



Letter to Airmen

Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force

6 Jan 06

Happy New Year—and thank you again for the sacrifices you make in the service of this great nation! I had the privilege of spending some of the holidays with our deployed Airmen across the AOR and in Europe. I know those I met miss their loved ones and homes, but all impressed me with their professionalism, innovation, and spirit. As always, I return invigorated and excited about our World's Finest Air Force!

I witnessed many innovations introduced by Airmen that help us make the most of our time and resources. For example, our CAOC at Al Udeid controls air operations for the entire CENTCOM AOR. We are able to run operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa from a single CAOC. This centralized headquarters equates to a smaller headquarters staff, while simultaneously empowering the Airmen actually engaged to make the execution decisions. This is a great example of Air Force Smart Operations 21 – questioning assumptions, examining processes, and eliminating waste and duplication. On a more individual level, we've repositioned individual deployment gear at Al Udeid. This makes the lives of our Airmen easier, we lose less equipment and we avoid over \$32 million per year in airlift costs, all due to this single common sense suggestion.

At Kirkuk, Balad, Ali, Bagram, Ramstein and Spangdahlem Air Bases, I met face to face with thousands more of the Air Force's finest, and at every stop I heard similarly remarkable stories of how our innovative and creative Airmen applied imaginative solutions to everyday processes and combat challenges. Such ingenious ideas are just what we need to transform our Air Force into the integrated and interdependent force it must become to remain the World's preeminent fighting force. As your Secretary, I will foster such resourcefulness across our Air Force—Active, Guard, and Reserve; Enlisted, Officer, and Civilian; at home and abroad.

To our deployed warriors, thank you again for welcoming me and for all you've done to foster the "Miracle of Southwest Asia"—furthering freedom and democracy throughout the region. For those deployed to Iraq, many of you have witnessed the Constitutional Referendum in Iraq, the General Election (in which nearly 70% of the electorate took part), and the First Flight of an entirely Iraqi C-130 crew. I fully expect we will continue to see democratic processes taking root across Iraq, choking out the ideology of violence and intolerance. I encourage you to share your stories with friends, families, and associates upon your return.

To all of you who stand alert and prepared, here at home and around the world, you are accomplishing miracles everyday. Your efforts create the environment and innovation that spark the pride that I saw – the pride of being an Airman. On behalf of a grateful Air Force and an appreciative Nation, I salute you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael W. Wynne".

Michael W. Wynne