completely independent, more exquisite systems can—while we keep a keen watch on cost and emerging requirements. Many questions remain to be explored—manned or unmanned, nuclear or conventional only, or standoff versus penetration, for example. And, while tradeoffs need to be considered—between speed, range, and payload—as well, we continue to be committed to providing the capability of our Air Force and our Nation to project military power worldwide, and to hold virtually any target around the world at risk. The U.S. Air Force, in concert with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, is working to define the



requirements, and to help determine the methods of employment and composition of the family of systems that will best meet our Nation's and our allies' needs for long-range strike.

Of course, underpinning all of this combat capability and the projection of hard and soft power worldwide are the mobility forces. As we continue our activities in Afghanistan, our airlift efforts will continue to build upon the over three million tons of materiel and seven million passengers that have been rapidly transported by air since the start of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our tankers will continue to be the backbone of our Nation's global power projection, as the more than 32,000 air refueling receivers over the last nine years can attest. And thus, our air refueling capability will remain a strategic imperative.

Our airlift efforts also comprise a very important element in our broader strategy for balance: building the capacity of our partners. In Afghanistan, for example, our Combat Air Power Transition Force has provided vital training to airmen of the Afghan National Army Air Force, helping them to conduct their first air assault mission earlier this year, when Afghan National Army Kandak Kommandos were airlifted on two Mi-17s into insurgent-controlled territory.

We realize that we cannot accomplish everything alone; however, that is but one reason for building partner capacity. Often, we find the achievement of strategic effects—even grand strategic effects—as we pursue tactical- or operational-level objectives. Case in point: last September, the first Afghan-only medical evacuation operation of a wounded Afghan soldier from the battlefield to a hospital—hitherto an inconceivable event—was successfully executed. The broader significance of this event cannot be overstated. These light mobility operations will increase force cohesiveness and confidence with the knowledge that few or no service members will be left behind. With greater cohesiveness comes greater mission effectiveness of the Afghan armed forces; and, with boosted confidence comes greater loyalty. There is no other way to instill this, for it must come from within. The U.S. Air Force and its Coalition partners are able, however, to establish the foundation, and our airmen are committed to this effort.



Another powerful example of where tactical airpower achievements continue to demonstrate enormous strategic value—the very essence of the versatility of airpower, by the way—is in building indigenous airlift capability that can bring remote populations in the hinterlands closer to the central government in Kabul. Where there continues to be a paucity of roads and other infrastructure in the rugged Afghan countryside, Afghan airmen are enabling transport for officials from Kabul to visit previously isolated populations, thus establishing and maintaining a substantive relationship where perhaps none previously existed. Airpower has facilitated other meaningful contacts—for example, during the Hajj this past November, when the central government provided transportation for many Afghans, from isolated areas to urban centers, for their pilgrimage to Mecca. In a country with few televisions and an illiteracy rate of 70 or 80 percent, these direct interactions become the very essence of progress toward effective governance that includes a central authority, in socially, politically, and culturally significant ways—and of tremendous strategic value.

In short, whether combat power in conflict zones or humanitarian relief in disaster zones, airpower affords our nations with rapid and timely airlift, in-flight refueling, aeromedical and casualty evacuation, precise and timely airdrop, and kinetic and non-kinetic effects. Airpower is able not only to intervene quickly in a crisis; it also provides steady assurances for constant and reliable capability during sustained operations.

Underwriting all of these capabilities is our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance architecture, providing unmatched and unprecedented situational awareness for our leaders, from battlefield commanders to national decision-makers. The current demand for near-real-time, full-motion, wide-area video of the battlespace is unlikely to abate. To achieve a mandate to fly 50 combat air patrols by the end of 2011, we have shifted more than 4,000 U.S. Airmen from other mission areas in the force to the ISR enterprise. And, we are working on innovative ways to leverage technology, to be less manpower-intensive even as the demand—along with our capability—grows. This will help to fulfill Coalition requirements, augmented significantly by capability provided by Coalition partners. Since



Operations NORTHERN WATCH and SOUTHERN WATCH, through IRAQI FREEDOM, and now in ENDURING FREEDOM, Coalition contributions in the area of tactical reconnaissance have been invaluable to discerning patterns of enemy behavior. And, with such capacity for ISR, the difficult guesswork on what hostile forces are around the corner, on the roof, or over the wall is substantially reduced for our ground forces. This capability is absolutely vital at all levels of conflict—strategic, operational, and tactical.

Conclusion

The second decade of the 21st century holds as much promise for opportunity as it does uncertainty to challenge our efforts. It will take firm commitment and solid leadership to realize the former and surmount the latter. The nuance, complexity, and ambiguity that compose our current reality will continue to unfold in uncertain ways, revealing challenges that are still unforeseen, and requiring solutions that are as yet undeveloped. But, through collaboration and cooperation—with long-standing alliances and emerging partnerships—we will continue to take inventory of our common objectives, confront our shared challenges, and devise integrated strategies to prevail and progress together.

I am eager to discuss the way ahead with all of you. Some may take issue with the ideas that I have presented today; others may believe these points to be intuitively obvious. Either way, we make progress only through frank discussions such as those at this conference. As airmen, airpower strategists, and leaders, it is incumbent upon us to fully realize and appreciate the compelling need to carefully plan for the future while we are fully engaged in current conflicts. I hope that these words, and those of the eminently qualified speakers at this conference, inspire lasting and meaningful discussion between those whom I am proud to call my fellow service members; those who comprise the proud global community of airmen; and those whom I am privileged to call America's partners: air forces that offer a full spectrum—including domain control, long-range strike, lift, and ISR—as opposed to niche capabilities.

I wish all of you safe travels back to your countries, and all the very best in the future. Thank you.