



☆☆☆
Whiteman Awards Ceremony
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES M. KOWALSKI

INTRODUCTION

I'm honored to be back here with the warriors of the 509th bomb wing, Whiteman AFB, current home of the Fairchild Trophy...the best bomb wing in the Air Force! Thanks for inviting me to speak as we recognize and honor the outstanding performers of 2010. Thanks also to the spouses and our downtown friends for celebrating with us tonight - Mayor Horn, Mayor and Mrs. Dyer, Mr. and Mrs. Kellock, Col and Mrs. Rodgers, Col and Mrs. Dawkins, Col and Mrs. Kmon, Col and Mrs. Milligan, Lt Col and Mrs. Higley and Chief Cooley. The support of our families and community is essential to our mission.

While it's nice to be at the head table with these distinguished guests, I can't help but to look at the folks who are at the tables in the back corners with a little envy and long for the day when I was a junior officer and could just have fun at these events without being in the spotlight...so, to the gang in the back, enjoy it while it lasts...too soon your seats will change and you'll begin that slow march toward the tables in the front. Heck, if you do this long enough you might even have to give the speech.



THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

At tonight's dinner we celebrate the achievements of our best airmen. We reward them and hold them up to all as examples. Airmen who have met their challenges successfully...the challenge of their jobs, the challenge of a crisis, the challenge of combat operations. Airmen who have demonstrated integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all they do.

Former President George W. Bush said, "I hope you'll never take the honor of public service for granted. Some of us will serve in government for a season; others will spend an entire career here. But all of us should dedicate ourselves to great goals: We are not here to mark time, but to make progress, to achieve results, and to leave a record of excellence."

So the question for all of us...how do we serve not just to mark time...not just to live an average life...but to leave a record of excellence? There are a number of attributes common to successful people and organizations. They tend to have clear objectives, stay focused on those objectives, they show strength of discipline, they are enthusiastic in their endeavors, and finally they are agile...they adapt to change so they stay on course to their goal.



Meeting the challenge of change is what each of our nominees have shown...and what they must continue to do in order to leave a record of sustained excellence.

Meeting the challenge of change is important for all of us as we execute an enduring Air Force missions...long range strike...in our rapidly changing modern world. Successful service to our nation demands the ability to adapt and change.

Those who joined the army air corps in World War II found out about challenges of change. In 1942 they arrived with their bombers in an embattled England and soon took the fight to the German war machine. The challenge of new aircraft, new tactics, new weapons, and new crews against a battle-tested enemy led to horrific losses. But they persevered...learned and adapted. They changed tactics, discarded outmoded concepts, refocused on basic skills. They innovated...added drop tanks, brought in more and better fighters, developed and employed radar and electronic warfare. We know them now as heroes, and call them the greatest generation.



Today we face the challenge of accelerating change and it's accelerating on a pace never seen before. We live in a world with more hazards than at any time since World War II. Our unipolar dominance of recent history is shrinking; nations that used to qualify as "third world" are now our economic competitors, our creditors, and the production base for many of our goods. Capitalism has unleashed their economies and they have taken advantage of their large labor forces.

In the next 8 seconds 34 babies will be born in the world—only 1 of those will be born in the U.S., 4 will be born in India, 5 in China. It's not just population size but also our education; in 2006 China had three times as many college graduates as the U.S...in less than 10 years China will be the number one English speaking country in the world. We all hope our relationship with China remains peaceful...but hope is not a strategy, and it is our job to anticipate danger in the dark alleyways of history.

As much as we abhor conflict, we have to acknowledge the risk of peer competitors...we don't have control over their internal politics, their military capabilities, or their ambitions. There will be uncertainty and tension as we compete for natural resources, markets, and influence. It is reasonable that as we build friendly global relationships based on shared interests, we also hedge against threats.



It's not just the emergence of peer competitors, but also their pursuit of technologies focused against our advantages in space, stealth, precision and command and control. They are also developing offensive and defensive weapons to keep us from defending our interests, or defeat us if we're force to fight.

These weapons are not only being developed and fielded by Russia and China, but by North Korea...a nuclear-armed kleptocracy with a history of unpredictability; and also by Iran, a nation that supports terrorists and has ignored the international community to continue its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Another area where we are challenged with accelerating change is in the cyber domain. Information technology allows the coalescing of the like-minded around ideas...we now see cultures and communities that cross borders, and increasingly, continents. Cyber is a domain allowing interest groups of all types to form and thrive. Who uses Facebook? If Facebook were a nation, it would be the world's third largest in population, ahead of the United States by over 200 million people.



For the most part, we see this examples as benign...we may think, “no one is going to become a suicide bomber because of their allegiance to Facebook,” but there are more strident and dangerous groups using cyberspace as the medium to grow their following, their resources and their impact.

Using these new technologies, non-state actors now have global reach and impact. Al-Qaida and other extremists are quick to denounce our technology and culture, but they have been deft students of the cyber domain. They use the internet to recruit, train, and conduct strategic communication. Their sites accelerate the learning cycle of our adversaries and are fertile ground for the growth of ad-hoc terrorist cells and disgruntled activists.

This rapidly changing modern world presents a fundamentally different security challenge than we’ve planned for in the past. We have to be prepared for the lethality posed by nation-states, but also acknowledge that lethality is no longer the province of nations. We’re seeing an intersection between groups determined to do us harm and the lethal technologies that allow them to act on that intent.



Will the proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology give terrorists the destructive power they seek? Will they find their asymmetric advantage in chemical, biological or cyber attacks? It forces us to think not only about the most likely scenarios, but the most dangerous scenarios. Do we have the strategic agility to be successful at the low end—in irregular warfare where Americans are fighting and dying today—and also be ready for a terrorist attack and for a high end threat from another nation?

We have to fight the war that we're in without giving up the ability to deter the wars we dare not fight.

As we struggle to adapt to these changes we find our own capacity restricted by a stumbling economy, record deficits, and declining defense spending. Our infrastructure is aging at our bases and our fleets of air and space weapons systems are desperate to be modernized. We also bear the fatigue of 20 continuous years of combat operations in Southwest Asia; 9 years of that against a determined and fanatic extremist enemy, best represented by Al-Qaida and the Taliban. We expect this fight to last another generation, and we could be in Iraq and/or Afghanistan for another decade.



It can be difficult for highly successful organizations to deal with change, especially disruptive change. We become emotionally attached to the ways and tools that have succeeded in the past and we miss or rationalize away, the danger of not changing. Recent business history is littered with examples of that failed to change...and then failed.

Polaroid invented the instant photo market. The instant photos should have been their core mission, not the film for instant photos. They should have seen digital as a way to be better at their core mission, but they failed to adapt. Blockbuster owned getting movies to consumers and that should have been their mission, but they remained loyal to real estate, physical stores and didn't leverage new technology to do get movies to consumers faster.

Those are recent business examples, but throughout military history, leaders have been faced with changes that had major effects on how battles were fought and won. By the 18th century, out were the knights with armor and swords, and in were muskets and infantrymen. Gunpowder became an effective means to destroy an enemy from afar. As weapons evolved from smooth bore, to rifled barrels, , to repeating firearms, the military leaders who best adapted to change, emerged victorious.



Well, if any service can adapt to the challenge of change, it's our Air Force. We have always been the service most responsive to new ideas, innovation, and change. Our culture...our ability to see the battle-space in three dimensions, our comfort with speed, range, effects; our bias toward technology, education, and continuous improvement, our characteristic flexibility...have kept us consistently one step ahead of our adversaries.

So what are we doing? We're realigning intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities and structures. We're dramatically increasing the numbers of remotely piloted vehicles such as Predators, Reapers, and Global Hawk, and the processing expertise and infrastructure required to turn their information into knowledge.

For our cyber challenges your Air Force has stood up a new Numbered Air Force under Space Command to better organize and train our cyber warriors. There's a lot of work to be done here. For example, who is the warfighter when we are all on the global grid? What is the relationship of offensive action in cyber space—reaching out and taking down the websites used by terrorists; to our defensive actions as we block attacks on our networks? What is our role in defending our critical civilian networks and data centers? We still are learning, but I think we're asking the right questions.



Global Strike Command is adapting to change as well. We're pushing investment in the Long Range Strike Family of Systems. This family of systems will continue to provide a visible deterrent and global strike well into the future. In a recent speech, the Secretary of Defense made a commitment to a new nuclear capable, long range penetrating bomber...one that can be optionally manned to provide greater operational flexibility to our joint commanders. We're looking at the next generation of land-based missiles, to include conventional strike missiles, and we want to change how we command, control and integrate these systems and their capabilities.

But all of our challenges will not be overcome at the Pentagon—it's going to take all of us...all of you. We have to lead and advocate change and innovation at all levels. Our success depends especially on our NCOs and Senior NCOs. Our NCO Corps is what has made us a great Air Force and they will continue to make us a great Air Force into the future. They must be our front line for innovation and adapting to change.



Tonight I've highlighted some of the challenges we're facing. I'm confident your Air Force is oriented toward the future, that we recognize the dangers and opportunities of the challenges our Nation faces. And as I look out at all the nominees here tonight, I am confident we have Airmen who will, in the words of President Bush, not only make progress and achieve results, but leave a record of excellence!

Don't take my word for it...look back on what the Air Force has done in our 62 years...we have always answered the call. We have fought, learned, adapted, and fought some more. We own the skies today because Airmen have spilled blood over battlefields. We will not rest on our laurels and be forced to pay that price again.

You are part of that long line of Airmen who were the fearless adopters of new technologies, who saw the potential of powered flight, who fought for the independence to fully exploit the air in our Nation's defense.

Thank you for your service, for your support, and for your kind attention this evening. Thank you for your record of excellence. Blue skies and tail winds.