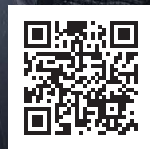


CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE FRENCH
AIR AND SPACE FORCE'S
STRATEGIC VISION



THE SKYES AS A BATTLEFIELD

AEROSPACE MILITARY POWER





GENERAL JÉRÔME BELLANGER

CHIEF OF STAFF
OF THE FRENCH AIR
AND SPACE FORCE

Because it is the birthplace of aeronautics, because it possesses its own industry at the forefront of the sector, and because its Military Aviation model is complete and committed from the ground up to 36,000 km, France is a military aerospace power whose Air and Space force is at the vanguard.

In the air and in space, this power is a major asset for the defence and security of the French people, for political freedom of action, and for the effectiveness of military operations as ordered by the Chief of Defence. We must constantly cultivate our operational edge and maintain our technological lead.

As Chief, I am responsible for our combat readiness, moral fortitude and cohesion. I oversee the effectiveness of our model in coordination with the Army, the Navy and the other Directorates and Supply Services within Defence, under the authority of the Minister of the Armed Forces.

Officers, non-commissioned officers, enlisted personnel and civilian staff; our forebears were visionary, audacious and determined men and women who fought and built an Air and Space Force recognized as one of the best in the world. Their commitment inspires us to constantly push the limits of what is possible.

General de Gaulle used to say: "France has aviators who fight in every sky".

At all times, the Air and Space Force resolutely defends our country, everywhere in the world, with the skies as its battlefield.



By reinventing the straight line and opening unexplored realms of speed and altitude, the aircraft revolutionised our relationship with time and space.



WHAT WE EMBODY

Constantly adapted over more than a century, aeronautical and space capabilities offer military forces an unrivalled position to observe the battlefield, communicate, project forces and strength, intervene either pre-emptively or in response to emergencies, fight on the front line or strike the adversary in its strategic depth.

Beyond contributing to the success of operations, actions in the air and space provide the political level with the possibility of demonstrating willpower, while managing the associated costs and assumed risks.

Always necessary and sometimes sufficient on its own, aerospace power acts across the entire continuum, from the lower layers of the atmosphere to geostationary orbit.

Aerospace power comprises responsiveness, lightning speed, range, precision, diverse courses of action and a graduated intensity of effects produced across the entire spectrum of conflict.

It guarantees our freedom of action and our access to areas of confrontation, whether physical or intangible, to protect France and the French people, to permanently defend our national interests and to honour our international commitments.



Heir to 90 years of continuous development, and forged in the crucible of uninterrupted operational commitment, the Air and Space Force is capable of:

✦ **autonomously understanding situations**, using air and space-based sensors or the action of its special forces, which contributes the anticipation of crises and strategic monitoring, political and military decision-making, as well as planning and execution of operations.

✦ **providing continuous deterrence**, against any threat to our vital interests emanating from a State since the implementation of the airborne nuclear component 60 years ago. The cutting-edge expertise required for this mission and the total commitment of our Aviators who support it are the foundation on which the Air and Space Force is built, as is equally true for conventional missions.

✦ **defending and securing our national airspace and its approaches through Quick Reaction Alert capabilities**, which fall within the scope of the State's action in the air, in the same way as Aviators contribute to inter-ministerial search and rescue or medical evacuation missions.

✦ **helping populations and territories, hit by disasters in both** mainland France and overseas territories or launching operations to evacuate French nationals from countries in crisis. The continuous control of operations from mainland France overcomes the tyranny of distance when, for example, an air bridge must be established on the other side of the world.

✦ **intervening and projecting forces and power to any point on the globe**, including from our air bases, to demonstrate political determination, strike deep in adversary territory, or fight in the air, perfectly integrated into joint manoeuvres. Whether acting autonomously or in a coalition, these operations rely on national analysis and targeting capabilities as well as on efficient command and control structures that integrate the effects produced in all domains of confrontation. Whether Aviators are in a supported or supporting role, the Air and Space Force pays constant attention to the operational needs of the Army and the Navy during joint operations.

In a context marked by mounting challenges to the international order and the uninhibited use of force, our potential adversaries challenge our model and our influence in the third dimension.



We have entered a new era where nuclear forces once more play a part in the balance of power: the risks of circumvention¹, proliferation and weapons employment have increased.

Aviators are concerned by this major development given their responsibility for the airborne deterrent, whose credibility rests on our independent intelligence capabilities as well as on the preparedness of our crews, weapons, command centres and warning systems. To counter intimidation attempts and a “fait accompli”, the strategic signalling of our air forces, both nuclear and conventional, is a key asset in asserting a language of power.

The sovereignty of States is threatened everywhere, including in their airspace, whilst hostile postures and actions are multiplying in the grey zone of Very High Altitude as well as Space. This necessitates serious consideration of our resilience and capacity for action across the entirety of the altitude continuum: from the ground to geostationary orbit; the third dimension is a battlefield.

Combat aviation remains an attribute of power, as evidenced by the continued modernisation of both the world's fleets and the systems designed to hinder their action. In

parallel, the proliferation and uninhibited use of weapons, including rockets and drones of all sizes, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles, are now within reach of non-state actors. Therefore, strengthening the protection of our bases, at overseas locations in particular, becomes a priority.

This accelerated diversification of threats coupled with technological levelling is upsetting the balance of power, contracting time and space and hastening the evolution of conflict.

The superiority we have long enjoyed in the air and in space is henceforth challenged. In Eastern Europe, combatants are bogged down in a war of attrition because of the inability of both the Russians and the Ukrainians to establish any form of air superiority, whether local or temporary.

This war requires us to take a fresh look at our capability development approach. The large gap between decisive weapons and weapons of attrition raises questions of mass, of maintenance and repair, of cost and speed of acquisition of the means required for contemporary and future combat.

Our capability to access various theatres of operation and manoeuvre in the third dimension is hampered by Anti-Access Area Denial systems. However, by neutralising Iran's

air defences, the Israeli strikes of October 2024 showed that these ramparts are neither impenetrable nor indestructible. It is therefore imperative that we strengthen our ability to suppress enemy air defences.

As International Relations become more strained, airspace becomes congested and more dangerous; access to air routes becomes more complicated. To preserve our freedom of action, we must strengthen and expand our partnerships.

Meanwhile, the development of combat artificial intelligence is changing the world of targeting, planning, and command and control, all factors determining the effectiveness of military strength. A radical acceleration of decision-making by those who unleash these tools irresponsibly presents a risk we must prepare for by considering all ethical, political, technological and military issues raised therein.

Finally, the environmental crisis is a catalyst and an amplifier of tensions. For Aviators, the challenge is first and foremost operational: we must guarantee our long-term ability to produce the required military effects in spite of the destabilising effects of climate change, including both the increase in extreme weather phenomena and the growing competition for resources.

Reassurance Missions on our Eastern Flank, Air Policing in the Baltic States, surface-to-air system deployments in the Black Sea region: since war has returned to our continent, the work of Aviators towards European Security has helped consolidate our position as a framework nation within the Atlantic Alliance.

Against a backdrop of widespread instability in the Middle East, our overseas bases at these regional geostrategic crossroads are invaluable. The persistent and increasing terrorist threat and transnational trafficking: while the “risks of weakness”² persist, particularly in the Sahelo-Saharan Strip, we retain the initiative, under the authority of the Chief of Defence to reconfigure our detachments and partnerships in Africa. In the Indo-Pacific as elsewhere overseas, the Air and Space Force is committed to asserting French sovereignty and the protection of the population. Its strategy is to deploy autonomous situational assessment capabilities, which involves the strengthening of deployed surveillance and communication resources, particularly at Very High Altitude and in Space.-



¹Cf RNS 2022, paragraphs 61 and 62. France sees the requirement for a balanced mix of conventional and nuclear forces in order to ensure effective deterrence against “circumvention techniques.”

²Cf French White Paper 2013, p. 38. ‘Risks of weakness’ are defined as a state’s inability to exercise its sovereign responsibilities.

Deployed from the ground to an altitude of 36 000km and producing its effects in both physical domains and immaterial fields, military aerospace power:

- Takes part in the defence of French territory and its approaches (in both mainland France and its overseas territories), and of French citizens wherever they may be. It also contributes to the defence of Europe and compliance with our international agreements.
- Is at the forefront of Joint and Inter-ministerial activities in our strategic environment, to be able to anticipate and contain ever-growing instability.
- Enables the rapid deployment of capabilities either in anticipation of, or in response to crises anywhere in the world to protect our citizens, reassure our allies and partners, demonstrate our determination and strike our adversaries.



As Chief of Staff of the French Air and Space Force, my first priority is to ensure that our Aviators are able, now and in the future, to carry out the missions entrusted to them.

When I look at contemporary conflict, I see the characteristics referred to in international relations as “strategic Darwinism”: the instinct of states to dominate each other and the use of force in a context of competition, will determine the ascendancy of those models most capable of adaptation, collaboration and collective intelligence over time.

This observation is perfectly aligned with the Joint Staff’s General Military Strategy. It is a call to arms for the mobilisation of our energies to prepare the Air and Space Force for the challenges of the future.

To act effectively and ensure the coherence of our model, we must be able to anticipate threats and exploit windows of opportunity as soon as they appear, to adapt more quickly, and to increase our partnerships.

I want to capitalise on the pioneer spirit, agility and openness that are the characteristics of Aviators.

PIONEER SPIRIT

Inherited from the conquest of air and space, the pioneer spirit guides our ability to understand and exploit new situations and opportunities.

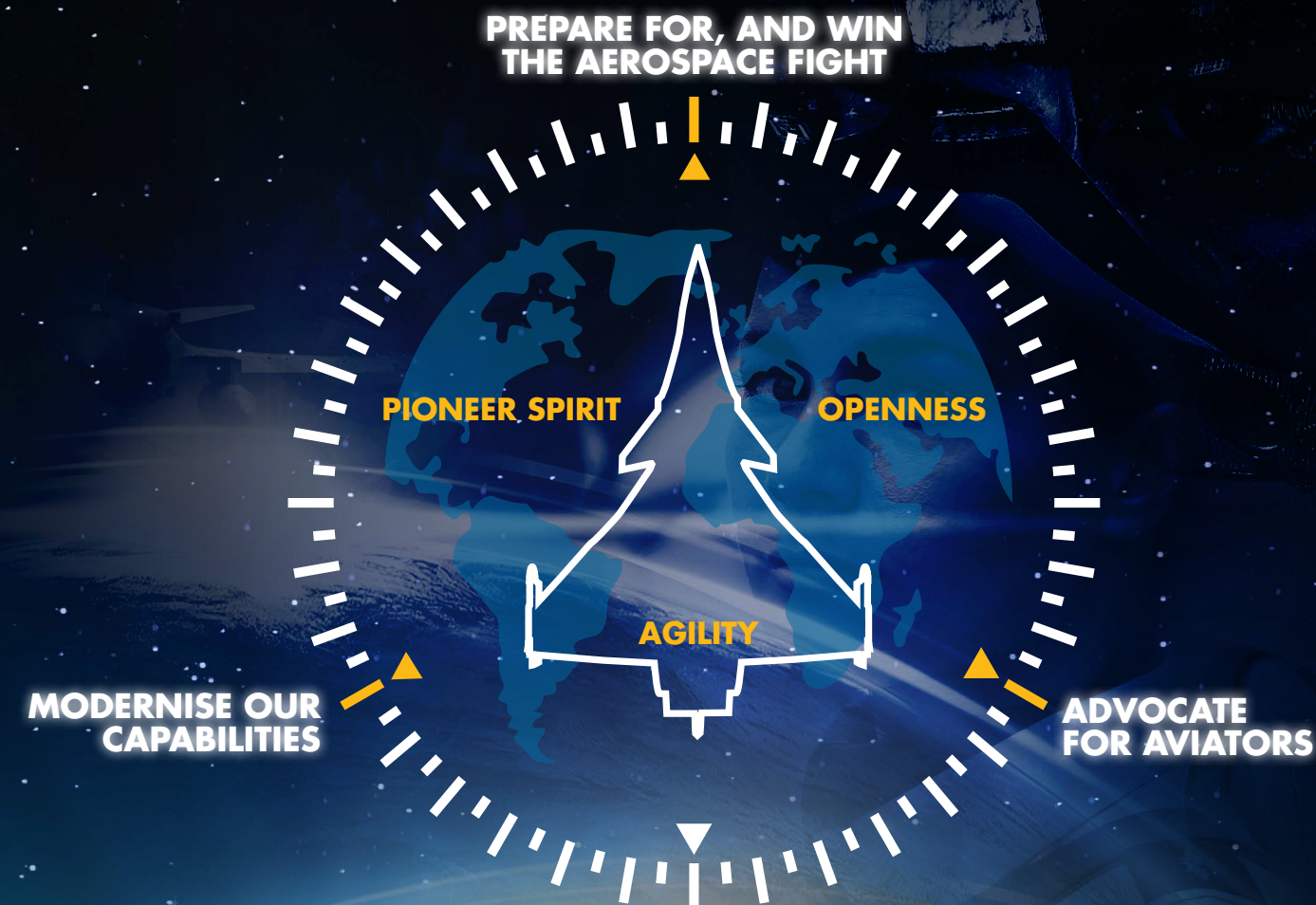
AGILITY

Imposed by the tempo of aerial combat, agility enables us to adapt quickly to threats and to come out on top when facing difficult situations.

OPENNESS

Across the Joint Force, we cultivate our understanding of other government departments, civil society, industry, research and development organisations, and allies and partners daily.

Strengthened by these principles, we concentrate our efforts along three axes to unleash the potential of our military aerospace power:





An Air and Space Force which trains and fights by seizing opportunities

presented by the expansion and hybridisation of contemporary domains of conflict, amplified tenfold by new technologies.

PIONEER SPIRIT



An Air and Space Force which trains and fights by hardening its Force Protection and diversifying its courses of action.

AGILITY



An Air and Space Force which trains and fights alongside its fellow Services, be they national or belonging to allies and partners, following a Comprehensive Approach, when necessary.

OPENNESS

FOR AN AIR AND SPACE FORCE WHICH TRAINS AND FIGHTS ONE STEP AHEAD

► The Air Force and Space Force is one of the actors involved in the design of Joint Readiness Training. Related to this is our effort to exploit all possibilities offered by simulation, from basic training to high-intensity combat training: the widespread deployment of low-cost simulators, and the development of Effects-Based Simulation capabilities provide training in a synthetic environment which, by bringing together physical actors and digital entities, best prepares us for major engagements.

► We will increase our deployments and strengthen our ability to operate away from permanent bases (French ACE - the French version of the NATO "Agile Combat Employment" concept). Cold War-style dispersal is once again imperative. We will integrate it in the broader framework of the resilience of our installations, incorporating other active defence measures (including multi-layered ground-to-air defences) and passive measures (including camouflage, deception, decoys and hardening).

► We will continue to act with our Joint partners in the realm of influence and information warfare. Because their credibility reaches beyond the Air and Space Force, Aviators must better publicize their operations and military aerospace power. We will further increase our air diplomacy efforts, capitalising on the notable success of our power projection missions to the Indo-Pacific and on the "Rafale route" built through its export successes.

Our ability to deliver aerospace combat rests on four pillars:

1. At home, the expertise and resilience of both the facilities and combat system that guarantee the Nation's response in crises.
2. Forward,, the ability to penetrate air defence systems.
3. Vertically, the ability to operate through the air-space continuum. Aviators are especially committed to mastering High Altitude Operations.
4. On all levels, the design of aerospace operations, based not only on the integration of Air and Space effects, but also on those from electromagnetic and informational fields, coupled with the digitisation of processes to speed up decision-making cycles. Our combat system plays a direct part in the armed forces' multi-sensor, multi-effector network.

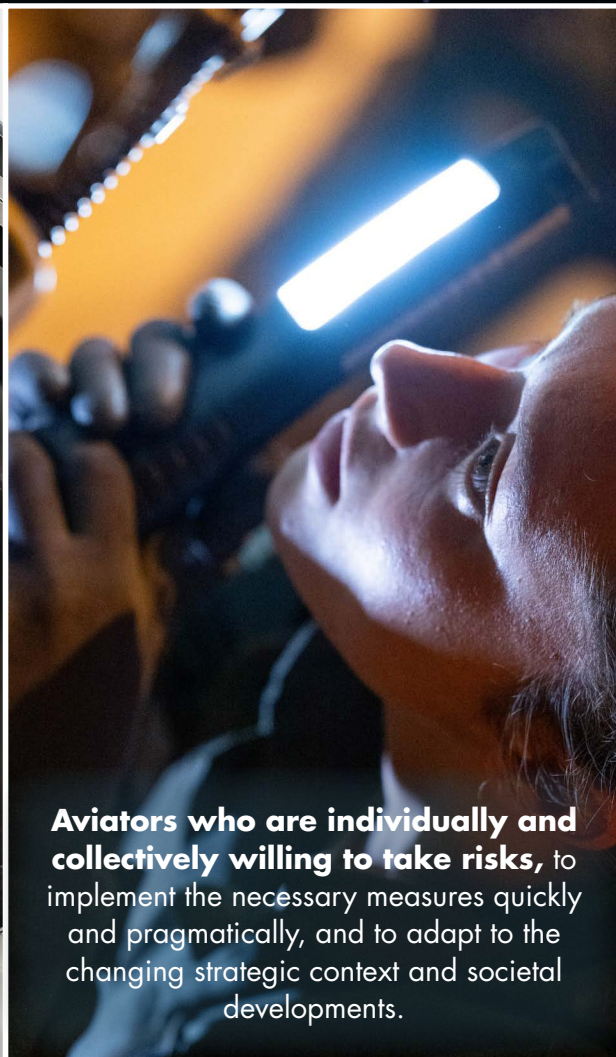
Aerospace military power rests on the precision and speed of targeting and execution with the command and control (C2) function ensuring the transition between both. Operationalising the Air – Space continuum requires the convergence of air and space C2.

Our technological superiority and our speed of execution in targeting and C2 provide the ability to overcome a numerical disadvantage by imposing a power imbalance: applying the right effect, in the right place, at the right time annihilates the perceived advantage of those who have greater numbers.



Aviators who see emerging technologies and the extension of all domains of conflict as opportunities for new professions and career paths.

PIONEER SPIRIT



Aviators who are individually and collectively willing to take risks, to implement the necessary measures quickly and pragmatically, and to adapt to the changing strategic context and societal developments.

AGILITY



Open-minded Aviators who are proud to share their values with their Nation. The links between the Air and Space Force and French society are embodied and energized daily, especially with the younger generations.

OPENNESS

FOR AVIATORS PREPARED FOR THE MISSIONS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW

► In addition to their technical expertise, our Aviators must gain knowledge regarding emerging technologies and the new domains and fields of conflict: Space and High Altitude Operations, Cyberspace, the Electromagnetic Spectrum, the Information Field, Data and Artificial Intelligence. We must all have a clear understanding of these topics that shape our identity and strengthen our legitimacy to be the first to act in the Air – Space continuum. I also want to reinstate, in all its glory, the practice of mentoring our young people by their elders.

► In terms of both human resources and day-to-day operations, we will exploit the digital transformation. Particularly important in recruitment and training where we need to increase capacity, it is also the case for career management where we must take advantage of data to strengthen dialogue, make career paths clearer and more individualised.

► We must strengthen the link between Aviators and society, in particular through the Air Cadets in order to share their passion for Air and Space, promote our values and that of civic service. Attentive to social developments and expectations, we must consider environmental issues as long as there is no impact on our operational activities. Finally, we must continue to work towards increasing the operational reserve, which must double in size by 2030, whilst also engaging regularly with our network of civilian patrons.

Beyond workforce issues, the well-being of our Aviators is a key factor of the moral component which also rests on the legitimacy of our action, our exemplary commanders, and our ability to operate in rustic environments.

In the same vein, as well as paying renewed attention to the working and living conditions of Aviators and their families, I want to revive our ‘Squadron spirit’ on an institution-wide scale: an esprit de corps that transcends our differences in recruitment, status or specialisation, and which enables each Aviator to find their place and express their talent.

Kessel expresses this sentiment when he recounts squadron life in Mermoz, saying, “the prestige of warrior courage, freedom in discipline, individuality in the actions of the masses, and camaraderie on earth and in the sky”. This perfectly illustrates our values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence (RISE).



A capabilities-based approach that looks ahead and anticipates the changes required in military aerospace power and the solutions to be implemented

PIONEER SPIRIT



A capabilities-based approach that rapidly adapts to threats to our operational and technological ascendancy or our freedom of action in order to defeat them.

AGILITY



A capabilities-based approach that is open to innovation and industry by integrating our organisational and regulatory evolutions in order to accelerate the commissioning of our assets and maximising their availability.

OPENNESS

TO SECURE OPERATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP IN AIR AND SPACE

► We will continue to meet planned capability milestones such as the Rafale F5 standard, the 4th generation air-to-ground nuclear missile (ASN4G), and **suppression of enemy air defences** (SEAD) capabilities which guarantee our ability to penetrate enemy lines of defence. In parallel, we will be pursuing those programmes which prepare us for tomorrow's warfare: Remotely-Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) and Future Combat Air System (SCAF), as well as the modernisation of the Air Operations C2 system. We will reinforce our **multi-layered ground-to-air defences**, in particular the counter **drone segment**, and we will exploit the potential of the **electromagnetic field** in the Air and Space domains.

► High intensity engagements require greater risk appetite with regard to **existing maintenance processes**. This change of mindset must also extend to capability development, by envisaging an approach where occasional setbacks are an acceptable step towards the rapid acquisition of new resources. In all these areas, we will review our regulatory requirements.

► We will continue to develop our **capabilities linked to High Altitude Operations and Space** which multiply our effects in all strategic functions, and where the threat is growing significantly. We must speed up the commissioning of new equipment and the integration of new actors in the space industry to develop our action towards space (surveillance, jamming), from space (communications, observation), and in space (e.g. Rendez-vous and Proximity Operations - RPO). Space support to operations determines the operational superiority of armed forces.

In Ukraine, dozens of cruise missiles, several hundred drones and more than a thousand bombs are dropped on the battlefield every week. Technological and tactical advantage remains paramount, but facing the ever-increasing possibility of a high-intensity conflict, quantity is a quality in itself. We will redouble our capability development efforts, seeking to saturate by combining mass, technology and electromagnetic warfare resources.

This requires not only the acceleration of the development of our weapons but also the maximising of their availability. Acceleration goes hand in hand with innovation and adaptation; it guides our capability development approach. In managing both major long-term programmes as well as fast-moving sectors such as **drones**, this objective shapes our relationship with industry.

Together with the ambition to move faster in our capability development work, we will explore every opportunity offered by **digital transformation**, the exploitation of data and the use of artificial intelligence.

It is by focusing on this capability development axis, across the Air - Space continuum, that we will succeed in producing the "mass effect" that will decide the outcome of future battles.

When considering capability development in particular, Europe's ambition to increase its strategic autonomy offers opportunities which we will support and exploit, in the service of our military aerospace power.



SQUADRON SPIRIT

*"The prestige of warrior courage, freedom in discipline,
individuality in the actions of the masses,
camaraderie on earth and in the sky"*

Joseph Kessel
Extract from *Mermoz* - 1938