

Air and Space Power Conference: Closing of Conference

Presenter: Air Marshal Stephen Chappell, DSC, CSC, OAM

GPCAPT Laroche: It is now my honour to welcome back Air Marshal Chappell, Chief of Air Force, to deliver his closing address.

Air Marshal Chappell: Thanks Jesse. I just want to start with a couple of thank you's. I'll start with Jesse and the Air and Space Power Centre and to Cass and the Air Force Events Team for putting on a magnificent Air and Space Power Conference today and I know that will go into tomorrow with our aviator and space symposiums as well.

So a quick round of applause please for the team that put all this together.

Now the team have asked me to sort of try and summarise the whole day and they've provided me a few notes as well which I thank them for and we're going to put online. I'm going to go a little off piste and take direction as guidance. And what I want to do is just touch on a few points raised today and then give you my thoughts on how we can best get after air and space power and national defence and also building fighting depth.

So firstly to Mr Bilahari, just putting on an absolute doctorate dissertation on where we are in the strategic environment of the world and helping us see the world and the strategic environment for what it is and not what we may wish it to be. So thank you sir for helping us open our eyes, seeing the world through a different lens and being pragmatic and very practical which as members particularly of the profession of arms and the associated community is important not only so we make the right decisions and prepare and deter but we also provide that frank and fearless advice to our national leaderships as well.

Niclas if I can thank you for your fantastic presentation as well. A great example from Sweden as I experienced in Finland last year on how nations can prepare and what national defence can look like. All of our nations have different contexts but there's a lot we can take away from the Swedish example and Niclas I thank you for that.

I also thank you and Jonas and the Swedish Air Force for co-hosting the small and medium Air Force Symposium in October last year in Sweden and we will do the same with your co-hosting in Australia roughly October this year. A chance for us to continue to learn from each other which we'll come back to as a theme. I also love the examples in your agile operations and the fact that we do need to go back to the future with camouflage, concealment, dispersal and deception as well and some great examples there and finally the challenge the Swedish aviators have laid down for all of us and I know I'm keen to challenge the Aussie aviators who are all back against anyone that if you with your conscripts can be turning aircraft in 15 minutes then I know that we can be doing the same. SO there's a great challenge you've put out there for us as well.

To colleagues and friends like Jamie, Susan, Justin Jones, Al Marshall, Brian De Niro, really appreciate the insights and again the key themes are so much similar with a couple of differences that we should be learning together because we are stronger together. We cannot shoulder these burdens by ourselves to quote Jamie as single nations or single services it's the collective effort that's going to help our collective security contribute to deterrence and also prepare just in case deterrence fails despite our best efforts.

Thank you for all the different themes from the presentations and from the panellists. There's plenty of organisational structures and other things that we've touched on today that we need to continue

to get after but I want to now pivot to, what does it mean for me and where do I think we as leaders in our militaries and in our national defence communities and what is it we can be doing right now and hopefully this helps pivot into tomorrow's symposiums as well.

Firstly, I come back to where I started with we are in strategic autumn. We are looking to deter through those six C's and demonstrating those D words that actually if we do that through our force generation, our exercises and our operations together then we are answering the call of our time. We are also by definition ensuring that we are as prepared as we can possibly be to respond should our best efforts fail. The Royal Australian Air Force in my view is a tier one Air Force. I have proud moments every single day and first and foremost it revolves around our people. We are a tier one Air Force and we must strive and maintain that tier one status. Part of how we do that and how we strengthen our tier one Air Force is by building fighting depth, time, in space and in posture.

How can you do that? How can we do that as leaders at all levels, in Air Force, in the Australian Defence Force with our APS colleagues, with our industry colleagues, with our allies and partners here in the room and more broadly? A couple of things I think we can focus on here and now regardless of how many resources you do or don't have. My Chief of Air Force intent has three P's in it. Not just because I'm a simple guy but because the people and the purpose are apportioned against the rest of the mission. If we as leaders at all levels, if we as commanders and we as command teams focus on the people and the purpose piece, our people will get everything else done in ways we cannot even imagine.

It is about unlocking the potential of our greatest capability, our people; and we do that through leadership and command. We do that by leading and commanding with humanity. This will always be a human endeavour. If it ever stops being a human endeavour, we've got bigger issues. It's about being active and curious as leaders and commanders and command teams. Hunting and gathering to build your situational awareness, maintain your situational awareness and regain your situational awareness. You cannot lead and command well without it. I'm talking to all of you at all levels, despite the uniform you may wear, the insignia on it or the type of clothing you wear. You are all leaders, here and online.

Be active, be curious. It's about storytelling. Our history and our heritage of our services, of our nations is proud and there are lessons in that and there are ways that we can reach out to help communicate with our nations and societies to help them understand the world that we're in, not the world that we might wish we were in. And what that means, what national defence means for our nations and our societies. We can do that through storytelling.

And finally, as a Navy I can't go past the debrief. Take a moment as leaders and commanders at all levels to debrief. Debrief the performance of the day. I'm not talking about mission debriefs, I'm talking about your performance as a leader and a commander or a command team. Big, small, it doesn't matter. And when you run a debrief, be the first to fess up. If you fess up to a shortcoming, big or small, as a leader, you instantly set that safe, generative environment where we get the lessons on the table, we empower the ideas and we collectively learn and optimise our performance.

Finally, as commanders and command teams, we need to focus on the fact there are two key objectives of command. And that is that you manage risk and seize opportunity. We talk a lot about managing risk. We've got a lot of lexicon, a lot of systems, and we do it pretty well most of the time. We don't speak enough in the profession of arms, in my view, about seizing opportunity. So a lot about what building fighting depth is all about is challenging us to both manage the risks and seize the opportunities.

There are 1,000 one percenters out there in each of our organisations. If you, as leaders at all levels, unlock those one percenters, the performance of our organisation, our ability to generate and deliver air power, space power, cyber power, land, maritime power, national power, will be exponential. So lots of great discussions today, but ultimately it comes back to the fact that our people are our greatest capability and we in this room and online are leaders. It is our duty to unlock the potential so we can build our fighting depth, build our national defence and contribute to the collective security on this globe.

Thanks very much.