

REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE ROBERT GATES LOCATION: MAXWELL-GUNTER AIR FORCE BASE, MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA TIME: 9:00 A.M. EDT DATE: MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2008

(Applause.)

SEC. GATES: Thank you. Thank you, General Lorenz. It's great to be back at Maxwell. I last spoke here nearly 16 years ago, when I was director of CIA. The world was a very different place then, of course, but some things never change. For example, Washington, D.C., has always been a perilous assignment, one that has cut short more careers than anywhere else in the world. As General Lorenz has pointed out, the worst day at Maxwell is still far better than the best day at the Pentagon. (Laughter.)

Representatives from many NATO nations are here today, including dignitaries from Poland. As I look around, I see more than a hundred international students in the audience. To our international brothers in arms, I appreciate your nation's partnerships, and I hope we can find new, creative ways to keep working together and way -- and in ways that capitalize on our respective areas of expertise.

As General Lorenz just mentioned, I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Air Force on January 4th, 1967. I was married in Seattle on January 7th, three days later, and a few days after that reported for duty at Whiteman Air Base in Missouri, then home to 150 Minutemen -- Minuteman ICBMs.

One of my duties at Whiteman was to brief the missile crews on international political and military developments.

I would have to tell you, their lack of interest was awe-inspiring. (Laughter.)

But because of my academic background and modest Russian language skills, I frequently briefed high-ranking officers on our wing's Minuteman targets in the Soviet Union. Translated, that means I was one of the few people in the entire wing and aerospace division who could actually pronounce the names of our targets.

One time I was explaining our target set to a lieutenant general, the commander of 8th Air Force at Westover, who I would describe as a cigar-chomping Curtis LeMay wanna-be. When I told him that 120 of our 150 missiles were aimed at Soviet ICBMs, he exploded and, with many expletives I will delete, said it was an outrage that we would be hitting only empty silos. He wanted to kill Russians. He demanded that I, Second Lieutenant Gates, rewrite the nuclear targeting plan. (Laughter.)

Reminds of another story about targeting. One Friday night we were called out of the Whiteman officers' club during happy hour because there was a

problem with the war plans. SAC headquarters had decided that they had to change the launch sequencing for all of the missiles. So we worked all night to fix the strike control documents. That meant wrestling with large, unwieldy sheets of lamination. This was an earlier age, technologically. This stuff was sticky as flypaper. The next morning, around 9:00, after the documents had been delivered to the launch control capsules by helicopter, we got a call from a major in one of the LCCs. He sounded puzzled as he examined his strike execution checklist and identified what he thought was a piece of pepperoni under the lamination. (Laughter.) He had correctly identified the kind of pizza we had during the night. (Laughter.)

Maxwell has a special claim on history. In 1910 an Alabama businessman leased a cotton field to the Wright brothers. They set up the first flight school here at Maxwell, near base ops today. They conducted night flights over Montgomery and even set an altitude recording, rising 2,500 feet, the second-highest ever achieved at that time. They could scarcely imagine today's machines.

In the invitation to speak here, General Lorenz asked me to talk about challenges that you, as Air Force officers, will face as you become senior leaders. The Air Force has been in the process of constant change for decades, with a steady drumbeat of expeditionary air operations. Perhaps uniquely among the services, the Air Force has been at war more or less constantly for 17 years, since the launch of Desert Storm.

Since September 11th, the Air Force has flown nearly a million missions in the war on terror, with an average of 300 sorties per day, ranging from lift to medevac to close air support.

The contributions of airmen have made a real difference for those fighting on the ground. Survival rates for those injured are up to 90 percent, in part due to aeromedical evacuation. During Desert Storm, it took about 10 days to medevac wounded to the United States. Now it takes about 3 days.

As Secretary Rice mentioned from this podium a week ago, the Air Force is doing some missions it would never have imagined in 2001, such as Air Force officers leading Provincial Reconstruction Teams. In addition, there are about 14,200 airmen performing "in lieu of" tasks on the ground, where an Air Force civil engineer might replace an Army heavy construction engineer.

And then there's the example of Air Force Tech Sergeant Jeremy Sudlow of Pandora, Ohio, who logged more than 430,000 miles on Iraq's roads as the convoy commander of a medium truck detachment. And in one month alone, C-17s helped take nearly 5,000 trucks off dangerous roads in Iraq.

Some of you have seen continuous operations in a combat theater since the day you donned the blue uniform. All of you raised your right hand knowing

that deployments were a fact of life, and as you well know, these activities have taken a toll on the Air Force's Cold- War-era equipment. As you well know, the average age of a tanker is 47, 15 years older than the average age of the pilots flying them. I believe the Air Force procurement program that the president has approved and requested and that I have supported is an appropriate and responsible one that will allow the service to reset from current operations and prepare for future challenges.

Those challenges will be immense and they will be diverse. When I last spoke here in June 1992, the Soviet Union had dissolved just six months earlier. Four decades of nuclear standoff fizzled out as the Cold War came to a quiet end. There were no parades or peace treaties. President George H.W. Bush didn't dance on the Berlin wall or declare victory over the Soviet Union. Only the Pentagon could resurrect what I actually said back then in June 1992, and I said, "We must expect continuing radical change and upheaval around the world -- at times promising, at times frightening -- before the form and patterns of a new era settle into place." As this new era actually continues to unfold before us, the challenge that I pose to you today is to become a forward-thinking officer who helps the Air Force adapt to a constantly changing strategic environment characterized by persistent conflict. **Let me illustrate using a historical exemplar, the late Air Force Colonel John Boyd. As a 30-year-old Captain, he rewrote the manual for air to air combat. Boyd and the reformers he inspired would later go on to design and advocate for the F-16 and the A-10.**

After retiring, he would develop the principles of maneuver warfare that were credited by a former Marine Corps commandant and a secretary of Defense for the lightning victory in the first Gulf War.

Boyd's contributions will resonate today. Many of you have studied the concept he developed called the OODA loop, and I understand there's an OODA Loop Street here at Maxwell, near the B-52.

But in accomplishing all these things, Boyd, who was a brilliant, eccentric and stubborn character, had to overcome a large measure of bureaucratic resistance and institutional hostility.

He had some advice that he used to pass on to his colleagues and subordinates that is worth sharing with you. Boyd would say -- and I quote -- "One day you will take a fork in the road, and you're going to have to make a decision about which direction you want to go. If you go one way, you can be somebody. You will have to make compromises, and you will have to turn your back on your friends. But you will be a member of the club, and you will get promoted and get good assignments. Or you can go the other way, and you can do something, something for your country and for your Air Force and for yourself. If you decide to do something, you may not get promoted, and you may not get good assignments, and you certainly will not be a favorite of your superiors, but you won't have to compromise yourself. To be somebody or to do something. In life there is often a roll call. That's when you have to make a decision: to be or to do."

For the kinds of challenges America faces and will face, the armed forces will need principled, creative, reform-minded leaders, men and women who, as Boyd put it, want to do something, not be somebody.

An unconventional era of warfare requires unconventional thinkers. That is because this era's range of security challenges, from global terrorism to ethnic conflicts, from roguenations to rising powers, cannot be overcome by traditional military means alone. Conflict will be fundamentally political in nature and will require the integration of all elements of national power. Success, to a large extent, will depend less on imposing one's will on the enemy or putting bombs on targets, though we must never lose our ability or our will to unsheathe the sword when necessary. Instead, ultimate success or failure will increasingly depend more on shaping the behavior of others, friends and adversaries, and most importantly, the people in between. This new set of realities and requirements have meant a wrenching set of changes for our military establishment that until recently was almost oriented toward winning the big battles and the big wars. Based on my experience at CIA, at Texas A&M and now Department of Defense, it is clear to me that the culture of any large organization takes a long time to change, and the really tough part is preserving those elements of the culture that strengthen the institution and

motivate the people in it, while shedding those elements of the culture that are barriers to progress and achieving the mission.

All of the services must examine their cultures critically if we are to have the capabilities relevant and necessary to overcome the most likely threats America will face in the years to come.

For example, the Army that went over the berm about five years ago was, in its basic organization and assumptions, essentially a smaller version of the Fulda Gap force that expelled Saddam Hussein from Kuwait a decade prior. As I've told Army gatherings, the lessons learned and capabilities built from Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns need to be institutionalized into the service's core doctrine, funding priorities and personnel policies. And that is taking place, although we must always guard against falling into past historical patterns where, if bureaucratic nature takes its course, these kinds of irregular capabilities tend to slide to the margins.

Like the Army, the Air Force has adopted some of the lessons of recent history. We see how deeply the expeditionary culture and mind-set have taken root. The service has adapted capabilities to today's realities and come up with some ingenious responses on the battlefield, such as small-diameter munitions that can strike irreconcilable enemies with less chance of harming or alienating civilians. In an era when we are most likely to be challenged in asymmetric ways, I would ask you to think through how we can build the kinds of air capabilities most likely to be needed while continuing to offer a strategic hedge against rising powers.

Protecting the 21st century's global commons -- in particular, space and cyberspace -- has been identified and adopted as a key task. Building the capacity of partners is another, a topic that Secretary Rice and I addressed before the House Armed Services Committee just last week. What the last 25 years have shown is that the threats can emerge almost anywhere in the world, but our own forces and resources will remain finite. To fill this gap, we must help our allies and partners to confront extremists and other potential sources of global instability within their borders. I ask you to think through what more we might do through training and equipping programs or other initiatives to enhance the air capabilities of other nations and whether, for example, we should pursue a conceptual hundred-wing air force of allies and partners to complement the thousand-ship navy now being leveraged across maritime commons.

These new realities and missions should be reflected in our training and doctrine. The Air Force will be increasingly called upon to conduct civil-military or humanitarian operations with interagency and nongovernmental organizations and partners and deal directly with local populations. These missions will put a premium on foreign language and cultural expertise. As you know, Red Flag at Nellis Air Force base is a premier training exercise that began after the Vietnam War to improve air-to-air combat skills over the years.

The exercise scenarios have expanded to include allied nations, close air support and other elements of modern warfare, but it has not yet addressed that gray zone between war and peace. Specifically, the exercise could include civilians from NGOs and government organizations and be more closely integrated with land component training such as the Army's NTC in California.

Furthermore, the counterinsurgency manual issued by the Army and Marines is over 200 pages long and yet only four pages are dedicated to air, space and cyberspace. Not long ago, the Air Force published a doctrine document on irregular warfare, but as future leaders of air power, you should consider whether there is more the service might do to articulate and codify the unique role of air power in instability operations.

Other questions I would ask you to consider go to the heart of how the service is organized, manned and equipped. What new priorities should drive procurement and what new criteria should drive promotions? At Whiteman in the 1960s I recall missileers and non-rated officers questioning whether they would ever make flag rank because they were unrated, so I know a good deal has improved for the career prospects of non-aviators since then.

In addition, we need to be thinking about how we accomplish the missions of the future, from strike to surveillance, in the most affordable and sensible way. We must heed John Boyd's advice by asking if the ways we do business make sense.

UAVs offer a case in point. In the early 1990s I was director of CIA. After 27 years of experience as an intelligence professional, I had seen many agents place themselves in harm's way to collect information in some of the world's most dangerous and inaccessible environments. I'd stood by flag-draped coffins at Andrews Air Force Base, receiving those from CIA who had given their all serving the nation. The introduction of UAVs around this time meant far less risky and far more versatile means of gathering data, and other nations like Israel set about using them. In 1992, however, the Air Force would not co-fund with CIA a vehicle without a pilot. Unmanned systems cost much less and offer greater loiter times than their manned counterparts, making them ideal for many of today's tasks. Today, we now have more than 5,000 UAVs, a 25-fold increase since 2001.

But in my view, we can do and we should do more to meet the needs of men and women fighting in the current conflicts while their outcome may still be in doubt. My concern is that our services are still not moving aggressively in wartime to provide resources needed now on the battlefield. I've been wrestling for months to get more intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets into the theater.

Because people were stuck in old ways of doing business, it's been like pulling teeth.

While we've doubled this capability in recent months, it is still not good enough. And so last week I established a Department of Defense-wide task force, much like the MRAP Task Force, to work this problem in the weeks to come, to find more innovative and bold ways to help those whose lives are on the line. The deadlines for the task force's work are very short.

All this may require rethinking long-standing service assumptions and priorities about which missions require certified pilots and which do not. For those missions that still require manned missions, we need to think hard about whether we have the right platforms -- whether, for example, low-cost, low-tech alternatives exist to do basic reconnaissance and close air support in an environment where we have total control of the skies -- aircraft that our partners also can afford.

This morning I have raised some difficult questions, with perhaps difficult answers. I'm asking you to be part of the solution and part of the future. As up-and-coming Air Force leaders, I urge you to explore creative new ways airmen, writ large, can apply their skill and talent and weaponry as the forms and patterns of this new era still settle into place.

No doubt such changes will be difficult for an organization that has been so successful for six decades. The last time a U.S. ground force was attacked from the sky was more than half a century ago, and the last Air Force jet lost to aerial combat was in Vietnam.

Such success is attributable in part to the ways airmen have pushed technology to its outer limits, but it is also attributable to maverick thinkers like John Boyd.

As you graduate from your respective courses and leave Maxwell, you too will eventually face Boyd's proverbial fork in the road. And you will have to choose to do something or to be someone.

For the good of the Air Force, for the good of the armed services and for the good of our country, I urge you to reject convention and careerism, and to make decisions that will carry you closer toward rather than further from the officer you want to be and the thinker who advances

airpower strategy and meeting the complex challenges to our national security.

Thank you. (Applause.)

GEN. STEPHEN LORENZ (U.S. Air Force, commander of Air University):
Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for those thought-provoking remarks.

I believe our students and faculty have some questions to ask you.

Air University students and faculty, if you have a question for Secretary Gates, please make your way to one of the microphones along the sides of the auditorium. I will recognize you and ask that you please identify yourself and your college or school. Thank you.

SEC. GATES: I had an old rule when I was head of CIA and doing Q&A. I'd say, anybody in the audience can ask any question they want, and I'll answer any question I want. (Laughter.)

Here, you can ask any question you want, and I'll answer any question I can.

Q Good morning, sir. (Name inaudible) -- from Air Command and Staff College, Flight 10.

Sir, you mentioned counterconventional thinking as part of your brief there. I'm part of a futures group here at ACSC called Blue Horizons. My particular research work, we've done in directed energy.

I polled a myriad of pretty high-level DOD thinkers in the direct energy realm. In addition to telling me that they were underfunded, as most people do, I was really surprised at what they perceived as an institutional bias, against not only funded directed-energy pursuits but also employing them, like the current Active Denial System that was headed for Iraq and then was pulled.

I was wondering if you could kind of talk to us about that.

SEC. GATES: This was on the directed energy?

Q Yes, sir.

SEC. GATES: You know, we were just getting started on direct energy programs when I unsuccessfully retired the first time. And the Congress just cut the missile defense directed energy, the laser plane.

I don't know about the tactical system that you were just describing. But let me see what I can find out, and get back to you with an answer. Sometimes it's just, you know, for the mundane reasons of making choices on budget issues and so on. And I just don't know whether it was a technical problem or a budget issue or a bureaucratic issue.

Q (Name inaudible) -- from Air War College.

The -- actually sir, I'm over on this side.

SEC. GATES: Okay. (Laughter.)

Q And I said that with all due respect, sir. (Laughter.)

SEC. GATES: Not clear whether it was my eyes or my ears that weren't working. At my age, it's probably both. (Laughter.)

Q It was the substandard PA system. There was an echo. (Laughter.)

Sir, with your regards to maverick thinking -- sorry for the feedback.

But In your regards to maverick thinking, how do you feel that military PME can be improved to facilitate more thinking outside of the box, more creative thinking versus research?

SEC. GATES: Well, I'm not -- frankly, I'm not quite sure of the distinction between out-of-the-box thinking and research. Of course, it does bring to mind the definition that -- if you borrow an author, it's plagiarism; if you borrow from a bunch, it's research. (Laughter, applause.) Only a university president would know that. (Laughter.)

You know, I think -- I think out-of-the-box thinking is, in many cases -- I guess I'd break it into two pieces: out-of-the box thinking in terms of technology and capabilities, and out-of-box thinking in terms of processes and the bureaucracy, if you will. And it may be that research is better suited for the former than for the latter. Real-world experience and knowledge of what's not working, of where the obstacles are in getting something accomplished, is more related to out-of-the-box thinking in terms of process, it seems to me, and bureaucracy. So the distinction that I would make is that in both cases, the problem is that the institution -- and not just the Air Force, virtually ever institution -- is organized in a way to stifle out-of-the-box thinking.

And -- so most successful executives, whether -- one of the things that I did before joining the Defense Department was serve as chairman of the independent trustees of the Fidelity Fund, the world's biggest mutual fund company. And the founder of that company, Ed -- Ned Johnson, basically always had a group of people around him who had no day-to-day responsibilities but that

-- the whole company in terms of looking for new investment opportunities, new ways of doing things, new innovations. And because of these out-of-the-box thinkers, in the early 1990s, Ned Johnson put a billion dollars of his own money into creating a back-office capability to handle 401(k)s, and I can't tell you how many billions Fidelity's made since then on it.

But the point is, you need to have some kind of -- and the intelligence community has wrestled with this over the years and, I would say, mostly unsuccessfully. And one example is the role of the national intelligence officer for warning. Now, this is supposed to be the out-of-the-box thinker who spots a threat coming down the road that nobody else can spot. But since most of the time, most threats don't materialize, eventually that person gets sidelined, and they don't play a constructive role. So figuring out how to integrate into a big organization and promote and protect a group of people that are trying to think outside the box, whether it's technology or process, I think, is one of the challenges for every senior leader. But in that case, as I say, I don't draw a distinction between research and process. But it's -- the key is leaders who understand the value of people who do think out of the box, and the reality is, they mostly have to be protected.

And I would put in the same category -- I'm going to talk about more at West Point later today -- dissent. Dissent is a sign of health in an organization, and particularly if it's done in the right way and respectfully and so on. But people who dissent, who take a different view, who kind of are orthogonal to the conventional wisdom are always at risk in their careers, just like Boyd was. And so figuring out -- Boyd couldn't have done what he did unless senior officers, at least one or two, were looking out for him.

And so I would say, in a generic answer to your question, the biggest challenge for out-of-the-box thinking is the wisdom of the senior leader who sees the value of that kind of thinking and protects it and the people who do it.

Q Sir, Lieutenant Colonel Bridge (sp), of Air Command and Staff College. Sir, we appreciate you taking the time today and coming to speak to us.

Yesterday, the New York Times had an article that talked about the number of retired senior officers who are commentators but who also serve on boards for companies that are profiting from the war. Sir, what do you think about all these senior officers who are now retired influencing public opinion about the Department of Defense and the war effort? And I don't know if you had a chance to read the article, but what do you think about that, if you will, conflict of interest that they are involved in?

SEC. GATES: Well, I will tell you that this is actually -- the increasing engagement of retired officers in the political process and in the

media is something that has really taken off -- (inaudible) -- to 1993. There were only one or two -- a handful of examples of it before 1993. And now it's kind of a cottage industry. I suppose in a flip sort of way I could say, the good news side is there are now so many it doesn't really matter. If there were still just a handful out there they might actually have some real influence.

But when you've got scores of these guys either signing up for different candidates or as media experts and so on -- the worry that I have in this whole thing, whether they are signing up with candidates or whether they are acting as experts for the media, is the important -- when they are referred to by their title, the public doesn't know whether they are active-duty or retired, often, because those distinctions tend to get blurred, and they don't know whether they're speaking for the institution or for themselves.

And so if I had one request to all of them, it would be in whatever role they're playing that they make clear that they're not speaking for the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, or the Marines Corps, or the Department of Defense, but only speaking for themselves.

And I suppose that takes a little of the gloss over the -- off of their appeal, but I think that's the honest way to approach this.

My -- I did read the article, and frankly, I think it -- I couldn't quite tell how much of it was an implied political conflict of interest, an implied financial conflict of interest or what.

But -- so I would just limit myself to saying I think that the one service they owe everybody is making clear that they're speaking only for themselves.

GEN. LORENZ: Ladies and gentlemen, we have time for one more question.

Sir?

Q Good morning, sir. (Inaudible name) du Pont (sp) from Air War College, from France. Sir, you mentioned this morning in your speech how important interoperability and working in coalition was for the U.S. Air Force. About a couple of months ago, the U.S. government decided that the future tanker will be provided by a consortium led by Grumman and Airbus. Since then, Boeing decided to challenge this decision. I would like to know -- and it will delay the overall process for the Air Force to procure this kind of aircraft. I would like to know what you think about this challenge and how -- (audio break).

SEC. GATES: Well, Boeing is using the legitimate processes that have been established to protest the award of a contract. As I understand it, the General Accountability Office will -- is evaluating the decision process and

Boeing's process and Boeing's protest, and they will issue a decision in terms of whether they believe the protest was warranted.

All I can say is that I think it would be a real shame if the tanker were to get delayed yet again. We're long past due in terms of getting on with this program.

The law is very explicit. The law allows the Defense Department, in an acquisition like this, to consider only technology, capability and cost. All other considerations are explicitly prohibited by law. And so it seems to me that, based on everything I've seen, this was a fair process. But we'll wait and see what the GAO report says. But I think that some things unrelated to what the law says we can consider are being thrown into the mix, at least on Capitol Hill. And I -- and that's a concern. And I think our undersecretary for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, John Young, said something about this publicly in a hearing the other day.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END.