

Fogleman's Big Six

The notion of USAF "core competencies," so-called, appeared in the mid-1990s. Both the Commission on Roles and Missions and the Air Force itself produced lists in 1995. No one was satisfied with these, and a year later, the Air Force Chief of Staff stepped forward with a revised list, and Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman surprised many by unveiling a new grouping of six competencies. Fogleman's comments were his first concerning the result of an 18-month-long review of Air Force plans and capabilities, a review which unabashedly concluded that airpower could be "decisive" in future warfare.

The Air Force considers a core competency to be the combination of professional knowledge, specific airpower expertise, and technological capabilities that produce superior military outcomes. ... What distinguishes the Air Force's core competencies is the speed, flexibility, and global range of our forces, along with the strategic perspective of airmen. ...

The long-range planning effort by senior Air Force leaders has convinced us we need to make some adjustments to our core competencies, and after much discussion, we arrived at the following:

- Air and space superiority
- Global attack
- Rapid global mobility
- Precision engagement
- Information superiority, and
- Agile combat generation

In keeping with our nature and focus as a global force capable of employment at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, and in view of the continued integration of capabilities in space, we've combined air and space superiority into one core competency. ... Control over the air and space environment assures a fundamental benefit to American forces: preventing adversaries from interfering with our operations and allowing our forces freedom of action. In short, air and space superiority provides freedom from attack and freedom to attack. Gaining control of the air over both friendly and enemy territory has been one of the constants of warfare in the last half of the 20th century and will continue to be so in the future. Simply put, air and space superiority is the key to winning wars with the fewest losses. ...

A core competency we've added is one we elected to call global attack. ... The primary aspect of global attack is the ability of the Air Force to find and attack targets anywhere on the globe using the synergy generated by air and space assets to operate at the strategic level of war. The other aspect of global attack is the expeditionary nature of our force. ... Depending on the situation, that force can include both lethal and nonlethal elements. This expeditionary capability will be key to rapidly providing tailored air and space capabilities to the regional CinCs [commanders in chief] in the future.

Because our forces will need to move quickly and lightly, we reaffirmed rapid global mobility as a core competency that will remain critical into the first quarter of the 21st century. Rapid global mobility provides the ability to bring forces forward for combat operations, peacekeeping, or humanitarian efforts. As we have seen since the end of the Cold War, we can expect

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our mobility forces to be on call and in use every day, as far into the future as we can imagine.

We call the ability to apply selective force against specific targets to achieve decisive effects precision engagement. This Air Force capability ... has a long legacy for airmen. Its origins date back to the 1930s at the Air Corps Tactical School. ... Today and in the future, our forces will be more precise and more effective, at day or night, in good weather or bad, whether delivering food or lethal ordnance. This ability will allow airpower, with its strategic perspective and ability to attack the enemy with precision, to sharpen the usually blunt instrument of military force for national leaders. ...

The core competency of information superiority is not the sole domain of the Air Force. Indeed, all of the services must develop their own capabilities in this area. ... We have moved out to build impressive offensive and defensive information capabilities. As the executive agent for battle management [and] command and control, the Air Force has the charter to be the integrators for the joint force. ... This ranges from providing the joint force commander of the 21st century with a picture of the entire battlespace ... to facilitating real-time control and execution of air and space missions. ... Information superiority must include aggressive efforts at defending our increasingly information intensive capabilities from enemy attack. ...

[A] vital part of what the Air Force provides the nation is highlighted by a core competency called agile combat generation. ... Agile combat generation reaches outside of pure logistics to include functions like security police, engineering, and other combat support functions. We adopted this core competency at Corona with the view of making our forces more expeditionary in nature, so that we will continue to be the instrument of choice when the national leaders want to engage quickly and decisively, anywhere on the globe. ...

These core competencies ... provide one construct for thinking about air and space power, but they are not written in stone. They will change over time. ... What must be understood and what must endure is the vision of air and space power as the decisive force for the 21st century. ■