



U.S. AIR FORCE



USSF

AFRL

THE AIR FORCE RESEARCH LABORATORY



LEAD DISCOVER DEVELOP DELIVER

COMMANDER'S INTENT

Brig Gen Heather L. Pringle, Commander

AIR FORCE RESEARCH LABORATORY

The **Air Force Research Laboratory** has a strong history of exploration and invention, relevant to operational capabilities today and indispensable to our Nation's future. Every day, we get to push the boundaries of modern technology and improve the science for tomorrow. Most of all, what makes **AFRL** truly special is our workforce – no one can match **AFRL's** talent, passion or commitment to the Warfighter.

Mission

We lead, discover, develop and deliver science, technology and innovation for Warfighters.

Vision

To arm Warfighters that dominate in time, space and complexity across all operating domains¹.

I am so excited to lead our team on this journey and know that you are more than ready to set the pace in today's science, technology and innovation ecosystem. I have seen firsthand your tireless devotion to learning difficult specialties, your teamwork in making significant discoveries, and your expertise in applying creativity to novel problems. Most of all, I am proud to watch **AFRL's** thought leaders and problem solvers choose to make an impact. Warfighters are counting on us more than ever, and I know you won't let them down.

Achieving our vision will not be easy, considering the strategic competition is formidable, our peer competitors are driving to overtake us as a Science and Technology (S&T) superpower and the National Defense Strategy forecasts a highly contested future fight with complex threats. While we recognize the complexity of these strategic threats, it is imperative that we also recognize the challenges we face as an organization:

- **AFRL** must deliver operational capability to our Air, Space and Cyber Warfighters who share a culture of urgency
- **AFRL** must be perceived both as relevant to today's Warfighters while relentlessly outpacing the future threat
- **AFRL** competes for a limited technical talent pool with commercial firms that pay more and hire quickly
- **AFRL** excels within its world-class directorates but has room to improve cross-directorate processes and share talent
- **AFRL** assessments reveal our workplace is not immune to harassment, racism, discrimination or toxic environments

It's time to take action. My intent for our team is to approach these challenges with the same tenacity and world-class problem solving that **AFRL** has demonstrated for years. First, we must **Accelerate the S&T 2030 Strategy Implementation** as a means to develop and deliver transformational capabilities to Warfighters. Next, we will prove that **One AFRL – Two Services** supports our newest Sister Service, the **United States Space Force (USSF)**, in winning the first volley of battle. Finally, we will **Lead the Best AFRL Team** as we continue to grow diverse, innovative and war-winning leaders.

My priorities for 2021 will challenge us to continue to embrace new thinking, new approaches and execute with speed and discipline, in order to assure our continued military superiority. I am more than confident in **AFRL's** world-class team – it is truly an honor to serve with you and be entrusted with a mission so critical to our Nation. Thank you for letting me lead you on this journey – there is no limit to what our **AFRL** Team can do!



Heather L. Pringle

Brigadier General, USAF

Commander, Air Force Research Laboratory

¹Adapted from the Department of the Air Force Science and Technology Strategy, 2019.

AFRL Commander's 2021 Priorities

1. Accelerate S&T 2030 Strategy Implementation
2. One AFRL – Two Services
3. Lead the Best AFRL Team



Priority 1: Accelerate S&T 2030 Strategy Implementation

Our first responsibility is to the Warfighter – across air, space and cyber domains – and solving the compounding challenges they face against potential peer adversaries in a technologically demanding operating environment. The **Secretary of the Air Force** set a bold vision to meet those challenges in the **Department of the Air Force (DAF) S&T 2030** strategy, which will enhance **AFRL's** ability to develop and deliver disruptive innovations to Warfighters. Every day that passes is a missed opportunity to outpace our adversaries, and so we must accelerate.

DAF 2030 S&T Strategy Objectives

- Develop and Deliver Transformational Strategic Capabilities
- Reform the Way S&T is Led and Managed
- Deepen and Expand the Scientific and Technical Enterprise

Build portfolios and processes to execute a transformational agenda

All echelons of **AFRL** will strengthen alignment with **S&T 2030** goals and commit to action. **AFRL** will support two paths to Transformational Strategic Capabilities – top down driven by design and guided by **USAF** and **USSF** future force design, as well as bottom up via a continuous pipeline of disruptive innovation. In FY21, we will build regimented, transparent, and scalable risk-informed processes in order to create transformational portfolios. Our investment strategy will emphasize “big bet” programs in order to drive game changing solutions at the speed of relevance, competitively selected, to defeat adversaries’ multi-domain system-of-systems. Finally, we will apply analytical methods to develop metrics to measure the merit of proposals, as well as success, in order to enhance **AFRL's** ability to articulate the value proposition of our efforts.

Develop and deliver cross-cutting capabilities with speed and discipline

The building blocks to support S&T transition are in place, but the complexity of modern platforms and the need for interconnectivity necessitate that **AFRL** experiments with new transition mechanisms and faster timelines. In FY21, investments will be linked with clear transition paths and documented external commitments. We will partner with acquisition program executives on opportunities

to enhance the success of urgent or early technical transitions. In addition, we will expand the use of minimum viable products for experimentation and demonstration to users and program offices and participate in wargames to collect feedback and secure advocacy.

Expand and enhance stakeholder buy-in

A wide range of stakeholders share our quest for innovation. Non-traditional partners help increase our diversity of thought and attract new ideas from the commercial sector. Moreover, strategic priorities shape our S&T agenda as **USAF** and **USSF** build the future force design to create surprise and overwhelm future adversaries. Finally, as we continue to incorporate the Warfighters’ perspectives, we can enhance unity of effort with all stakeholders to distribute risk and control costs. In FY21, **AFRL** will expand and persistently enhance strategic engagement on challenges and opportunities in an enterprise plan, including:

- Air, Space and Cyber Warfighters
- **AFRL** workforce
- Acquisition Program Executives
- Strategic innovative organizations such as **Office of Net Assessment**
- Department of the Air Force Leadership, policy makers and partners throughout the **USAF**, **USSF** and **DoD**
- Congress, think tanks, FFRDCs, industry, entrepreneurs, academia, HBCUs, civic & international partners

End State: By the end of FY21, **AFRL's** processes, resources and priorities will be in place, aligned to S&T 2030 Strategy goals, with published measures of success. **AFRL** will be solving transformational, cross-disciplinary challenges with speed and discipline, communicated and validated with our Warfighters and stakeholders.

Priority 2: One AFRL – Two Services

Our way of warfare depends on space superiority and **AFRL** has a long history of research and development in support of this domain. With the recent standup of the **USSF**, along with the emergence of US Space Command and new energy in the commercial space sector, we have exciting opportunities to modernize the way we lead and manage S&T. In FY21, we will commit to the success of our newest Sister Service and go above and beyond to prove that we are **One AFRL – Two Services**, in word and deed.

Increase understanding and alignment

Across all units in **AFRL**, we must improve our understanding of what it means to fight in the space domain in order to create more opportunities to solve space-related operational challenges. In FY21, **AFRL** will delineate S&T that is space unique, as well as S&T that is broadly applicable to space, or domain-agnostic. We will also align S&T efforts to the priorities set by the **USSF**. We will establish clear transition paths and meet our commitments through speed with discipline.

Connect and strengthen relationships

We will enhance our partnerships in the space domain, with particular emphasis on the technological base in the commercial enterprise. In FY21, we will codify **AFRL** activities supporting the **USSF** in a Memorandum of Agreement and leverage the Deputy Technology Executive Officer (TEO) position as the focal point for the **USSF**. We will establish regular communication mechanisms and ensure **USSF** has a voice in our processes.

Seize opportunities to work without barriers

Although few **AFRL** units have “space” in their title, all of us need to think about the ways in which our daily activities apply to the **USSF**. We will leverage this new Service to experiment with new business practices and build policies from the ground up, rather than amending antiquated ones. We will not create barriers in pursuing solutions that apply to a single domain or function; rather, we will build processes to encourage problem-solving across multiple domains, multiple disciplines and actively develop cross-cutting solutions.

End State: By the end of FY21, **AFRL** directorates will have an improved understanding of **USSF** operational challenges, a well-articulated path to resourcing and supporting space-relevant S&T with clear customer delivery dates, and a tailored **USSF** stakeholder engagement plan.



Priority 3: Lead the Best AFRL Team

Without a doubt, **AFRL**'s workforce is our competitive advantage. We have exceptionally talented professionals and we value each and every one of you! Together, all our functions and specialties form a team that is more than ready to be part of something big and ready to lead us to a better future. In FY21, we will advance **AFRL**'s digital transformation, accelerate innovation through skill building and growth, embrace diversity, and promote an agile workforce promoting a culture of urgency with a competitive spirit.

Advance the digital enterprise and data analytics

The agility and speed of our business processes, decision tools, and enabling infrastructure must match the pace of **AFRL**'s drive for innovation. In FY21, **AFRL** will double down on our digital transformation and fund more tools to support the entire workforce – particularly for distributed, virtual, horizontal, cross-disciplinary work and sharing lessons learned. We will strike the right balance of incorporating speed with discipline into our processes, as well as measure customer satisfaction and provide feedback.

Accelerate innovation and embrace the power of collective learning

If **AFRL** is to meet the challenges of the future, then innovating faster than our adversary must be part of **AFRL**'s DNA, and we will build on our individual achievements to more effectively solve problems together. To accomplish this, **AFRL** will acculturate our current and new employees to embrace distributed innovation, capitalize on diversity and inclusion for creative thinking ideation, and institutionalize risk-taking and enterprise-level decision making as a normal way of doing business. The goal is to enhance what each of you already uniquely possess with complementary skills and mindsets that enhance our competitive edge as a multi-disciplinary enterprise.

Strengthen our commitment to diversity and inclusion

AFRL's commitment to innovation is inseparable from our

commitment to diversity and inclusion. We will continue the necessary discussions to identify our blind spots. We will use data to our advantage to uncover priority issues to be addressed in hiring, promoting, and retaining a diverse workforce. We will continue to offer Unconscious Bias training and the AFRL Diversity Speaker Series. At all levels, **AFRL** personnel will be encouraged to speak up and empowered to shape our culture.

Promote an agile enterprise through teamwork and talent sharing

AFRL will set multidisciplinary, enterprise teaming as an expectation and formally structure our evaluation criteria and incentives to reward it. We will reward cross-directorate collaboration and free sharing of talent. Leaders at all levels will take on a coaching mindset and continuously enhance cohesion across ever-evolving teams. Additionally, all **AFRL** members will “pay it forward” by vesting in developing our junior force and onboarding new teammates. Supervisors will connect new hires and junior force members to a team of mentors across the workforce to enhance belonging, networking and learning in a virtual environment. We will continue to lead the Department in innovative Workforce initiatives that take care of our team and adapt to their needs.

End State: By the end of FY21, new digital tools will be in place to enhance virtual collaboration, and we will attract, groom and retain a more diverse workforce, as well as release a steady stream of innovative initiatives to improve our workforce environment, development and growth opportunities.





For more information about the Air Force Research Laboratory, please visit our website at www.AFResearchLab.com.
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