

Challenges Facing Mobility Command

General Arthur Lichte

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General Lichte: Thank you, Sandy. Good afternoon everybody. Bob Largent, another fantastic event that you've had here over the last few years. I don't know whether they call you a community organizer or the mayor of AFA, but you've done a great job. [Laughter]. All right, it will take you a little while. You'll catch up with the humor later. [Laughter]. That's the last time I'm trying any jokes on this crowd today.

It's been an incredible last few days, and quite frankly it's been an incredible year for Air Mobility Command. We have a lot to celebrate. Your mobility air forces -- total force team, and by that I mean USAFE, PACAF, AETC, Guard, Reserve, and active duty -- they've been hard at work enabling America's clenched fist in executing the global war on terror and at the same time extending her outstretched hand as we come to the aid of people around the world. And as the Airmen of AMC did so, they continued the proud heritage that was handed down to them by those who stood before us. In particular what I'm talking about is the Berlin Airlift. Now we're in the middle of the 60th Anniversary celebrations of that.

I've been proud to lead Air Mobility Command for just over a year now, and I've been able to do it with the great help, the eyes and ears of our enlisted force, our Command Chief Joe Baranen. Joe, I want to thank you publicly for everything you've done. Thanks, Chief.

[Applause].

You know, in Air Mobility Command all you have to do is look at the headlines and see what's going on. That gives us our job and what we're doing. Air Mobility Command recognizes the strategic importance of the legacy that was handed down to us. We pay tribute to our forefathers, our international friends, and the enduring relationships we fostered back in the late 1940s. But more than solely celebrating a triumph for democracy in what was certainly one of the most defining moments of the Cold War, we herald the lessons that we learned in its execution and we continue to refer to them today as we tackle the present-day challenges with the global war on terror.

And while we continue to support our joint warfighters as they bravely carry on the war on terrorism and defend freedom around the world, just as was the case in 1948, Air Mobility

Command continues to serve as America's outstretched hand of hope for those in need.

Whether it was the return of troops to their homeland, to combat invading forces, or the delivery of food and blankets to their countrymen in need, Air Mobility Command delivered.

Whether it was natural disaster relief driven by catastrophic cyclone or repatriating three Americans after having survived more than five years in captivity, Air Mobility delivered.

Or whether it was here at home dropping flame retardant on wild fires consuming our West Coast, or evacuating our Gulf Coast, preserving life in the face of impending hurricanes, Air Mobility delivered.

Whatever the task, whatever the call, when our nation makes a promise, it's AMC's privilege to deliver.

So I'd like to highlight something that happened some 60 years ago and I think it will help set the stage for our discussions today. As was the case in all footage back then, the video's in black and white. But rather than detract from its message, let the lack of color serve to remind us just how far technology's come in the last 60 years. In this light it underscores the complexities Airmen faced without the aid of avionics and GPS, and as such the magnitude of the bravery, courage, and ingenuity that enabled Airmen to succeed.

As you watch this short video clip I'd like to highlight two gentlemen you're going to see. The first is Colonel Gale Halverson who was really the face of the Berlin Airlift. The other is Lieutenant General William Tunner who was really the brains behind the whole operation, who orchestrated and organized it.

And pay attention as you see in the film the great connection between measurement and metrics that made the efficiency of the Berlin Airlift improve. I would tell you that General Tunner was AFSO-21 long before we ever thought of the term.

So if I could get you to please roll that video.

[Video shown].

You know, by any measure what those folks did back then was simply amazing. We're proud to have the Berlin Airlift as part of our AMC legacy.

The blockade began on the 24th of June. You heard that in the film. The airlift officially began two days later on June 26th. On that day this year I was fortunate enough to travel to Germany and spend it with the gracious people of Berlin at Tempelhof, many of whom were direct recipients of the Airlift's aid. And as we departed Frankfurt with my good friend General Brady at the controls, on a flight plan very similar to those flown during the 15 month airlift campaign some 60 years ago, I was struck by the profound emotion of hope. Hope that not only for the Berliners trying to survive the repression of the Soviet Union, but as a pilot I also felt the hope of the allied Airmen wanting to complete their mission to save individuals, families, villages, the city of Berlin and the whole of the German people.

The hope was apparent to every man, woman and child in the world, to include the Soviet military and all of Josef Stalin's regime. It was this hope that planted the seed of doubt in the mind of Stalin as he witnessed the persistence of the airlift campaign. Whether that plane carried coal and fuel to individuals trying to power and heat their city, or flour and vegetables to those trying to feed their city, or chocolate and gum to children just trying to enjoy their city, it was this hope that ultimately broke the will of the Soviet blockade. Those brave mobility Airmen landed an aircraft every three minutes. They delivered nearly 4,000 tons daily and in aggregate they moved 2.3 million tons with over 277,000 flights over the course of some 461 days.

They had hope that their supplies were loaded correctly. They had hope that their flight plan was timed perfectly. They had hope that their plane was mechanically sound, and was the case more often than not, due to poor weather the hope that their approach controller could talk them down to another safe landing. And I had the hope that General Brady would make a darn good landing in Tempelhof. [Laughter].

But more importantly, it was their hope to succeed in providing relief to succeed in providing human compassion to a fellow man and to succeed in providing the ultimate gift, the spirit of hope to sustain life itself. This will to succeed endured then, and I will tell you it endures now for humanitarian airlift is the outstretched hand of hope. That's why when someone heard the rumble of a C-54 landing at Tempelhof, Germany during the Berlin Airlift, or when they hear the roar of a C-17 about to airdrop humanitarian rations, the effect of it is all the same. It's hope.

Let me tell you from first-hand experience that the effects of our efforts and the relationships we've built still reflect that same hope in the eyes of those Berliners today. Though 60 years have passed there remains an unbreakable bond between our two countries. That bond stands as a testament to America's

commitment to our friends and to our determination to help in time of need. And although I can't really say for certain whether or not in this case history will repeat itself, I both suspect and hope that in some 60 years from now we will have a similar bond with our international friends that call Iraq and Afghanistan home.

That Berlin Airlift was our answer to the first shot of the Cold War, and in our response we proved not only that air power could be used to diffuse and win conflicts, but that on that wings of mobility Airmen, soft power really can be a decisive factor.

On September 19th, just two days from now, that's exactly what was in all the papers back in 1948. Without firing a single shot the Berlin Airlift became a pivotal event, carrying with it strategic implications for the world. In the decades to come our President could use strategic air mobility to execute or help facilitate foreign policy objectives just like moving one of the Navy's aircraft carriers to a hot spot or deploying an expeditionary force of Marines or sending a peacekeeping force of Army soldiers, or holding any target in the world at risk with today's global strike capabilities with our tanker bridge.

The Berlin Airlift put the unsung and unassuming cargo aircraft on the table as a valid instrument of U.S. foreign policy. The American people stood in solidarity with their Airmen who were delivering hope halfway around the world. But as the world watched with baited breath as more than two million West Berliners' lives stood in the balance, the Airmen themselves were being educated. As unfortunate as it was, some of the lessons they learned came at the price of their very own lives.

In the first two months of the Airlift we lost four aircraft and nine Airmen as they struggled to deliver thousands of tons of cargo through three small air corridors to a single runway at Tempelhof. Poor weather conditions added to the complexity as Germany saw their worst weather in almost 40 years. That and the fact that post-war Germany had only one GCA radar that was left, it made planners have a real risk.

We lost a total of 31 Airmen in the course of the airlift, and it was something called Black Friday that drove General Tunner and his team to solve the problem that was inherent as aircraft stacked up in holding patterns. They refined the use of the existing air corridors -- two inbound and one outbound. They established a regimented three minute time slot pattern for the aircraft in the corridors. And they gave pilots only one chance to land. If you had a missed approach you had to turn around and go all the way back and start over again. And all the flights were mandated to be flown on instruments, by the numbers, and they would operate like clockwork.

General Tunner understood that the hallmark of a successful airlift operation was consistency and efficiency and in his words the real excitement comes from seeing a dozen lines climbing steadily on a dozen charts -- tonnage delivered, utilization of aircraft and so on. That was General Tunner who I think embodied AFSO-21.

The key to it all was discipline and metrics. Identifying trends and getting the word out and making adjustments where necessary. When Tunner came in and joined the airlift, aircraft spent almost an entire hour on the ground after they had been unloaded and before they took off. He went out and he just started to watch what was going on. He found out that the crews left the aircraft to obtain the latest weather. Then they spent some time obtaining their departure clearance. Then of course, like most crew dogs do today, they stopped off at the snack bar to get a quick bite.

In three days he changed things around. First, weather officers were forced to meet the crews on the runway with the latest forecast. Operations officers delivered their departure clearances. And a jeep pulled up carrying coffee and donuts for the crews. And just as the effects of Black Friday were significant, so were these greatly decreasing the crews' turn times, and correspondingly increasing the daily tonnage delivered. This was AFSO-21. We learn about it, we apply it today, the same thing that General Tunner applied to bring efficiency to the Berlin Airlift.

Now the advantage of technology helps today, but it doesn't solve all our problems. You see, today we face some of the same problems that they did back in the Berlin Airlift and it's called the tyranny of distance.

What's different between then and now and what drove really the maturation of air refueling is the necessity to not only deliver aid from within a country's border but to deliver aid or ordnance to anywhere in the world within hours and to do it from American shores if need be.

It is in this context that we see the criticality of what we've come to call the tanker bridge. Let's look at a comparison that better kind of captures as we draw further conclusions and comparisons between the Berlin Airlift and our efforts in the global war on terror.

The Military Air Transport Service was created only three weeks before the Berlin blockade started. This fledgling ancestor of MAC and AMC consisted mostly of a fleet of C-47s, a two-engine aircraft that only could carry three tons of cargo. It took about one hour to transit the 285 miles from Rhein Main

to Tempelhof as the Airmen took the opportunity to deliver their payload of cargo. For comparison, that's the equivalent of flying from JFK up to Niagara Falls -- slowly I turn. Remember that? Some of you last year remember that I showed a comparison of how much fuel could be off-loaded by watching Niagara Falls. I was going to show it again this year, but last year too many of you had to run out and take a restroom break in the middle of that, so I kept the slide away. [Laughter]. But just so you know we're still making improvements, last year I told you that you would have to watch that slide for 24 minutes with the water flowing over the Niagara Falls in order to see how much fuel we off-loaded since 9/11.

Well, if we showed it this year, we increased it by another 20 percent and you'd have to sit here and watch for another six minutes for a total of 30 minutes watching the Niagara Falls flow to see how much fuel has been offloaded by Mobility Command tankers.

In the Berlin Airlift, their enemy was time and they quickly realized that their success hinged on the number of airframes that could land and the payload they could carry. Within the first three months of the airlift they had completely transitioned from C-47s to brand new C-54s that had four engines and could carry three times the payload. But even at that, General Tunner and his Airmen looked closely at the amount of fuel that was required to make the flight to Tempelhof and actually cut excess fuel in order to increase the payload an airplane could deliver. Some of the same things that we're doing today. But range was not their limiting factor, it was payload. Since then, technology has allowed us to design and build planes that dwarf the payload of a C-54 carrying up to 135 tons in a C-5, or delivering 85 tons to austere locations on dirt runways with a C-17.

Today it takes about five hours to transit the just under 2000 miles to the regular commute our airlifters fly from Ramstein to Baghdad as they deliver critical supplies supporting our warriors engaged in Afghanistan and Iraq. For comparison, that's the equivalent of flying from JFK all the way across the continent of the United States to San Francisco. That's over 6.5 times the distance of the Berlin Airlift and we're flying it every day, in addition to all our other commitments around the world.

With the aid of our tankers for the global war on terror, AMC lists over half of the Berlin Airlift's daily tonnage with only one-fifth of the aircraft and we've been doing it every day for the last even years.

But as I mentioned in my introductory comments, Air Mobility Command has been hard at work at extending America's outstretched

hand and that has made the papers. The story hit the press just last month when Russia invaded its sovereign neighbor the same day that the world was captivated and focused on Beijing to celebrate the 2008 Olympic Games. As the people of Georgia absorbed the Russian assault, the international community rallied at their side in united support of the democracy of this elected government. And as we did, it was AMC's privilege to act on their behalf.

Georgia was a staunch supporter, fighting the global war on terrorism, and with a preponderance of their deployed forces in Iraq they were actually the third largest contributor of coalition forces after the United States and Great Britain.

Respecting this and applauding their courage, our President made a promise to the people of Georgia that in doing their part for humanity, America would take all measures necessary to return their troops home if ever their country was attacked.

So when the Georgian President recalled his soldiers following the outbreak of fighting with Russia in the break-away province of South Ossetia, AMC got the phone call and we quickly swung into action.

The transport began on the 10th of August, really just two days after the invasion, and by the following day over the course of some 16 C-17 flights, we airlifted all 2000 troops and their equipment from Iraq to their capital city of Tbilisi, returning them to defend their homeland. And in returning the last members of the Georgian 1st Brigade to Tbilisi from their encampments in Iraq, we had made good on our commander in chief's promise.

The entire troop movement was complete within 29 hours after Mobility Command was given the go-ahead, which was only 92 hours after the government of Georgia initially requested that they be returned.

It's stories like these that make me incredibly proud to lead the mobility professionals of Air Mobility Command. But oh by the way, while many stopped and watched as the crisis in Georgia unfolded, events around the world just kept on moving on. As always, the men and women of Air Mobility Command were there to answer the call.

When the professionals of the 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center were overseeing the execution of the Georgian troop movement, they also had some other things they had to do and planned up to an additional 1200 missions that spanned the face of the globe.

First, we had the President on Air Force One heading home along with some of the support equipment that we needed to move

from China back to the United States. We also had an opportunity based on a request from the Secretary of Defense to fly King Abdullah of Jordan into Baghdad. He then became the first Arab leader to visit since the fall of Saddam back in 2003.

General Patraeus was moving. He was going from Baghdad to Kabul. Luck wasn't with us and he had an in-flight emergency on his C-17. We had to have him divert, get another C-17 to launch him and continue him on his way.

At the same time we had 68 distinguished visitors traveling around the world that we had to support. And we had the little thing going on in Southwest Asia with the global war on terror.

So our plates were pretty full and as Russia flexed its military in Tbilisi, we flew flights ensuring continued credibility of the U.S. nuclear strategic deterrence with the START package.

We had an opportunity to improve the morale and welfare of some of our folks as we moved Tops in Blue from RAF Mildenhall to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and then on to Offutt. And while we were at it with R&R we had three different R&R missions, giving our joint warriors some well deserved down time from the combat stresses of their deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The last two bullets that you see on there, while we're not happy with, we feel that they're absolutely essential. We consider it our solemn duty to bring home our injured warriors to the best medical care that we can provide, and in the case of our fallen heroes, return them home with dignity.

Most of these events were to likely covered in the papers as they certainly weren't deemed newsworthy. And although we're certainly not looking to find our way into the headlines, that's exactly where we found ourselves a couple of days later because on the 13th of August America responded to the armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in the region of South Ossetia and across Georgia with medical supplies and emergency assistance.

Again, Air Mobility Command got the call and the first C-17 landed on the 13th, with another one landing the following day. We were delivering humanitarian assistance before a formal ceasefire had even been arranged between Russia and Georgia. Those first two C-17s delivered some 78 tons of humanitarian aid and medical supplies. In the days that followed subsequent humanitarian deliveries, termed Operation Assured Delivery, made by the United States Air Force C-17s, C-130s, U.S. Navy C-9s and C-40s delivered medicine, clothing sleeping bags, cots, and a six man humanitarian assistance team.

I got to thinking about that first crew that was flying in. I couldn't help but wonder what they were thinking about as they were tasked and flew the mission, especially the lieutenant that you see up there, Lieutenant Adam Littman. Could he be about the same as Lieutenant Gale Halverson was back some 60 years ago? As I come to find out, the crew was supposed to be returning to the United States when they arrived at Ramstein Air Base, but when they checked with the schedulers they found out otherwise. Their revised mission was to fly humanitarian aid into Georgia's war-torn capital Tbilisi.

Now the crew arrived, it was day four of their mission. When they got alerted for what they thought was going to be an uneventful trip back across the pond to Dover they found out that they were going to receive a mission change. The crew proceeded to intel and tactics and was briefed on the current situation and the threat level in the country. At the conclusion of the brief they received blood chits that covered both OEF, OIF, and Georgia -- a little bit eye-opening for them.

So this Dover crew headed out and we put them on a McGuire Air Force Base C-17. Enroute to Georgia the crew faced several areas of concern. The first was dealing with how they were going to enter the country. It was widely known that the Russians had completely shut down Georgian airspace and they were patrolling the area with numerous fighters.

As they went through Bucharest airspace, air traffic controllers relayed to the crew that the airfield in Tbilisi was closed, and what did the crew want to do? Please state your intention. As most crew members would do, they immediately said "stand by" and this is where technology started to help. They contacted the 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center. They talked to the TACC Senior who then patched them through with the Battle Staff Director and on in through to the American Embassy on the ground in Tbilisi. The embassy confirmed that the airfield was open and they wanted them to continue the mission, so they did.

The second was the possibility of getting intercepted by Russian fighters as they entered Georgian airspace. To make sure they were ready in case of a contingency they intensely studied their intercept procedures in the flight information handbook -- a pretty good thing to do.

Nearing the border the crew of Reach 422 donned armor, strapped on helmets, and cinched down their seatbelts as they executed their combat entry checklist. They entered Georgian airspace with defensive systems armed, not fully knowing what to expect. The next hurdle was going to be the descent, approach and landing in the field.

In the previous days the Russians had bombed the majority of radar sites in the country. They had deployed armor columns that were approximately 15 to 20 miles from the field. This left the crew with a hostile, night time, no-radar mountainous terrain environment in which to negotiate.

Now what happened next surprised everyone on the crew because upon the opening of the crew entry door it was obvious that a lot of people knew they were coming. Approximately 100 people were there waiting for the crew to come down the stairs. Numerous camera flashes complemented the cheering that was going on in the background. U.S. Ambassadors, Georgian government officials, as well as reporters from CNN, NBC and Fox were all there. The first person who shook their hands at the bottom of the stairs was a U.S. State Department Special Envoy. He thanked all of them for their efforts on behalf of Mikhail Saakashvili, the Georgian President. And a Special Envoy told the crew of Reach 422 that about 1.5 ours before they landed the President of the United States, President George W. Bush, addressed millions around the world from the Rose Garden at the White House, and during that speech the President announced a U.S. C-17 aircraft with humanitarian supplies is on its way. Again, promises made and promises kept.

Air Mobility is having an impact that the world can see in its headlines every day. The recent move of combat troops from Iraq to Georgia and then the quick delivery of humanitarian aid into Tbilisi is really a vivid illustration of Air Mobility. But it is also a significant reminder that there are many interesting similarities between the Berlin Airlift of 60 years ago and our modern day operations. Times and places are different, but in many ways history is repeating itself.

Today once again we are employing airlift to relieve a population that is struggling for democracy and whose security is in jeopardy. Once again we're transiting specific airspace corridors to rescue a city whose conventional supply routes had been cut off. And once again, America is leveraging her mobility warriors to stand by her friends and deliver humanitarian aid in their time of need.

Today's promise of hope rests firmly on the cornerstone of the humanitarian relief that was provided during the Berlin Airlift. The spirit of hope is grounded in the commitment to uniting forces and standing with our fellow man to deter aggression and uphold democracy anywhere in the world.

Humanitarian airlift remains a valid form of U.S. foreign policy, and just as you could see the hope we delivered in the eyes of the West Berliners, I'm certain that the first crew of Reach 422 saw that same hope in the eyes of the Georgians.

As in the Berlin Airlift, today's heroes are not just AMC air crews, it's part of the total force team -- Reservists, Guardsmen, ground crews, maintainers, air traffic controllers, logisticians, and many more who provide this hope, and quite frankly make miracles happen every day. It's those dedicated Airmen who continue to deliver the spirit of hope around the world.

What perhaps has changed is the routine nature in which they provide humanitarian relief at home and abroad while simultaneously conducting combat missions around the world, all without missing a beat.

Now 2008 marks the 18th year of Air Mobility Command's continuous combat support. Though that has for the most part remained consistent, we've had quite a year in reaching out to those in need.

Back in May, Cyclone Nargis was a strong tropical cyclone that caused the worst natural disaster in the recorded history of Burma. When the cyclone made landfall on the 2nd of May it caused catastrophic destruction and at least 130,000 fatalities and thousands more people were missing. In what was dubbed Operation Caring Response, U.S. Air Force C-130 Hercules loaded with emergency relief supplies touched down at Rangoon International Airport in Burma on the 12th of May in support of national disaster relief efforts. We flew some 63 C-130 missions into Myanmar, Burma. We delivered over 1.1 million pounds of relief supplies. And we sent some 45 members of the 36th Contingency Response Group from Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, to open and operate the airfields. That was a PACAF operation that's helped support this entire mission.

In May a devastating 7.9 earthquake shook the Szechuan Province in China leaving more than 32,000 dead and over 250,000 injured. That was again responded to by, after receiving Chinese requests, we ended up delivering two C-17s, 200,000 pounds of FEMA-supplied humanitarian aid. And the C-17s that we had stationed at Hickam back in 2005 proved their worth because within 24 hours of the government coordination being completed, the cargo was being off-loaded in China.

In January a 25 person British fishing trawler known as the Argos Georgia, was located below the Antarctic Circle and found itself stranded without main power due to a broken engine piston. They had been stranded there since the 23rd of December, and after six days and with bad weather continuing to increase and icebergs looming, the British Embassy requested U.S. assistance and the situation was designated an emergency.

After obtaining mission approval, a C-17 took off from Christ Church New Zealand and they flew about 300 feet above the

surface and at about 150 knots. This crew from McCord on a McCord C-17 dropped exactly what they needed. The results were amazing. The bundle was dropped directly on top of one of the ice sheets within 200 yards of the vessel.

Then in July of this year we were called for a Colombia hostage repatriation. Now after their plane went down in the jungles of southern Colombia in February of 2003, three Americans were captured by the Leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. You probably know it as the FARC. They were forced to endure captivity for more than five years. The three military contractors were rescued by the Colombian military and they were returned home on one of our C-17s. The C-17 was from Travis Air Force Base and the crew was from Charleston Air Force Base, along with an aeromedical evacuation team from Pope Air Force Base.

It shows that the things that we've done in Air Mobility Command over the years to be able to respond quickly are paying dividends.

While we're on the subject of using Air Mobility forces to provide the outstretched hand of our nation to those around the world, it's just as important to provide that same outstretched hand of hope to those right here at home.

This summer was a particularly difficult one for the citizens of California as three years of below normal rainfall left their forests prone to wildfires that are sparked usually by lightning strikes. Since late June our National Guard and Air Force Reserve C-130 units were actively engaged in combating those fires and assisting the U.S. Forestry Service and the firefighters on the ground in containing and controlling them.

As for the Gulf Coast you know that we're currently in the heart of hurricane season now. As you know, we all held a collective breath as Hurricane Gustav made landfall back on the first of September. Then we started bracing for the next wave of hurricanes -- Hannah and Ike. I'm sure you all remember the original Ike, President Eisenhower, and we're still flying some of his airplanes. We'll talk more about that later. [Laughter].

Post-hurricane requirements involve anything from aeromedical evacuation and transport of emergency personnel to delivering humanitarian aid to include food, water and supplies. Overall during that time we placed more than 50 aircraft and 100 air crews on alert, standing ready to immediately assist relief operations. As always, I was very thankful for the great teamwork from Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard and our partners at Altus and Little Rock in Air Education and Training Command.

So in dealing with natural disasters here at home, the men and women of Air Mobility Command did great. They made these past few months look effortless, but I think all of you know that's not true. The coordination between federal, state and local agencies and the military components requires a great deal of preparation in order to be successful.

The year as a whole was a success, and I'd like to share some of the numbers that actually tell that story.

You'll recall that one of the lessons I pointed out earlier was that you have to track metrics and their value to maximize the impact of what we're doing. Taking that to heart, the experts of the 618th TACC maintain a slide like this, and they always tell us exactly what's going on. As a matter of fact on that slide I usually get to see Air Mobility Command daily some 900 sorties that come across my desk.

It's incredible, really, to stop and think that that means that every 90 seconds somewhere in the world a big gray aircraft is rolling down a runway with an AMC tail flash. Believe it or not, earlier this year we set an all-time high water mark when we hit 1,051 sorties on the same day. That's one departure every 82.2 seconds if you're into the math of this. But it's pretty amazing that this all happens. I got to thinking a little bit more about what are total sorties and hours. So I asked the question. I said I wonder how this translates to how much time do our air crews spend aloft if you were to look at all this? Incredibly, we are on track this year to accumulate over 80 years, 80 years aloft, by the end of this fiscal year. Eighty years. That's how old our tankers are going to be, but we'll talk about that later, too.

In addition to us achieving our one millionth sortie since 9/11, in those 80 years that we were airborne, we accomplished quite a few other things. We had a big year when it came to looking at all the thing we could do.

If you can give me the next slide --

Here are a few samples. The first one, Operation Maggie Migration. You may remember that on the 50th Anniversary of our Air Force there was a whale named Keiko. Keiko got moved from, all the way up to Iceland to be let free.

It turns out Keiko must have talked to his animal friends and now we had to move in the 60th anniversary year of our Air Force, we had to move Maggie the elephant. It seems that Maggie was up in Alaska and she needed to go to the Old Elephants Home. So we flew her safely down to California where she is frolicking among the other elephants in California. I didn't know we had elephants in California, but that's where she is. [Laughter].

On January 14th the Expeditionary Airlift Squadron set a record drop of some 80,000 pounds of food or water from a C-17 through the Afghan sky and onto the folks on the ground.

We continued the record-setting pace was done in the month of March when we set all kinds of records for total passengers moved and total cargo moved, we beat the existing record by some three percent, over 120,000 passengers, and 41.3 tons more which exceeded the record by some seven percent.

At the same time with the help of Military Sealift Command we continued to deliver the MRAPs -- Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles. We did so just three months after we met the Secretary of Defense's goal of getting 1500 of them into theater by the end of 2007. And we had the first high deck patient loading platform delivered in April of 2008 which allows us to move passengers with ease, and we now have three of them so it will help us all around the world.

In May we retired not only the oldest KC-135 in the fleet, but the oldest airframe in the entire Mobility Air Force inventory. This was known as Foxy Lady. Foxy Lady was the tanker that appeared in 1964 in the movie Dr. Strangelove. [Laughter].

We also had an opportunity to go down and participate in Air Force Week in Philadelphia. We had an opportunity to do an awful lot and I had an opportunity to speak at the Global Reach Forum along with General Schwartz.

In August we had the first overseas flight of our re-engined C-5. It was some 11 hours. They took off from Alaska and flew to Germany over the North Pole. C-5M is proceeding very well and doing fine.

And I'm very proud to say that we had the best 101 critical days of summer this year. We did not lose a single Airman in Air Mobility Command for the first time ever.

[Applause].

2008 was a great year, but we're not going to rest on our laurels, so I have to tell you a little bit about our mobility way ahead. So over the course of this past year we've made great strides towards modernization and recapitalization. Even though the pace may not have been as fast as we would like, we're continuing to make progress.

I had planned to talk all about the tanker fleet and the imperative of getting on with the tanker business, but General Schwartz gave such an outstanding description of why we need the

new tanker, I would just ask you to refer to his speech because I couldn't say it any better. The bottom line is, we need a tanker, we need it now, and we need to move out with it.

So as we talk about what the future of our 135 fleet will be, make no doubt, we have to replace it.

Having said that, we are taking great strides to preserve it in the near term. Over 50 percent of our KC-135 fleet has had the global air traffic management upgrades. Over 80 percent have been upgraded with flight director systems, radio altimeters and auto pilot systems that they need.

The other piece is the KC-10. Our KC-10 is now 25 years old but it's got a lot of life left in it. We need to fix it and we need to have it prepared in the event that the KC-135 fleet has to be grounded. The only thing that we could fall back on is our KC-10s, so it's absolutely imperative that we move out with some modernization efforts to allow it to be able to fly in airspace that has limited its restrictions beginning in 2015.

When we talk about our airlift fleet, modernization programs are going very very well. The AMP program in C-5 is doing well and as I mentioned we'll be RERPing, re-engining, 52 of our C-5s. That test program has gone phenomenally well. It's on time and moving forward now.

Our C-17. We've accepted deliver of 177 of the 200 C-5s that we were going to get, and we're happy to see that international sales continue to improve throughout the world. This month, Dover and Travis Air Force Base will actually receive their final number of tails for the C-17 for their bases. That program is doing well and the C-17 has been a workhorse.

When you look at our intra-theater fleet, we continue to add C-130Js to our fleet. We will have a total of 132 C-130Js and we'll be modernizing with AMP 222 of our C-130s. The AMP test program is going well.

We also will be looking forward to resolving differences on Capital Hill with the Joint Cargo Aircraft, and bringing that into our inventory.

So that, ladies and gentlemen, is Air Mobility Command, a tribute to our legacy, a look at our contributions today, and a road map to our forthcoming successes of tomorrow. So whether it's enabling America's clenched fist in support of the global war on terror or extending her outstretched hand to those in need at home or abroad, Air Mobility Command continues the proud legacy that was handed down by those who stood before us.

The heroes of the Berlin Airlift saved the lives of 2.2 million Berliners. It was air power alone that kept them warm and fed for some 15 months.

That same drive and determination that gave Airmen the will to persevere still burns in the hearts of Airmen today as they return troops to their homeland and deliver humanitarian aid, despite patrolling fighters and airspace restrictions. It's these Airmen, our total force Airmen, from the active duty, Guard and Reserve, that continue to raise their hand and voluntarily put themselves in harm's way so that hope may reach those in need.

A former commander, General Cross, used to say that the sun never sets on Air Mobility Command. So let me end by showing you how come the sun never sets on Air Mobility Command, and show you why we're a 24 hour operation.

Please run the video and you'll see all our Mobility Airmen in the course of just one day.

[Video shown].

Thank you, Mr. Largent, for hosting us here today, and thank you ladies and gentlemen for coming out to join us. God bless each and every one of you and God bless this great Air Force of ours.

Thank you, Sandy.

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