

"Air Power"

Airpower is the most difficult of all forms of military force to measure, or even express in precise terms. Winston Churchill

FORWARD

Churchill's insight is as valuable today as it was decades ago. This is especially evident in discussions that attempt to agree on the definition of "air power." We in the Air Force seem to have a notion of what air power is, and specific ideas on it as applies to our particular specialty. But as the Chief of Staff, General Fogleman, has reminded us on several occasions, we have become too stovepiped and miss the bigger view of how our entire Air Force accomplishes its mission as part of the joint team. A logical point of departure for understanding the bigger picture is to begin with an understanding of the basics. This brings the discussion back to Churchill and his observation of the difficulty in expressing air power in precise terms. With this in mind, and as a point of departure, the following definition of air power is offered:

Air power is the integrated employment of all air and space forces to control and exploit the air and space environments to achieve national security objectives. Air power exploits the properties of its operating medium to realize unique operational characteristics and thus employ unique capabilities to provide the nation a broad range of military options.

This essay is the result of discussions on roles and missions, core competencies, institutional identity, and similar topics. It is the result of disagreements on some of the most basic elements of our profession. Air Force people "out in the trenches" will probably not care much about the meaning of air power. For that matter, most would probably question the notion that there isn't a common understanding of air power -- that's okay. However, those Air Force people who are in positions deciding on what the future Air Force should look like, how it should be employed, what equipment it buys, what missions it gets into, the priorities it gives to emerging missions, and similar decisions, absolutely must understand air power. As the fog of political debates, budget battles, and service policy dilemmas cloud the air, Air Force decision makers, military and civilian, must maintain a clear bearing on what the Air Force is about. What the Air Force is about, is air and space power. Thus the author is compelled to exercise the privilege of "having a say," at least about air power. Many readers may very likely not agree with the ideas expressed here -- and that is okay.

Air power

Billy Mitchell defined air power as "the ability to do something in the air." Although Mitchell seems to have provided a simple and direct definition of air power more than 70 years ago, the meaning of air power remains an issue of debate yet today. Within the Air Force, airmen and scholars alike remain unable to define air power in terms that all can agree upon. To complicate and further confuse the issue are related issues of core competencies, and roles and missions. Amid the debate is the search for an institutional identity within the Air Force. At the root of all these, and related issues, is the question of the meaning of air power.

To understand air power requires a fundamental understanding of the terms "air" and "power." "Air" is the envelope of atmosphere surrounding the earth; as a medium it singularly covers the entire earth. Power can be described as the ability or capacity to perform effectively. To understand "air" as an operating environment is fundamental to understanding the characteristics of air power. Understanding "power" serves as a means of identifying the capabilities of air power.

Properties of the medium

An understanding of the characteristics of air power must begin with an understanding of "air." "Air," for the purpose of defining air power, is the atmosphere. The air has certain immutable properties that provide air power with defined characteristics. The **fundamental properties of the atmosphere are: 1) it has few natural obstacles, 2) it covers the globe, and 3) it has vertical depth.** Although it may be possible to list further properties of the atmosphere, these are the most fundamental ones from which others are derived. The three fundamental properties of the atmosphere enable three fundamental **characteristics of air power: 1) speed, 2) range, and 3) elevation.** Although other characteristics are, have been, and will be expressed, they are nothing more than a product of one or more of the fundamental characteristics of speed, range, and elevation.

Characteristics of air power

The air has few natural obstacles thus making possible the **speed** of aircraft. The air environment has only one distinct boundary the earth's surface. Aircraft operate above this boundary, however, and it cannot be considered a natural obstacle for normal operations. The atmosphere has another, indistinct boundary, defined by the thinning of the atmosphere at higher altitudes. Between these two boundaries lies the air within which aircraft operate. Within this density of air, except for extreme weather phenomena, there are no natural barriers to significantly impede aircraft. Because there are few obstacles, air vehicles can achieve unparalleled speed. It is singularly the lack of obstacles that makes speed possible. Were there obstacles in the air, they would slow air vehicles in the same way as mountains and rivers impede surface movement. The lack of obstacles makes speed possible. By way of example, consider two equal world class sprinters on a straight 100 meter track. Given equal conditions, both sprinters would likely finish with seconds of each other, and both achieve their maximum speeds. Now, place hurdles in one lane while leaving the other lane open. The sprinter with the open lane will achieve maximum speed over the course, while the sprinter facing the obstacles will be slowed down, whether going over, around, or under the hurdles. Physical obstacles slow movement, whether it is an obstacle course, a mountain, or a swamp. The air has few obstacles and thus air vehicles can achieve speed unmatched by surface movement over, around, or under these obstacles.

The air covers the entire earth's surface making possible the **range** of aircraft. Air vehicles can travel along any route of air, to any point covered by air, from any point covered by air. The distance between the points is of no consequence as long as the air connects the two. Range then, is also of little consequence for air vehicles. Technology presents challenges to the range of aircraft because of their dependence on fuel to sustain flight, but it also provides solutions with in-flight refueling and greater efficiency engines. Range is not a function of speed, as speed

affects only the relative measure of the time it takes the aircraft to travel the required range. It is singularly the ubiquity of air, the fact that it envelopes the earth that makes range possible. The nonstop, non-refueled flight of the Voyager aircraft around the globe in December of 1986 illustrates the range possible by the ubiquity of air. Were air limited to only an area of the earth's surface, then an aircraft's range would be equally limited to this restricted area. This point is evident when considering the vertical range of aircraft rather than the horizontal range. Aircraft cannot travel any further vertically than the limit of the atmosphere. Where the air stops, the aircraft stops, having neither air to sustain lift nor propulsion. The range of the aircraft is thus limited. Operating within the lateral dimensions of the atmosphere provides for unparalleled global range. The air medium allows unlimited access to the entire earth's surface. Air and space forces are able to range over land and sea boundaries without difficulty, because the air is ubiquitous.

The air has vertical depth making possible **elevation**. Because the air exists between its surface boundary and some upper limit, it has immense vertical depth. Aircraft, exploiting this depth are free to maneuver vertically. Although this point may appear obvious, many times this characteristic is confused with "perspective" or "freedom of maneuver." Perspective describes the result of elevation rather than the characteristic of elevation. Because the atmosphere has depth, aircraft can maneuver to achieve height and thus gain perspective. Because the atmosphere has depth, aircraft can gain elevation, thus realizing an increased freedom of maneuver. This again, however, describes the result of elevation and not the characteristic. The uses of elevation are many, but the characteristic of elevation is made possible, singularly because of atmospheric depth.

The fundamental properties of the air endow aircraft with fundamental characteristics. The atmospheric properties of: 1) being unobstructed, 2) being ubiquitous, and 3) having vertical depth make possible the air power characteristics of: 1) speed, 2) range, and 3) elevation. Each of the atmospheric properties contribute to realizing the three characteristics of air power, however, there is a singular relationship between distinct properties of the air and distinct characteristics of air power. That is, speed is a function of the lack of obstacles, range is a function of the ubiquity of the atmosphere, and elevation is a function of the air's depth. There can be but three fundamental characteristics of air power. These characteristics individually and combined enable aircraft, as Mitchell stated "to do something in the air." The "something" begins with those things air power is capable of, that is, what air power can do.

Capabilities of air power

Air power has certain capabilities that result directly from its characteristics of speed, range, and elevation. Capability, for the purpose of this essay, is potential ability or capacity. To understand air power capabilities requires a focus on what air power has the capacity to accomplish, or the potential ability to do, based on its speed, range, and elevation. Capability is not a measure of "how" air power should or could be employed. Rather, it is distinguished by "what" it has the capacity or potential ability to do with its speed, range, and elevation. To understand the capacity or potential ability of air power requires an answer to the question: "What" do speed, range, and elevation make possible? The **capabilities of air power are: 1) responsiveness, 2) mobility, and 3) perspective.**

Responsiveness is made possible from air power's unequalled speed and range when operating in elevation. Responsiveness emphasizes speed. Speed permits air power to respond or react quickly to changing situations. Speed and range combine to permit air power to quickly respond at great distance. Air power's speed allows it the flexibility to quickly change from one mission objective to another. This includes the tactical flexibility to change targets rapidly or the operational flexibility to change from one mission type to another. The responsiveness made possible by the characteristics of air power also allow it the versatility to direct operations equally against strategic, operational, or tactical level objectives, individually or in combination, regardless of range. Responsiveness includes the ability of air power to maneuver rapidly to achieve mass and concentration. Responsiveness produces unequalled flexibility and versatility.

Mobility is freedom of movement. In its simplest form mobility is also a combination of range and speed. Aircraft, operating with elevation in the atmosphere are able to achieve unmatched range and speed, and thus the freedom of global movement. Mobility emphasizes range. Because of the atmosphere, aircraft can operate freely anywhere around the globe and do so with great agility. The unhindered movement across the varying surface mediums of land and water is a result of the characteristics of air power made possible by the properties of the air medium. Aircraft operate above both land and sea and can, with ease, cross the boundary that separates them. Land and sea forces are limited by sea and land boundaries not only in range, but mobility. Aircraft are able to move rapidly over vast ranges, independent of sea or land boundaries. Aircraft operating with elevation, speed, and range operate with unequalled freedom of movement.

Perspective is enhanced by the increased awareness made possible through elevation. Elevation makes a broader perspective possible, both in the physical and intellectual realms. Simple elevation provides a broad physical view of the surface and enables a wider perspective of surface events. This perspective enables an understanding of seemingly separate events on the surface thus increasing awareness. Increased awareness provides more information and enables more informed decision making. Thus, the perspective made possible by elevation goes beyond physical dimensions to enhanced information and decision making.

The capabilities of air power are: 1) responsiveness, 2) mobility, and 3) perspective. These capabilities represent what air power has the ability to do because of the characteristics endowed by the atmosphere. Air power will always retain the potential ability and capacity for responsiveness, mobility, and perspective because air power has speed, range, and elevation. Employment options that fragment air power or introduce artificial seams within the seamless medium can detract from air power's responsiveness, mobility, and perspective, but even that does not take away its capability to realize them. To capitalize on the capabilities of air power requires that air power be employed effectively.

Air power's greatest limitation is our lack of understanding of its potential.

Lt Col Johnny R. Jones

Principles of air power

The properties of the atmosphere provide aircraft the unique characteristics of speed, range, and elevation that give them the capabilities of unmatched responsiveness, global mobility, and unequaled perspective. These capabilities allow aircraft to travel to any point above the earth's surface to employ air power for military purposes.

In employing air power to achieve military objectives there are certain truths that have been learned in more than 80 years of military aviation. The truths of air power can be called tenets, maxims, or principles. A tenet is a principle being held as true. A maxim is a fundamental principle or truth. Common to the definitions of both tenets and maxims is the word principle. A principle is a basic truth, law, or assumption. For the purpose here of understanding air power, the truths of air power will be called principles. The principles of air power employment represent those lessons learned on how best to employ air power to achieve military objectives. **The principles of air power are: 1) air control, 2) centralized control - decentralized execution, 3) priority, 4) balance, and 5) concentration.**

Air control is absolutely critical to air operations. As a basic truth, the principle of air control stipulates that control of the air environment is essential to effectively employing air power. The task of air control may be total air supremacy or a degree of air superiority. The foremost consideration, however, in employing air power must be to achieve the degree of air control necessary to allow for required air operations. To exploit the properties of the atmosphere, aircraft must be able to operate within it. If the air is controlled by a hostile force, access to the air is limited. Without control of the air, air power's speed, range, and elevation are compromised. Hostile control reduces speed with defensive barriers, limits range and controls elevation through hostile fire. Once air control is established through air superiority or supremacy, the air can then be used to employ the full weight of air power. Air control is a fundamental principle of air power.

Centralized control is critical to the effective employment of air power. The principle of centralized control advises that air power be centrally directed by an air commander. "Control of available air power must," as stated in the 21 July 1943 War Department Field Manual FM 100-20, Command and Employment of Air Power, "be centralized, and command must be exercised through the air force commander...." Centralized control maximizes the responsiveness, perspective, and mobility of air power. Without centralized control to establish priorities, ensure unity of purpose, and harmonize objectives -- responsiveness, perspective, and mobility suffer from a divided effort. Centralized control enhances responsiveness and its key elements of flexibility and versatility. Flexibility allows air forces to exploit mass and maneuver simultaneously -- the effects of this are significantly increased through the singularity of purpose made possible by centralized control. Versatility enables air power to be employed equally effectively at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of warfare -- again, mass and maneuver can be more appropriately directed and coordinated against the most significant objectives through centralized control. By centrally controlling the total air effort, air power's total effect can be directed with concentrated effort against those strategic and operational objectives that will have decisive effects.

Decentralized execution maximizes the flexibility of air power at the tactical level. Decentralized execution suggests that operational air commanders have the latitude to employ air

power to meet the demands of the situation in achieving larger objectives. Decentralized execution permits the exercise of flexibility in employment. Decentralized execution allows air commanders to effectively use air power's speed, range, and elevation by matching capabilities with the demands of the particular situation to achieve specific objectives. Decentralized execution maximizes flexibility by allowing air power to rapidly respond to changes in the tactical and operational situation. Air power can operate with unmatched speed over unmatched ranges with great agility, making air power tremendously responsive to changing conditions in real time.

Appropriate **priorities** must be established to ensure the responsiveness, mobility, and perspective of available air forces are employed in the most effective manner. Since air power--both lethal and non-lethal--can be directed globally, and against almost anything, air power is susceptible to being fragmented by varied requests and demands. The tremendous versatility of air power often results in its piecemeal application amidst competing priorities. Rather than employ air assets piecemeal and degrade the synergy of an integrated air effort, air forces must be employed to achieve the most decisive results according to an integrated set of priorities. The prioritized, integrated employment of air forces has a greater total effect than the sum of their individual effects. Priorities also shape the persistence of air power by determining the need to visit or revisit objectives to sustain or achieve desired effects. Priorities are essential for the integrated, balanced employment of air power.

In employing an integrated air force, the air commander must **balance** objectives, opportunity, effectiveness, and efficiency. Air forces possess theater-wide range and can concentrate their efforts to achieve decisive operational effects. Division of the air effort reduces both the responsiveness and mobility of aircraft, and their ability to concentrate on operational objectives. Balance ensures that air power is properly proportioned to conduct operations to achieve assigned priorities and decisive effects. It is through balance that synergistic effects are created and sustained. Air power, when applied in a comprehensive and integrated manner, will produce effects well beyond the proportion of each mission's individual campaign contribution. Balance guides air commanders in conducting air operations in an integrated, total effort that may be sequential, parallel, or some balance between these.

Concentration is a product of air power's responsiveness, mobility, and perspective. These characteristics permit air power a tremendous agility of maneuver. Concentration is not measured in numbers, but in effect. Air power's maneuver agility allows it to focus overwhelming power at the decisive time and place. Concentration of military power can involve both lethal and non-lethal efforts. Air power can concentrate non-lethal power globally through mobility to position forces and equipment, through responsiveness to provide presence, and through perspective to maintain awareness. Air power can concentrate lethal power employing relatively small numbers -- using precision and lethality to produce effects equaling massed firepower. Aircraft can achieve mass and maneuver rapidly, and effectively attack many targets simultaneously. The effect of this concentration at the operational level can overwhelm or paralyze an entire target set, or even several target sets in one attack. The results of concentrated attacks can be strategic in that they can cause a paralysis in the opponent's ability to react or continue to conduct combat operations. Because of operations in the third dimension, aircraft can

strike virtually any target, anywhere, at any time. Lethal, precision-guided munitions now make it possible to achieve the effects of concentrated combat power with a few aircraft.

The truths or principles of air power employment are: 1) air control, 2) centralized control - decentralized execution, 3) priority, 4) balance, and 5) concentration. Air control makes air power possible by enabling air operations. Air control advises that control of the air be established in some degree as a prerequisite to effective air operations. Centralized control guides the integrated application of air power's unique capabilities. Centralized control recommends that air power's flexibility and versatility, its responsiveness, be used effectively with unity of purpose. Decentralized execution advises that air power's responsiveness be preserved in the face of changing conditions. Priority recommends that air power's mobility, perspective, and responsiveness be employed synergistically to produce the most decisive effects. Balance recommends the employment of air power to achieve full effectiveness across the range of employment options. Balance guides the weight of effort between sequential and parallel operations. Concentration suggests that combat power is an effect and not a measure of quantity. Concentration guides the employment of air power's ability to simultaneously achieve mass and maneuver.

Air power relationships: medium to employment

Air power has definite characteristics that enable certain capabilities that can be effectively employed with guidance of those principles learned over the history of military aviation. The linkage between the atmosphere's properties, the characteristics of air power, the capabilities of air power, and employment principles presents a logical relationship. Air power's characteristics are inexorably dependent on the properties of its medium. Aircraft, like sea and land craft behave according to the laws of the medium they exploit, and can exhibit only the characteristics the atmosphere allows. The characteristics aircraft exhibit enable them to achieve defined capabilities. These capabilities can be reduced in potential, but cannot be dismissed as they are tightly fused to the characteristics from which they are derived. In employing those capabilities for military purposes, there are certain lessons that have been learned over the history of military aviation. The principles of air power employment guide the use of air power to maximize its capabilities. Although semantics often confuse the issue of air power, it remains as Mitchell noted: "doing something in the air." Once "air" is understood as an operating medium that allows for certain characteristics of aircraft, then the "something" can be understood as air power's capabilities enabled by the characteristics of air forces, employed with the guidance of the principles of air power. Thus, the following table depicts the relationship between the medium and air power employment.

properties of the medium	characteristics of air power	capabilities of air power	principles of air power employment
limitless	speed	responsiveness	air control
ubiquitous	range	mobility	centralized control -
depth	elevation	perspective	decentralized execution
			priority

			balance
			concentration

Strengths of air power

Military operations in the atmosphere are significantly different from those of the land or sea mediums, thus necessitating a special expertise. This expertise is embodied within the United States Air Force. Just as the land and sea mediums require separate services and the expertise that includes, the air medium mandates a separate service as well. The Air Force exists to train and equip a force to defend our nation and its interests through operations in (and out of) the atmosphere. To achieve those military objectives the Air Force must rely on certain strengths that it possesses, strengths unique to operations in the air, and thus, unique to the Air Force. The strengths of the Air Force must not be confused with capabilities shared by all the services.

All military services share certain military capabilities such as lethality, precision, and stealth. Lethality is a capability shared by all services, land, sea, and air. Modern warfare has become intensely lethal. Whether employed on the land, sea, or air, or across these boundaries, modern weapons are vastly more lethal than earlier weapons. As weapons become more lethal, all services share this lethality. Precision is another military capability not unique to one service or medium. Technology offers equally the land, sea, and air commander a precision in employment that was unheard of a few decades ago. Likewise stealth benefits all services. All the military services have exploited technology to increase the lethality, precision, and stealth of military operations. Such technologies have increased, and emerging technologies will undoubtedly continue to increase the capabilities of all the services, and enhanced their operations within, or upon, their medium. These enhancements have benefited each service to increase their effectiveness. Technology has altered the nature of warfare, but has not fundamentally changed the traditional obligations unique to each service, nor the reasons the nation has separate services.

Air forces provide global range and global power. All of the Air Force, regardless of aircraft or equipment, has global reach because air forces are globally mobile. All of the Air Force, regardless of aircraft or equipment, provides the nation global power because air forces provide air power. The Air Force, however, is more than aircraft. The Air Force, and the air power it provides, is the result of the integration of all its people, equipment, and infrastructure. The Air Force in its entirety -- military, civilian, Guard, and Reserve -- makes air power possible because it is the service concerned with operations in the atmosphere.

The Air Force is an air service operating air forces to achieve air power. Air power is employed to achieve national security objectives. The Air Force ensures the nation's ability "to do something in the air." The strengths of air power are based in its ability to exploit the characteristics of speed, range, and elevation. Whether these strengths are called "core competencies" or another term in the current lexicon, they are the "things" the Air Force does, or should do, better than any other service. The **fundamental strengths of Air Force air power are: 1) air superiority, 2) reliable global mobility, 3) rapid global employment, and 4) acute global awareness.**

The first task for the Air Force is **air superiority**. Air control is a critical principle of air power and a prerequisite to effective air operations. Air superiority is absolutely essential to air force operations. This must be a fundamental strength, and one at which the Air Force excels. Although other services employ air power to control the air, it is done largely in support of surface or maritime operations. Air superiority by land and sea forces is primarily intended to support and aid in the achievement of surface or maritime objectives. It is air power limited in scale and scope, the purpose of which is also limited in scale and scope. Only the Air Force is concerned with control of the air to enable all military operations: air, land, and sea. Only the Air Force is concerned with air superiority to fully employ a range of air power options, lethal and non-lethal in realizing national or operational objectives. No other service is concerned with control of the air to fully exploit its properties, to fully realize the characteristics of air power in achieving decisive results. "Decisive results" are those that produce results and effects beyond the operation itself (whether the operation be a battle, strike, attack, engagement, or campaign, etc.). Air power can produce decisive strategic, operational, and tactical-level effects, however, to achieve this requires control of the air. Air superiority must remain a fundamental strength of Air Force air power.

Air power is the most mobile of all forces. Air power alone has the ability to project power to any point on the earth's surface with a speed and range that only air power can achieve. Air power provides the nation with global reach. Mobility, or global reach, is movement. Mobility, however, is usually deployment, not employment. Deployment mobility is the capability to move from one point to another. The deployment of personnel, equipment, supplies, combat forces, and related cargo provides for presence and demonstrates national power. When mobility in and of itself is employed to achieve strategic objectives -- when mobility is the aim of air power, then it represents **employment**. Global mobility provides for global power, but usually through **deployment**. Reliable global **mobility** is a proven strength of Air Force air power. In peace, crisis, and armed conflict air power has reliably provided global mobility to achieve national interests. Air power offers the nation a means of rapid response to convey both lethal and non-lethal military options to meet contingencies around the globe. Land and sea forces are trained and equipped to operate predominantly on the surface of those mediums, only air power has a global ability to reliably move across the land and sea mediums. A long established, fundamental strength of air power, reliable global air mobility is a strength that only air forces possess.

Air forces produce air power. Within a global air force, deployment and **employment** are inseparable, however, deployment usually represents mobility or reach, and employment represents force or power. Employment is the use of air power, both lethal and non-lethal. Air power can respond rapidly and globally to national security concerns with a range of military options both lethal and non-lethal. When non-lethal air power is employed to achieve national goals and military objectives, is the linchpin of ensuring a successful operation, is the predominant form of military power, and armed conflict is not central to the operation, this is non-lethal air power employment. Humanitarian assistance and evacuations are examples of non-lethal air power employment. Because air power is capable of global operations, air power will most usually be employed in conjunction with deployment (global mobility). Air power can be employed to produce lethal military power, either independently or in conjunction with surface forces. Employment of lethal air power enables the nation to project armed combat power to defuse and deter potential threats to national interests. Global employment of precise, lethal

power provides the nation the means to shape events anywhere in the world, both unilaterally or in support of surface operations. Air forces can rapidly engage an adversary's air, land, and sea forces simultaneously while holding at risk that adversary's national leadership and economy. Precision, stealth, and lethality all contribute to the employment of lethal combat power. Air power is unmatched in its capability of rapid global employment. Rapid global employment of non-lethal and lethal force is a critical strength of air power.

Global awareness enhances all military operations by providing the perspective achieved by elevation. Global awareness also has a significant "virtual" element, that is, an element based in information technologies, but it is in the air and space-based elements that perspective is noticeably manifest. **Acute global awareness** provides air power and the nation the ability to anticipate crises and respond appropriately. Near real-time global operations are an Air Force strength. Air power provides for an increase situational awareness by allowing the nation to monitor and assess global conditions. The acute global awareness made possible through global Air Force operations and Air Force systems is a key element of national responsiveness and a strength of air power.

Conclusion

Air Force air power is the integrated employment of all air and space forces to control and exploit the air and space environments to achieve national security objectives. Air power exploits the properties of its operating medium to realize unique operational characteristics and thus employs unique capabilities to provide the nation a broad range of military options. Air power's **speed, range, and elevation** are unique. Air power derives these characteristics from its operating medium that has few obstructions, covers the globe, and has vertical depth. The **speed, range, and elevation** of air power can be exploited to achieve unmatched **responsiveness, mobility, and perspective**. These capabilities, when properly employed through **centralized control - decentralized execution, priority, balance, and concentration** provide a range of military options to meet national security interests across the spectrum of peace, crisis, and armed conflict. Air power's strengths are **air superiority, reliable global mobility, rapid global employment, and acute global awareness**. These strengths are unique and are fundamental to the Air Force mission. Through these strengths the Air Force adds an unmatched expertise and military capability to the nation's defense force. Air power is singularly the force with global agility.

Because air power responds rapidly with global awareness to provide lethal and non-lethal force, it is the most responsive and versatile element of national military power. Air power exploits the properties of its operating medium to achieve unique operational characteristics and thus employs unique capabilities to provide the nation a broad range of military options. Air power is **"the ability to do something in the air."** Through air superiority, reliable global mobility, rapid global employment, and acute global awareness the Air Force can quickly, effectively, and economically serve the nation's needs.

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