Historical Background:

Fact Sheet

In December 1994, the Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force (CSAF) tasked Air University to conduct a study to identify the concepts, capabilities and technologies the United States would require to remain the dominant air and space force beyond the first quarter of the 21st century. The study was called ***Air Force 2025***, or ***2025*** for short.

The Commander of Air University (AU), the project chair, directed the formation of a study team composed of students and faculty from the Air University's Air War College (AWC) and Air Command and Staff College (ACSC); scientists and technologists from the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), located at Wright-Patterson AFB, OH; and selected academic and business leaders in the civilian community across the nation. The AU team network included the Joint Staff; the staffs of unified commands; agencies with the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Defense Intelligence Agency; and all the services. Collectively, this diverse group served as a "think tank" to identify the innovative, high-leverage technologies and systems that will enable the United States to continue to set the standard for excellence in air and space power well into the 21st century.

Air University class members of all military services formed into research teams composed of AWC and ACSC students. Approximately forty AWC students, some two dozen AWC civilian and military faculty members, nearly 120 ACSC students, and over 20 ACSC faculty members were participants in the study. These Air University teams were the nucleus of the nationwide network of military experts, academicians, scientists, industry leaders and creative thinkers participating in the study.

The AU students participated in a series of lectures designed to broaden their intellectual base through discussions about creative thinking and problem solving; future world conditions and the accompanying geopolitical environment; the nature of future conflict; land power, naval power, air power, space power, and information power; and emerging science and technologies. Speakers such as futurists Alvin Toffler, Dr. Dennis Meadows, Dr. Peter Bishop, Dr. Edward Teller, and Dr. Martin van Creveld; creative expert Bob King; the creators of Hollywood movies such as Star Trek, RoboCop and Terminator; Kevin Kelly, the editor of WIRED magazine; and others, visited Maxwell AFB to provide their perspectives in these areas.

This major study spanned the 1995-96 academic year at Air University and was integrated into the existing curriculum. The study was conducted in three phases. The first, or idea generation, phase started in August and continued through January. During this phase, participants used multiple sources, including a homepage on the worldwide internet, to look for insights and innovative concepts in science, technology,

organizational structure, doctrine, and strategy which will improve the effectiveness of the Air Force in the future. Nearly 1,400 ideas about future air, space, and information capabilities were submitted by almost 900 individuals representing nearly 500 firms.

The second phase synthesized the ideas generated during the first phase. Potential future operating environments were analyzed, assessed and distilled down into "alternative futures" which described and framed the possible futures with the highest potential for danger and/or surprise for the United States in 2025. By forecasting relevant operating environments in 2025, these futures served as a model and point of departure for other studies underway in government and academia.

The third, or validation, phase involved research and concept development using material gathered through a worldwide data call. The data call used traditional solicitations for information plus worldwide electronic mail services. During this process, the data was sorted, categorized, and cross-referenced. This phase was extremely complex and involved assessments by a wide array of government departments, other military services, operating military commands, industry, and academia. During this phase, hundreds of concepts were honed to focus on the highest leverage capabilities required for the future.

The final product was a collection of white papers presented to the CSAF in June 1996 which detailed the study's findings regarding air and space capabilities required for national security in the future; recommended new or high-leverage concepts for employing air and space power in the future; and identified the technologies required to enable the capabilities envisioned.

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