



# **A Century of Air Power Leadership - Past, Present and Future: Proceedings of a Symposium**

*Jacob Neufeld*

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Orville and Wilbur Wright first flew from the sands of Kill Devil Hill near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903. In 1999, to mark the first century of manned, powered flight, Congress created the Centennial of Flight Commission to coordinate national commemoration activities and to act as an international information resource. To manage its own participation in commemorative events around the world, the United States Air Force established a Centennial of Flight Office in 2001. The Air Force History and Museums Program, through its own activities, played a significant part in those events. Recognizing that the centennial of flight celebration offered the public a golden opportunity to better appreciate air and space power history and the innovations and adaptations that have enabled aviation to transform the world, the George Bush School of Government and Public Service and the Air Force History and Museums Program jointly sponsored a symposium, *A Century of Air Power Leadership: Past, Present, and Future*. The symposium was held on October 29–31, 2003, in the Leonore and Walter Annenberg Presidential Conference Center at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum on the grounds of Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. The Wright brothers brought to their great achievement—the development of a new technology—extraordinary inventiveness and diligence that still inspire America’s commitment to aviation excellence. Aircraft changed the natural order of things, while the effective use of air power added a third dimension to war. The advances that took us from the Wright brothers’ biplane to Neil Armstrong’s and Buzz Aldrin’s lunar lander occurred at blinding speed. No technical innovation has altered human affairs more rapidly, widely, or significantly than the science of flight. United States Air Force leadership in air and space has been essential to victory in war during the last century. Today, air and space operations offer unprecedented global reach, power, and vigilance in support of worldwide joint operations around the clock. The symposium explored aspects of military leadership over the past 100 years, highlighting factors that encouraged success or inhibited innovation. Among the crucial issues discussed were problems in doctrinal, technological, and weapons innovation and differences among air power leaders. Although focusing on the past, the symposium proceeded from the proposition that air and space power leadership had revolutionary effects on strategy and security. This book is intended to help readers who are interested in the impact of leadership on military affairs. As the symposium and the book make abundantly clear, the role of the individual in the saga of air power has far outweighed any other single factor, including technology. The symposium featured presentations by distinguished airmen, scholars, and public figures. All shared their knowledge and insights on key events, issues, and lessons before a diverse audience. Former President George H. W. Bush, Dr. James G. Roche, Secretary of the Air Force, and Gen. John P. Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff, were keynote speakers. Few American leaders can match President George H. W. Bush in dealing with the transformation of American air power. Before a crowd of 400 attendees, he spoke of what his World War II combat experiences meant to him and candidly assessed the leadership challenges ahead. Secretary Roche and General Jumper discussed the implications of air and space power for America’s national security and, in tackling tough, politically charged issues, demonstrated those qualities of leadership we most admire. Air Force History and Museums Program.

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