



621ST CONTINGENCY RESPONSE WING 10-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2016, six months after the Contingency Response Wing (CRW) re-organization, the CRW leadership convened a strategy conference to look at where the wing is headed over the next five to ten years, and where it should focus its efforts. This document was derived from key themes and concepts discussed at the conference.

PART I: SITUATION

Observe & Orient

Part I summarizes the CRW's mission, outlines several assumptions, and reviews Higher Headquarters (HHQ) strategic guidance. Identifies Operational Agility as a guiding principle for future operations. Discusses adaptability, and identifies the current and future challenges the CRW faces in implementing this strategy.

PART II: GUIDING POLICY

Part II takes many of the concepts identified in Part I and applies them specifically to the CRW. A strategy should not attempt to tackle all problems but must select just a few focus areas.

PART III: ACTIONS

Part III prescribes ways the CRW can immediately implement this strategy. Including specific actions in this strategy document is part of a deliberate attempt to bridge the gap between thought & implementation.

PART IV : CONCLUSIONS

Part IV Offers a brief conclusion and provides guidance for periodic assessment and review of this strategy.



PART I: SITUATION

621CRW MISSION

“Deploy versatile mobility Airmen, disciplined to solve problems in complex environments.”

CONTINGENCY RESPONSE FORCES (CRF)

Open & operate airfields to link the established mobility structure to emerging contingencies of all types, in peace & war, delivering airpower to the point of need.

MOBILITY SUPPORT ADVISORY SQUADRON (MSAS)

Build partnerships with foreign nations allowing for operational deferment and facilitating access for future operations.

AIR MOBILITY OPERATIONS SQUADRON (AMOS)

Provide theater command & control during steady state operations and in crises. The AMOS's build and sustain partnerships & procedures at the COCOM level allowing significant participation in theater strategy & planning.

MOBILITY SUPPORT OPERATIONS SQUADRON (MSOS)

Provide mobility liaisons to the US Army & Marine Corps, linking our joint partners with mobility capabilities.

THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC PLAN

The CRW operates all over the world, in unique and threatening environments, with a small footprint.

There will be an upward trend in higher threat missions, in increasingly complex environments.

CRW Airmen must provide the necessary capabilities to execute the toughest 1% of missions. To operate multi-based, multi-nodal mobility missions providing capabilities beyond core mobility competencies to joint and coalition partners.

The only way to prepare is to deliberately look ahead, anticipate the requirements, and develop a path forward.

The CRW/CC's conference was the first step. This plan consolidates conference concepts, providing a unifying document for CRW Airmen.

ASSUMPTIONS



In the next 5 - 10 years of the CRW basic organizational structure will remain unchanged. All efforts must work within the status quo.



The CRW budget and manning will remain the same.



The current facilities will remain the same.



Operations tempo will continue to increase.

WHERE THE 621 CRW GOES, AMC AND THE REST OF THE AIR FORCE FOLLOWS. IT IS IMPERATIVE WE'RE LEADING EVERYONE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

HHQ GUIDANCE

The Air Force has released several complimentary strategy documents over the last several years that paint a picture of where the Air Force is headed in the next three decades.

Most recently, it released the Future Operating Concept in September 2015.

This document describes how the Air Force will conduct its core missions.

The central principle of how is “Operational Agility.”

OPERATIONAL AGILITY

Becoming Operationally Agile will enable the CRW to meet the challenges of the future.

Another way of talking about Operational Agility is through the concept of adaptability. What makes an organization adaptable?

A daptable Military Organizations

1) Utilize mission command

2) Develop shared consciousness among teams.

“Operational Agility is the ability to rapidly generate—and shift among—multiple solutions for a given challenge....It is the ability to act appropriately within a changing context.”

-Air Force Future Operating Concept September 2015.



ADAPTABILITY

Operational Agility is through the concept of adaptability. Adaptability has two parts.

MISSION COMMAND

A method of command & control in which leaders “assign missions and explain the underlying intent but leave subordinates mostly free to accomplish. Commanders seek to exercise a sort of command by influence, issuing broad guidance rather than detailed directions or directives.” Mission command “seeks to maximize low-level initiative while achieving a high level of command, the more general should be the supervision and the less the burden of detail” and vice versa.

But, “the practice of relaying decisions up and down the chain of command is premised on the assumption that the organization has the time to do so, or, more accurately, that the cost of the delay is less than the cost of errors produced by removing a supervisor.” FOC states, “senior leaders who choose not to delegate decision-making to the appropriate level will find themselves outpaced by events while they attempt to gain sufficient situational awareness to direct action.”

Finally, MCDP 6 Command & Control, states, “In a system based on detailed command & control, the command & control process tends to move slowly: information must be fed up to the top of the chain where sole decision-making authority resides, and orders must filter to the bottom to be executed. Understandably, such a system does not generally react well to rapidly changing situations.”



DEVELOPING SHARED CONSCIOUSNESS

AKA

CROSS MISSION KNOWLEDGE

In a strictly hierarchical command structure the leader fulfills the function of knowing how all the pieces fit together and directing them to an end (a team or individual might only know their own role and nothing else).

In mission command, that function must not be lost. Without it, chaos ensues. Only when each team understands both its role and the role of the other teams does mission command succeed.



Mission command and shared consciousness are essential components of an adaptable organization.



CHALLENGES

IDENTITY

Being a “CR Airman” does not bind Airmen to the mission in the same way being a “C-17 Pilot” does. It has an identity problem within itself.

It also has an identity problem within the command as a distinct operational mission set. Its very name “Contingency Response Wing” leaves out large parts of the Squadrons’ missions.

COMMAND & CONTROL

Effectively employing mission command and empowering enlisted leaders to make decisions will not be easy or automatic.

CRW leadership is pulled from AMC which values efficiency and pushes decision-making up to higher levels.

Penalties for breaking these rules are steep, so Airmen have become accustomed to asking permission for most things. Breaking this habit can be hard.

SPEED

The CRW is best suited to fit a consistent need for quick response mobility forces and must continue to reduce the response time to less than 12 hours.

Challenges to our deployment processes include host wing processes, internal processes, and deployment training requirements.

We must also become faster in how we acquire equipment, how we conduct our training, and most importantly, in how we make decisions.



PART II: GUIDING POLICY

CROSS-MISSION KNOWLEDGE

(shared consciousness)

An individual, team, or sub-organization knows how its role fits into the big picture and the roles of other groups fit into the big picture. An org's ability to foster shared consciousness is in part determined by its structure. Many orgs are placed into sub-groups that are Mutually Exclusive and Collectively Exhaustive (MECE). In a MECE organization, none of the sub-orgs' roles & responsibilities overlap.

The CRW must avoid becoming MECE. Its mission sets overlap between Groups & Squadrons.

For example, the Contingency Response Groups (CRGs) do not contain the entire CR mission; they share it with the Air Mobility Liaison Officers (AMLOs) who fall under the Air Mobility Advisory Group (AMAG). Even where the wing's mission sets do not overlap, its knowledge pools do—Air Advisors, CRTs, and AMD operators often go to similar, if not the same, locations, work different aspects of the same problem, and openly communicate with each other about potential solutions.

As the CRW builds shared consciousness they will do so with varying levels of interaction, from detailed integration to cooperation to generalized awareness.

Shared consciousness does not call for maximum integration. Forcing integration where it's not needed is counterproductive.

Building shared consciousness also does not mean that all CRW Airmen must be interchangeable. General Stanley McChrystal said of his Task Force, "We did not want all the teams to become generalists—SEALs are better at what they do than intel analysts would be and vice versa. Diverse specialized abilities are essential. We wanted to fuse generalized awareness with specialized expertise. Our entire force needed to share a fundamental, holistic understanding of the operating environment and of our own organization, and we also needed to preserve each team's distinct skill sets."

"Sharing information and creating strong horizontal relationships improves the effectiveness of everything from businesses to governments to cities...The collective intelligence of groups & communities has little to do with the intelligence of their individual members, and much more to do with the connections between them."

-General Stanley McChrystal

CI
COMMANDER'S INTENT

Squadron Commanders & SNCO's help build Airmen's cross-mission knowledge and ID areas for integration, cooperation, and awareness among CRW mission sets.

MISSION COMMAND

If the CRW is to truly become an adaptable organization it must employ mission command.

Mission command can be utilized at all levels—between a group & squadron commander or between a Contingency Response Team (CRT) Chief and an Aerial Porter. However, in most organizations it is possible to identify the level of organization at which mission command becomes most useful & essential.

AN ADAPTABLE CRW

The CRGs cannot approach each airfield opening by applying a ready-made, complete solution. MSASs can't approach each advisory mission as if all countries were the same. AMOSs can't treat each AMD as if it were part of the 609 AOC at Al Udeid. The challenge is to determine at what level, for each of the CRW mission sets, standard operating procedures (SOPs) are beneficial. SOPs should be standardized at the highest appropriate level to build understanding between groups. It is for this reason the CRW needs a Wing Tactics function.



It is commonly at the level where strategic guidance must be translated into tactical execution.

In the CRW, this point is often the interface between the squadron commander and their NCOs/SNCOs, and junior officers.

Where SOPs end, the ingenuity & intelligence of Airmen begin. Their ability to problem-solve complex situations depends, in part, on their level of training. When faced with novel situations we fall back on experience & training. The better and more diverse our training, the better we are able to problem-solve.

Finally, the CR mission set will become “lighter, leaner, faster” to become more adaptable. We become “lighter” in part by taking advantage of technological advances that reduce our equipment footprint and improve our mobility.



Group & squadron commanders lead by setting vision, intent, guidance, and expectations, then letting their subordinates execute.

The NCO/SNCO corps is the keystone upon which all of the other pieces rest.



CRW Airmen identify:
1) what can be codified in SOPs to gain efficiencies where appropriate
2) what should remain “left open for solving” keeping adaptability.



CRW AIRMAN

IDENTITY & ABILITY

What does it mean to be a CRW Airman?

CRW Airmen view themselves as team members of the wing rather than merely a member of a squadron or flight.

They gain that designation by training to standards common to all members of the wing regardless of AFSC or squadron affiliation.

Raising team identification above the squadron level to the wing level reduces siloing, increases Airmen's propensity for cooperation, and enables them to better see how they fit into the big picture.

Currently, many CR Airmen's highest level of identity resides at the squadron level or lower. Beyond this point, as General McChrystal bluntly put it, "everyone else sucks."

Beyond this point, information is not readily shared, cooperation is limited, and adaptability at the highest level is unattainable.

Many CR Airmen's identity ends at the East or West coast or at their squadron's mission set.

There will be some skill set commonalities and overlap among mission sets and AFSCs; However, overstressing being a CRW Airman as ability has negative consequences.

The more time Airmen spend becoming generalists, the less time they have to hone their specialized expertise.

In the short term the bulk of building Airmen's identity falls on the squadron commanders & SNCOs. They can promote a culture where Airmen understand both their role in the big picture & the other squadrons' roles.

Essentially, it falls upon the squadron leadership to create shared consciousness that binds sub-organizations into a more effective team through trust & common purpose.

In the long term, CRW identity will depend partly on how AMC treats CRW experience.

If valued, Airmen will be drawn to the CRW. CRW leadership can build identity by training Airmen in core skills commensurate with peers outside the CRW, & add CRW competencies & operational mission leadership experience.

Time & money constraints will make this extremely difficult to do but it must be part of our guiding policy.

CI
COMMANDER'S INTENT

Leadership will develop training that maintain Airmen's core competencies during CRW tour. Squadron leadership will promote a culture of identity rising to the wing level, and guard against attitudes that marginalize one coast or the other, one mission set or the other.



PART III: ACTIONS

IMPLEMENTATION

The strategic rebalancing of the CRW began the summer of 2014 with an initial phase of process evaluations to include Finance, Mobility Processes, Equipment, Training, XPO, and ops centric processes (including plans & administration). This ongoing phase requires continuous improvement & IG evaluation of these critical CRW programs.

The second phase focuses on program & process development that enhances our ability to execute the mission, empowers our enlisted leaders, & codifies the career development of our members. These programs can be developed in parallel, but should be introduced systematically & with consideration to the prioritization of resources.



Program 1: Codify the OT & E process & continue to improve it



Program 2: Build a comprehensive CRW Tactics program



Program 3: Build & sustain a Functional Manager training program



Program 4: Codify NCO/SNCO career development in the CRW

TACTICS PROGRAM

Over the next year & a half the CRW will create a wing tactics program.

► CRG units establish Mission Planning Cells & Tactics Sections where appropriate. AMAG units establish Deliberate Planning sections within their squadron where appropriate. The Deliberate Planning section will have standardized processes utilized to plan their unique missions.

► CRGs & the AMOS units will build exercises that utilize their mission planning cells. These exercises should eventually reach a point where they are multi-level & multi-planning cell events & integrated across multiple mission sets.

► All units will work to improve their debrief, after action report, & lessons learned programs. The wing will ensure a process is in place for effective information sharing between units, higher headquarters, & mission partners.

► With operations & constraints constantly evolving, it is imperative that we continue to educate internally & externally to ensure our personnel can operate effectively & are utilized effectively & efficiently.

► The CRGs will review & update their AFTTP, as applicable, in an effort to standardize operating procedures, & to drive a formalization of CRW policy at the MAF & AF level.

► CRW Airmen at all levels will identify behaviors & activities that can & should be codified into standard operating procedures. These SOPs will be coordinated at the highest appropriate level to ensure interoperability among coasts, but not so high as to limit adaptability.

TRAINING

Future CRW training programs will set the standard for developing an Airman from a functional expert into a disciplined, experienced, versatile, interconnected leader capable of executing many cross functional mission sets. When a CRW Airman is returned to their primary AFSC they will be more experienced and possess the capability to not only execute their mission, but to solve complex problems and lead their fellow Airmen.

► Each mission area within the wing will develop “pipeline” training programs to expedite training timelines. This will enable our Airmen to more rapidly integrate into their units and begin expanding their cross-functional skill sets during operational missions.

► Units will also develop programs through the wing FAM program to ensure Airmen are maintaining the core career field core competencies so they can stay functionally “on-level” with their peers in the career field.

► To truly provide the air force better Airmen when they leave the CRW, units will identify training programs outside of the CRW that will add to an Airmen’s knowledge base and better equip them to problem solve in complex environments.

► CRG units will develop exercise scenarios that, by design, require the use of mission command to promote leadership skill development within our enlisted force. All CRW Airmen of the future must be advising capable. We are already seeing our Airmen on missions informally advising our mission partners. In the future our training programs must ensure our Airmen are capable of advising Joint, inter-agency, and multi-national partners on mobility & CR employment.

IDENTITY

Developing an identity for the CRW and our Airmen requires internal & external efforts. Internally we must focus on the benefits gained by the Airman being a member of the CRW, and we must empower Airmen to lead, while providing opportunities for growth. SNCOs & NCOs are the heart of the CRW, and are essential to our capability to execute future missions.

► All units will develop a SNCO/NCO career path. It will provide targeted qualifications & jobs for Airmen to work towards while in the CRW, & will allow units to better plan & target training opportunities as they deliberately develop the SNCO/NCO corps.

► Officer & Enlisted leadership at all levels must promote a climate that leads Airmen to identify as a “CRW Airman” not merely as an Advisor or a functional specialist.

► Externally the wing will continue to build partnerships both laterally & vertically. A key part of this will be educating & integrating with planners at all levels. Planners need to understand what capabilities the CRW brings, and we need to be included early in the planning process. If the CRW is to serve as the platform that other organizations plug into for support, we must ensure they understand how they accomplish that, and what we can do to improve efficiencies during their mission execution.

► The wing will work to improve the hiring and outplacement processes. We need to ensure personnel with the right skillsets, attitudes, and leadership qualities are being asked to join our organization, and since we demand so much from our Airmen, we owe it to them to provide appropriate outplacement for their development. The true value of a CR Airmen will be realized within the command when our skillsets are the first considered for placement to HHQ staff.

ORGANIZE, TRAIN, & EQUIP

The CRW of the future needs to be lighter, leaner, faster, & standardized.

- ▶ All units will develop a systematic process for identifying equipment needs, acquisitions, & divestitures of outdated equipment. This process must empower all CRW airmen to participate, & needs to enable a faster equipment refresh rate

- ▶ Looking forward to the next 3 budget cycles, units will identify emerging capabilities the CRW will need to provide, & what technology will be required to execute those missions.

- ▶ Equipment should be standardized to the max extent possible between mission area units. Standardized equipment will allow units to develop equipment share processes.

- ▶ Over the next year units will conduct LOGDET reviews through Pilot Unit Reviews.

- ▶ Continue to refine business rules & combine in a Wing Operating Instruction.



PART IV: CONCLUSION

A LOOK AHEAD

CRW leadership will meet periodically to assess the implementation of this strategic plan and to keep it on track. The anticipated time between these leadership conferences is approximately six to twelve months. The timing of the conferences may be event driven rather than a fixed time interval. The January 2016 conference lasted three days and looked solely to the future, not setting aside time to address current issues. Subsequent conferences will begin with an assessment of past progress and current issues before looking forward. Therefore, they should be planned for longer than three days.

Future operating environments are uncertain and the only thing that can be expected is the unexpected. The CRW will continue to succeed by becoming more adaptable and exercising Operational Agility. CRW leaders will utilize mission command and develop their Airmen's cross-mission knowledge. Understanding how the CRW's mission sets fit together will strengthen what it means to be a CRW Airmen and make our teams more effective, and leadership will create a culture that promotes interaction among mission sets.

To execute this strategic plan, units will develop tactics programs; obtain equipment to make them lighter, leaner, and faster; provide Airmen with outstanding training for both their CRW-specific competency and their core AFSC in contested, degraded, and operationally limited (CDO) environments; and professionally develop Airmen to be successful officers & enlisted beyond the CRW.

This document is merely a guide meant to provide our Airmen the latitude to innovate & implement solutions. They know the challenges we face, and are the experts best equipped to solve these problems and improve our wing. As stated earlier, where the 621 CRW goes, both physically & organizationally, AMC and the rest of the AF will follow. It is imperative that we ensure the CRW is leading into the future while anticipating future challenges that only our Airmen can envision.

