



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

13 MAR 2018

FROM: SAF/AQ
1060 AF Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1060

SUBJECT: Greetings to the Acquisition Workforce

Firstly, I am truly honored to join the Air Force team! After only two weeks, I am thoroughly impressed by the talent in the Air Force and its Acquisition Workforce. I want to work with you to make supporting Air Force programs the best jobs in the Department of Defense. They should be! Stars are aligning to put more power over programs back in your hands: greater decision authorities, faster development options, and most importantly, an Air Force Top Four looking for change. We should take full advantage while this rare conjunction lasts.

My goal coming in is simple: empowering you. Working Air Force programs should be awesome, bottom line. Throughout our history, we have conducted the highest-tech developments, most ground-breaking tests, and fastest deployments. Decision power was at the edge, and the senior leadership enabled it. It is time to return to those roots, to build and sustain next-generation systems our successors will name alongside the likes of the SR-71, GPS, F-117, and X-37B and to do so at cost and speed.

So, how do we do this?

First, we will continue organizing our team to generate "power at the edge". This is much more than just delegating decision authority; it's creating opportunities to reorganize, retrain, refocus, or remove barriers so that you can take full advantage of having the reins in your hands. I'd like each Program Office to begin thinking about changes it would like to make, and, yes, experimenting is okay! I also want to know what we can do to enrich professional development and make acquisition assignments more than just getting programs from points A to B. For my part, I hope to create a streamlined process for rewarding good ideas of all kinds: creative concepts, processes, contracting strategies, sustainment plans, cost estimates--you name it. All acquisition Airmen should be innovators, so expect me to focus on this and, most importantly, you.

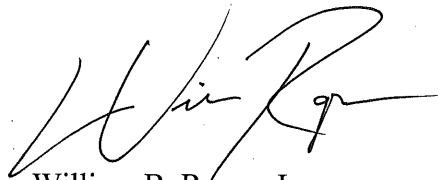
Second, we will work with the Air Force Top Four to organize for speed. It matters everywhere—on the battlefield, in development, in sustainment—so let's organize around it and steal time back from our adversaries. Please give me your ideas: how do we make each day at work more valuable and impactful? I have already heard, loud and clear, that much of your time is still spent managing the Pentagon instead of your programs. Unlike treasure, time is never

stolen all at once, so it is difficult to catch its thieves red-handed. But we can do it if we adopt temporal metrics: time to require, contract, develop, maintain, upgrade, and even fail. We need to set aggressive goals; track progress and impediments; and arm our leadership with hard evidence to put "time thieves" on trial. To streamline and accelerate requirements and acquisition, we should aspire to dialog and feedback, vice cumbersome document-driven exchanges. We should also adopt new commercial technology and practices in sustainment to get back in the air faster and likely save money doing it. I know full well you also have these ideas: I have seen many planted seeds over the past few weeks. Let's plant a whole field and water them together.

Third, we are going to get after software and networking because artificial intelligence (AI) will revolutionize warfare. To harness it from commercial industry, we must design, acquire, and update software like them. I know this will be a big change, but can you imagine a future Air Force with a myriad of drones, planes, satellites, and cyber tools sensing, learning individually, sharing data, and learning collectively at machine speed? This kind of "skyborg" isn't science fiction; we could build it today if data, software, and networking become as important to us as platforms. The Air Force has always pioneered new warfighting domains that allow us to observe, orient, decide, and act (OODA) the fastest: first air, then space, and then cyberspace, with each new domain shrinking the OODA loop. Now, a new domain looms that will likely draw this loop into a knot of unprecedented decision speed. We must dominate this new "blue yonder" of AI, but to do so, we must design for it. Let's start the change and begin making this real on our watch.

Lastly, let's rebrand our organization: new slogan, new logo, new swag! Let's officially flip the organization chart so that the acquisition workforce is now at the top with me working for you--the stars of the show. These may be small things, but hopefully, they will serve as continual reminders to be different and daring.

Thank you for reading this memo; it marks the beginning of a dialog that will restore more of the yoke and throttle to your hands and return upper management to what it ought to be: your wingmen. Future Airmen depend on us to make this pivot. I am confident that we will, together.



William B. Roper, Jr.
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