



The Secretary's Vector

Dr. James G. Roche
Secretary of the Air Force

14 January 2003

The Secretary's Vector - New Tool to Communicate Our Vision

The current strategic environment offers a dynamic array of asymmetric threats, evolving partnerships and challenges, and dramatic advances in defense technology. New conditions demand America's Air Force continually assess itself and adjust as appropriate in order to sustain the competitive edge of air and space power. As we evolve, accurate, timely, and clear communication with all airmen is essential to educate as well as build awareness of, and support for our service. In this spirit, and complementary to the Chief of Staff's *Sight Picture*, I introduce the "*Secretary's Vector*" to share my perspectives on major issues relating to our service's direction.

The topic of this inaugural "*Secretary's Vector*" concerns the fundamental way in which we describe ourselves, and how we conceptualize our contributions to the nation's security mission in the current era -- that is, our Air and Space Core Competencies. General Jumper and I have discussed these competencies extensively among ourselves and with our colleagues, and we believe they capture the essence of who we are, just as the effort to refine them underscores the spirit of constructive change that motivates us all.

Air and Space Core Competencies

The Air Force has made tremendous strides in realizing the vision of early airmen and exploiting the potential of each medium in which we operate. Yet, we recognize there is an array of capabilities as yet undiscovered, and a need to test and evolve basic tenets against new realities and conditions. Just as our operational concepts and systems continually advance, so must the way in which we articulate our Air Force competencies.

The history of the Air Force reveals fundamental competencies that are at the core of our ability to develop and deliver air and space power. These unique institutional qualities set the Air Force apart from the other services and every other military force in the world. By identifying and keeping these competencies foremost in our vision, we can more effectively advance these unique capabilities, as well as the ultimate effects we provide to the nation. The Air Force continually nurtures these areas of expertise, making us the preeminent air and space force in the world. Previously, we distilled these into six distinctive capabilities which we referred to as our "core competencies" -- *Air and Space Superiority, Global Attack, Rapid Global Mobility, Precision Engagement, Information Superiority, and Agile Combat Support*. Upon reflection and discussion, we learned that certain elements are more fundamental to who we are as an Air Force, how leaders, commanders, and colleagues view us, and how we develop our capabilities for joint warfighting. These are our institutional air and space core competencies -- those that in fact make the six distinctive capabilities possible: *Developing Airmen, Technology-to-Warfighting, and Integrating Operations*. Our air and space core competencies form the foundation upon which we organize, train, and equip, and are the cornerstone of our strength as a military service.

1) Developing Airmen: *The heart of combat capability*

The ultimate source of combat capability resides in the men and women of the Air Force. The value of strategy, technology, and organization are diminished without professional airmen to leverage their attributes. Our Total Force of Active, Guard, Reserve, and Civilian personnel are our largest investment and most critical asset. They are airmen -- steeped in an expeditionary ethos. Therefore, from the moment they step into the Air Force, we are dedicated to ensuring they receive the education, training, and professional development necessary to provide a quality edge second to none. The full spectrum capabilities of our service stem from the collective abilities of our personnel; and the abilities of our people stem from a career-long focus on the development of professional airmen.

2) Technology-to-warfighting: *The tools of combat capability*

The vision of airmen fundamentally altered the way in which we approach military operations. As a leader in the military application of air, space, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance technology, the Air Force is committed to innovation to guide research, development, and fielding of unsurpassed capabilities. Just as the advent of powered flight revolutionized joint warfighting, recent advances in low observable technologies, space-based systems, manipulation of information, precision, and small, smart weapons offer no less dramatic advantages for combatant commanders. The Air Force nurtures and promotes its ability to translate our technology into operational capability -- to prevail in conflict and avert technological surprise.

3) Integrating Operations: *Maximizing combat capabilities*

Effectively integrating the diverse capabilities found in all four service branches remains pivotal to successful joint warfighting. Innovative operational concepts and the efficient integration of all military systems -- air, land, maritime, space, and information -- ensures maximum flexibility in the delivery of desired effects across the spectrum of conflict. The Air Force contributes to this enduring objective as each element of air and space power brings unique and essential capabilities to the joint force. Our innate ability to envision, experiment, and ultimately, execute the union of a myriad of platforms and people into a greater, synergistic whole is the key to maximizing these capabilities. Yet, effective integration involves more than smart technology investment -- it also requires investigation of efficient joint and service organization, and innovative operational thinking. Thus, continued investment in our people to foster critical analysis and intellectual flexibility is equally important to our technology development. Collectively, our air and space core competencies reflect the visions of the founders of airpower, are recognized by our joint "customers," and serve to realize the potential of air and space forces. We foster ingenuity and adventure in the development of the world's most professional airmen. We thrive on transitioning new technologies into practical systems while we encourage intellectual innovation at every level of war. And, we drive relentlessly toward integration to realize the potential and maturation of air and space capabilities.

Our proficiency in these three air and space core competencies underpin our ability to contribute to joint warfighting, producing effects across the spectrum of conflict. Our continued focus on and nurturing of these core competencies will enable us to remain the world's greatest air and space force.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James G. Roche".

James G. Roche
Secretary of the Air Force