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Benjamin O. Davis Jr. Collection - Yearbook (Class of 1950)

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To the graduating class of the Air War College:

Since its inception some four years ago it has been the constant purpose of the Air War College to foster above all things an atmosphere conducive to truly objective thinking. We have sought, through study of the principles and lessons of the past their relationships to the events of the present, to provide you with a basis on which to interpret intelligently the trends of the future.

The evolutionary nature of conflict, together with its ever-increasing complexities, imposes on the military echelon a challenge to meet and solve its problems with a high degree of competence. Survival of our way of life in this age of technological advancement depends in large measure on a sound understanding of the fundamentals of present and future conflict and their application to the evaluations we place on the concepts we develop.

Unification of our Armed Forces has been a major step forward in organizing to deal with our problems on a common front. However, it must be recognized and kept continuously uppermost in our minds that organization per se is not the panacea for all our present and future ills. There must be unification in our thinking as well as in our organization. In this connection I should like to touch on what in my estimation are two of the main barriers to the attainment of this all-important objective.

The first of these is mental laziness. Among the many factors that contribute to what I term the fallibility of man this characteristic is the most dangerous and the most prevalent. Procrastination, as well as the refusal of man to recognize the grave issues with which he is confronted and apply himself diligently and objectively toward attaining sound solutions to these issues, presents a problem of serious magnitude in terms of national security and ultimate survival. The ever-present tendency to accept and support, without critical appraisal and adequate evaluation, the concepts and theories advanced by individuals and groups, whose view and knowledge are wedded to the patterns of the past, can result only in a dangerous and unacceptable compromise of our future position.

The second obstacle to the development of unified thinking is related to and grows out of the first; I call it timidity. Military man is known for his tendency to place too high a value on his past successes without due regard for the condition under which they were attained. As a result we find man inclined to hold to the more readily accepted methods and ideas of the past rather than boldly reach out for and seek sound applications for the new. The future of the United States, indeed of

To the Graduating Class of the Air War College:

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