

"Future of Air Mobility"

General Arthur Lichte

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General Lichte: Good afternoon, everybody. All the mobility team is out here. We've got you by name and number. Thank you for showing up. Those of you in Air Mobility Command wearing uniforms, you all get a good assignment after this. All those guys who left, they're in trouble. [Laughter].

I am very happy to be here this afternoon. I would say that I'm the last thing between you and some cold adult beverages, but I saw some of you out in the sports bar before I started talking, so I know that's not true.

Let's get serious. Let's talk a little bit about Air Mobility Command and the great men and women we have, because we have some fantastic people in Air Mobility Command. One of them you saw yesterday, our Command Chief, Chief Joe Baron, who is sitting right out here watching my every move and word. But Chief Joe Baron will also be retiring this year, and he has led our enlisted people, and he's the one who comes in and closes the door and tells me what's really going on. So Chief Baron, let me say in front of this group, thank you very much.

[Applause].

But I want to tell you a little bit about Air Mobility Command this afternoon. The way I want to do it is I want to start by just telling you a little bit about our heritage and our past. Because I think it's important that we always remember where we've been before we start looking and wondering where we're going to go.

It was some 91 years ago that we had our first airlift. I'm going to talk about our core competencies. It was an airlift airplane back in 1918 that took some enlisted men from Chanute Air Force Base or Air Force Station at the time, I guess, to Champaign, Illinois. This airlift business didn't really kind of catch on very quickly because the airplane didn't carry very many people. But we found out that it was really pretty good for carrying the baseball team. So it carried the baseball team from Dayton, Ohio, out to all their visiting games. That's how really the airlift piece of this and how carrying passengers started out.

Also in that timeframe, we started our aeromedical core competency. This plane that's depicted right there is a Jenny, JH-4 Jenny, and it started back at, really, Ellington Field was the first place that they did aeromedical evacuations.

This is an airplane that we had at Scott Air Force Base, because after they proved the concept at Ellington they said we need to send this out and make sure that all our airfields for crash and rescue have an airplane like this.

What they did, and you can see it in the picture, is they kind of took out the back seat of the Jenny, they put a folding latch kind of thing on it, and they put in the patient. And then that daring pilot would take off and take that patient to wherever they needed to go out at Scott Air Force Base or Scott Field at the time. They flew the great distance to Mascoutah, Illinois, which is really the next town right outside our gate. Not a very far distance, and they didn't go very fast, and the doctors didn't kind of like the concept of having a daring pilot with just a patient. So shortly thereafter we put an extra seat in there and started carrying a doctor around. They increased the number to two patients and one doctor. From that time, we've always had doctors flying with us. So that's how our core competency of aeromedical evacuation started out.

That leaves another core competency; air refueling. I think probably if I were to ask anyone in this room you would all say yes, I've heard of the Question Mark.

The Question Mark was the airplane that took off 80 years ago, because it was January 1st, over the Rose Bowl that the Question Mark took off, and they wanted to prove the concept that they could keep that airplane aloft. And they did for six days orbiting over southern California.

Now what many of you don't know is that in 1929 that spurred kind of competition among cities around the rest of the United States. In August of that same year, in 1929, they had the Spokane Sun-God. The Spokane Sun-God took off from Spokane, flew down to San Francisco, flew over to New York City, and then back to Spokane. That was the round trip. It took them five days to do it. And oh by the way, back in that time frame to arrange for air refueling you couldn't just get on the radio and say hey, meet me at the radios off of Omaha, Nebraska. You had to arrange it in advance, and so they did. And they had refuelings all the way across the country.

When they got to New York City, there were 100 planes that were airborne to greet and to cheer these folks on. They made the turn, and that's when they learned one of

their first lessons about air refueling. Headwinds are important to calculate. They started running out of fuel, so what were they going to do? They probably could have lost this whole flight and lost setting another record.

Well they were pretty smart, and as they got up over Kalispell, Montana, they started dropping notes out the window of the airplane saying can anyone come up and give us gas. They orbited there for awhile and, believe it or not, people responded. They got an airplane, and they ran down to the local creamery. You know those big creamery jugs? They filled those up with gas, took off with another airplane, and lowered them down by rope to guys in the Sun-God. They filled up their tanks. They then flew over the river and dropped the creamery jugs in the river. A little guy rowed out and picked them up. Air refueling complete. Mission complete. They made it all the way back to Spokane.

So you can see we do it a little bit differently nowadays, but still very, very important. You're going okay, come on, yeah, got it, we know all this history stuff but what are you doing for us lately. What is Air Mobility Command doing for you lately? Well I'll tell you what. We've been pretty busy.

When you look at this slide that we've got up here, again, across the top are our core competencies with airlift, aeromedical evacuation, and air refueling. We had a pretty banner year setting new records for doing an awful lot.

When you think about 13.1 million passengers -- that would be like taking the city proper of Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and throw in Manhattan up in New York -- that's the amount of people that we transferred this past year.

Aeromedical evacuation. I would tell you we're still moving too many patients. We want to get that number down to zero, but when we're needed we're there and we're getting those people to the hospitals and back home as quickly as possible.

And then when you look at the refueling core competency, an unbelievable amount of fuel has been passed. Mike said it seemed like just a short time ago -- it was actually September 2007 -- when I stood before you and I brought a big slide of Niagara Falls. I said you would have to sit here and watch that for 24 minutes. Now you would have to sit and watch that same slide, with water running over it, for 41 minutes. That's the amount of fuel that has been passed in just the additional time that I've been in command since September of '07.

When you say okay, who are the customers for Air Mobility Command? They're along the bottom, with our biggest customer, CENTCOM, right in the middle. Of course, that shouldn't surprise anyone. There's a war in Iraq and Afghanistan going on and so that's our busiest customer.

Our second busiest, of course, is NORTHCOM, right here in the United States, with Operation Noble Eagle and all the things going on, all the Guard and Reserve training and all the active duty training, all the exercises. So it makes sense, again, that NORTHCOM is, again, our second biggest customer.

And then finally, the third biggest customer is European Command, EUCOM. And again, it makes sense when you think about all the aircraft that we have flowing in the skies and moving around.

When you crunch all those numbers together, you come out with an amazing number of sorties and hours. And so I asked our guys, I said hey, what does this translate to, because we can look at that for a long time and we won't be able to figure it out.

Well if you convert those numbers of hours into years, Air Mobility Command, or the mobility air forces, flew just short of 83 years last year in one year; 83 years up in the air. That's pretty amazing, but that number struck me because when you think about it, our tankers are going to be 83 years old in real life if we don't get on with the new tanker program.

So it's pretty amazing when you crunch these numbers, but it all turns out to that brief bumper sticker that we've been saying for a long time. Every 90 seconds, somewhere in the world, a big Air Mobility Command aircraft is rolling down a runway and we're pretty proud of that.

We're pretty proud of it, but that's talking about our air crews and our aircraft. What we're even more proud of is some of our young Airmen that are out there, our expeditionary Airmen that are out doing different things.

I'd like to share a little bit of a story with one of those folks who's not out there generating sorties and missions. The story I'm going to tell you is about Captain Wendy Kosek.

Captain Wendy Kosek is a recent graduate from the Law School of Notre Dame. She's a lawyer, a JAG, working at Little Rock Air Force Base. Wendy was working at Little Rock Air Force Base till June of this year when she deployed. She deployed to Baghdad, Iraq. When she got over there, she was assigned to work on the Task Force 134, which

is the detainee operations. And Wendy was working with all those detainees to give them their legal rights and to make sure they were being treated properly.

In August she took off on a typical mission where she was going from one base to the other, and on the way she met with an explosion. One of those explosively formed penetrators, the EFPs that they talk about, hit her vehicle. It was a terrible explosion and, as you would imagine, there was a lot of damage and also people who were hurt.

The thing that saved Captain Wendy Kosek is the fact that she had gone through some Expeditionary Airman training up our Air Force Expeditionary Center at McGuire, Fort Dix, and Lakehurst. I talked to her just yesterday. She's doing great, but she talked about this training she received at the Expeditionary Center, because she said she knew exactly what was going to happen next.

She saw the person across from her come over and start administering self aid and buddy care. She saw the other vehicles starting to get out and move them, first of all securing the perimeter and moving them from one vehicle to another.

And then Wendy began the next phase of her journey as she then got back to Camp Victory. At Camp Victory, she started the trip back home. In five days she was back home, but along the way she stopped at five different military hospitals and she had two surgeries, which took a little bit longer to get her home. But she is now back safely in the United States, and I talked to her on the phone just yesterday down at San Antonio, and she is doing fantastic. And she told me that everything she did that day was because of the great people she was with.

Now in my mind, Wendy is just another example of the fine men and women we have in our Air Force and in Air Mobility Command. We pick them up and we tap them on the shoulder at any one time and we say okay, you're going to deploy.

The JAGs weren't really prepared to be out doing real hand-to-hand combat or anything else. They certainly weren't planning on having something like this happen. But Wendy, due to her great training is alive today and she tells a great story. Captain Kosek, we hope, will be back in action pretty soon.

I've got to tell you that yesterday she was smiling and so exuberant and enthusiastic and she's ready to come back and get right back into the game as quickly as possible. Now we need to make sure that we take care of all our Airmen

like that, and we need to make sure that we continue to go forward in what we do and how we prepare for the future.

I also want to tell you that as Wendy was talking about what a great year it was for her, and how different, and how she's so happy to be alive, and how her family comes and asks her to tell all the stories, we got to talk a little bit about what a great year Air Mobility Command is having. I want to share some of the things that Air Mobility Command has been this last year, because it's pretty amazing when you step back and think of all the things that go on.

For example, if you were sitting and wondering what would ever happen if a tsunami came and wiped out the southern coast of Puerto Rico, who would you call? Now don't say Ghostbusters; that'll give your age away. Not Ghostbusters; you have to call Air Mobility Command, and we would call our contingency response wing. They went out and they did an exercise down there in Puerto Rico to make sure that if anything like that happens we're prepared to respond.

And oh by the way, if you're the President of the United States and you want to move equipment and people into Darfur as a result of the UN mandate, you call Air Mobility Command again. And Air Mobility Command will respond.

And oh by the way, if you're the National Science Foundation and you want to know how to get equipment and cargo to the most remote spot in Antarctica, you call Air Mobility Command again.

And then if you want to move an orphanage and get furniture and equipment down in Guatemala, you call Air Mobility Command and we'll send you up to Dover. We'll put it all on a C-5 and we'll take care of it.

And oh by the way, you've all heard about the swine flu. Well South America was getting ready to go through their winter and they needed some help in getting the dependents the shots, whatever that word is, we needed to get the shots down there as quickly as possible to take care of the people in South America, and we were able to do that.

If you look at our tanker fleet, our tanker fleet has been flying like crazy with Operation Noble Eagle. If you look at the number of the sorties that the KC-10 has flown, and I would tell you that goes astronomically higher if you throw in the KC-135 sorties. And that goes on all year long.

And then you say okay, what about this surge business that's going on in Afghanistan. Who do you call? Well you call Air Mobility Command and we work a very unique way of

getting supplies from Japan down to Manas and we set up a shuttle to get all that matting and all the things that you need to get a big mobility operation going and to be prepared for that surge. And that all went like clockwork.

And then you say we want to move a Stryker Brigade, and we'll get those over there too. How are you going to do that? Well this time we did it a little bit differently in working with the United States Transportation Command, and we used an intermodal solution. All those Stryker vehicles and everything were sent to Diego Garcia and then from Diego Garcia we flew them up into the AOR.

You say okay, that's pretty good and things are going pretty good but did you do anything lately? Well just last week, actually about the time we were arriving here at AFA, we had our C-5M, the newly re-engined C-5 that's up at Dover, take off and set all kinds of records, 41 different records with time to climb, weight carry. And so the year keeps beating. It keeps going on, and that's just in a September-to-September timeframe that I wanted to share with you.

Now if we're going to do that, we've got to keep our fleet healthy. So I want to turn our attention a little bit right now to talk about how I view our core competencies. I told you how they were back in the early days of this command. I told you what we've been doing as a command lately. Now I want to kind of show you what we're doing in these three core competencies.

When you look at the airlift state of the fleet, I think we're in pretty good shape. Our inter-theatre piece is doing well. We have three C-130s that have completed AMP and are out testing now. They're doing very well.

And by the way, the other C-130E models we're trying to retire, and we're bringing in C-130Js to replace them, up to 132. We've just delivered our 67th C-130J over to Ramstein Air Force Base in USAFE, and we're getting ready, in November, they'll get their next one. But they're doing pretty well.

We also have two C-27Js out and flying and learning how to do business; quite frankly, as a joint team right now with the Army and the Air Force, but we are also looking at how we're going to take over the direct support mission for the Army with our C-27s. We'll get 38 of those aircraft and we'll figure out how we're going to implement that so that they can go on a deployment as early as next year.

If you turn the viewfinder over to the inter-theatre, the strategic lift, we're doing well on the C-5s. I just told you how well the C-5 RRRP program is doing. We begin a

full-blown surge test beginning on the 1st of October. The way the C-5 has been performing -- the C-5M has been performing extremely well. I don't see any problems as we go through that.

Oh by the way, the Avionics Modernization Program has kind of gone through the halfway point, and all the B models have now been AMPed, and so now we're just completing up the number of A models, which will bring us to a fleet of 111, but we can talk about that maybe in Question and Answer, depending on how many C-17s we ultimately end up with.

The C-17s have been doing a yeoman's work out in the AOR. They are probably our hardest working airplane right now. They're doing very well. We have our program was for 205 C-17s. Now we're up to 213 as a result of some inserts from Congress, and that's okay because what we need to do is then retire C-5s. The oldest and most tired C-5As, we'll retire them if we can get permission from Congress. We love the C-17s, and we can use them, but we have to make room on the ramps and we have to keep the balance just right.

When you look at our OSA and VTSAM fleet, we're doing pretty good. Things are going well. Those aircraft are performing very well. We would like to continue to modernize our fleet.

We wanted to start with the presidential aircraft, because even though you say that DC-25 looks pretty nice every time it pulls into a spot with the President getting off, that airplane is starting to get old too. We wanted to replace it in the 2017 time frame. But if we don't start now, we won't be able to have a replacement in place by 2017.

And so we're wrestling this, just like with a lot of priorities with the budget as we move forward. We're looking at defensive systems for the rest of the fleet, and we want to continue to modernize. So if you ask me how I think the airlift fleet is doing, I'd say we're doing pretty good. We're at probably a B+ or an A- if I had to give it a grade.

Then when you turn to the aeromedical evacuation core competency, I'll tell you right up front that I give this one an A+. We are doing absolutely fantastic. We are the only nation in the world that pays as much attention to aeromedical evacuation. We are the only nation in the world that stops what we're doing, sends an airplane in to pick up the lowest ranking Soldier, Sailor, Airman, or Marine, stop what we're doing, get them to safety, and that's our deal with them. We get them to safety and we get them to where their families are, and we get them to where they can get the best medical attention. And we can do this because of

the great things that have been accomplished over the last few years.

When you look at just the improvements that have been made since Desert Shield and Desert Storm, we've shrank the time that it takes to get someone back home. And when you can do that, you get them to much better medical care and you get them to be with their families. Just like we were talking about Captain Wendy Kosek. She was telling me how her mother and father were there with her in the hospital. That's important. That's important for the healing process, and it's also important for Mom and Dad to know how their son or daughter is doing. And so we will continue to work on that.

It has been a pretty good news story when you look at the survival rate, because when you look all the way from the very beginning of the Revolutionary War time all the way up to the present, the survival rate is pretty good if you fall on a battlefield. It gets even better if you can make it to a hospital at Balad or Baghrum, and we'll get you back home. That survival rate gets up to about 98%. It's doing pretty well.

As a matter of fact, if you think about the time two years ago when I stood in front of you and we talked about aeromedical evacuation, I told you about a Sergeant Powers. Sergeant Powers was the soldier who fell in Iraq under attack and had a knife stuck in his head. Do you all remember that story? Well I can report to you today that Sergeant Powers completed his jumps. Remember he was Airborne. He has completed his jumps and now he's back in Afghanistan serving again. All as a result of the great aeromedical evacuation that we have in our Air Force that happens to reside right now in Air Mobility Command.

Now the grade that I've got to give to the tankers is probably a D, and if we don't get this new tanker on contract pretty soon we'll be giving it an F. But in the meantime, because the KC-135 is going to be around for a long time, we've got to continually update it. We've got to modernize it. So therefore, we're going through this Block 45, as we call it, to get the navigation systems up to speed and to make sure that it can fly in that sweet airspace around the world.

We've got the stab trim mod that was as a result of an accident in Gailenkirchen, Germany many years ago. We found out we needed to put a brake on the trim. That's in progress, and we continue to do that, and we found a way to improve the braking system. Where it was usually just getting a few landings and then we'd have to change the brakes, and our poor Airmen would have to work hard to do

that, now we can get up to maybe a thousand landings before we have to start changing brakes.

I mention the maintenance guys because really everything that we're doing in the KC-135 world comes on the backs of our maintainers. Seven to ten hours of maintenance on the ground by those guys for every hour that that KC-135 flies in flight.

It's tragic that we have people working on 50-year-old airplanes. It's tragic, I think, that we've got people flying on 50-year-old airplanes.

As a matter of fact, Mike was picking on me for my age, but I am one of the few people left at Air Mobility Command that was even born when the first KC-135 rolled out to fly. Now granted, I was a little kid, Mike, but these airplanes - - even the President wasn't around when the first KC-135 rolled off the assembly line.

We need to get on with replacing them. We can talk about that in your Q & A's, but I think you know where I'm coming from on that, and we've just got to get on with it.

When you talk about our KC-10, the KC-10 is no spring chicken either; it's 25 years old. And by the way, we haven't done anything to the KC-10 to modernize it. It has about the same equipment that it had when it first rolled out in 1981.

We need to start getting on with an avionics modernization program for that, but we're facing a lot of obsolescence issues. Especially when you start talking about the boom control unit. We don't have the manufacturers to do that. We've got to go out and remanufacture and start fresh on some of those things, and we need to keep the KC-10s flying till about the year 2045. So it's important that we continue to take care of modifications on these tankers.

And when you start to look for the new requirement and you say okay, well how many tankers do you need, there's a requirement out there for 520 to 640 KC-135 replacements. We've started out on this path by announcing that we were going to do KC-X, which is 179 aircraft.

Some people say well why don't you wait, maybe you don't need that many. I guarantee you that we need a minimum of 179, and so we've got to get on with this KC-X contract.

The way we designed the whole program was KC-X, KC-Y, and KC-Z. And we know with a requirement of 520 to 640 that

we are already seeing a gap. We only have 474 tankers, so there is a readiness gap that we have out there.

What we need to do is we need to get on with the program. The KC-X will take care of that first surge. KC-Y will bring us up to the second one, and then we'll use KC-Z as a shock absorber and we can figure out how many we really need and whether UAVs are being refueled at that time or what other new concept has come along.

So when you think about what we've been doing in our airlift, air refueling, and aeromedical evacuation areas, you've got to remember that the age on all of our systems is kind of a common factor. When you say okay, why is that important to you, it's the same reason it's important to the airlines.

When you look at comparisons of some airlines that we've looked at, to maintain a large fleet of aircraft is a big deal. There are only four 707s left in the whole United States. If you're going to maintain one of them, you can do it like your '57 Chevy that you've got parked out in the garage. But if you have a whole fleet that's being used every day, you've got to manage it differently.

The airlines have figured this out. That's why you see their average lifespan of the aircraft that they have, because they've found out you can get rid of the aircraft, bring new ones in, and it really will save you money in the long run because of efficiencies in fuel; efficiencies by how you use them.

You look at our numbers and our projected numbers. We operate them, and we're just hoping that we don't end up with a catastrophic failure like they've had in the civilian world a couple of times. The Aloha Airlines flight is a fair example of that, when you look at how the skin peeled back on that airplane.

We want to make sure we never ever get to that point. That's why we put so much investment and time in the maintenance end of this. That's why our maintainers are working so hard, and the people at Depot working for General Hoffman are putting so much effort into this, because we never want to get to this catastrophic failure of our refueling business.

Now I told you the grades. I give this a D, maybe going to an F. Our aeromedical evacuation is A+, and our airlift fleet is probably A- or B+, somewhere in there, because we're doing good.

But we can't just worry about this. We've got to start thinking about the whole next generation. What comes beyond

all this? And so that leads us into discussions that we have around the headquarters to try and figure out when is the right time to buy into something else, and how will that help us.

So we're talking about things like C-X, which is the replacement aircraft for a C-17 or a C-5. When is the right time to start bringing that in? How can we afford it? How do we put it into the long-range plans? We talk about that in our Air Mobility Master Plan.

We talk about the Joint Future Theatre Lifter. That's a little bit closer in and we try and figure out what is the Army going to need, because they're our biggest customer with this. What size box do they need that we can carry and how will we do it? And that leads to discussions on the JFTL.

We talk about automated air refueling. We certainly want to get a new tanker, but by the time we get to that KC-Z time frame, we may be talking about unmanned air refueling platforms coming in behind us. How will that affect us? We've got to figure out what's the right time and how do we do that.

We're always thinking about energy conservation, so we've got our C-5s, our C-17s, our KC-135s, and KC-10s. They're getting ready to be used with alternative fuels. We're using the Fisher Tropes. We've proven that. And now we're getting ready to prove it with biomass fuel, and we've got to do that too for the future.

We've talked about airdrop. How can we improve airdrop? Right now we go twice over the target, even with precision airdrop, because we do the drop zones. We drop them and then come back around. We've got to figure out a way to get to single-pass airdrops. And then we've got to figure out for the future, how we can carry a much bigger load. That's why we're looking at things like hybrid airships.

All that's out in the future. Sometimes you get all focused up front, but you've got to remember that someone has got to be looking out there and then figure out how to blend it in at the right time.

Whether it's the past, whether it's the present, or whether it's the future, Air Mobility Command really delivers one thing. We deliver hope. Whether it's for that patient that we're evacuating. Whether it's that soldier on the ground that's waiting for a fighter to come rolling in. No matter what it is, we're out there to provide hope. We provide hope with that outstretched hand when we go for a humanitarian crisis, or we provide that closed fist of

justice when an enemy deserves to have the bombs dropping on their heads.

So that's our story of Air Mobility Command. That's what I wanted to share with you. That's why I thought this was so important that I was going to go last, by virtue of good old General Dunne. But I wanted to share that with you and leave you with those thoughts as a minimum and then we'll leave the rest of the time for Mike and all of you to ask questions. That's it, Mike.

[Applause].

Moderator: General Lichte, I know that when we had the Senior Leader Panel here I asked a question about a building a joint partnership. I know AMC is involved with building joint partners overseas. I know you wanted to say a little bit about it then, so let me ask you now. What kind of work is AMC doing right that would help improve --

General Lichte: With irregular warfare and building partnership capacity, I would tell you that that's what Air Mobility Command is all about. We've been doing that since the early days, in the beginning.

Hey, could you throw up that one backup slide we had before we were going to include it, wherever you are, Colonel Webb? As he's doing that --

Our job is to be out there in the en-route structure. Our job is to be out making friendships and building those partnerships every single day. And I would tell you that we do it whenever we're around the world. We're out reaching out, meeting new people, talking to them, and sharing weapons systems. We now have the C-17 out with all kinds of folks.

So when you start talking about building partnership capacity, and bring up that next part of the slide, we are working that. We work the supply chain with all the different countries. We work our maintenance and we share that with the folks. We work our support equipment. We're out there partnering, and as people in the airport and other areas work together, they're going to be using the same equipment.

Our air crew is part of building partnership capacity, because they're out there shaking hands with the folks. Command and Control, working with the people in those countries, are important. Certainly partner nations; that's what we deal with all the time.

Training. We're sharing training right now with Afghanistan and with Iraq. And our aircraft, wherever we go, it has got the big American flag and it's building partnership capacity.

So when I tell people about this for us, it is Air Mobility Command when you're talking about irregular warfare and building partnership capacity. And we do it every day.

Today we're flying, I think it was 942 missions and most of them are in foreign places, and we're making new friends, and we're building that relationship that we can come back. Whether it's in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and all those other -stan countries. Wherever we go we're meeting people that someday we want to go back and work with again.

We do that as we share our C-130s and our C-17s. The more aircraft that we can work and have together in partnership, Airman-to-Airman relationships will be important. So anyhow, irregular warfare and building partnership capacity, I think that's right up our alley.

Moderator: That's great. To follow up on that, I don't know that everybody in this audience realizes how difficult it is to build an airbridge. What goes in first, what goes in second, what kind of overflight rights do you get? Can you give us an idea of the complexity of that issue to try to go into say a bare base far away?

General Lichte: Sure. Well obviously building the airbridge is the first thing that happens. After 9/11 the first thing that we did in the Air Mobility Command, and General Robertson remembers, was that we put tankers on alert because we knew that somebody was going to be going east or west. Then you figure it out later how you're going to do this. But you automatically start prepositioning folks.

The people up in the northeast right now, our Guard friends out of Pease really help set up that airbridge that starts from the United States. Then, depending on where you go, you have to have tankers in all those various countries.

And so over the years, Air Mobility Command has built up relationships with some of those folks. We've built our new en-route structure and, instead of just concentrating on airlift, we've now combined tankers in with that.

For many years we just worried about the airlift and working relationships for an airlifter to go somewhere. Now it's all about tankers.

Of course when you bring this in you have to bring in the support equipment to keep those KC-135s or KC-10s moving in the system, and that means that you're going to have to have some C-17s drop in with all the equipment and the ground equipment in order to operate.

It's pretty complex, but it's the first thing you've got to do to lay out your tanker bridge before you start deciding where you're going to move the aircraft. Whether it's the C-17s that will bring follow-on loads or, as it was early on in Enduring Freedom, the B-2s.

The big choice is are you going to go east or west. Well, we didn't have the time or the luxury to say well we'll just put our tankers in one form or fashion. We actually had to put our tankers out east and west in order to be prepared once the decision was made to go west or east. So it's an important piece.

Moderator: Can you give us an update on the health of the Civil Reserve Airlift Fleet?

General Lichte: The health of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet. Yeah, we rely on them immensely. For passengers, we rely on the Civil Reserve Air Fleet the most because we really don't have the big numbers of passenger-carrying airplanes, so we rely on them for that. And then we use them for what we call the bulk cargo. Anything oversized or outsized we use our C-17s and C-5s for.

The health of the fleet is doing pretty good. We went through that problem time about a year and a half ago when some of the companies were going out of business. Now they've kind of all gotten together and formed strength with those that are remaining. We are working with the Hill to make sure that there's some guaranteed business, because their big concern is okay, we're doing good now and we're sustaining ourselves. What happens when this all comes to an end? Will we have any more business? Obviously, there is no end in sight right now but they are doing very well. We have meetings with them every six months, and we discuss these issues. We've got another one coming up just next week as a matter of fact, so they're in pretty good shape.

Moderator: Congress has consistently added C-17s to the Air Force buy, which is from AFA's perspective a good thing, but I note that when the C-17s get added that you don't get the people, the facilities, and some of the other things it needs to operate them. Can you comment on what kinds of other things do you need if you get issued these airplanes, and are you going to have to recommend retirement of others if you don't get them, other aircraft.

General Lichte: Well you hit the nail on the head. The C-17 is a great airplane. It's a tremendous workhorse. We're happy to get them, but we know that budgets are a problem. That's what we've heard throughout this whole Air Force Association week. We've heard the problems that we're going to have to wrestle with the budget.

Do we have other priorities that are higher than getting more C-17s? The answer is usually yes, but in the long run if we get more C-17s then we need to retire aircraft, and in this particular case we would retire C-5s.

We have a list of the worst-performing C-5s to the best-performing C-5s, and we would go to the worst-performing C-5s and we would start to eliminate them. Our plan is if we get anything over the 205, which was the program requirement that we stated earlier, that we really need a one-for-one replacement or retirement for the C-5s for us to keep going.

C-17s are great. We'll take them. But we have to keep -- In my mind I would say that the absolute minimum is we have to do the 52 that we're going to re-engine, the 52 C-5Ms that we'll be calling them that are really made up of the D models, one A model, and two Cs. That gives us 52 aircraft. We need to continue that. Anything other than that, we'll keep retiring C-5As.

Moderator: AMC has been a model for the Air Force for the total force integration with the reserve components. Can you give us an overview of how that's going now and what's going on in that area for you guys?

General Lichte: First of all, you've got to go all the way back to the '60s on our airlift fleet, because that's when we've had reserve associates, and the reserves and actives have been flying together. Really, in most of our airlift communities in the C-17s, C-5s -- KC-10s I would put there because the KC-10s were born into associate programs - - they do real well.

The KC-135 that had come from Strategic Air Command had never really had an associate program. They were owned by active duty, they were owned by the Guard, and they were owned by the Reserve, and we didn't really blend them together very much. Now we're doing that because we find out we can get much more out of them.

The same on the C-130s. So we stood up the first associate unit in Wyoming in our C-130 world, and we put an Active Duty squadron embedded with the Guard and that has worked out great. They're kind of the model we point to.

We now have a Guard unit up at Fairchild that's working and embedded with the active duty, and we're opening three more Guard units at Pease, Birmingham, and Scott, which will be associate units.

I would tell you that every one of our KC-X units that we're planning will be some type of an associate unit, whether it's owned by the active, owned by the Guard, or the Reserve, you will have one of the other elements associating with it. So we will continue to build on it, and it's working great. We love it.

Moderator: We've heard a lot this week about the growing focus on irregular warfare. As part of that effort, AMC has been working on a light-mobility aircraft to support required capabilities. How would you plan on using that aircraft in support of IW?

General Lichte: I'm going to be honest with you. It's very early in that stage of the program. We don't know yet. We're still talking about it.

When you talk to Air Mobility Command about it, we turn immediately to our contingency response wings because they're the ones out doing that building partnership capacity. They're the ones that are kind of the first ones in, and we know that when we talk about a light mobility aircraft the Chief's intent is to teach the whole system. Therefore, we want to make sure that they understand command and control, that they understand aerial port operations and things like that.

We've got to figure out how we're going to use it and where are we going to put them, whether they're flown by the Guard, Reserve, or active duty. All is still being debated, and I think we're going to get an update at the next Corona.

Moderator: A similar question on a different area. How about contracted refueling? Is that an option to meet some of the demands from the customer?

General Lichte: Contracted refueling. Fee for service.

Moderator: Right.

General Lichte: We've looked at this a number of times in Air Mobility Command and our Air Force. It hasn't proven fruitful till now.

We've been given a mandate by Congress that we have to go through a five-year study. We're following through with that right now.

Part of it is the vendors. The vendors have to come and say we are willing to buy the technology to put a boom on the airplanes. There is a lot of these companies that do just rogue, but they don't have the boom.

So we've got to find out if this makes sense, especially when you say how would we use it and would I have to pay extra for something that I'm already doing. Every time a tanker takes off it's doing its wartime mission. It's doing training and it's prepared to pass gas, which we will use in wartime. And so, if we go out and we pay someone else to do that and then in wartime I turn to the aircrews and they're not qualified because they haven't been getting the training, there's a problem. And so we have to figure out how are we going to do this.

Right now we've taken the refuelings and given them to Transportation Command to help prioritize, just like we do on the airlift side. And so they prioritize the most important to the least important air refueling and they validate it. Then we put our tankers against it. So if there's this little niche that we're doing over here, I may be paying twice for it because it may not reach the standard of the importance that TRANSCOM has put on it. If I then contract it out, now I'm paying for it and I shouldn't have been doing it at all.

So we are looking at this. We're following all the rules. We've had the Industry Day with AFMC, and AFMC kind of has the lead for now, and then it comes to Air Mobility Command where we'll do the follow-up.

Moderator: I normally don't like to ask a question that I don't know the answer to, but in the Air Force's efforts to revitalize the nuclear enterprise it strikes me that AMC has a role in that. What kinds of things are you involved with in that area?

General Lichte: Right. Well the big part is our tankers. We have a big number of tankers that participate with that mission and need to be qualified in the nuclear mission to support General Klotz and Global Strike Command. When the bombers go into a nuclear generation, our tankers would too.

Also, someone has to move those parts and pieces around and we do that with some of our C-17s. It's a very critical and a very important mission, but I would tell you that we've been very fortunate, knock on whatever, to have done very well on all our NSIs, and we just gave them a no-notice NSI to make sure that it was up to speed. And they're doing good with what we call the PNAF mission to move those parts

around, and our tankers are doing very well in their NORIs when they get their Nuclear ORIs, and that's back, by the way active, Guard, and Reserves who do that, so we're in pretty good shape on that.

Moderator: Last question, and it's more of a personal one. This questioner wants to know what the most memorable moment is in your long and distinguished Air Force career.

General Lichte: There are so many of them. I don't know. I would tell you that the most memorable moments are usually associated with people that I've worked with, some of them in this room, that I've gotten to know along the way so there's a lot of memorable moments there.

I would tell you that probably the one thing that you stop and say yes, I've got to remember that, and it's 9/11. And I think all of us remember that because I was with General Robertson that day and 9/11 happened. Just like all of you remember exactly where you were, and you realized that our Air Force will never again be the same and our country will never again be the same.

So, I don't know. There is a lot of memorable moments, and fortunately you don't have cameras for any of that, Mike.

Moderator: Right.

General Lichte: But it has been a wonderful 38-plus years and I still continue to have memorable moments as I sprint to the finish line.

Moderator: Sir, great presentation. It gives us a broad overview of what some arguably think is the most important command in the Air Force. On behalf of all of us at AFA, Chairman of the Board Joe Sutter, myself, and all of us, I want to thank you for a scintillating discussion.

We have for you an Air Force flag flown over the Air Force memorial on Memorial Day. What they probably haven't told you is that when you leave the Air Force you don't get to take your Air Force flag with you so this one can substitute for that.

General Lichte: Great. Well thank you very much, Mike. I appreciate it. Thank you. Thanks for all that you're doing too. Great. Thank you.

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