

Air Force Future Operating Concept Executive Summary

The Air Force Future Operating Concept (AFFOC) articulates how Airmen will successfully fight in the future and deliver airpower to deter and, if necessary, stop aggression by a peer adversary. The AFFOC is a key component to accomplishing the needed “change” in General Brown’s *Accelerate, Change, or Lose* concept, guiding the U.S. Air Force to fly, fight, and win in a new era. Specifically, the AFFOC explains how Airmen offer unique contributions to the Joint Force – and the forces of our Allies and partners – in support of the National Security Strategy, the National Defense Strategy, and the Joint Warfighting Concept.

In a situation where a peer adversary initiates military aggression, the U.S. Air Force brings trained Airmen and advanced capabilities to accomplish its five core functions: Air Superiority; Global Strike; Rapid Global Mobility; Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance; and Command and Control. In doing so, the U.S. Air Force creates opportunities for the rest of the Joint Force to apply their strengths and stop the aggression. No service or force element operates alone, but in the face of the advanced threat, it is the Airmen who open the door ... or kick it down.

The AFFOC presents the current military problem as six critical and concurrent fights that Airmen must win through “pulsed airpower,” which is the concentrating of airpower in time and space to create windows of opportunity for the rest of the force. The Department of the Air Force’s investments in seven Operational Imperatives will provide critical capabilities to make these pulses possible. The AFFOC states that winning the six fights depends on Airmen empowered to make decisions under a doctrine and culture of mission command.

The AFFOC’s primary audience is Airmen, including Headquarters Air Force (HAF) staff, the Air Force Major Commands (MAJCOMs), and Airmen across the Joint Force who lead strategy, planning, and mission execution in all geographic and functional combatant commands. When Airmen apply the principles of the AFFOC, it will enable the Joint Force to coalesce combat power in unstoppable, all-domain pulses.

To do this, Airmen must be able to prevail in six key “fights” as they apply airpower in the defense of Allies, partners, and national interests.

- The (1) **fight to compete with and deter** endures from competition through conflict. Even in combat, Airmen will compete to nurture partnerships and strengthen alliances and deter horizontal and vertical escalation throughout the spectrum of conflict. While *competing and deterring*, Airmen deploy according to the Air Force Force Generation model, fostering relationships with Allies and partners and sharing capabilities and concepts that are integrated by design. They pre-position key warfighting materiel, create resilient infrastructure, and practice Agile Combat Employment.
- When ready to act globally, Airmen will overcome adversary attacks and (2) **fight to get into theater**. Our adversaries have studied how we fight – Airmen should expect resistance and interference from the very beginning of any crisis. Airmen will execute Agile Combat Employment when *getting into theater*. This will require Advanced Battle Management Systems capabilities, agile control powered by the deployable Tactical Operations Center, and Adaptive Defense to protect Airmen and operating locations from multi-domain threats, both kinetic and non-kinetic.

- Whether supporting Allies and partners directly or generating combat power over long distances, Airmen must (3) **fight to get airborne**. No air base, even in our homeland, will be a sanctuary. Airmen will generate combat power, even in the face of enemy attempts to stop them. Key supporting concepts include an Advanced Battle Management System and an all-domain sensing grid that will be pivotal in the *fight to get airborne* as the Joint Force synchronizes efforts and effects in time and space.
- Tomorrow's adversaries will contest our control of the air in the attempt to prevent us from delivering effective support to the Joint Force, our Allies, and partners; therefore, Airmen must (4) **fight for air superiority** to create windows of opportunity for teamwork in all warfighting domains. Key concepts in the *fight for air superiority* are next-generation munitions, collaborative combat aircraft, the Advanced Battle Management System, agile electronic attack, and the sensing grid.
- To deliver devastating combat power against an aggressor, Airmen act as part of the Joint Force to (5) **fight to deny adversary objectives** by stopping an attack or invasion. Airmen must *deny adversary objectives* through next-generation and palletized munitions, as well as stand-off and stand-in strike capabilities powered by the Advanced Battle Management System that allows for distributed control. This fight will also require all-domain intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, the all-domain sensing grid, electronic warfare, and cyber defense and attack teams.
- Airmen must (6) **fight to sustain** ourselves, our Allies, and partners in competition and conflict. The ability to conduct large-scale logistics has been a key strength of the U.S. military, and this will be a primary target in a future conflict. Airmen must be smarter, more agile, more responsive, and more flexible than our adversaries to survive and sustain the Joint Force. Airmen *sustain the fight* by conducting logistics under attack, adopting innovative ways to use Unmanned Aerial Systems for logistics, defending against all-domain effects, to include long-range missile threats, and recovering operating locations quickly after attacks, ensuring relentless combat pressure to stop aggression.

Airmen must be prepared to engage in several of these fights *at the same time*. For this reason, Airmen who are experts in a single core function will be unprepared to win against a peer adversary. Airmen will remain technical experts, but they will also be trained in additional skills that allow them to fight and win as agile teams. Tomorrow's Airmen must be multi-capable in order to win multiple fights.

The AFFOC will not work without Airmen skilled in mission command. Mission command is a philosophy of leadership that empowers Airmen to operate in uncertain, complex, and rapidly changing environments through trust, shared awareness, and understanding of the commander's intent. When empowered in this way, Airmen do not have to wait for orders from the higher headquarters to make bold decisions and take advantage of fleeting opportunities. This type of leadership does not just happen. It takes intentional development and practice.

The strength of our Nation's airpower is its Airmen. This AFFOC captures the value Airmen bring to the Joint Force by delivering unstoppable airpower to deter, confront, combat, and halt aggression.