

**AFA 1996–97 Statement of Policy, adopted by the delegates at the 1996 Air Force Association National Convention September 16, 1996**

## Aerospace Power Makes the Difference

**I**N 1997, the US Air Force marks its fiftieth anniversary as a separate military service. During that time, it has become the nation's first line of defense. Our capabilities in air and space have been unique sources of strength for the United States as well as incomparable instruments of national power.

Throughout the Cold War, the security and stability of the free world depended on the Strategic Triad, primary elements of which were the Air Force's long-range bombers and land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles. In conventional conflicts from Korea to the Persian Gulf, the Air Force has conducted missions and delivered results that were not within the abilities of any other military force on Earth. The Air Force has demonstrated that it can respond promptly to distant crises and project power from intercontinental distances. From the Berlin Airlift of the 1940s to the Balkan crises of the 1990s, the signature of US power in war and peace has been flexible air operations.

The United States today is an aerospace nation. Our evolution as such has contributed to and sustained our position of leadership in world affairs. Aerospace excellence over the past fifty years has made the difference.

As the Air Force begins its second half-century, its capabilities are still growing. The primacy of air and space in national security will be even more pronounced in the years ahead. Command of air and space will be fundamental to all else.

■ **Leading With Airpower.** Platforms in air and space provide air superiority, reconnaissance, surveillance, mobility, situational awareness, and other capabilities vital to operations on land, at sea, or in the air. Because of its speed and range, the Air Force often will be the first on the scene of crisis or conflict and the first to fight. Early requirements will be establishing air superiority and seizing the initiative for the forces that arrive later.

Whether deployed forward, operat-



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ing as an expeditionary force, or projecting power globally from bases in the United States, the Air Force can strike with precision and effect. The basic attributes of airpower—speed, range, flexibility, maneuverability, and lethality—make it of enormous value in any joint or combined-arms engagement. All of the services are dependent on the Air Force for mobility, sustainment in early phases of conflict, and other functions. The Air Force can and does support surface operations, but it can also achieve tactical or strategic objectives independent of surface power or with land or sea forces in support.

■ **Asymmetrical Force, Parallel Operations.** Time and physics have overtaken the traditional force-on-force model of attrition warfare, geared to battle lines on the ground, massed forces, and sequential operations. Strategies of the future will be oriented less toward territory lost or gained and more toward eliminating the enemy's ability to wage war. Future operations will emphasize asymmetrical force, applied intensely and overwhelmingly against the enemy's strategic, operational, and tactical "centers of grav-

ity," including his order of battle and supporting infrastructure. These targets must be attacked "in parallel"—all of them concurrently—rather than by serial attacks that present the adversary with an opportunity to adjust, adapt, or mount a counteroffensive.

Critical "center of gravity" targets will generally lie deep in the enemy's territory and will be protected by lethal defenses and other means. Frequently, they will be located in urban areas. For reasons that include the penetration of hostile airspace, success of the attack, the avoidance of collateral damage, and the limitation of casualties on both sides, the force of choice will be deep-strike aircraft employing stealth and precision guided munitions.

■ **Information Dominance.** Military operations of the future will be predicated on information dominance. Emerging technology enables the rapid collection, processing, and dissemination of an increasing volume of highly accurate strategic, operational, and tactical information. Much of this information comes from reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence assets in air and space, but the national and international information infrastructures are of benefit as well. Control of the information spectrum will be pivotal to the outcome of conflict in the twenty-first century. It will involve not only the preservation of our own access to such information but also the denying of access to our adversaries. "Global awareness" will soon take its place alongside "global reach" and "global power" in the Air Force's sense of purpose and direction.

■ **Space.** The armed forces are vitally dependent on space systems for information, communications, and operational support that ranges from targeting assistance to weather reporting. It is clear that space will figure even larger in defense programs and strategies of the future.

The Air Force launches and operates more than ninety percent of all

Department of Defense space assets. The Air Force has also been designated as the Department of Defense executive agent for multiuser space systems. Leadership in the developing arena of space is a heavy responsibility but one that the Air Force is well suited to meet.

The increasing importance of the military space program is such that it must be accorded priority in research, development, and funding by the Department of Defense and by the nation. Leading requirements include routine, affordable, reliable access to space and better systems to detect and track theater ballistic missile launches.

■ **Strategy and Forces.** Present US defense strategy requires that our armed forces be prepared to fight and win two major regional conflicts (MRCs) almost simultaneously. This strategy, initially adopted to facilitate a deep reduction in the defense budget, has long been under attack as excessive and unaffordable. The arguments for diminishing the two-conflict strategy, however, are economic, not military.

The two-MRC concept works reasonably well as a means for sizing the force and for estimating resources required. Response to regional crises is central, but the strategy must also provide for other missions ranging from strategic deterrence and defense of the United States and its allies to peacekeeping and counterproliferation. It must also provide a margin for the unexpected. The proper standard for sizing the force is obviously more than one regional contingency, and the two-conflict standard is a reasonable minimum.

However, the present force does not meet the two-conflict standard, nor is it projected to do so in the future. The reductions have gone too far. The force that won the Gulf War no longer exists. We could not do today what we did then.

We stand on our position that to implement the strategy and meet its obligations in wartime and peacetime, the Air Force component of the force structure should include not less than twenty-four combat-coded fighter and attack wings, at least 184 operational bombers with precision guided munitions, a modernized airlift capability of fifty-two million ton-miles per day, and an infrastructure sufficient to dominate the space theater of operations.

■ **Resources.** Contrary to any assumption that the defense reduction is over, the Administration's budget proposal for 1997 would fund defense at six percent less than the 1996 level. Yet another reduction is planned for 1998.

Defense has already been cut to

the danger line, and the nation has already collected a large "peace dividend" from the savings. The latest proposal, adjusted for inflation, would put the defense budget forty percent below its peak during the 1980s. Defense outlays, already down to 3.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product in the plan for 1997, will drop to 2.7 percent by 2002, compared with 11.9 percent of GDP in the 1950s. Arguments that the defense burden is becoming unbearable are patently absurd.

Within the limits of reason—and those limits lie somewhere above 3.2 percent of GDP—the defense budget should be driven by validated requirements and not reduced to meet external budget constraints.

■ **Technology and Force Modernization.** Technological superiority is the basis of the advantage that US military forces have over their potential adversaries. It is not an advantage we can take for granted, especially in view of the proliferation of weapons of high technology, including ballistic missiles, modern combat aircraft, state-of-the-art air defenses, and the growing access of many nations to space.

The US military advantage of tomorrow depends on force modernization investment today, particularly in stealthy aircraft, precision-strike weapons, space systems, surveillance and reconnaissance, information warfare capabilities, and modern air mobility. During interludes of peace, the nation must not allow itself to be lulled into believing it can neglect the making of provisions for the future.

The fielding of the revolutionary aerospace systems of the future will be a challenge as great as any that American defense industry has ever faced. In this anniversary year, it must be remembered that the achievements thus far would not have been possible without the contributions and the excellence of industry. Given the shrinkage and decline of the industrial base in the 1990s, the job ahead calls for trust, cooperation, and mutual respect between the armed forces and the industrial base that remains.

■ **People.** We congratulate the Department of Defense and the Air Force on the strong initiatives they have undertaken to improve the quality of military life. These initiatives are timely, because Congress and the armed forces have fallen behind in providing for service members and their families. That situation, brought on mainly by inadequate funding, will lead ultimately to problems of morale, recruiting, readiness, and retention if not corrected.

Military compensation already lags

pay in the private sector by a significant margin, and the gap is getting wider. Military housing is inadequate, and current quarters allowances fall far short of the actual cost of housing off base. Family support programs need improvement and expansion. These and other quality-of-life issues require serious attention without delay.

We must, however, raise a special alarm about health care. Access to medical care, which military people regard as their single most important non-cash benefit, continues to diminish. It is time to restore credibility to the entitlement of health care for service members, military retirees, veterans, and families. The final analysis of the health-care system—and the criterion for judging the competing proposals for reform—is the quality and delivery of care as experienced from the perspective of those who receive the care.

■ **Total Force.** The USAF Total Force partnership of today is the result of many years of trust, mutual support, and cooperation among the active-duty, Guard, and Reserve components. The Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve can ably handle the fullest share of the total mission that is consistent with sound force balance and force management. The Air Force continues to demonstrate how Total Force can and should work.

AFA believes that the official auxiliary of the Air Force, the Civil Air Patrol, should be recognized as associated with the Total Force and that CAP's unique resources, capabilities, and training activities should be used to augment Air Force missions when feasible.

■ **AFA and the Full-Service Air Force.** The Air Force Association, on this its fiftieth anniversary, has consistently over these many years focused on the US Air Force and its application of airpower, from science and technology to research and development, test and evaluation, production, fielding, and sustaining of forces. Its concentration is on the extraction of every possible ounce of advantage from operating in the mediums of air and space. For the US Air Force, aerospace power is a profession, not a sideline.

The other service departments have, and should have, aviation capabilities that are integral to their primary land and sea missions, but the responsibility to provide and prepare forces for sustained aerial warfare remains with the US Air Force. In any conflict of significant scope or duration, and in many applications of limited force as well, the preponderance of the air effort will be and should be performed by the US Air Force. ■