

SecAF delivers 'State of the Air Force' speech at AFA

by Tech. Sgt. Amaani Lyle, Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs, Posted 9/14/2009 www.af.mil

9/14/2009 - WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- The Secretary of the Air Force outlined the service's priorities during a keynote address at the 2009 Air Force Association Air & Space Conference Sept. 14.

Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley said he credited Airmen for the service's significant milestone achievements, including the proliferation of the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capability, the reinvigoration of the nuclear enterprise and the activation of 24th Air Force, a component to the U.S. Cyber Command.

Secretary Donley said 9/11 forever altered the international security environment, and the Air Force's response to the event has brought new air, space and cyber capabilities to bear in concert with the joint and coalition team.

ISR, Secretary Donley said, is the linchpin of today's fight with a 250 percent increase in full-motion video capacity linked with other sensors over a broad battle space.

The secretary described the plus up as a "quantum leap in real-time situational awareness provided by the Air Force."

Secretary Donley discussed several of the Air Force's clear agendas that include completion of the F-22 Raptor program of record with planned upgrades, an F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter ramp up, an increase in unmanned aerial systems such as MQ-9s Reapers and RQ-4 Global Hawks, and what he described as the most important - success in the coming KC-X procurement.

The secretary put the criticality of cyber security into perspective with a noteworthy statistic.

"While it has been more than 55 years since the last American servicemember came under attack by enemy air-to-surface fires ... the last time an American servicemember came under cyber attack was the beginning of this sentence," he said. "The need for more ISR and other joint enablers is just as urgent and compelling."

Near the close of his speech, the secretary re-emphasized his commitment to the people behind the Air Force's new technology - Airmen and their families. As such, Secretary Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz designated July 2009 to July 2010 as "Year of the Air Force Family," dedicated to the well-being of total force Airmen and civilians.

Secretary Donley explained the program's focus is to address the hardships and needs of Air Force families and building a greater sense of community across the force.

"Air Force families and communities backstop, they underwrite, and share the sacrifice in all that our Airmen do," Secretary Donley said. "Supporting families is not only the right thing to do for our Airmen; it is the smart thing to do for our Air Force."

As the service sustains its focus on Airmen and their families, the secretary said he'll continue to develop the service's long-term vision with an emphasis on balance to prevail in today's operations.

"We must be bold and embrace change," Secretary Donley said. "It is one of our great strengths. Our Air Force is borne of innovation; our Airmen are innately adaptable. We have been challenged many times in our history; this is just another opportunity we will take on together."