At the recent Air, Space and Cyber Conference at National Harbor, Maryland, the Secretary of the Air Force, Chief of Staff of the Air Force and Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force presented their vision regarding The Force We Need, the Future of Multi-Domain Operations, and the key to enveloping and executing this vision; the Airmen We Need. The recently formed Air Force Strategic Integration Group (AFSIG) blends these perspectives to implement lasting change across our Air Force. Using Simon Sinek’s *Start with Why* philosophy, we intend to enhance understanding across all leadership levels; especially, our enlisted Airmen - the backbone of our Air Force.

At the core of the SecAF, CSAF and CMSAF’s vision is the underlying need for our Airmen to be ready and lethal while conducting operations in a multi-domain environment. The concept of multi-domain operations is the result of a new and emerging security environment, highlighted in the Secretary of Defense's recently published National Defense Strategy (NDS). The NDS demonstrates our need to reorient our forces to a new set of threats; especially, threats posed by near-peer adversaries. In today’s volatile climate, it is important for our Airmen to understand their role in the Air Force’s concept of multi-domain operations.

The proliferation of advanced weapons systems and the reemergence of great power competition are converging unlike anything we have experienced in the past. When combining these threats with the kind of conflict we may face with a peer adversary, the security environment we will fight in becomes extremely complex: First, we know future conflict with a peer adversary will be multi-region, multi-nation, multi-component, multi-service, multi-combatant command, multi-domain, etc. While our Air Force has been engaged in various forms of conflict for many years, we have learned the complexity of operations across each of these “multi-s” continues to plague our enterprise with challenges.

These complexities create seams across diverse areas, such as, seams between domains, seams between components and seams between command authorities. Closing the distance between these seams is at the heart of multi-domain command and control, and it is our contention that a revolutionized command and control structure will be fundamental in allowing us to manage those seams.

To enhance the Air Force’s ability to conduct multi-domain operations, General Goldfein recognized the need for a three-pronged approach: First, we must motivate, develop and inspire healthy fighting formations, described in terms of our enterprise-wide effort to revitalize squadrons. Second, we must integrate, influence and lead joint forces; therefore, we must strengthen our joint leaders and teams. Finally, we must have a multi-domain command and control capability, with expert personnel, to enhance our ability to conduct multi-domain operations.

Addressing the heartbeat of our Air Force, revitalizing squadrons is an enterprise-wide effort to increase our Airmen’s readiness and lethality. The focus with this effort is to enrich unit culture across squadron and squadron-like organizations that embrace purpose-driven and inspirational leaders, while eliminating barriers to success and providing every Airman the tools and resources they need to do their jobs better. This effort begins at the grassroots level with our Airmen who are driving squadron culture and directly leading our enterprise towards success.

Field visits to 10 diverse MAJCOMs, 25 bases and 3,886 peer-to-peer interviews advanced quick wins for the Air Force’s revitalizing squadrons’ initiative. The wear of the Operational Camouflage Pattern (OCP) uniforms, changes to the Air Force fitness assessment process; allowing commanders the authority to conduct PT testing at the squadron level are just a few examples where our Airmen had an immediate impact on the future of our Air Force.

Additional initiatives recently tasked across the enterprise is the reduction of ancillary training, cutting the number of AFIs, decreasing the amount of additional duties and increasing squadron manning to ensure each task we ask of our Airmen also sharpens their collective focus on the mission. All of these efforts are enveloped with a single purpose: to give back valuable time for Airmen to accomplish the unit’s clearly defined and understood mission. With whitespace added back into our Airmen’s daily agendas, we can unpack the most important part of this initiative, which is to develop inspirational and purpose-driven leaders.

Purpose-driven leadership development is a concept woven in the heart of every Airman. As stated in our Airman’s Creed, “we are wingmen, leaders and warriors.” Leadership development begins on day one at Lackland Air Force Base and across various officer
development institutions. As an enterprise, we have placed the focus of purposeful leadership across all levels, where inspirational leaders are being purposefully developed and are having a direct impact on those accomplishing the mission. To formalize this initiative, wing commanders and command chiefs have been tasked to implement flight leadership development courses, and are responsible for identifying the types of Airmen our Air Force needs at higher leadership levels, while mentoring and grooming these Airmen earlier in their careers.

It has been said, “we recruit Airmen and we retain families.” Our efforts cannot rest with a focus solely on our Airmen and our mission, we must also ensure we are in lock step as an enterprise to care for our families. Our families are oftentimes the heart of Airmen resiliency; they are the sounding boards, outlets and support structures who enable an Airman’s readiness and lethality. In a nutshell, the Air Force’s efforts in revitalizing squadrons is not about a handful of efforts to ensure readiness and lethality, it is truly about everything an Airman will experience throughout a successful career in the Air Force.

_“While today's Air Force is the most lethal and ready in the world, to maintain our competitive lead we must strengthen our ability to operate in an increasingly complex multi-domain joint environment. To better prepare ourselves to thrive in a joint environment, the Air Force must develop increasingly experienced, credible Airmen who are ready to integrate into, influence and lead in a joint environment.”_ – Strengthening Joint Leaders and Teams Implementation Plan, 23 July 2018.

Readiness requires certification and qualification, while lethality requires mastery and expertise. Across the Air Force, there are Airmen at every level who contribute their mastery and expertise inside joint communities. Our Airmen are highly valued and integrated members of many joint teams, but we cannot rest on these laurels. We must continue to deliberately develop and better prepare our Airmen to influence and lead joint teams. Enlisted, officer, civilian and total force Airmen will see the Air Force’s efforts of Strengthening Joint Leaders and Teams manifested in a variety of ways over the next several years.

First, Airmen will see Air Force doctrine and competencies become better aligned to joint competencies and doctrine. Airmen will see these competencies reflected in the Continuum of Learning and our professional military education platforms. Air Education and Training Command (AETC), along with HAF/A1, has begun the arduous work to create an education catalogue that will list opportunities for courses, classes and training; many of which will offer joint-focused development.

As Airmen advance through their careers, the Joint Talent and Tracking Management (JTTM) system woven into the MyVector platform will pull data from current and new human resource systems, and will also offer updatable fields to input and validate experience that has not been captured on existing systems. JTTM will serve as a valuable tool for Airmen, career field functional managers, assignment professionals and command teams who can identify, hire, place and deploy the right Airmen for the right opportunity at the right time. This could mean sending a joint-steeped senior master sergeant on a deployment because the assignment requires that level of mastery, or it might possibly mean sending a staff sergeant on a joint exercise for the first time to acquire proficiency integrating into a joint team.

In addition to updating doctrine, education, competencies, systems and processes, Air Combat Command and 9th Air Force are standing up the first core Joint Task Force Headquarters. The core Joint Task Force Headquarters will train, equip and organize a joint-staff certified and multi-functional team ready to integrate, influence and lead a Joint Task Force. Historically, it has taken upwards to six-weeks to identify, certify and deploy a Joint Task Force. However, the speed of operations in future fights and humanitarian relief efforts demands our Air Force to be ready to integrate, influence and lead with credible joint-minded Airmen the moment they are called upon to do so.

As the Air Force focuses on multi-domain operations (MDO), many discussions surfaced about the new officer Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC), 13O, being established to lead the Multi-Domain Command and Control (MDC2) effort in Air Operations Centers (AOC). There is also an enlisted force spanning several AFSCs that are also critical to the command and control of MDO: 1B4, 1C3, 1C5, 1C6, and 1NXX, to name a few. Each of these enlisted AFSCs already execute many missions vital to MDO.

Mission execution across the Air Force is extremely manpower intensive and needs automation to enable MDC2 experts to make decisions faster. Our ability to increase decision speed will prevent our enemies from defending themselves from multiple dilemmas, within multiple domains, simultaneously. To speed up the MDC2 process, the Air Force must first address the storage and sharing of operational and intelligence data. From there, the Air Force must embrace the use of artificial intelligence and machine-to-machine learning programs to decrease decision times from hours and minutes, to seconds and nano-seconds. This is why it is vital for our Air Force to develop and maintain an advanced cadre of experts who are focused on operational-level C2.
Officers will have a 13O initial qualification course to become advanced command and control warfare officers, while enlisted Airmen will have two distinct paths to identify and develop their MDC2 specialty. The first method addresses Airmen currently holding any one of the five AFSCs described above, plus the 3DXXX AFSC, to be vectored by their command team for Multi-Domain Operations (M-Prefix). A pre-requisite for this vectoring is the Airman must have at least 12-months experience in an Air Operations Center (AOC). Once approved, the M-prefix will then be attached to their AFSC for the remainder of their career.

The second method is reserved for 1B4, 1C3, 1C5, 1C6 and 1NXX Airmen who attend a career-broadening course involving a different domain (Air, Cyber or Space) than their own primary AFSC courses. Airmen can attend a course taught by one of the other functions, or they can attend the new MDC2 course being developed at Keesler AFB in the Command and Control Technical School House. The new AETC-certified course is scheduled to begin in June 2019, and will be taught to Airmen who work in the AOC environment. Once the course is completed, and the member serves in the AOC for 12-months (at least 6 of those months preceding course attendance), they will be awarded the Special Experience Identifier - 907, identifying them as an MDC2 specialist.

Given these major initiatives, this is the blueprint for Airmen success:

You work and live at the unit-level. With the Air Force’s revitalizing squadrons effort, we are looking to create white space; whether we are reducing AFIs, reengineering our ancillary training model, relooking at additional duties, etc., most of this initiative is to give time back to our Airmen. This time is value added to become more productive, more resilient, ready, lethal and connected, and we believe this effort will train current and future leaders better than we have done in the past. Our goal is to create viable and healthy squadrons with strong leadership.

When you fight, you will fight jointly. For strengthening joint leaders and teams, we are building joint credibility through deliberate force management. We must demonstrate our values to our Airmen that a joint path is not an either-or dilemma. This is not the difference between an Air Force track or a joint track, or a trade-off from an Air Force [command team] experience over a joint experience. We need our Airmen to see both the Air Force and joint experience as a combination of opportunities that prepare us to contribute in whatever skillset we bring to the fight.

You must succeed in Informational Age warfare. In order to win our Nation’s wars, we must shed our misconceptions and “old thinking” on single-domain-specific warfighting concepts. We must embrace and integrate technology much faster than the enemy, even if that means getting more comfortable with failure and risk in our acquisitions. Finally, we need to train, educate and experience our Airmen to rapidly integrate into and lead the joint, multi-domain team. This is a process, not a product. We must understand that we will be perpetually enhancing our ability to conduct Multi-domain operations as the adversary will continuously be working to counter our efforts. This is what is required to conduct multi-domain operations, what it means to deter in the 21st century and what it will take to maintain our strategic advantage and win in this era of great power competition.