



A Fireside Chat with Maj. Gen. John Klein, Commander of the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center

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Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Hello, and welcome to Air & Space Warfighters in Action. I'm Doug Raaberg, the Executive Vice President of your Air & Space Forces Association. Thank you for joining us this morning. Our Warfighters in Action series is made possible thanks to our very generous sponsors: BAE Systems, Raytheon, Collins Aerospace, Deloitte, Elbit Systems of America, General Dynamics Mission Systems, Honeywell, L3Harris, Lockheed Martin, Oracle Cloud, the Roosevelt Group, and SAIC.

Our guest today is Major General John Klein, commander of the US Command Air Force Expeditionary Center, a critical organization inside Air Mobility Command. The center provides 24/7 expeditionary agile combat support and training at 42 locations in 24 countries around the globe. General Klein leads 14,000 Airmen assigned to the center's Air Force Expeditionary Operation School, five Air Mobility Command Wings, and two standalone groups. That's a big job.

Today's discussion couldn't be more timely. Air Mobility Command just wrapped up its largest full spectrum readiness event in history called Mobility Guardian 23, taking part across the Indo-Pacific Theater, Mobility Guardians sought to test the skills, the center, and parts onto Airmen, skills that are vital to any future conflict in that vast area of operations. General Klein, thank you so much for joining us today.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Hey, good morning General Raaberg. Thank you so much. Really appreciate this opportunity to join you all today. And wished it could have been in person, schedule didn't allow for that, but happy to be joining you here virtually. It's my pleasure to interact with the AFA and your audience.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, that's great. Good to be with you as a former long, long time ago, tanker guy and one who's dealt in the expeditionary world with mobility, I think we're going to have a very good conversation this morning. Let me just kick it off, if you don't mind.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yes.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

On the heels of Mobility Guardian 23, and I think our audience needs to understand that included at least 3,000 US and allied forces, and I understand upwards of 70 US Air Force aircraft. Can you tell us a little bit about the Expeditionary Center's role in that historic exercise?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

You bet, sir. Yeah, you got the numbers right. It was approximately 3,000 people, 70 aircraft for US forces and our partners and allies. Before I dive into that question, just want to expand a little bit on the overall mission sets of the Air Force Expeditionary Center. The numbers are all right there, 14,042 locations, 24 countries, and our five wings to two groups in the EOS. But we have four primary mission



sets. The first, of course, administered by our Expeditionary Operations school is Expeditionary Warfare Education and Training. We run about 100 courses a year and graduate about 40 some thousand students per year. Next is contingency response, and then En Route Air Mobility Support is our third one. Those two together constitute what we would call the Global Air Mobility Support System. And we can talk more about that later.

And then lastly our fourth overall mission set is joint basing. So we have coverage over three of DOD's 12 joint bases. And so we have presence at JBLM up in Western State, and Joint Base Charleston down in South Carolina, and here in New Jersey, where we're headquartered at Joint Base McGuire. So those are three big power projection platforms that we cover down on.

Regarding Mobility Guardian 23, this exercise was about the fight to get to the fight when we talk about the Secretary of the Air Force's six fights. And so as you know, this was the first iteration of Mobility Guardian that was not located here within the continental United States. We took this one abroad, and so lots of lessons learned there. It definitely required integrating with partners and allies, which was one of our objectives for the exercise. And the Expeditionary Center's role in this was really the Global Air Mobility Support System. So we had contingency response forces employed, we had our Air Mobility Support forces deployed in this. And so we were exercising our ability to explode into theater and create a lay down of forces, which, a lot of them are already there through the global Air Mobility support system, which is this global network of logistical nodes that provide aerial port, en route aircraft maintenance, and some degree of command and control capabilities.

But I like to think of if mobility forces, as General Minihan has said, as the commander of Air Mobility Command, if they're the maneuver for the joint force, I'd like to believe that the GAMSSS is the foundation of all that maneuver. So we like to preach, "There's no air mobility without air mobility support." So that's what we provided for Mobility Guardian 23 in the form of contingency response, air mobility teams, air mobility liaison officers, and air advisors to interact with partners and allies. So a huge play. We were all in along with our partners in 18th Air Force.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, I know your call sign is Speedy and I can't think of anything more appropriate. And I really like the point you said, is, "You got to fight to get to the fight." So let's expand on that. I think it's really important, is where were you when Global Guardian was occurring? And first question is really, what role did this center Airmen play in Mobility Guardian?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah, I was able to go out into theater for a portion of Mobility Guardian 23 and observe our Airmen in action. So I had the privilege of being in Japan and visiting some of our locations there at Yokota, and some of the other that areas that we deployed to, and interacted with some of our JASDF partners. So that was where I was. Now, a lot of our forces were essentially being commanded and controlled through the 618th Air Operations Center from Scott Air Force Base. So you talk about global reach, we're plugged into that and part of the global C2 architecture for air mobility command and mobility forces.

So part of what we were exercising and trying to do was the rapid expansion of the Global Air Mobility Support System. They currently exist at those 42 locations, but we need to have the ability to rapidly expand that capability in support of agile combat employment. And so that was a big part of this exercise. I saw us do that, as you look at almost these before and after pictures of where the current lay down is and then what the lay down was for our forces for Mobility Guardian 23, you see this, you know, expanded network of nodes that can service our mobility aircraft and others across the Indo-Pacific Theater. So that was really good. One of the most, I think illuminating and rewarding things that I



witnessed while I was out there was the integration that we had with allies and partners. The Japanese Air Self-Defense Force is currently trying to develop their own contingency response capability. And so we're forging just increasing and better and better relationships with JASDF right now through our contingency response wing.

And so the interaction that I saw at one of our locations between our contingency response forces and the JASDF's fledgling and growing contingency response forces was seamless. It was incredibly impressive. So they are well on their path. I think they would describe themselves as humbly, as in the crawl stage. Our assessment is they're well beyond that. So they're doing very well. And the relationships and the partnerships are only getting better.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, I thought it's really interesting because you had upwards of seven countries involved in four COCOMs in this overall operation. But putting that all together, I think there are three things that the Indo-PACOM Theater has the challenge, and that's what I would call the temporal or the time dimension that you're having to speed up to maneuver forces. Not only just air, but also the other services.

I think the second one is obvious, is the distance. I think still a lot of people don't understand the vast distances that you're going to have to move things. And finally, you've already alluded to it, contested. So the real question to you is from Japan and from your center, what are some of the lessons learned from the exercise? Which ones stood out right away from the exercise? And were there any big surprises?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah, I would say there were no big surprises and here's why.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Good.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

In February, as part of the planning for Mobility Guardian 23, we held what was called a GAMSS C2 summit in conjunction with another planning event that was taking place at PACAF headquarters. And so we brought together our Global Air Mobility Support System experts and subject matter experts to discuss, "What are the gaps, what are the seams, what are the holes, what are the connectivity problems that we have right now that are known?" And so we did this to be anticipatory and to head off some of those potential problems so that we could essentially mitigate and make the exercise a success.

So what I would say is the vast majority of the lessons learned coming out of Mobility Guardian 23, we were already aware of. What those lessons learned have given us, though, is really a lot of fodder and validation of the previous work to be able to craft some initiatives throughout this next year to close those gaps. So specifically, I think the two biggest ones that concern me and that were our takeaways from this are in general the command and control of Global Air Mobility Support System forces and secondly, connectivity.

So we've made some changes to how we force package some of our forces. We could talk about that a little bit later, but the force packaging, the training, the organization that you do to create these specific force packages with certain capabilities is only good if you can command and control them. And to be able to do that, they've got to be connected with each other and with the command control node, which, in our case is the Air Operations Center.



And so there are all kinds of DOTMLPFP fixes, things that we need to work on to help shore that up so that the command and control of those GAMSS forces is a little smoother. I believe that we should be able to command and control our GAMSS forces the same way that we command and control aircraft and our air crews, so that we can put them at the point of need in an orchestrated way that allows a fast, agile dynamic fight. But so the big lessons learned are the command and control of GAMSS, and then the connectivity. So getting them the properly good equipment, secure comms, secure tactical comms that allow them to plug in and stay connected to the command and control operation centers.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

I think that's interesting. If you don't mind if I expand on that, because it revolutionizes the term of in-transit visibility. Command and control is completely different, especially when you're moving at a pace and rate to feed the fight, let's say for the Marine Corps, for the Army movement, and stuff. But I also noticed in the exercise you practiced not only airlift, land, and maritime resupply. You were doing AR, so air refueling, which we're going to touch on in a second, Aerovac disaster relief, and supporting exercising, including the bomber task force near and dear to my heart. So anything from that? Because that has a lot of command and control visibility on your part as well, you know, as you organize, train, and equip for the joint fight.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Right. Our piece in all of that is what I talked about earlier with our air mobility support forces being the foundation to enable all of that. So they've got to be in place. They've got to be there. We got to have the theater set before all that can come in. And our forces are part of that. So they have to be that half step ahead and in those locations before we are able to operate and support agile combat employment across the theater. So that is a big mission set. This gets at General Minihan's expressions that, "It's going to be mobility Air Forces that will be the most dependent upon forces ever, if there's a contest in the Pacific Theater." So it's because of all those things you just mentioned. It's a very big mission set. And so I assume we're going to get into the discussion about Multi-Capable Airmen. But I think they're the glue that makes all of that happen, which expands our capability in all of those areas to cover down and fill the gaps and seams.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah. If you don't mind, why don't we touch on that? Because I think our audience is very interested in, is how are you strengthening and muscling up the multi-role Airmen and guardians of the future? Because this is an entirely new world order.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah. Our chief has said, "Hey, every Airman should be a Multi-Capable Airman." You ought to be able to understand and be a technical expert at your primary job, but you also ought to be able to at least have some other capabilities on the fringes of that, and capabilities. And that if everybody can do that, it helps fill in the gaps. It also allows us to shrink our force packaging and go lighter and leaner because we have Airmen who can do multiple things.

I'll tell you that my personal opinion of the Multi-Capable Airman concept is that largely, it's a mindset. It's more of a mindset than it is a capability, in my personal opinion. And I think if you ask our Airmen and how they're embracing it, that they would agree with that. Now, is there certain training that they need to receive, certain technical training, cross utilization training that we can give them to expand



their capacity even more? Absolutely. And that has to be done smartly, but I think largely it's that mindset.

So here at the Expeditionary Center, we're providing some of that foundation through our Expeditionary Operations School, teaching a couple of classes called advanced readiness training, which is, there's a core course and then we can expand and add onto that to get after the Multi-Capable capability. So there's a advanced readiness training contingency response track, there's an advanced readiness training contingency location track. And both of those provide a lot of Multi-Capable training for our Airmen. But that's just foundational. Again, when Airmen get out to their units, and then out to the field in those deployed locations, it's more of a mindset of being able to embrace the challenges and embrace the unknowns, and without all the tools that they would normally have and be able to come up with solutions.

And so our experiences is that Airmen are crazy about this. They really enjoy having the ability to go out there, and be innovative, and get the mission done. So our contingency response forces, which have been in place for 15 plus years, now, in their current form, they've been doing Multi-Capable **Airman** stuff for a long, long time. It's just inherent to what they do. I've often said what every MAJCOM needs is a contingent response plane, to have that capability that can provide what they provide everywhere. So Air Force is coming along. But I think the Air Force is catching up to everything that the contingent response force has been doing a long, long time. And I think it's a very, very good thing. But there's a training aspect to this, but there's also a cultural and mindset aspect to this.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah. Speedy, I like, I'm going to give a little shout-out to one of our journalists at the Air & Space Forces Magazine. The title of his article was Mobility Guardian Ditches the Easy Button to Put Airman to the Test in the Pacific. Boy, I tell you, it couldn't have been more appropriate. But one of the things he said in there, and this is very, very important, because I consider it an asymmetric capability of the United States, and that's gas, and fuel, and getting the petroleum moving. And as he coined it, Chris Gordon calls it "Gas is King." So what was the immediate challenge that you saw moving fuel, keeping it safe, but keeping it on the move to be able to meet this rapid movement of force capability to different locations?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah. Many of the locations that we fell in on already had base operating support and some of that in place. As the phrase goes, amateur study tactics and professional study logistics, fuel is part of that. And I think wars are won or lost based on logistics. Just look at the Russian-Ukraine conflict going on right now, and the struggles that Russia has had. It's because of logistics and their ability to put it all together. Now, I can't speak to the specifics of our logistics initiatives that are working to solve those major fuel logistics problems, but I can say that our A4s and our J4s of the world are working very closely with the Defense Logistics Agency to help solve those problems. And this is all under the umbrella of contested logistics. And so they're working, the four community is working very, very hard to get after that.

Logistics is hard enough, but when you add in the tyranny of distance, it makes it that much more complex. So as far as what we are doing, probably more at the tactical and operational level, we got to be able to fuel that fight. And so this comes back to the Multi-Capable Airmen and their skillset. We're asking our Airmen to do things and giving them some skills that are normally associated with fuel specialists, and not only just fuel specialists, but those that are only qualified to refuel a certain type of aircraft. So we're expanding that. And so we are giving our Airmen some of the training that they need



to be able to fuel multiple types of mobility aircraft, even fighters, and bombers, and allies, and partners. So we're not there yet, but that's where we need to go.

We also need to get them qualified on FARP operations and hot pit refueling, so forward air refueling points in order to press the fight. And so that is, I would say right now for our forces, it's very sporadic. That capability is sporadic. We've got to institutionalize that and help provide that capability. But one thing I witnessed at one of the locations in Japan, where one of our air mobility teams was located, Mobility Guardian was also a part of the multi-layered set of exercises that were happening throughout the Pacific all at one time. And so Mobility Guardian was some of the logistical support to that. But our Airmen at one location in Japan were supporting F-35s as part of the Iron Riptide exercise. And our mobility Airmen were refueling and launching F-35s. So that's Multi-Capable Airmen. And that's how they can help press the fight.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, I think that's awesome. Let me go further. In fact, in today's Wall Street Journal, good article entitled Makeshift Bases and East Fast Moving Troops, How the Marines Train to Thwart China. Can I put on your joint hat for a second? Because this is important coming out of the exercise, especially for Mobility Guardian. It's still going on. And the Marine Corps is trying to also develop this expeditionary advanced base operations concept. So as I'm listening to you, and I'm pretty sure your audience is very interested, is what were some of the challenges you dealt with in terms of, as you said, Ford refueling helicopters for the Army, of Ford Hill helicopters, Ospreys for the Marine Corps, and you're trying to train these multi-role Airmen to be able to deal with all those contingencies. Anything from that you gleaned?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah. I think there's definitely work yet to be done on the front. So as we develop these capabilities in-house, from just an Air Force perspective, I think the next phase of exercising and integration is really enhancing that joint integration. And that's going to happen. I'm pushing for more joint integration and joint exercises. And we do a pretty good job of exercising tactically. I think we need to do more operational level exercising that really exercises those joint muscles and gets our Airmen out there, understanding how our joint partners do business. And so a lot of more work to be done, there. We are often in support of our joint partners and particularly in big exercises like Mobility Guardian, or Northern Edge Tac-2 that was all going on during in the Pacific Iron Riptide, all of that, Talisman Sabre right now.

And so the more we can put ourselves in those large operational level exercises, the better. And I think the fact that we are getting out into the Indo-Pacific is a good thing. The vast majority of our force right now is extremely familiar with the CENTCOM area of operations. And we know that, and there's some of us that that's dominated our whole career. So we know that theater like the back of our hand. We need to become as intimate with the Indo-Pacific Theater as we have become with CENTCOM. So exercising out there with our joint partners, and our allies, and partners is definitely, we need to do more of that.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

You really made good emphasis of General Minihan's point about his being very vocal about preparing for conflict in the Indo-PACOM region. Along that line, experience told me at CENTCOM, especially running operations, you got to be prepared for the unknown unknowns, like all of a sudden trying to move heavy strikers, an entire brigade all at once, it just comes out of nowhere. It's almost like a time sensitive movement. I'm concerned, a lot of us are concerned about things like rapid movement of these long range strike platforms that the Army's speaking of and so forth. They're still going to



depend on the Expeditionary Center to organize training and equip for that kind of thinking. How's that challenging now?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Well again, I think it's just taking, you know, the same principles-

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

... and transferring those to other theaters. So the principles remain. It's just how do we orient upon that now? So I would argue personally that the shift that our department had to make following 9/11 for the global war on terror arguably took five to six years to really, really reorient all those DOTMLPFP items, and really truly orient upon that counter terrorism fight. I don't know that we have that kind of time right now as far as reorienting upon other pacing challenges, but it's a work in process. We're moving fast and getting better every day.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

No, thank you. I think this is ironic but actually very appropriate. Mobility Guardian, and I touch on the Guardian part, especially with space-based capabilities and so forth, which is what I would say one of your combatant commands in the background, but could be in the foreground in a heartbeat, especially on the demand signal. So SPACECOM, space assets, space requirements, and your Guardian's perspective from you as the commander of the Expeditionary Center?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah. The next fight, whatever that is probably not going to start kinetically on the ground, right? It very likely could start in space. So we need to be monitoring the indications and warnings that might be very, very, very much overhead. And so from our perspective, I think, and in the fight, wherever that may occur, this gets back to some of the connectivity, and the ability to command control, and have visibility of where our forces are. So being able to do Blue Force tracking, being able to take those force elements and force packages, and put them to the point of need, and orchestrate that ballet is going to be key. And space is most definitely part of that. So some of the kit that we experimented with and tried out during Mobility Guardian 23, was SATCOM type capability. And so very, very dependent upon that. It was very reliable and very effective. So there was a lot of experimentation we did along those realms that was validated and now we can go, "Yes, I think that's the kit that we need to be able to support ground-based and tactical beyond line of sight communications."

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

And since you've been on the Joint Staff even at the higher echelons, really, when it comes to doctrine in terms of support and supporting relationships, and as we talked about the four combatant commands were involved in the exercise itself, I'm not expecting to be the doctrinal expert, but really curious, how do you fit into, let's say feedback to the doctrine, and things that need to be addressed? Especially with the respective services but also the respective combatant commands?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:



Yeah, I'll tell you that Air Mobility commands lessons learned coming out of Mobility Guardian 23 fall into three general categories. One is command control, one is command relationships, and then three, it's a catchall, but it's what we would call fundamentals. And by that it's we've been able to go to a very established theater for a very long time, and so there's some muscle movements there that we got to get back and relearn. So that's the fundamentals catchall.

But from the command relationships perspective, and obviously that comes back to doctrine, and how we draw the dashed lines, and the solid lines, and the dotted lines in a command relationships chart, and all of those different command relationships. So I think what we need to be careful about is that we don't try to reinvent anything new, don't reinvent the wheel. Let's ground ourselves in doctrine and see what we can do with that. Because a lot of those, they're proven methods. That's doctrine by definition. But it doesn't mean that we can't revisit.

So there's definitely some refresh that needs to take place just in our business. There's some refreshing of Air Force doctrine, probably some joint doctrine, and that that's some of our intent in getting after the institutionalization of the command control of GAMSS forces. So that's that side. Air Mobility command did learn some things about, and the challenges of operating with two air operation centers, right?

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yes.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

So 618th Air Operations Center at Scott, which serves as the air force component of transportation command with a global mission, but then there's a theater air operations center in the 613th Air Operations Center that are command and controlling theater assigned forces. So when you have this mix of MAJCOM retained OpCon, those forces coming into another combatant commander's theater where he's got his own theater side forces, you can imagine that there may be some differences.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yes.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

So-

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Obviously this is maybe a little cerebral, but back to that point of not only distance but a contested environment. But I go back to the time dimension.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

And I can only imagine how much more challenging it is for you and commanders to deal with rapidly changing operational command, tactical command of assets, in some cases, maybe even combatant command if necessary. That has got to be one heck of a change for you all to deal with.



Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah, well, I think from that, because air transportation command has that global mission, and air mobility command is the Air Force component of that.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Right.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

The 72 hour ATO cycle doesn't necessarily work for us, right?

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

And so that was some of the disconnect in the rub was, "How do you mash together two different types of C2 systems and methods between what the 618th AOC was doing and the 613th AOC for PACAP. So those are all things we can work out. But it's in the time dimension. So we're operating from halfway around the world from a C2 perspective, and they're operating within theater, maybe, it's probably still five, six or more different time zones within the Pacific Theater. So yeah, it complicates it all. I think it makes the 72 hour ATO cycle challenging. And so something to rethink, you know, as far as how we-

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

We probably got about maybe about another minute or two, because, really, you got an audience that wants to throw-

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

You bet.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

... some questions at you. But Speedy, one thing that I'd like to wrap it up, if you don't mind, from that perspective, the doctrine and so forth is the international component. Obviously, this is not new in terms of dealing with international partners and allies, but rather, again, those doctrinal things, the movement of forces. How did you see that from your vantage point?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Number one, we have to continue to build those relationships with partners and allies. We have to get comfortable using their equipment, them using ours, and understanding their perspective. We cannot forget that we're coming into their theater, their country, their area of operations. And it's just a little bit different than what we've been used to. The foundation is the relationships and then from there, as we are better able to integrate, then we can better support each other from a agile combat employment perspective. And so that those, and going to the point of need, and when we can communicate better all of our needs, those can be prioritized, and then we can provide our capabilities to them, and their capabilities to us, and that just closes a lot of those gaps and strengthens that whole mesh across the theater.



Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

No, thank you. Why don't we do a little change up, here, and let's take some questions from the audience? For our audience, please raise your virtual hand and if you do have a question or you just want to type your question in the chat box, that'd be fine. We'll do our best to get through them. Just a reminder to everyone online, please unmute yourself before you ask a question. I promise we'll be nice in the Zoom era. Let's start with first question, looks like is from Chris Gordon, Air & Space Forces Magazine. Chris, you unmute and fire away.

Chris Gordon:

Thank you, sir. And thank you for the shout-out earlier, General Raaberg.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

You're welcome.

Chris Gordon:

Sir, two related questions on the topic of Multi-Capable Airmen, how exactly will a Multi-Capable Airman be defined? While it's a mindset, how is it going to be more formalized and put into doctrine? Will it be specific skills required? Is it something where individuals will just be required to think on their feet more? Will there be more formal training courses? And then related to that on ACE, how do you go about practicing it more? Do you have to plan to do bare bones operations as it were? And how do you get to the point where you can just be lean and agile from the get-go?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah, thanks Chris. Excellent questions. I would say there on the Multi-Capable **Airman** piece, it is multidimensional. There's two ways to looking at it. Number one, it is a mindset. But number two, we've got to make sure that the skills that we're giving our Airmen are at least within the realm of their skillset. So for example, you still want the EOD guy cutting the red wire. You don't want anybody doing that. You still want the cardiologist doing heart surgery. It's not, "Just throw them into the mix, and them figure it out, and do everything." There's some degree of that, but there's probably a baseline set of skills.

There is more work to be done on the education and training side to provide some baseline skills for the environments that our Airmen could potentially be going into. And so it is defined. I don't have that exact definition at the ready right now. But it has been defined on paper by our air staff, A3, and our A4 is working this as well, but there is guidance on a table of what certain AFSCs, how they can expand their skillsets through cross utilization training, through just OJT, through exposure to different things that are within the near realm of their core Air Force specialty code. So there is some structure to it. And we want to give our Airmen some baseline training. Some of that is done here at the Air Force Expeditionary Center. Some of that is done through Multi-Capable Airmen academies that are popping up. There's some standardization and institutionalization that needs to take place with some of that, but our major commands are getting after it. And even down to the wing level, they're putting those types of academies together at the base level.

As far as agile combat employment and how we practice that more, I think, yes, I don't want to say it's a brand new concept, we've done things like this before. But in terms of the dynamic force employment and the dynamics of it there, there's certain things that we have to work on. I would say that we are beyond scripting those types of things, but we need to plan those situations into our exercises and how we conduct our exercises.



And so in intentional design of situations and some good white cell ops that can inject things into our exercises that force agile combat employment scenarios. I think where we need to get has been learned, agile combat employment is logistically intensive. What, I think the next phase of developing the concept of agile common employment is the synchronization of the logistics that need to come into place so that it can operate in a very fluid manner. And of course this comes back to good connectivity, and command and control. How do you command and control all those forces? We can force package down in the best possible way. But if we cannot command and control them, and get them to the point of need to be able to sense opportunities and then seize upon those opportunities, then it's really all for naught. So the next phase of this I think is the synchronization of the logistics that supports agile common employment.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, Speedy, it almost sounds like I got this image of Amazon under attack. The fulfillment center only gets to last so long before you better get it out of there and lose a lot more packaging. But hey, we have another question. I think this is a treat, from the Lieutenant General, retired, Charlie Coolidge, obviously a great friend of Airlift and stuff. And Charlie asks, "What's the biggest surprise from Mobility Guardian?" And Charlie, if you don't mind, I'm going to expand the question a little bit in terms of for you, Speedy, put your industry hat on for a second. And what would you be telling industry is some of the surprise that may be of interest to them. And Charlie, if I misspoke that one, please pipe in. Fire away, Speedy.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Okay, good. I wanted to give General Coolidge a chance to tack onto that. But General Coolidge, thank you for the question. Biggest surprise from Mobility Guardian 23, I think probably very generally is just the complexity of it all. And so our Airmen, as General Minihan says, "Airmen are the magic. They will always make it happen." But we need to resource and give our Airmen the tools that they need so that they don't have to work so hard to bring that magic. And so some of that is material, some of that is guidance and policy, some of that is how we have them organized.

So I think there was no surprise that our Airmen made this a success. There were a lot of lessons learned coming out of it, especially down at the tactical level. There's definitely some things to work on and smooth out in those three categories I mentioned before. And I think that, but strategically it was a massive success in terms of the message that we were trying to convey to the theater, which is, "Number one, we're ready. We can do this. And number two, that our ability to work with some really, really good, strong partners and allies is strong." And so it really strengthened those relationships. From an industry perspective and surprises, I really wouldn't call it a surprise, but there's work to be done on the connectivity piece. And so whatever we can do to provide connectivity solutions for our Airmen so that they can employ in this vast theater in a dynamic and agile way is where we need to head.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Susana Curatolo, if you're up, I understand you have a question for General Klein.

Susana Curatolo:

Morning, General Klein. Can you comment on the intertheater disbursement security challenges?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:



Intertheater security disbursement challenge? Could you clarify exactly what you mean by that or give me an example?

Susana Curatolo:

Well, I got that quote from general [inaudible 00:51:46], the US Transport Command. And he was commenting on the pacifying function and competitive advantages to make the theater more integrated. And I want to understand that in context of MG 23.?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Well, I don't know exactly what she stated, but I assume that she's largely getting after strengthening the relationships with our allies and partners to enhance our ability for access basing and overfly. And those arrangements really need to be established and forged ahead of time. So whatever we can do to integrate, exercise, train our partners and allies to build and forge those relationships only strengthens our ability to operate within the theater and understand each other.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah. And Speedy, I got a followup question. It's anonymous from the audience, in that this is a softball, but you can expand on it, "What specific skills and capabilities, like you mentioned, forward air refueling and so forth, just stood out as rusty and really, really needed practice? It's like you go to workout and all of a sudden you find out you're spraining a few ankles and everything else." But go ahead.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah. Our goal was, to use General Minihan's words, just to explode into theater.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Okay.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

And we did. We did, relatively. Remember it took our grandfathers three years to work their way into theater and to be able to operate from the positions where we were, in Mobility Guardian 23. So we start with a huge advantage. And this falls into the fundamentals category that I talked about earlier, of learning how to deploy to locations that we haven't been to before, where there's not a lot of base operating support already established. We've got a lot of CENTCOM babies out there. I'm one. Right? And we are used to going to these very established, fixed bases. So the deploy portion of getting into theater, there's some stiff and creaky sclerotic muscles there that we need to work out. And that comes through practice, that comes through repetition, more reps and sets. So again, the more we can get out into the Indo-Pacific Theater, learn the theater, relearn some of these, what it takes to get out of town rapidly, that's all readiness. And so there's some of those readiness lessons learned that we need to apply. And I think the exploding into theater is one. And we talked about the command and control challenges that we had before. Our Airmen worked through those, through their own means and filled those gaps. But again, they were having to work too hard. So how can we provide them the tools, the training, the organization, and everything that they need, the connectivity to make their ability to do their job a little bit smoother so they're operating on a higher plane?

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):



Yeah, we got about five minutes remaining, but I really want to get this question across from the Steven Dininger. I think it's a good one. And it's beyond force protection-based defense and everything else. But he says, "When you're practicing the A's, how are we thinking about protecting temporary bases from missile attack?" Let's just focus on that very quickly, about a minute.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah. I think that again, it comes back to the command and control, and communications and connectivity. I think the best thing we could do is enable our Airmen to have awareness so they know when to duck and cover. So being able to communicate that to them. This is well beyond my pay grade as far as deployable missile defense, but we probably need some enhanced capability in that realm. And then those assets need to be light and lean so we can maneuver them where we need to maneuver them.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

General Klein, I'm going to give you a couple minutes, two or three minutes just to catch your breath for a second, and some closing remarks. And what would you like us to take away from today's discussion?

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Yeah, well, first, number one, I couldn't agree with General Minihan more in that our Airmen are the magic. And so I couldn't be more proud of their performance in Mobility Guardian 23. Some of the way, from our perspective and within our enterprise and their part in the Global Air Mobility Support System, watching that rapidly expand across the theater and rapidly provide this ... the term we're using is rapid nodal flexibility across the theater was really eye watering. And then watching our Airmen interact with allies and partners, and enhance those relationships, and enhance those partners' capabilities was really eye watering. So I think that the get off the stage for me is, again, that I think it's our forces that have to be that half a step ahead of everything else that could potentially be flowing into theater, in order to set the theater. And so there's no air mobility without air mobility support, and we are the foundation of the maneuver that Air Mobility Command provides the joint force.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Well, General Klein, I'll tell you, this has actually been a refreshing conversation. I really appreciate you answering all the questions, because as we look ahead and you're organizing training and definitely training to equip the multi-role Airmen for the future, there's a lot of modernization that has to come with it. And that could be anything from the platform's delivery to the modernization of the systems, as you mentioned, command and control. So again, personally, thank you.

Maj. Gen. John Klein:

Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to engage with the AFA audience, and it's just a wonderful opportunity, and have a great conversation.

Maj. Gen. Doug Raaberg, USAF (Ret.):

Yeah, this is also my polite way of saying thank you for getting me around the theater in CENTCOM back then, when you were a cap combat driver, trust me. For our online audience joining us today, really, I encourage you to join us September 11th through the 13th, just outside here, in DC, for what is honestly shaping up to be our largest Air, Space & Cyber Conference ever. We're expecting over 48 sessions. And right now we have a docket of over 175 speakers. So please scan the QR code that's coming up on the



screen to register or make it easy for yourself, just go to afa.org and look for the 2023 Air, Space & Cyber Conference. And for everybody, please, have a great mobility day. Thank you.