

This transcript is made possible through the sponsorship of JobsOhio.

Gerald Murray:

Ladies and gentlemen, we are off to a great start this morning. One of the things that we wanted to do at this conference was celebrate our heritage and the spirit of air power. When I think about that spirit of air power I can't help thinking about my old boss, the 17th Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, General John P. Jumper. Ladies and gentlemen, I had the opportunity over the past month to take and spend time with boss again as we completed what we called a legacy tour across eight bases of air and our space bases across our nation.

How good to be back with him to hear the stories and many others that we were with. Boss, thank you. Thank you for being here. It is an absolute honor. Ladies and gentlemen, the 17th Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, General John Jumper.

Gen. John P. Jumper (Ret.):

Thank you, Chief Murray, my wingman, and thank you Secretary Kendall, Chief of Staff of the Air Force number 22, C. Q. Brown, Chief of Space Operations number one, Jay Raymond, our manage comm commanders and senior enlisted leadership joining us today. And thank you, AFA, for the honor of addressing this generation of Airmen and Guardians about the past, the present and the future as we celebrate this 75th anniversary of the United States Air Force.

I have the right to claim some expertise here, because some of us here in this room were alive at the birth of the Air Force. I was only two years old at the time, so nobody cared much about what I had to say, but my dad was a World War II fighter pilot and his career in the Air Force was shared with the pioneers of air and space power. These pioneers used to hang around my house. I met Robin Olds when I was in kindergarten. I met Chuck Yeager when I was 12 years old, and the Mercury Seven astronauts lived on my street at Langley Air Force Base in the early '60s. I was 16 years old.

Later, as an instructor and commander at Nellis Air Force Base we hosted the Tuskegee Airmen, the Flying Tigers and members of the Doolittle Raiders, and listened to these humble heroes tell stories of unbelievable courage and selfless call to duty. That's when I learned that the spirit of these Airmen, these heroes who helped save the world in World War II, the real spirit of air power is not merely seeking the thrill of higher, faster, farther. They were possessed with that warrior spirit thrust into the souls of those who simply would not allow our nation to lose.

These heroes of that era are mostly gone now, their duty done, their commitment fulfilled. But that warrior spirit must live on in us, the Airmen and Guardians assembled here and on guard around the world today.

For decades our Air Force has been deployed around the world and fought against persistent terrorist threats. That fight continues. Our withdrawal from Afghanistan does not mean that we can excuse ourselves from the battle against terrorism, against an enemy that is as committed as ever before to our destruction. That fight continues.

Our present and future are now complicated by the return of peer adversaries eager and ready to compete for primacy on the global stage. China speaks of the demise of the United States and our form of government. They mock our internal strife, our democracy and our national values. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was largely based on assumptions of America's weakness and lack of commitment.

So how do we address these future Airmen and Guardians? How do we address these issues? Do we still possess that warrior spirit that has always leveraged aerospace and cyber power to reassure the American people who depend on our courage, our commitment, our integrity?

Our secretary, Mr. Frank Kendall, and our Chief of Staff, General C. Q. Brown have given directions for all of us to follow into the future, clear instructions that we must accelerate change or lose, a focused list of seven operational imperatives; not operational initiatives, not operational suggestions, not seven tasks to be abandoned because they're hard to do, but imperatives as we as an Air Force, a space force, and a nation require to compete with the real world that confronts us.

We've also heard General Jay Raymond, our Chief of Space Operations, state his imperative that space capabilities must be operationalized and delivered at the speed of relevance rather than the speed of committee, or the speed of over-classification, or the speed of typing. The speed of relevance should be much closer to the speed of light.

Can we do these things? Yes, we can. Over the past few weeks I've been on the road with several others of the older generation of Airmen. We've been on a tour of air and space force bases called the legends' tour. If you're old you get to be called a legend, by the way.

My fellow legends were General Dick Myers, General John Hyten, General Fig Newton, General Lorie Robinson, General Larry Spencer, General Suzanne Vautrinot, former Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Jim Finch, and my wing man, Gerald Murray, and Chief Master Sergeant Gerardo Tapia.

We visited several thousand Airmen and Guardians and we saw them working on acceleration and doing their part pursuing the seven imperatives. We saw space warriors on the front range of Colorado who are operationalizing space and creating that speed of relevance, information flow to warriors on the surface and in the air.

Progress is being made and momentum is building, but there is more to do. Emerging doctrine for the employment of aerospace and cyber power will require proficiency and disbursed base operations, and the ability to deploy, set up, sustain operations, and rapid relocate as threats emerge. This is a degree of operational agility that exceeds any previous demands on Air Force expeditionary proficiency.

Pre-deployment preparation, base security inside and outside the fence, sortie generation, engineering skills to build, sustain, tear down and relocate, other essential capabilities like ground based air defense, combat medicine, new concepts of combat search and rescue, new ways to think about tactical airlift, rapid staging of command and control, cyber and space links, and importantly the training of a new generation of installation commanders who think, train and exercise disbursed base operations every day, these are our tasks.

Many needed changes are already underway. Technologies to improve our standoff and precision are constantly improving. Accelerating the kill chain is embedded in the operational imperatives. On the ground or battlefield Airmen in units like the 820, our Security Forces Squadron, our contingency response groups, and work being done by Special Operations all address the tough issues of expeditionary warfare, but they must scale to deliver the combat power necessary to deter and engage a large, well equipped enemy.

Air combat commands, agile combat employment operational concepts, along with the Air Force's fourth generation concept, shows us the emerging organizations and Force presentation, but the execution of these concepts are in the hands of the Airmen, Guardians and cyber warriors who know how to train for these needs, who know how training needs to be adjusted and what new and modified equipment is needed to deliver these capabilities at scale.

Airmen and Guardians on staff, who are just as much warriors as the people in the field, must work to realign resources and policies to rapidly facilitate leadership's directions and enable those in the field who have heard the chief and the secretary to strive to comply with their directions. As in every generation, when we place the concept in the hands of our Airmen they will make it better than the

concept developers ever imagined. I'm thankful to General Kelly, General Manahan, our manage comm commanders. They get it, and they're doing the work that the nation needs.

What I've seen at our bases during the legend tour has reminded me of every generation of Airmen during my nearly 40 years of service and beyond. The questions that we were asked by our Airmen were not self-serving questions, but about the mission, about how to make things better. We have always lived with frustrations that divert our attention away from the mission, but there has never been a greater need for our Airmen and Guardians to facilitate that accelerated change that General Brown has directed.

If any one of you in uniform doubt the importance of what you are doing listen to this ancient Airman when I tell you that there is nothing more important you could be doing with your life than you are doing for your country today. You are fulfilling the greatest, the least recognized ingredient of human satisfaction, and that is that you are a part of something bigger than yourself. When you look back on your life you will see that it will be hard to match the contributions that you are making now to the greater good of our nation.

As we set about to reinvent ourselves we do so with obstacles. It's hard to accelerate change as we live through a decade of budget disruption and continuing resolutions and the uncertainty of the threats of government shutdown. The reality of our disruptive and dangerous world demands that the United States remain the beacon of hope and justice, and we rank our ability to deter the fight above the partisan political divides that diverts the nation's focus and masks the reality of external dangers.

We need and are thankful for focused support from our elected representatives who equip our warriors with the tools they need to fight and win. As we celebrate our 75th anniversary there's no better symbol to demonstrate that than this star I wear on my lapel today. The star was given to me by General Russ Dougherty, the former Commander of the Strategic Air Command and former President of the Air Force Association.

The star was given to General Dougherty by General Ira Eaker, who is the architect of the bomber offensive in World War II. The star was given to General Eaker by General Hap Arnold, the Air Force's only five star general in World War II and the leader most responsible for the creation of the modern Air Force. On this coming November 6th I will pin this star on my daughter, Catherine, who will become the third generation of general officer in the Jumper family.

Another big anniversary on the horizon is the 250th anniversary of our nation. We should take time to reflect on our own history and we should celebrate our form of government that through the centuries has always been self-correcting, even as we endured crises, political, financial and social, more severe than we are experiencing today.

As Airmen and Guardians, we took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. We did not swear to a ruler or political party, but to our Constitution and to the rule of law. By virtue of this common oath we wear the uniform we wear, we dedicate ourselves to our mission and our fellow Airmen and Guardians. All these things we know are part of something bigger than ourselves and essential for us to sustain our way of life and the security of our families and fellow Americans.

The spirit of air and space power is bound in the hearts of the warrior. It is the spirit of the nation, the spirit of air power, the spirit of the warrior, the spirit of the nation, the spirit of America. I leave you with the warriors that I think of often when I recall my days at Nellis Air Force Base, with huge numbers of airplanes in the sky ready against one another and the aggressors start inbound and the mission leader pushes the mic button and utters the words, "Fight's on. Fight's on." Thank you.