



A/T/Q

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ON THE COVER: PHUKET, Thailand -- Maj. Brian Geronime takes off from Phuket, Thailand in a C-130 Hercules after moving an engineering assessment team here 8 January. He is a pilot assigned to the 36th Airlift Squadron. The 36th AS first delivered relief supplies and equipment to devastated areas in Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, on 29 December 2004. As of 8 January, the U.S. military had delivered 1,454,200 pounds of supplies, 433,840 pounds of food and 16,000 gallons of water. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Val Gempis)

Murphy's Law and Why This Edition of A/TQ is So Late

Simply put, Murphy's Law states "If anything can wrong, it will." I feel justified in invoking this law here in that the law itself has Air Force roots. The law was born at Edwards Air Force Base in 1949 and is named for Capt. Edward A. Murphy, an engineer working on Air Force Project MX981, (a project) designed to see how much sudden deceleration a person can stand in a crash. I ran into this truism head-on while getting this edition of A/TQ ready for print.

Following last fall's A/TA convention in Dallas, Texas, I returned home to continue the arduous task of moving my downtown office to my home. The move did not go as quickly or as smoothly as planned. Suffice it say that one can accumulate a lot more stuff in 20 years than one would think.

After culling mountains of files and artwork, and filling a dumpster numerous times, I faced the task of disposing of several pieces of obsolete equipment including typesetting equipment, photostat cameras, layout and light tables, etc. I was finally able to arrange for these valuable pieces of graphic arts ephemera to be placed with museum personnel who will use it as part of a display on the printing business.

Next came the setting up of a new office space on the second floor of my 140-year-old farm house. First there was the problem of "too much stuff - too little space." I ended up moving much into storage than anticipated. Then there were the unforeseen consequences of trying to put modern computer equipment into a Civil War era structure. The thick walls precluded using a wireless network and complicated establishing a wired environment.

Of course while trying to accomplish all of this tearing down and setting up I was struck by the flu bug, not once, but twice. Murphy's Law in overdrive!

Then came the devastating news of the 26 December tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The airlift of humanitarian aid which followed was too big a story not to be included in this edition of the magazine, so I scrapped much of the planned content and started over with a new cover story. I felt it necessary to let the relief effort develop before finishing the story, which led to even further delay.

When you read Barry Creighton's Secretary's Notes you will see that the Association as a whole seems to be immune to Murphy's Law. The 2004 convention went well and we are in great financial shape. I attribute this to Dennis *Murphy's* hard work coordinating the convention and John *Murphy's* apt handling of the Association's finances!

Sorry for the delay, but as they say, better late than never.

Collin R. Bakse, editor

Chairman's COMMENTS



Gen Ron Fogleman
USAF, Ret

As this edition of the A/TA Quarterly was being readied for press the world witnessed the awesome versatility of the United States military. In Iraq, the world saw a free and open election...something that has never happened in the history of that country. Forces of tyranny and oppression demonstrated their fear of freedom and democracy by making every effort to scuttle the election through increased violence against the Iraqi people and our military forces - to no avail. In December, when the level of violence began to escalate, General Jumper, Air Force Chief of Staff, visited the theater and came away with an idea on how the Air Force, using its Air Mobility Forces, could reduce U.S. casualties and provide better support to the deployed troops. The idea was to reduce the number of daily surface convoys needed to carry needed supplies from Kuwait and Jordan.

The solution was to task Air Mobility Command ground and flying assets to provide an air bridge, thus reducing the daily exposure of hundreds of troops to ambushes and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The members of the Mobility Forces responded in a magnificent fashion showing the flexibility of air power by quickly establishing the biggest intra theater airlift operation since the Vietnam War.

On the 26th of December, while our Mobility Forces were hitting their stride in Iraq, the world was stunned by the tsunami that devastated wide areas of South East Asia and the Indian Ocean. With most of the region's normal transportation infrastructure destroyed and thousands of survivors in danger of dying for the lack of food, medical and sanitation services the United States responded with a combination of naval and mobility forces. The naval forces in the immediate vicinity responded quickly with shipboard assets while airlift and tanker forces rushed thousands of tons of supplies and equipment to the area, thus averting an even greater disaster.

No other nation in the world can do what the United States can do - simultaneously support freedom in Iraq, conduct a global war on terror and respond to one of the largest natural disasters in the history of mankind. At the execution level it is the training, dedication and sacrifice of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines that make this possible. At the strategic level it is our Mobility Forces that serve as the key enabler. I am proud to be part of an organization that has a primary mission of providing support to the superb men and women who make up the Air Mobility Forces. They are all great Americans...distinguished by the service to their fellow Americans and mankind from around the world.

*Future A/TA Convention & Symposium Locations**

2005 *Opryland, Nashville*

2006 *Marriott World Center, Orlando*

2007 *Opryland, Nashville*

2008 *Marriott/Hilton, Anaheim*

2009 *Opryland, Nashville*

2010 *Marriott World Center, Orlando*

2011 *Opryland, Nashville*

2012 *Marriott/Hilton, Anaheim*

**Tentative outline of locations. Subject to change.*

President's MESSAGE



**CMSgt Mark A. Smith
USAF, Ret**

Hoah Airlift/Tanker members – what a convention! Sharp salutes to our Vice President Programs, Dennis Murphy; Vice President Industry Affairs, Ed Wiesner; Symposium Director, Bob Dawson; Registrars, Bud and Pam Traynor; the A/TA Board and our many volunteers for a great convention. And thanks to you – the membership – for your overwhelming support and attendance. It is remarkable to see how our organization and conventions have grown, yet we continue to keep the same level of camaraderie and friendship among our members.

Congratulations to the 2004 award recipients! Your professionalism and contributions to air mobility are remarkable. A new award was introduced this year at the A/TA convention: the President's Award. This award recognizes an A/TA member-volunteer who has contributed immeasurably to the overall success of the Airlift/Tanker Association.

The inaugural President's Award was presented to three outstanding air mobility members. Collin Bakse, editor and art director of the *Airlift/Tanker Quarterly*, and his wife Dawn, editorial and advertising coordinator, have dedicated themselves to producing what has become "a first-class mobility journal" for the past 17 years. In addition to producing *A/TQ*, Collin has been involved in many other Association projects. He developed the idea of an annual "convention theme," and designs the "convention logos" each year. Collin also designs and manages the production for the annual "Hall of Fame" display at the convention. Collin and Dawn continue to develop editorial content for articles and books concerning Airlift and Tanker forces. Collin attends all Airlift/Tanker Association Board meetings and his input and insight in numerous areas has been invaluable to the growth of this Association. Congratulations Collin and Dawn and most of all – thanks for your dedication and hard work that make our association so successful.



**Collin Bakse with the
President's Award**



**Ron Owens with the
President's Award**

Ron Owens has managed the critical functions of security, transportation and hospitality suites for 19 of the last 21 Airlift/Tanker Conventions. On many occasions, Ron worked "all night" marathons to complete his work for the Airlift/Tanker Association and convention. Ron's dedication and efforts were also instrumental in establishing and maintaining the Airlift/Tanker Hall of Fame walk at Scott AFB. Ron served as the Huyser Chapter President for many years and continues to serve the Airlift/Tanker Association as Chair of the A/TA Heritage Committee in addition to his transportation and security functions at the Airlift/Tanker Convention. Congratulations Ron and thanks for your hard work and dedicated behind the scene efforts to "get it done"!

I would also like to recognize Bob Dawson for his faithful and dedicated service as our Symposium Director. During the general membership meeting, Bob was elected to a board position – VP of Industry Affairs. Congratulations Bob and thanks for bringing our symposium program to a new level of excellent professional military education.

Thanks again to Ed Wiesner for his many contributions as the past VP for Industry Affairs. We appreciate your many contributions, which enabled us to grow and succeed under your leadership.

We are off running with a great start for 2005 and beyond. Although our association and convention attendance is substantially growing, we are committed to maintaining our trademark high quality program and air mobility family atmosphere as we experienced as a smaller group in the past. We look forward to seeing you again at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee, this year.

Lastly and most important, many of you are still deployed serving our country and protecting our freedom. We were amazed to view your remarkable efforts to provide aid to the people and countries affected by the Tsunami disaster and we stood extremely proud as we watched countless Iraqi people travel extensive distances and stand in stretched lines to vote for the freedom that you helped them achieve. The sacrifices you and your families are making are significant and we sincerely appreciate your service to air mobility and to the United States of America. Our prayers and support are with you always. God bless you all.

Cabin Report...Secure!



**Ed Wiesner with
Service Award**

SECRETARY'S NOTES

This space is woefully inadequate to thank so many of you who made our 2004 Convention such a great success...but here's my attempt. Many of you have heard us say that working toward the goals of the A/TA is a "Labor of Love". Indeed it is – I challenge anyone to find any other organization that does what we do with a paid staff of ONE (two if Bud shares the paycheck with Pam).

So volunteers, you make it happen – *Thank You!*

The turn of a new year is always a good time for a self-assessment. I think you'll find these data points interesting:

Over the past five years:

- Total attendance at the convention has increased 62%
- Enlisted attendance has increased 118%
- Air Reserve Component attendance has increased 253%
- Flag officer attendance has increased 66%

Your desire to form new and invigorate existing chapters continues (we chartered Lajes and Incirlik in Dallas). Like you, I look forward to receiving this terrific publication each quarter not only to admire Collin Bakse's great work, but also to see what you are doing.

All the above hints at fantastic leadership in our officer and enlisted corps--leaders who have invested of themselves in A/TA and are eager to share the benefits with those in their charge. Kudos to you all!

So my read, is that you and I are among 7469 members of a pretty sound organization.

Keep the blue side up,
Barry



**Col Barry C. Creighton
USAF, Ret**

Capital Chapter

DIRMOBFOR Panel Discussion

The National Capital Chapter of the Airlift Tanker Association (A/TA) was proud to host a panel discussion addressing the critical role of the Director of Mobility Forces (DIRMOBFOR) on 13 September 2004. This meeting, the chapters first in nearly three years due to the operational tempo driven by the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), was held in conjunction with the Air Force Association (AFA) Air & Space Conference at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel. Several prominent mobility leaders were in the audience, which also included several members from the A/TA National Staff.



Col Scott Wuesthoff, National Capital Chapter President introduces the distinguished panel of speakers.

The group of distinguished mobility leaders was comprised of several former DIRMOBFORs. Lending their expertise in tanker and airlift operations were Maj Gen (ret) Nick Williams (Operation Iraqi Freedom DIRMOBFOR), Maj Gen Rod Bishop (Operation Allied Force DIRMOBFOR), and Maj Gen Mark Volcheff (Mozambique Flood Relief AFFOR). The moderator for the panel was Maj Gen (ret) Buck Marr (Operation Vigilant Warrior DIRMOBFOR), who guided the discussion and led a question & answer period following the presentation.

For nearly an hour, the former DIRMOBFORs shared their operational experiences and challenges from recent

mobility contingencies. Although there were numerous takeaways, the following is a list of the panel's most vital lessons learned:



Maj Gen Robert Bishop makes a point while fellow panel members Maj Gen (ret) Nick Williams and Maj Gen Mark Volcheff listen.

- Be involved early in the planning process – The DIRMOBFOR needs to fully understand what the mobility plan is for their contingency from the earliest stages of development. It is too hard to play “catch up” once the personnel and material starts flowing into the Area of Responsibility (AOR).
- Plan an exit strategy – The DIRMOBFOR must be aware of what constitutes “victory”. Moreover, the eventual goals of the operation must be both measurable and achievable. “You need to know when you’ve reached your end state and it’s time to go home,” said Maj Gen Volcheff.
- Be cognizant of the Regional Combatant Commander (RCC) – Regardless of the contingency, mobility operations will be in another RCC’s AOR. They will have a keen interest in what transits their region. It is highly unlikely that there will be enough manpower to run airlift and tanker operations plus simultaneously provide the required visibility to the RCC’s staff. Therefore, the DIRMOBFOR and RCC will have to share their staffs in order to preserve this precious commodity.
- Pick the mobility team carefully – As noted by Maj Gen (ret) Williams, “People are the most important resource.” Therefore, the DIRMOBFOR must have the best

possible support personnel in order to ensure success. Additionally, these airlift, tanker, and aerial port experts need to be properly balanced for the actual contingency at hand.

- Be aggressive and support the team – All mobility contingencies have their unique set of challenges. The DIRMOBFOR provides the leadership to overcome these obstacles. The support staff, on the other hand, is tasked with creating the plan to enable overall success. The DIRMOBFOR should provide



Maj Gen Richard Marr addresses the audience during the question and answer period of the briefing.

the vision and then allow the staff to accomplish the mission.

- Pay attention to risk management – We are all familiar with exercising proper risk management during peacetime operations. The GWOT, however, will require future mobility leaders to rethink this issue. As Maj Gen Bishop said, “We’re all used to making the ‘knock-it-off’ call for safety reasons during normal peacetime ops, but we need to re-think that paradigm during combat operations. These are now times when the DIRMOBFOR routinely places personnel under their command in harm’s way.”

The moderator’s closing words provided key commentary on the importance of the DIRMOBFOR. “We face a determined enemy in the Global War on Terrorism, said Maj Gen (ret) Marr. “The role of the Global Mobility team, and specifically the DIRMOBFOR, has never been more important in today’s ever-changing environment.”

FMC Technologies Generously Donates to ETG Program and the Awards Fund

Following last fall’s Convention & Symposium, FMC Technologies donated \$3190 to the A/TA ETG Program generated through the sales of books at their booth at the convention. And, in an expression of their appreciation for the creation of the Halvorsen

Award (recognizing an outstanding 2T2 aerial porter) the company also made a direct donation of \$5000 to the Association’s Awards Fund.

In a letter to the Board, Bryce Mannen, General Manager Military Programs for

the company, expressed his thanks for the award’s creation, and passed along Gail Halvorsen’s pleasure in having his name associated with the award.

The Board of Officers and membership thank FMC for their generosity!

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ETG CRITERIA:

- Membership in the Airlift/Tanker Association
- Hold the Rank of E-2 through E-6
- Commander's Recommendation
- Assigned in an air mobility operational and/or support function (an augmentee on a mobility or maintenance support team, for example). Anyone directly or indirectly supporting the USAF Airlift or Air Refueling mission.
- Classes must be completed as an active member of A/TA during the same calendar year as the submitted application. Exception: January/February applications can include the previous quarter classes (Sep-Dec) of the immediate past year.
- Checks will be issued upon completion of a course with proof of a grade of C or better in an accredited degree program
- Individuals are limited to one ETG per 12-month period.
- Student financial need is not a principal criterion
- May not be used for a lower or lateral previously awarded degree
- Additional details available online at www.atalink.org



**The A/TA ETG Program.
Working to improve
America's Air Mobility Force.**

Luftbrücke Chapter

Airlifters Return to Rhein-Main

By 1st Lt. Uriah Orland

The Luftbrücke Chapter of the Airlift/Tanker Association at Rhein-Main Air Base hosted 49 Berlin Airlift veterans on 13 October 2004 to recognize the 55th anniversary end-date of the largest humanitarian airlift mission in the history of the Air Force.



Col. Brad Denison, commander of the 469th Air Base Group and president of the Luftbrücke Chapter, and Mrs. Gerdi Rausch, vice president of the chapter, present Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Lichte, U.S. Air Forces in Europe Vice Commander, a commemorative Rhein-Main afghan after the general's comments at a dinner honoring the 55th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift celebrated at Rhein-Main Airbase, Germany Oct. 13.

Col. Brad Denison, commander of the 469th Air Base Group and president of the Luftbrücke Chapter, and Rhein-Main honored the veterans during ceremonies at the base chapel and at the Berlin Airlift Memorial, located near Rhein-Main.

During the afternoon ceremony at the Berlin Airlift Memorial, Dr. Earl Moore, president of the Berlin Airlift Veteran's Association; the Candy Bomber, retired Col. Gail Halvorsen; Mrs. Gerdi Rausch, vice president of the chapter; and Colonel

Denison laid wreaths in honor of the 85 American, German, French and British service members and citizens who lost their lives in support of the Airlift.

Colonel Denison, addressing the veterans at the afternoon ceremony reminded the audience that at the end of the Airlift General (Lucius) Clay said, "Berliners and their leaders never wavered in the determination of freedom." Colonel Denison then praised the Airlift veterans, saying, "Not only did the Berliners not waiver, you did not waiver in your mission to support them and built the foundation for a victory in the cold war. For that we salute you."

The visit culminated in a dinner where Lt. Gen. Arthur J. Lichte, U.S. Air Forces in Europe Vice Commander, gave the keynote address to the more than 170 attendees.

Highlighting the friendship between the United States and Germany, and between Rhein-Main and the Frankfurt International Airport, General Lichte thanked the veterans for their contribution and effort to help a former enemy become a new friend, saying, "Tonight we celebrate 55 years of



Dr. Earl Moore, president of the Berlin Airlift Veteran's Association, addresses more than 170 guests at a dinner honoring the 55th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift celebrated at Rhein-Main Airbase, Germany Oct. 13.

an enduring friendship between Germany and the United States that has only grown stronger over the years. It is only appropriate that we commemorate this event here at Rhein-Main, a location that played a significant role in the legacy of airlift and

where the friendship that began during the Berlin Airlift continues to this day as we work together in the Global War on Terror and transition to what our forces will look like for the next 50 years."



The Candy Bomber, retired Col. Gail Halvorsen addresses more than 170 guests at a dinner honoring the 55th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift celebrated at Rhein-Main Airbase, Germany Oct. 13.

General Lichte also highlighted the accomplishments of the veterans.

"When you talk to those who served during the Berlin Airlift about their accomplishments you hear phrases like 'I was just doing my job,' 'We did what we had to do to make it happen,' 'We worked, worked some more, and we slept when we could,'" he said.

"People like James Spatafora left his job in a Brooklyn necktie factory when he was seventeen, and joined the Air Force as a hydraulics mechanic," General Lichte continued. "He says when he got to Rhein-Main, there was no such thing as staying in your specialty – he helped change props, electricians helped tow planes and they loved every minute of it. In his mind, there was nothing heroic about it; they were just ordinary people living in extraordinary times."

This celebration was the last reunion for the Berlin Airlift veterans at Rhein-Main due to the base's closure scheduled for December 31, 2005.

Team Robins Chapter

On 25 January 2005, The Carl Vinson Chapter of the Air Force Association hosted a joint luncheon with the "Team Robins" Chapter of the Airlift Tanker Association. Lieutenant General John R. Baker, Vice Commander of the Air Mobility Command was the Guest Speaker. Over 110 people of the various organizations were in attendance. General Baker discussed the complex mission of the Air Mobility command supporting our various warfighters worldwide.



In the picture from Left to Right, Col Steve Bernard (Acting ATA "Team Robins" Chapter President, and Commander of the 19th Air Refueling Group), CMSgt Mark Smith (National President of ATA), General John Baker (AMC), Bob Largent (National President of the AFA), and Lynn Morley (Chapter President of the Carl Vinson Chapter of the AFA).

Operation Unified Assistance

AMC Supports Tsunami Relief Efforts

On 26 December 2004, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake, off the west coast of Northern Sumatra, Indonesia, triggered massive tsunamis that affected several countries throughout South and Southeast Asia, as well as Somalia, Tanzania, Kenya, and the Seychelles in East Africa. Based on initial findings of USG assessment teams and on the recommendation of Secretary of State Colin Powell and USAID Administrator Andrew Natsios, on December 31, President George W. Bush committed \$350 million toward earthquake and tsunami relief and recovery efforts.

Colonel Richard Richardson, director of operations for the Tanker Airlift Control Center, at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, said as soon as officials learned of the tsunami disaster, they were ready in case AMC aircraft or people were needed. Within days, Air Mobility Command aircraft and people began delivering tons of relief equipment and hundreds of service-members into the affected region...

Editor's Note:

This article was developed from stories from several sources, including the Air Mobility Command News Service, Air Force Pacific News Service and the Air Force News Service.

Immediate Response

The first call came 29 December when a C-17 Globemaster III from McChord Air Force Base, Washington, was tasked to move a C-130 Hercules maintenance package from Yokota Air Base, Japan, to Utapao, Thailand to support the C-130s providing airlift within the tsunami-devastated countries.

Airmen from Yokota Air Base, Japan, were among those bringing the first wave of relief for people on the coastlines of Southeast Asia and Eastern Africa.

The Airmen and six C-130 Hercules aircraft delivered relief supplies including food, shelter and clothing to Thailand within the first 24 hours, officials said.

Defense Department officials said U.S. Pacific Command would establish a joint task force for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations in the region.

PACOM officials also said humanitarian assistance assessment teams would deploy to various locations within the region. An assessment team includes servicemembers in the following specialties: medical treatment, civil engineering, preventive medicine, contracting, public affairs, logistics and water purification.



YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan -- Airmen from here load a C-130 Hercules with mission-support materials Dec. 28. The Airmen are deploying to Thailand supporting relief efforts after an earthquake and tsunamis devastated coastal regions of the Indian Ocean on Dec. 26. They will help establish a forward-operating base and assess the needs for additional relief efforts in the region. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katie Thomas)

"The assessment team will identify requirements for temporary military-specific support to DOs and humanitarian relief agencies in (the country)," an official said. "Our primary concern is to prevent the further loss of life and human suffering, and we will support the relief response to this terrible tragedy."

In the days following that initial tasking, C-5 Galaxy and C-17 Globemaster III aircraft were called upon more than 20 times, moving everything from helicopters and relief equipment to support people and emergency responders.

Colonel Richardson said as of 5 January, AMC had six C-5 aircraft staged out of Kadena AB, Japan, and four McChord C-17s staged out of Utapao. Another C-17, from Charleston AFB, South Carolina, brought U.S. Army civil affairs Soldiers and equipment to the region on 4 January.

The C-5s included three active-duty aircraft from Travis AFB, California, and two Air Force Reserve planes from Lackland AFB, Texas, and Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts, and one Air National Guard aircraft from Stewart Air National Guard Base, New York.

The colonel said that Reserve and Guard participation during the relief operations is "significant" and "outstanding."

Within a week of the disaster, AMC aircraft and aircrews had delivered more than 1.66 million pounds of cargo and 748 passengers in

support of the tsunami-relief operation, including communications equipment and people assigned to the U.S. Marine Corps' 7th Communication Battalion in Japan. C-17s flew six HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters and two CH-46 helicopters and related support equipment (a single C-17 can carry two CH-46 helicopters or two U.S. Marine Corps Force Service Support Groups (which provide combat service support to Marine Corps forces worldwide). A U.S. Navy Seabee unit from Guam was flown to the region to provide critical water-well-drilling support. A C-17 maintenance package from McChord AFB, Washington and people and equipment assigned to Kadena's 18th Communications Squadron were also flown to the region.

Besides flying people and equipment, AMC Airmen also ran a tanker airlift control element out of Travis AFB, California, to provide on-site management of AMC airfield operations, including command and control, communications, aerial port services, maintenance, security, weather and intelligence – the critical elements needed to ensure safe and highly efficient air bases for all tanker and airlift operations. AMC's initial relief efforts did not go unnoticed.

A senior U.S. Agency for International Development official said support from AMC aircraft was both welcomed and necessary. USAID is the lead governmental department responsible for U.S. tsunami-relief operations.

Edward Fox, USAID's assistant administrator for legislative and public affairs, said "the one thing that distinguishes the United States from the rest of the world is its military, especially the Air Force and its airlift capability."

He said Air Force airlift is a central part of any relief effort of this magnitude.

"To be able to provide the type of emergency response needed to save lives, the Air Force logistical capability is indispensable to USAID and others in the international relief area, because we don't have those types of assets," Mr. Fox said. "We are extremely delighted and proud to be working side by side with the U.S. Air Force."

For example, Mr. Fox said the helicopters delivered were "worth their weight in gold." He explained that the topography of Indonesia and other countries struck by this disaster make normal means of transportation impossible.

"Without the helicopters we wouldn't be able to get the assessment teams in to determine what response to take," Mr. Fox said. "Helicopters also provide a lifeline to get water, food and medical supplies into these communities to sustain them in the early stages of a disaster; until the normal modes of the transportation are restored."

Mr. Fox said the most urgent problem was the prevention of further loss of life caused by the effects of the tsunamis: contaminated water supplies, people dislodged from their homes and the threat of disease.

"This is the perfect breeding ground for major health problems and diseases which could kill as many people as the event itself," he said. "The ability to provide clean drinking water, plastic sheeting for shelter, water purification kits and food supplies is literally saving lives."

For this and other reasons, Mr. Fox said "the (importance of the) logistic lift capability provided by the U.S. Air Force cannot be overstated."

Operation Unified Assistance: A Timeline

The following stories are offered in chronological order (by date filed) to relate the magnitude of AMC's involvement in Operation Unified Assistance, the magnificent personal commitment of AMC personnel to the relief effort, and the challenges they faced –

29 December 2004 – First Call

Ops Support Center Airmen Coordinate AF Relief Efforts

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii (AFPN) -- Pacific Air Forces officials here activated the 24-hour PACAF Operations Support Center to coordinate Air Force-related relief efforts for the devastation caused by the tsunamis.

Center officials, who are working with Department of Defense and U.S. Pacific Command, are assisting with the relief efforts for the victims of the disaster.

Six C-130 Hercules from Yokota Air Base, Japan, and three KC-135 Stratotankers from Kadena AB, Japan, are supporting people and moving relief supplies. The Stratotankers delivered two Marine Corps disaster assessment teams to Sri Lanka. Supplies of fresh water and packaged meals continue to arrive in Thailand.

Center officials will help identify requirements for temporary Air Force-specific support as well as the flow of aircraft from PACAF bases.

"We express our deepest sympathy and compassion to the hundreds of thousands of people who are suffering from loss of family, homes or property as a result of the tsunamis," said Col. Mark Tapper, 502nd Air Operations Group commander and the Joint Forces Air Component commander for Joint Task Force 536. The task force was created to coordinate U.S. military relief efforts in the region.

"We are going to do all we can to help out in this humanitarian relief effort," Colonel Tapper said.

30 December 2004 – Setting Up Relief Efforts

U.S. Military Team Arrives To Assess Disaster Relief Efforts

KATUNAYAK AIR FORCE BASE, Sri Lanka (AFPN) -- About 30 members of the U.S. military arrived here 30 December to help assess disaster relief assistance in the wake of tsunamis that struck south Asian countries.

Airmen from the 613th Contingency Response Group at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, and Marines from the III Marine Expeditionary Force in Okinawa arrived at this Sri Lankan military base to identify requirements to support the local U.S. Embassy and humanitarian relief efforts.

"Our mission here is to go out and size up the relief efforts and provide the embassy with a clearer picture of what the military provide," said Marine Col. Thomas Collins, commander of Joint Task Force 536th's disaster relief assessment team.

The team comprises civil affairs, medical treatment, preventive medicine, contracting and civil engineers, among others.

Airmen from the 613th CRG are also in Sri Lanka to conduct an airfield suitability assessment.

"Right now we have a group of 10 members on the team to evaluate the conditions of the airfield and to select the best place for strategic airlift," said Lt. Col. Paul Williams, 613th CRG commander. "We will make sure that the local airfields can support aircraft like the C-17 (Globemaster III) and the C-5 (Galaxy) during disaster relief operations."

Once the assessment teams complete their evaluations, airlift will begin from Yokota Air Base, Japan, and from Kadena Air Base, Japan. Crews will be scheduled to fly around the clock to transport much needed items like water, food and medical supplies.

"We will do whatever we need to help" said Maj. Alex Ferido, a KC-135 Stratotanker pilot from the 909th Air Refueling Squadron at Kadena AB. "Today we brought some Marines and Airmen. Tomorrow we might be refueling aircraft coming to the Pacific to help (with relief efforts)."

Air Force C-130 Hercules and KC-135s along with Navy P-3 Orions have flown from Kadena to transport pallets of water, food, clothes and medical supplies to Thailand, in what is expected to be one of the largest humanitarian relief operations since the Berlin Airlift, officials said.

3 January 2005 – In Gear

Yokota Airmen Keep Steady Pace In Providing Relief

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan (AFPN) -- About 170 Airmen from here have arrived in Thailand to assist in relief efforts.

The Airmen from the 374th Airlift Wing have deployed to Utapao, Thailand, to establish a forward-operating location to provide supplies and people throughout the region.

The deployed Airmen include aircrews and maintenance, operational support, medical and communications specialists.

"We're just glad to try and help end the loss of life and human suffering," said Airmen 1st Class Nicholas Mathews, of the 374th Maintenance Squadron.



BANGKOK, Thailand -- Volunteers organize a sea of relief supplies between two hangars at the international airport here Jan. 1. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Michael Farris)

Eight C-130 Hercules aircraft have deployed to Thailand to support a regional airlift hub by moving people, equipment and humanitarian supplies. The aircraft will remain in Thailand and deliver supplies to more austere locations in the region.

"We've sent out every cargo aircraft we have to support humanitarian relief operations," said Col. Mark Schissler, 374th Airlift Wing commander. "Our aircrews have a wealth of experience operating C-130s in all types of recovery and relief operations. They're (part of) one of the largest airlift operations ever seen."

Most of the Airmen who have deployed did so with two hours notice.

"I think it's especially unique this time of the year," said Maj. Bill Summers, 36th Airlift Squadron director of operations here. "It says a lot about these (Airmen) and their families."

The Airmen have delivered about 57 tons of supplies and equipment to Thailand.

4 January 2005 – Steady Flow

Airmen Continue To Deliver Relief Supplies to Thailand

PHUKET, Thailand (AFPN) -- As the calendar turned a new year, the aid delivered by Airmen of the 353rd Special Operations Group to communities on Thailand's southwest coast approached 100 tons.

Four MC-130s and 100 Airmen from the group continue to pump vital relief supplies into strategic cities located along the devastated coastline.

Thai officials are still identifying life-sustaining supplies such as medicine, tarps for shelter, bandages and water, as top priorities. Two massive aircraft hangars on the east side of Bangkok's sprawling airport are the collection location for donations nationwide. Trucks

are taking nonperishable supplies to the coastal cities 10 hours away. In a matter of two days, donations from around the kingdom have outpaced all airlift capabilities.

Here in Thailand's largest tourist destination, the situation is dire. Upwards of 5,000 dead have been found along the coast, and Thailand's prime minister warns that number may double as outlying islands are fully examined. While this resort town was smashed by killer waves, islands offshore, like Phi Phi and Kao Lak, were completely decimated.

Lt. Col. David Mobley, from the 17th Special Operations Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Japan, is the deployed mission commander in Bangkok.



YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan -- Airmen from the 374th Airlift Wing load supplies onto a C-17 Globemaster III here Dec. 31. The aircraft is headed for a forward-operating base in Utapao, Thailand. The supplies are intended to help other Airmen conduct missions supporting tsunami relief efforts in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India. About 170 Airmen from here have also deployed to support relief operations throughout the region. (U.S. Air Force photo by 1st Lt. Warren Comer)

"With limited aircrews, a skeleton maintenance squad, a few spare parts and almost no support functions, the work carried out by this team is amazing," he said. "Every Airman here understands that to be doing anything else right now just wouldn't seem right."

The Americans are not alone. The Royal Thai air force has mobilized its forces and is also busy hauling life-saving cargo south.

Thai aviators have accompanied U.S. aircrews on flights to many of the remote airfields to facilitate entry, unloading of supplies and departure. Airmen involved in the operation said it has been a huge success.

"We've enjoyed very quick turnarounds because the Thais know these fields like the back of their hands," one said. "Their experience is invaluable to us getting our jobs done. With less than one day's notice, we rolled in here and began operating out of their offices and their neighborhoods like we were old friends."

An Airman assigned to the 1st Special Operations Squadron, said his impact was brought home his first day here.

"Bringing a dozen litter patients back to Bangkok was by far the most meaningful thing I've done," he said. "The sincere thanks and absolute gratitude of people whose lives have been crushed was amazing. I'll never forget it."

As a one-man ringleader, a loadmaster here directs pallets onto the aircraft every day.

"The supplies we're loading into these planes are having a huge impact on millions of people's lives today," he said. "If it's a temporary shelter for a family of five or vaccinations for 50,000, these things are important right now. It's humbling to be a part of this assistance."

The Airmen in Bangkok are under the direction of Joint Task Force

536. The task force is coordinating U.S. military relief efforts in the region and will enable leaders on the ground to maximize the efforts of people and resources.

As the new year began, the devastation in Southeast Asia was just beginning to be understood. The fatality total has reached 150,000, and continues to climb. With such dire situations on the ground, the Airmen here said they can only hope their efforts can make a difference.

Airmen Choreograph Flow of Aid To Disaster-Torn Thai Communities

BANGKOK, Thailand (AFP) -- When Lt. Col. David Mobley arrived here as the 353rd Special Operations Group's point-man for disaster relief, he said he envisioned a steady flow of aid from the kingdom's sprawling capital to devastated provinces in the south.

He said he never imagined that in 48 hours the modest pile of assorted blankets, sleeping mats, food, tarps and medicines would grow into a mountain of material, bulging the seams of two aircraft hangars and spilling out onto the ramp.

On the back side of the international airport here, sandwiched between two Royal Thai air force hangars, hundreds of Thai volunteers have sorted the material into distinct foothills of the mountain. Individual cases of bottled drinking water give way to bigger jugs and 55-gallon barrels. Blankets are bundled, wrapped in tarps and piled 25 feet into the air. Cases of medicine from Greece, the United States, Germany and points beyond are inventoried and slated for airlift. The biggest challenge facing Airmen here is moving the material.

"In less than 24 hours we've transitioned from hand-loading items to palletizing aid with cargo straps and netting. It makes for much quicker (loading and unloading)," the colonel said. "Initially, we lacked forklifts and other equipment that is now available."

The process is now far more efficient and streamlined.

Royal Thai air force leaders and military experts from the country team are directing priorities. They assign items and locations, and it is the American Airmen's job to make the delivery. The most frequent destination is Phuket International Airport, but deliveries have also been made to Krabi, Raynong and Trang, and other locations are being targeted.

The volunteers are given a list of the day's priorities. They build and weigh pallets with the help of Air Force loadmasters. As each plane is loaded, the priorities all shuffle up, three tons of dry ice to Krabi, two pallets of blankets to Raynong, 1,500 body bags to Phuket, and so on.

Besides taking aid and disaster workers into the hardest hit areas, the Airmen also bring out the most seriously wounded. Several dozen injured people, of various nationalities, have been medically evacuated to Bangkok where their wounds will be treated faster.

Airmen from the 17th Special Operations Squadron create daily schedules that push the aircrews and maintainers toward a vigorous pace that sees a single aircraft flying a round-trip shuttle several times a day. The flight times to points south are about an hour-and-a-half, but the ground time varies depending on availability of gas trucks, fork lifts and ground support people to unload the airplane.

"It's a delicate balance of trying to help everybody," one planner said. "There's a massive amount of donated aid and a finite number of planes and crews to transport it all."

Another planner with the 17th SOS said he is happy to be involved. He is working long hours to support the effort but wants to do more.

"I've volunteered to fly south with the aircrews and help unload planes or assist wherever I can. It makes me feel proud to pitch in to help make these people's lives a little easier."

10 January 2005 – A Very Busy Day

Humanitarian-Relief Mission Supports Tsunami Victims

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- "The largest humanitarian relief effort since the Berlin Airlift in 1947 is providing desperately needed water, food and medical supplies to victims of the tsunamis in the Indian Ocean," the general coordinating air support for the operation said 9 January.

Brig. Gen. Jan-Marc Jouas, director of the Combined Support Force Air Component Coordination Element based in Utao, Thailand, called the relief effort "a monumental task" but said he is impressed by the extent of the international response and the speed with which it has come together.

Tremendous distances between the affected nations and destruction at many airfields following the devastating 26 December tsunamis have challenged the relief effort, General Jouas said. However, C-130 Hercules aircraft are currently able to land at one site in Sri Lanka, three in Thailand and three in Indonesia. From these sites, as well as airfields in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and Singapore, rotary-wing aircraft and trucks are then ferrying relief supplies to tsunami victims.

In addition, Sailors are playing a big role in delivering supplies in ship-to-shore operations that eliminate the need to use damaged or overcrowded airfields.

General Jouas said the search continues for more runways to expand the airlift support to the region.

Secretary of State Colin Powell stressed that the United States must plan to give long-term support to the region during the recovery period ahead.

"This is a long-term prospect," Secretary Powell said following his visit to the region last week. He said the United States must help fund not just "immediate humanitarian relief . but also infrastructure development."

Secretary Powell said it is important to continue assessing need to avoid flooding the area too quickly with more supplies and more financial assets than are yet needed for rebuilding.

Rebuilding timetables will vary throughout the region, Secretary Powell said. Banda Aceh, Indonesia, one of the hardest-hit areas, will take "years" to rebuild after much of it "was scraped to the ground," the secretary said. Other areas will return to relative normalcy much more quickly, he said.

Besides delivering water, food and medical supplies, the relief effort is also focused on providing sanitation and shelter for some 1.5 million people left homeless following the disaster, said Tom Fry from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Mr. Fry leads the agency's disaster assistance response teams. He said the relief effort will soon become a rehabilitation effort. Rebuilding people's livelihoods is as important to their long-term survival as rebuilding homes, he said.

Deployed Troops Send Relief To Southeast Asia Survivors

SOUTHWEST ASIA (AFP) -- Deployed troops at a forward-deployed location here combined forces to send relief items to victims of the tsunamis that swept through Southeast Asia..

Several base agencies worked hand-in-hand with host-nation organizations to provide much-needed clothes, sanitation items and food to Sri Lanka. These efforts will probably lead to lasting programs that will continue to support people in need even after the coordinators of these programs leave, officials said.

"This (project) turned out to be a lot bigger than what I had thought," said Miguel Laboy, a base communications contractor whose daughter was in Thailand when the tsunamis hit.

Realizing that deployed Airmen were interested in donating to the countries in need, not to mention lightening their baggage before returning home, Mr. Laboy said he had

originally teamed up with a local church to provide clothes to people in the Philippines who were plagued by flooding about a month ago. But after hearing of the tsunamis that devastated areas across the Indian Ocean, he shifted his focus to helping those particular victims.

"My first thought was to make sure my daughter was OK," he said. "And when I found out she was, I called the Sri Lankan Embassy here to find ways I could help."

Working with embassy officials, Mr. Laboy said he has been able to arrange for needed items to be flown free of charge by a commercial Sri Lankan airline company. And by word of mouth, the seemingly small project he began at one base has grown into a joint effort between two air bases and an Army post, all located in Southwest Asia.

"So far, we've got enough clothing, food and sanitation items to help out about a hundred people, and the donations keep coming in," said Mr. Laboy, who is also a retired Army sergeant major.

Another base organization that has also helped gather relief supplies for Sri Lanka is the base chapel.

"We have a good relationship with churches located downtown," said Chaplain (Capt.) David Mansberger, who is deployed from Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. "One of them was flying a plane (to) Sri Lanka about two days after the tsunamis hit and invited us to donate to the effort."

Although there was not much time to gather clothing and supplies for the effort, Chaplain Mansberger said they gathered about four large boxes of clothes.



Staff Sergeant Billy Lucas an Air Transportation Craftsman with the 733 Air Mobility Squadron guides a pallet of relief supplies on to a C-130 from Kadena Air Base Japan on 4 January 2005 at the Bangkok International Airport. Sergeant Lucas is in Thailand in support of the international Tsunami relief efforts in Asia. (USAF photo by Tech. Sgt John M. Foster) (Released)

"The spirit of volunteerism and giving donations is alive and well on this base," he said.

Chaplain Mansberger said this giving spirit might contribute to making this a lasting project.

"When working with the church (downtown), we also found that some third-country nationals (locally) were in need of clothes and supplies, too," he said. "So, we're working toward collecting enough items to make donations once a month or every other week."

Although Mr. Laboy's efforts were specifically aimed toward helping the people of Sri Lanka, he said he knows recovery efforts will take quite some time.

"Even after I leave, I hope somebody else on base will take up the responsibility of collecting items to continue donating to those countries that need it," he said.

Air Force, Partners Deliver Aid To Indonesia

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AFP) -- Unfamiliar partners from

disparate lands have tuned the tools of their humanitarian outreach trade and are working in unison in the wake of one of the world's worst natural disasters.

Airmen of the 353rd Special Operations Group, based in Langkawi, Malaysia, said the 16-hour days typically begin, oddly enough, at night.

Just an hour's flight from Sumatra's shattered west coast, crews of the C-130 Hercules aircraft there take off around dusk. Their destinations are Indonesia's capital of Jakarta or the humanitarian hub at a military airfield in Medan.

U.S. Marines and Indonesian servicemembers there help aircrews pack the planes to thresholds. On a single mission, 1st Special Operations Squadron Airmen carried 10 doctors from Portugal with tons of medical equipment, two mobile water purification trailers from Spain and an enthusiastic contingent of disaster-response specialists from Mexico. Bundles of cargo burst the seams of aircraft hangars in Jakarta and Medan, bearing the flags of countries worldwide.

Logisticians and leaders prioritize the loads, and the C-130s cycle through the process.

Most of the precious cargo is flown to the hardest-hit region of Banda Aceh. U.S. Marines and Air Force combat controllers direct the unloading of C-130s and other aircraft throughout the night. The massive bundles can be up to 8 feet high and weigh several tons -- far too large for effective distribution in this stark land where roads are impassable, trucks are scarce and the citizens are desperate.

The C-130s head back to Medan for second and third loads, always balancing maximized capacity with flight and ground safety. Forklifts



BANDA ACEH, Indonesia -- A pallet of water is unloaded from a C-130 Hercules here Jan. 10. More than 18,000 Marines, Sailors, Airmen, Soldiers and Coast Guardsmen with Combined Support Force 536 are working with international militaries and nongovernmental organizations to aid the affected people of Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia after a magnitude 9.0 earthquake Dec. 26 triggered devastating tsunamis. International efforts to minimize suffering and mitigate loss of life continue as the CSF 536 servicemembers provide humanitarian assistance supporting Operation Unified Assistance. (U.S. Air Force photo by 2nd Lt. Ben Sakrisson)

do much of the heavy lifting, but not all. Loadmasters and people on the ground soak through shirts and flight suits in the humid Indonesian nights. Piles of tent poles and 200-pound canvases are too bulky to load on pallets and are, instead, heaved about with brute, back-breaking force.

As crews work to load a one plane, they pause to watch a seemingly endless line of refugees exit another. Thousands of refugees, many injured and all horribly shaken, have been flown to Medan by the international contingent. Very few carry any bags.

At dawn, swarms of U.S. Navy helicopters swoop into Banda Aceh from ships anchored off the coast. They queue into receiving lines at the airfield, directed by civilian air traffic controllers and 320th Special Tactics Squadron combat controllers. More helicopters from the Indonesian air force join the file and haul bundles to shattered cities up and down the coast.

The Air Force controllers use airfield management expertise to improve the efficiency of the operation and keep it safe. Another team of combat controllers works cargo shipping veins from Medan.

The hardscrabble squad organizing moving parts in Banda Aceh quintessentially defines the term "remote." Tents would be a step up in this rural Indonesian town where the dead outnumber the living. The Airmen sleep on the tarmac on cots covered with mosquito nets a mere 75 yards from where cargo planes maneuver in for unloading. The noise and commotion occur around the clock, and the physical demands are endless.

Their food and water consist of that which they brought in their trucks. As the sun comes up back in Langkawi, Malaysia, aircraft maintainers recover the planes and assess the status. The aircrews trudge off to sleep, and the maintenance begins. Luxuries of home station do not exist, and the logistic tail back to Japan is a long one. Pile on language barriers, security considerations and a minimal work force and the challenges become apparent. Two hallmarks of special operations, flexibility and innovation, are exercised daily.

The work being done by the 353rd SOG Airmen here is vital to recovery in the region, said Lt. Col. Rick Samuels, the Air Force special operations component commander.

"The moment we fail to react to others in need, we cease to be human," he said. "Our government cares deeply about helping these folks get back on their feet, and we demonstrate that daily."

Colonel Samuels said 353rd SOG officials considered several operating bases before deciding on Langkawi.

"In the days following the quake and tsunamis, there were a lot of questions regarding how to best get supplies in," he said. "The air choice was an obvious solution, but it's rarely efficient to bed down at a forward-distribution center. Ramp space is (at) a premium, and there's simply too much traffic in Banda Aceh.

"Instead, we looked at nearby airfields, and the Malaysian (liaison) suggested we consider Langkawi," he said.

Another challenge facing the group was arriving before the higher headquarters was fully stood up. Colonel Samuels said the 353rd SOG's unique capabilities allowed it to move into Thailand and begin delivering aid before Joint Task Force 536 had arrived.

"We knew the commander's intent, so we flew missions out of Bangkok for several days while policies were refined and staffs formed," Colonel Samuels said. "Shortly thereafter, we relocated to Malaysia to do the same for Indonesia."

Yokota C-130s Continue To Fly Aid To Tsunami Victims

UTAPAO, Thailand -- C-130 Hercules crews from the 36th Airlift Squadron at Yokota Air Base, Japan, continue to fly vital supplies and equipment to tsunami-stricken areas in Southeast Asia.

"It feels great to help. It makes you feel good to be an American when we are able to share with those who are in need," said Maj. Brian Geromine, a C-130 pilot from the 36th AS.

The C-130s first flew into the damaged areas 28 December. They delivered much needed relief supplies to Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia after tsunamis devastated parts of the countries two days earlier.

More than 155,000 people have died, several thousands are missing, and millions are homeless.

Floods cut off roads and bridges to most of the coastal areas.

Bottlenecks of supplies built up quickly as large-scale military and civilian aircraft ferried goods to various airports, officials said.

Yokota C-130 crews helped move life-saving food, water and medicines into places large aircraft could not access.

"We have the unique capability to get into smaller airfields and austere places. We were delivering relief supplies right into people's hands as soon as we arrived here," said Senior Master Sgt. Dave Niehaus, a flight engineer.

The Airmen said that the people coming out to meet the aircraft were very thankful for the supplies. Some of them had not eaten for days.

Squadron Airmen also said that because the aircraft arrived here before their normal support infrastructure, the crew had to load and unload relief supplies by hand.

The Yokota Airmen also said they are proud they have flown without a single flight cancellation.

"It's incredible to see everyone step up to the plate and work around-the-clock. We've had some very long days, but everyone is glad to be here," Sergeant. Niehaus said.

As of 9 January, eight Yokota C-130 crews have flown about 60 sorties. They delivered about 550 tons of relief supplies, moved more than 600 displaced and injured people, and flew various military and civilian international assessment teams to different locations.

Deployed Airmen Support Operation Unified Assistance

LANGKAWI, Malaysia (AFP) -- The mission was simple: bring a forklift here only to be moved by another unit to Banda Aceh, Indonesia, the next day.

Airmen of the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing at Utapao, Thailand, support Combined Support Force 536, which is playing an integral role to the international support effort called Operation Unified Assistance.

"This is a very important mission. This forklift will help expedite the unloading process in Banda Aceh," said 1st Lt. Rob Reinbach, a C-130 Hercules co-pilot from the 36th Airlift Squadron at Yokota AB, Japan. "On one of our first support missions, we had to unload about 10,000 pounds of supplies by hand. This equipment will allow us to increase the flow of aircraft providing support to Indonesia." The 374th AEW has provided the strategic airlift necessary to move water, food, people and, in this case, heavy equipment.

"Doing things like this is the best part of the mission because we get to experience firsthand the impact of our actions," said Staff Sgt. Mark Parth, a C-130 flight engineer with the 36th AS.

"We were part of the first C-130s to land in Thailand and Indonesia. When we got there, military members of both countries were waiting for us, ready to help unload the supplies we were transporting to the affected areas," Sergeant Parth said.

Most of the servicemembers participating in the humanitarian operation said they did not have to think twice when asked to participate in what would become the largest humanitarian operation since the Berlin Airlift.

"I got a call shortly after the disaster happened, and I said 'yes, right away,'" Tech. Sgt. David Bragg said. "We always train for situations like this, and I was not going to miss the opportunity to help others."

So far, the combined support force has helped to move more than 782 tons of food, water and supplies to Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand. More than 16,000 servicemembers are supporting U.S. and international organizations relief operations.

11 January 2005 – Switching Gears

Relief effort Moves Beyond "Crisis-Response" Stage

SAN ANTONIO -- The tsunami relief effort has switched gears and moved out of the crisis-response stage, the commander of the Air Force expeditionary airlift wing at Utapao, Thailand, said.

Sixteen days after tsunamis hit 12 countries in Southeast Asia, the flow of aid into the region has moved into a more controlled recovery and reconstruction phase, Col. Mark Schissler said. He said

the first priority was to meet the crisis.

"The one thing we've done that matters is deliver aid that stops suffering and death," said the deployed commander of the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing.

After the first few days, the wing settled into a rhythm, Colonel Schissler said. This allowed the troops time to catch up and organize, and to set up work areas and communications. The unit has become "more efficient on a daily basis," he said.



BANDA ACEH, Indonesia -- Large amounts of relief supplies line the side of the runway here Jan. 10, and aircraft and vehicles from a variety of countries sit on the tarmac. More than 18,000 Marines, Sailors, Airmen, Soldiers and Coast Guardsmen with Combined Support Force 536 are working with international militaries and nongovernmental organizations to aid the affected people of Thailand, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. (U.S. Air Force photo by 2nd Lt. Ben Sakrisson)

It does not mean, however, that the relief effort is slowing down. Utapao, home of a Thai navy base, is the hub of the humanitarian relief flights. Operations by C-130 Hercules and HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters within the region continue around the clock along with missions by C-17 Globemaster IIIs, C-5 Galaxies and commercially hired transports providing airlift in the region.

Plus, "any country that can get an airplane here [to help] is trying to do that," the colonel said.

On any given day, wing crews from any location that can service the aircraft, Colonel Schissler said. That includes airfields in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and other countries in the region.

"We'll use [the airfield] if we can get clearance to go in there, or if there's aid to pick up there," the colonel said. As a result, the wing's aircraft are flying an average of 17 or 18 daily missions within the theater. Other aircraft fly an additional 17 to 20 from outside the theater. That could add up to 40 missions on a busy day, he said.

Airmen are part of the more than 13,000 other U.S. troops -- active duty, Guard and Reserve -- providing humanitarian support. They make up Combined Support Force 536, the largest U.S. military force in the region since the Vietnam War, officials said. Their effort -- known as Operation Unified Assistance -- is the largest humanitarian relief effort since the Berlin Airlift.

Those who work on the flightline are keeping up with the hectic pace. Among them is Airman 1st Class Mark Torneskog, who deployed to Utapao on 3 January from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. He said, the seven-hour flight on a KC-135 Stratotanker was grueling.

"We got off the plane and started working before going to the hotel," the air transportation troop said. "We had to move some stuff around."

Thus began his 14-hour work days loading and unloading transport aircraft. "This place is pretty busy," he said.

The fast pace is necessary because the more relief supplies that

reach survivors, the less chance of more deaths and disease. Colonel Schissler said the Air Force's airlift capability will allow a continued quick response.

There are challenges. The region has congested airspace unfamiliar to most of the aircrews. But the Airmen possess "tremendous capability, professionalism, knowledge and the airmanship" to meet the test, he said. As a result, aircrews are moving large quantities of relief goods to where they are needed. That means a lot of flying for aircrews and work for ground crews.



BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AFPN) -- A tanker airlift control element team uses an all- terrain forklift to unload pallets of cargo from a C-17 Globemaster III that flew here from Utapao, Thailand. The C-17 was flown by a crew from the 8th Airlift Squadron based at McChord Air Force Base, Wash. (U.S. Air Force photo by Samantha L. Quigley)

"Morale is really good. People are excited to be helping -- that's just the way we are," said Staff Sgt. Rod Hale, an air transportation troop from Travis Air Force Base, Calif. He said he has heard few complaints by co-workers. "Everyone just wants to do their part."

Many more will get to help, too. In a speech to officials of the U.S. Agency for International Development and other relief groups in Washington, President George W. Bush predicted the effort to help rebuild Asia would take time.

"We have a duty, we have made a commitment, and our commitment is a long-term commitment to help those good folks in the part of the world that got affected get back on their feet," he said.

For the Airmen at Utapao, that could mean a long tour of duty, but Airman Torneskog said he does not mind. In fact, he wishes he could remain there for three reasons: Everyone is motivated, the work is high intensity, and people must get things done quickly.

"Everyone is working well together, and we're always up and moving," he said. "It's a great work environment. I wish I was stationed here, actually."

The relief effort has had a double impact, Colonel Schissler said. It has affected Airmen because they are proud to represent their country in the region.

"Most of us wear American flags on our sleeve," he said. To the people of the region, the flag "represents capability," the colonel said. "(It says) we're a reliable partner when trouble comes their way. I think that's what people count on; I think we're welcome everywhere we go."

Combined Support Force Refines Relief Efforts

UTAPAO, Thailand (AFPN) -- Relief efforts continue in the Southeast Asian region and water-production facilities are being established in Indonesia in coordination with host government officials, said Marine Lt. Col. Robert Krieg, lead future-operations

planner for Combined Support Force 536.

Five C-130 Hercules have arrived at Banda Aceh with an Air Force mobility support team to organize an airport ramp area. That is one of the critical things needed at Banda Aceh, Colonel Krieg said.

"It's a small airfield," he said. "We're trying to put a lot of supplies through there. Many nations are trying to put supplies through there."

The U.S. Navy pre-positioning ship MV Pless, with the capability to offload fresh water, is off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. Operations have not begun, but the ship is standing by should the Indonesian government make such a request. The USS Duluth also arrived in the area and is ferrying supplies to shore via amphibious landing craft.

Teams also have begun clearing debris from affected areas in Sri Lanka. At least 150 metric tons of debris was cleared from the roads. Some debris was deposited to reconstruct the sea wall and some was taken to a Sri Lankan landfill.

Pulau Simeule, a small island about 60 miles off the coast of Indonesia, is getting new attention. Sailors on the USS Bonhomme Richard are delivering supplies to the 1,000-person island.

Numbers continue to grow with the relief efforts. Colonel Krieg said 850 sorties have been flown since the beginning of operations, moving 46,000 gallons of fresh water, 4,009 pounds of food and 775,000 pounds of supplies. They have also moved 153 injured people, he said.

Guardsmen Help With Tsunami Relief

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFPN) -- Alaska and Hawaii, the two closest states, are supporting American relief efforts by sending Air National Guardsmen and resources to the region devastated by the 26 December earthquake and tsunamis, Guard spokesmen said.

The guardsmen are undertaking this mission at the same time that many others are heavily engaged in the war against terrorism at home and abroad, said Maj. Mike Haller, spokesman for the Alaska National Guard.

About 150 Alaska Air Guardsmen were involved or prepared to take part in the tsunami relief efforts, Major Haller said.

Brig. Gen. James Robinson, the Alaska Air Guard's chief of staff, has been assigned as second in command for the joint U.S. military assistance group for Thailand. He is responsible for the daily activities of the joint relief effort, Major Haller said.

Three C-130 Hercules from the 144th Airlift Squadron at Kulis Air National Guard Base, Alaska, are on duty in Japan, assigned to support airlift operations for the recovery. About 25 guardsmen are involved in that mission.

About 120 guardsmen from the 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons at Kulis are standing by to take two HC-130 rescue tankers and three HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters to the afflicted region if they are needed.

Meanwhile, Maj. Russell Wilmot III, an Alaska Air Guard intelligence officer, has served in the hard-hit Thailand resort town of Phuket with six people from the Anchorage Fire Department.

Major Wilmot is familiar with Thai military forces and speaks the country's language so he could offer the firefighters the necessary coordination to ensure their skills are properly used, Major Haller said.

The Hawaii Air Guardsmen are also helping, said spokesman Maj. Charles Anthony.

A KC-135 Stratotanker has flown a Department of Defense forensics team to Thailand to help identify victims. Two combat communications Airmen have been sent to the same country, he said.

Thirty-nine security forces Airmen will provide security for U.S. forces in Indonesia, Major Anthony said.

This, however, is just the beginning of what world officials said they believe will be a long relief effort.

13 January 2005 – Making Progress

Tons of Relief

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Servicemembers deployed across Southeast Asia remain busy "providing literally tons of relief" supplies, a U.S. officer reported 13 January from Utapao, Thailand.

U.S. Sailors, Marines and Airmen continued the massive airlift and sealift of food, medicine and water earmarked for Indonesians, Thais, Sri Lankans and others whose homes and businesses were washed away, Col. Mark Schissler said.

"We're making a lot of progress," said Colonel Schissler, commander of the 374th Air Expeditionary Wing. Operation Unified Assistance recovery efforts, he said, already have made much headway in Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Relief workers are "still working hard to get enough food into Indonesia," which was hardest hit by the natural disaster, he said. The tsunamis killed at least 150,000 people across the region; an estimated 100,000 of those victims have died in Indonesia.

The mission's key priority is "stopping suffering where it's still going on," Colonel Schissler said. Many people living on the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, remain displaced and homeless. Efforts are ongoing to provide food, water and other aid to those victims, he said.

U.S. servicemembers were hurriedly called away from their families to participate in the operation. But "that doesn't distract us much from the job at hand," the colonel said.

"When you get out and do the mission," Colonel Schissler said, "you find that you're providing direct aid" to people in need. Such work "is very rewarding," he said.

The colonel said he "couldn't be more proud" of the response of the U.S. servicemembers. He acknowledged a group of them based in Yokota, Japan, who joined the relief effort after just returning from a tour in the Middle East.

"We asked them if they would deploy with us," Colonel Schissler said, and he said their answer "was universally, 'yes.'" Servicemembers, he said, get "an extra boost" to their morale when they deploy on humanitarian missions.

"There's a certain sense of satisfaction at the end of the day when you know that you've helped people during the day while you're doing your military job," he said.

Vital Role Continues

UTAPAO, Thailand (AFP) -- Airmen of the 8th Airlift Squadron from McChord Air Force Base, Wash., continued their vital role in the disaster relief effort 12 January. Equipment, supplies and people were loaded onto one of the squadron's huge C-17 Globemaster III cargo jets headed to Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Indonesia was one of the areas hardest hit by the 26 December earthquake and resulting tsunamis.

The C-17's crew of four, with the help of a tanker airlift control element team, loaded at least 58,000 pounds of equipment and supplies, said Tech. Sgt. Mark Hafer, one of the crew's two loadmasters. The team is from Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

The equipment, Sergeant Hafer said, included a tonnage loader and an all-terrain forklift used to move pallets of supplies. The C-17 also carried other supplies, including 6,000 pounds of relief supplies, he said.

The mission came off without a hitch. The plane, which took a fair amount of time to load, landed in Banda Aceh after about two hours flight time. Cargo unloading took about 45 minutes, and the plane and crew took off quickly on the next mission.

The 8th Airlift Squadron's normal missions involve a great deal of training with 82nd Airborne Division Soldiers from Fort Bragg, N.C., Sergeant Hafer said. The unit also has flown missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This mission is different though.

"You definitely get more satisfaction helping people," Sergeant Hafer said. "It beats getting shot at," he added with a smile.

Satisfying as it may be, the mission here is more difficult than normal. Simply navigating the lumbering C-17 into the Banda Aceh airport has its challenges.

"All of their stuff was wiped out," said Capt. Bill Quashnock, aircraft commander. The airport's radar system is gone, and air tower workers cannot "see" inbound planes before they are physically visible, he said.

"As we're flying in, we're constantly having to give them updates (on our location)," he said.

To combat the lack of a radar system, the aircrews use what are referred to as "nonradar procedures." The system is officially known as the traffic collision avoidance system. The C-17 also has a small radar system onboard that can pick up other planes in the area, which is especially important since air traffic controllers cannot see on radar when planes might be crossing paths and subject to a collision.

"(The system) is a fallback everywhere," Captain Quashnock said. But, it is not as difficult for pilots as it is for the controllers, he said.

The air traffic controller, who is Indonesian, has a bit of help by way of an Australian counterpart, Captain Quashnock said. That backup watches over the air traffic controller's shoulder to ensure that there are no misunderstandings because of any language difficulties.

The authorization of night flights is imminent, Captain Quashnock said. As the airport's systems are limited, these night flights will require the use of night-vision goggles, he said.



DAMBULA, Sri Lanka -- An HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter crew picks up vegetables here during an Operation Unified Assistance mission. The crew is helping bring food, medicine and supplies to the affected areas. They are assigned to the 33rd Rescue Squadron at Kadana Air Base, Japan. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Val Gempis)

With all the challenges present in flying relief equipment and supplies into Banda Aceh, Captain Quashnock said that this mission is more satisfying than those to Afghanistan and Iraq.

"I guess you could say it's a lot more enjoyable," he said.

18 January 2005 – Proudly Serving

America At Its Best!

UTAPAO, Thailand (AFP) -- A Message from Colonel Michael R. Boera, 374 Air Expeditionary Wing vice commander: At various times throughout my 23 years in the U.S. Air Force, I have taken the opportunity to write articles for my hometown newspaper in Vermont for my family and friends to read and for home base newspapers where I've been assigned.

My editorials included my personal thanks for the support I received during Desert Storm, my perspective of combat air

operations over Northern Iraq during Operation Provide Comfort, and my heart-felt thoughts after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on America.

Today, I write you from Royal Thai Naval Air Station Utapao here where I am deployed in support of Operation Unified Assistance, the humanitarian relief mission in support of the tsunami victims in Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

I have made a livelihood of flying F-16 Fighting Falcon combat aircraft and am currently assigned as the 35th Operations Group commander at Misawa Air Base, Japan. A couple of weeks ago, I was preparing to fly a local combat training mission when I received a call from my boss. I was basically told to get some shots and pack my bags because I was being sent to Thailand to help stand up the 374 Air Expeditionary Wing. About 24 hours later, I was landing at Utapao airfield.

The mission of the wing is to provide support to the intra-theater airlift units, mostly flying C-130 Hercules and C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters, sprinkled around workable airfields in the affected countries. We are the Air Force piece of Combined Support Force 536, commanded by a U.S. Marine lieutenant general. I have never been involved in a humanitarian relief effort and now I am involved in one rivaling that of any relief effort -- ever!

It has been my honor to serve in such an operation. As much as I miss being away from my family and flying the F-16, it gives me great satisfaction to be involved in a relief and recovery operation versus the typical combat operation I am so familiar with, and which usually involves some sort of destruction. This is America at its best!

It is also the America that doesn't make the headlines very often, or the lead story on our top TV news stations' telecasts. In fact, this relief operation is probably not the lead story in the United States any longer.

Please keep in mind, the mission continues.

Obviously, I am involved with the U.S. military aspect of the mission. We are but one piece of the puzzle to bring much-needed disaster relief to the victims, but a significant piece at this stage of the effort.

Gradually, we will let civilian governmental and non-governmental organizations take over the bulk of the effort and most of us will return to our home stations. When I do, I hope to pick up where I left off; say "hello" to the family and get back in the cockpit of an F-16 to once again train for combat operations.

Until then, I am proud to be a part of this relief mission. It is America at its best!

Helping Is a Tremendous Feeling

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- Airman 1st Class Emily Starcher does not have to be reminded how important her mission is here in Sri Lanka -- she sees it everyday.

There is nothing but wrecked homes and destroyed buildings along coastal towns here, she said. Town after town was wiped away by the 26 December tsunamis.

She is an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter flight engineer with the 33rd Rescue Squadron based at Kadena Air Base, Japan, and one of a group of Airmen from there hauling relief supplies to tsunami-stricken areas on board their six helicopters.

"It's a tremendous feeling to know that we play a part in helping people put their lives back together here. I feel proud to be a part of this operation," Airman Starcher said.

Airman Starcher, who is on her first deployment, said she was nervous and excited at the same time when she found out she was tapped to assist here.

She did not know what to expect, but said she quickly understood how much impact their work here has on the tsunami victims.

"It's a great mission. We're making a difference," she said.

The Airmen pick up food, hygiene kits, water, plastic sheeting and

medicine daily from various distribution points.

With the helicopters packed to the ceiling with goods, the crew leapfrogs from one location to another delivering the much-needed supplies to affected areas.

Although the people welcome the Airmen with open arms, operations at the landing zones can be hairy at times, they said.

"One of our biggest challenge here is safety," said Tech. Sgt. Keith Kolb, an aerial gunner.



DAMBULA, Sri Lanka -- Airman 1st Class Emily Starcher helps Sri Lankan relief workers unload boxes of vegetables from an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter during an Operation Unified Assistance mission here. She is a flight engineer assigned to the 33rd Rescue Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Japan. The Kadena Airmen are helping bring food, medicines and supplies to people affected by the Dec. 26 tsunamis. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Val Gempis)

When aircraft arrive, excited and curious crowds would rush the helicopters to help the Airmen unload, he said.

Although the crew welcomes the extra hands, running towards a chopper while the rotor blades are spinning can be dangerous, Sergeant Kolb said.

To prevent injuries, the Airmen, with the help of Sri Lankan security, make sure the people do not approach until told to. They also use hand signals to let the people know when and where to go.

Cargo safety is also a concern here, the Airmen said. The team ensures the supplies are tied down and secured correctly inside the aircraft.

The Airmen said they are happy to be here and that the best part of their mission is interacting with the Sri Lankans.

The people are very friendly and will bend over backwards to help the Americans, they said.

"We get lots of 'thank you's' and smiles. You could see in their eyes how much they appreciate us being here," Sergeant Kolb said.

During one of their delivery missions, Sergeant Kolb said he noticed a young boy circling outside the rotor pad. Worried about his safety, Sergeant Kolb approached him. The boy's eyes lit up as the Airman got closer.

The boy gave him a hug. He just wanted to thank the Airman. As the boy was leaving he kissed the back of the gunner's hand to show his appreciation for the efforts here.

"What we're doing here has a direct positive effect on people's lives. We're very happy to help," said Lt. Col. Billy Thompson, 33rd RQS commander.

19 January 2005 – Running Like Clockwork

Air Force Continues Aid In Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- Of the 12 countries swamped by the

tsunamis, Sri Lanka took the brunt of the killer waves, some reportedly 20- to 30-foot high.

Besides cargo planes filled with relief supplies, Joint Task Force 536, based at Utapao, Thailand, includes Airmen deployed from around the world, like Master Sgt. John Boyd, from Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

As the sole point of contact for newly-arrived Airmen, Sergeant Boyd had little time to rest during the initial stages of the operation. During the early-morning hours of 15 January, the day he and his contracted bus driver picked up a team from Hawaii, he had one hour of sleep in 24 hours.

"They just keep coming in," he said through half-shut eyes. Still now, local people pack the airport. Some arrive, others go. For weeks, Sergeant Boyde weaved his way through the masses at the airport, looking for Airmen still weary from travel. It was the bleary-eyed leading the bleary-eyed. He then placed them in different hotels scattered throughout this capital city. With the flood of relief workers here, it is still a challenge to find a room.

Since the 26 December disaster, the local government has built camps with temporary shelters along the east side of this island; however, washed out roads and bridges have hampered the delivery of food and supplies to the displaced people who need them most.

To the rescue came a helicopter unit from Kadena Air Base, Japan. Airmen of the 33rd Rescue Squadron arrived with six HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters during the first week in January.

Rescue squadron pilots are used to plucking downed aircrew members from an ocean in pitch-black darkness during a storm. Pilots say it takes a steady hand, nerves of steel and lots of practice.

This mission is different.

Flying from here, they pick up relief supplies from one site and ferry them to another, where Sri Lankan military and civilian relief workers unload the goods and take them to the camps.

The stripped-down helicopters, sans machine guns and other equipment, have more room to shuttle medical supplies, fruit, vegetables, doctors and relief workers. One day, they even hauled mattresses.

"Instead of a rescue mission, it's more like a cargo transport mission," said Maj. Doug Hiestand, the squadron's assistant operations officer. "I feel good about what we're doing, but I wish we could do more."

The relief effort is slowly evolving into a recovery operation. Once the government here repairs roads and bridges, squadron officials will decide if their services are still needed. Until that time, they will continue to help the Sri Lankans devastated by the tsunamis.

21 January 2005 – Just Keeps Ticking and Ticking

Airmen Keep Cargo, People Moving

UTAPAO, Thailand (AFP) -- Since 1 January, tanker airlift control element Airmen here have been making sure that what comes into the Royal Thai navy airfield gets out.

The element in Utapao is composed of Airmen from the 615th Air Mobility Squadron out of Travis Air Force Base, Calif.

In one of two buildings they use here, the Airmen schedule planes in and out of Utapao. In the other, the cargo and people aboard the planes are tracked.

So far, the Airmen have moved more than 1,000 tons of humanitarian aid and cargo. The supplies are being sent as part of the disaster relief efforts to assist the victims of the 26 December earthquake and tsunamis that hit Southeast Asia.

"In the beginning (the pace of planes in and out of Utapao) was very fast," said Maj. Jaye Gandy, the elements operations chief at Utapao.

The cargo includes mostly humanitarian supplies: food, water, blankets, tents and hygiene kits. The Airmen also handle gear for troops in the field.

Major Gandy said the supplies usually come in on larger aircraft -- C-5 Galaxies or C-17 Globemaster IIIs -- and are repackaged for shipping on smaller aircraft such as C-130 Hercules. This is in large part because some airfields were not equipped to handle the large craft in the beginning of the operations, he said.

Since the air traffic has been so heavy in and out of some airfields, efforts were made to improve these airfields. It is now possible to get C-17s in to deliver supplies and people to those locations, he said.

The Thais have relinquished two of their three parking aprons to the aircraft flying in and out of Utapao supporting Operation Unified Assistance, Major Gandy said.

The other responsibility of the Airmen is to send out small assessment teams to determine whether an airfield can handle operations. Once they assess the proposed area, they determine what is needed to make that happen. Each aircraft type has specific minimum requirements for landing, Major Gandy said.

"If you can put a C-5 in there, you can pretty much put anything in there," said Maj. Michael Thomas, who is part of an assessment team.

The teams can be as small as a handful of people and as large as 300. The team at Utapao is a medium-size team, Major Gandy said. They have been "plussed-up," he said, to include a contractor, someone from finance, some security and a four-person medical team.

As is becoming more and more the case, the effort is joint, Major Gandy said. The Airmen are working closely with the Marines to process the shipments.

"It's worked out pretty good so far," he said.

26 January 2005 – Heading Home

Airmen Passing Relief Operation To UN-Led Team

UTAPAO, Thailand (AFP) -- The more than 850 deployed Airmen from bases around Pacific Air Forces are preparing to head home.

PACAF aircrews, maintainers and mission support Airmen have been here supporting Operation Unified Assistance.

As the U.S. military completes its emergency relief portion of the mission, the United Nations, the World Food Program and other organizations will take over the relief effort, officials said.

"I'm very proud of the people who have made this relief effort possible," said Col. Mark Schissler, 374th Air Expeditionary Wing commander. "Especially our Airmen . . . who've sweated and worked hard to make every mission successful. It's remarkable that our Air Force has flown more than 850 sorties and almost 2,500 hours, delivering over 4 million pounds of humanitarian aid as part of a joint and international team.

"I could not be happier with the incredible performance of our expeditionary unit," said Lt. Col. Charles Eastman, 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron commander. "Though no one really could have anticipated a tragedy of this magnitude, we train every day in preparation for possible contingencies," he said. "As a result, this time when our nation called, we were clearly ready."

"It's great to see how all the training on a daily basis at home pays off in the field," said Chief Master Sgt. Kevin Van Gordon, 36th EAS maintenance flight superintendent. "When you can see results everyday and know what you are doing is helping so many people, it just feels good to be part of the team."

Air Force officials said they plan to redeploy all assets in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand over the next several days.

"We've nearly completed our mission here, providing the emergency relief that thousands of people desperately needed," Colonel Schissler said. "And I'm pleased to say that we're turning this operation over to a very capable and resourceful UN-led team here in the region."

Once again America's Air Mobility Forces performed an integral role in bringing relief to millions through their professionalism and persistence. Thank you! ■

Editor's Note:

Named as the A/TA's new Vice President for Industry Affairs at the 2004 Convention and Symposium Annual Membership Meeting, Col. Robert E. (Bob) Dawson (USAF Ret.), who had been serving as the Association's Symposium Chairman for the past several years, was in the middle of a move to a new employment location as this edition of *A/TQ* went to press, and was unable to file a story.

Bob did a tremendous job of building and improving the Association's annual Symposium schedule and will bring a wealth of knowledge and know-how to his new position. We look forward to his input in future editions of *A/TQ*.

Since the Convention in Dallas the Association's corporate membership has grown by two and now stands at 53.

The two members new are Flightcom Corporation and Spokane Industries, Inc.

Flightcom, based in Portland, Oregon is a leader in the development and production of headsets and intercoms for the aviation industry.

Spokane Industries, Inc., located in Spokane, Washington, serves a large number of customers in many industries -- from aerospace, construction and agriculture, to transportation, aggregate processing, and manufacturing. Of special interest to the Mobility community is their SealVac™ Fuel Drain System which greatly improves aircraft bottom draining practices, dramatically decreasing or eliminating safety risks, environmental issues and fuel contamination concerns while increasing overall speed.

Welcome Aboard!

Have an Idea for an A/TA Sponsored Seminar for the 2005 Symposium?

Anyone wishing to present a ATA-sponsored seminar (non-AMC) should contact Lt. Col. Jeff Bigelow, ATA Seminar Chairman. He can be reached via e-mail at: Jeffrey.Bigelow@jdtc.jfcom.mil or by phone at: 757-878-3837.

A/TA Corporate Members (as of 5 March 2005)

AAI Engineering Support Inc.
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AAR Opens A New Huntsville, Alabama Facility

Huntsville, Alabama (September 15, 2004) — AAR has opened a new facility in Huntsville, Alabama to expand its Mobility Systems and Composites businesses and better serve its commercial, military and government customers based in Alabama.

"The Huntsville area is home to many military commands and virtually all of the major aerospace and defense contractors," said Mark McDonald, Group Vice President at AAR. "To continue to grow our military business, we must be responsive and accessible to existing and potential customers operating out of Huntsville. The talented program managers working from this new facility will provide a vital link between our customers and the vast network of resources available from AAR."

AAR Mobility Systems is the world's leading supplier of rapid deployment equipment, including ISU® mobility containers, shelter systems, cargo pallets and custom palletized systems for military transport aircraft. A major focus of AAR Mobility Systems' efforts in Huntsville is the growing market for mobile tactical shelters used to house communications equipment, and command and control centers. The new facility in Huntsville will enable AAR Mobility Systems to better serve customers who need to integrate complex systems into mobile, self-contained platforms. AAR Mobility Systems currently operates facilities in Cadillac, Michigan, and Sacramento, California, and maintains field service teams in the U.S. and Europe.

AAR Composites develops engineered structural components for the defense, aerospace, and ground transportation markets. The Huntsville office will focus on emerging opportunities in military aviation and other weapons systems, and will develop new markets for existing product lines. AAR Composites works with customers to develop innovative designs that make the most of the weight and performance benefits of advanced composite materials. AAR Composites specializes in flat panels for floors and liners, and in the development of complex, highly engineered products such as flight control surfaces, airframe members, and large monocoque structures. The company currently operates facilities in Clearwater, Florida and Cadillac, Michigan.

"To continue to grow our military business, we must be responsive and accessible to existing and potential customers..."

EADS Throttles-Up For U.S. Military Market

The North American division of European Aeronautic Defense and Space Company — the company that owns 80 percent of Airbus — is building up its presence in the lucrative U.S. military market, forming partnerships with American companies and building European products in American plants.

The company already supplies helicopters and missile defense technology to the United States. Monday, it announced the sale of 55 American Eurocopters to the U.S. Border Patrol.

And a central expansion target is the KC-330 tanker, the direct competitor to the KC-767 tanker to be modified at Boeing Wichita.

Having built itself into a commercial-jet leader with Airbus, EADS now looks to boost its military business. And the United States is by far the world's largest market.

Ralph Crosby, chairman and chief executive of EADS North America, argues that the United States would benefit from more competition for defense contracts and that new U.S. manufacturing jobs could be created as a result.

American companies aren't taking the overseas competition lightly. Officials at Boeing, EADS's chief rival, state that the European company is trying to poach U.S. defense work because European governments are too busy subsidizing Airbus—unfairly, they add—to support the company's military arm.

"To offset the declining defense market in Europe, it is not surprising that the European Aeronautic Defense and Space entity would like to grow its participation in U.S.-funded programs," Boeing spokesman Doug Kennett said.

At more than \$400 billion a year, the U.S. military market dwarfs all others.

But competition for those dollars isn't as intense as it once was. Since the Cold War ended, defense company mergers such as the one between Boeing and McDonnell Douglas have reduced the number of large companies that sell to the Pentagon.

Fewer companies means fewer bids for contracts, creating more suspicion that the government may not be getting the best deals possible.

Crosby, formerly president of the Integrated Systems Sector of Northrop Grumman, has worked in U.S. aerospace for three decades. EADS North America, formed in 2002 from a group of EADS-owned compa-

nies, can play an important role in today's U.S. military, he said.

"We have an ability to serve as an alternative source for aerospace," he said.

Currently, EADS North America is about a \$500 million-a-year business. That's tiny compared with EADS's overall \$8 billion defense business, which in turn pales in comparison with the \$30 billion Lockheed Martin brings in, Boeing's \$27 billion and the \$17 billion brought in by BAE Systems, which owns the other 20 percent of Airbus.

Crosby said the key to U.S. growth is to build partnerships with American companies on existing programs, then expand into new ones while building new facilities in the United States. The company is opening a helicopter plant in Columbus, Miss., on Oct. 20. It's currently a partner with Lockheed Martin on ballistic missile defense and with Northrop Grumman on unmanned aerial vehicles, for example.

The KC-330, which would update the aging U.S. tanker fleet, is central to the division's growth strategy. But it's also the project that may face the greatest struggle.

The Airbus tanker would give EADS North America a toehold in a part of the military market that Boeing currently monopolizes. Even a small piece of a contract to replace more than 400 KC-135 tankers over decades would funnel tens of billions of dollars to Boeing's archrival.

It would also be used by EADS to justify building a U.S. plant that could then be used to build other planes for military -- and commercial -- competition.

The concept of U.S. skies protected by a French-produced jet generates fierce resistance among lawmakers and Pentagon officials.

The thought of an Airbus tanker was dismissed by lawmakers and industry experts when it first gained attention shortly after Boeing announced its KC-767 tanker plan in the fall of 2001. In 2002, the KC-330 lost a competition with the KC-767 for the tanker contract.

But the cloud of ethics and cost problems that has settled over the KC-767 project has put a final decision on the proposed \$23 billion program on hold and could give Airbus a second chance.

Crosby relishes that chance, as Airbus advances its refueling technology and further hones the KC-330, which since 2002 has won competitions to supply tankers to the British and Australian air forces.

"We'll bring a competitive product to what should be a competitive place," Crosby said. "We're a global company, and we'll be competitive in this market."

Having built itself into a commercial-jet leader with Airbus, EADS now looks to boost its military business. And the United States is by far the world's largest market.



36th Annual A/TA Convention & Symposium • 28-31 October 2004 • Adam's Mark • Dallas, Texas

A/TA In Dallas: 2004 Convention Another Big Success

Once again the annual Airlift/Tanker Association Convention & Symposium proved to be the highlight of year for America's air mobility community. Old traditions were continued and new ideas and concepts were introduced – many of which will surely find their way into the hallowed halls of A/TA heritage.

In his President's Message (see page 3), Association President Mark Smith outlines many of exciting things that took place at the 36th annual gathering held last fall in Dallas, Texas. The 2004 convention featured almost 40 professional development seminars on air mobility topics as well as keynote speeches by Air Force senior leaders including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard B. Myers; Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. John P. Jumper; commander USTRANSCOM and Air Mobility Command, Gen. John W. Handy; ANG director, Lt. Gen. Daniel James III; commander of Air Force Reserve Command and chief of the Air Force Reserve, Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley; and, for the first time ever, the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, CMSgt Gerald R. Murray.

Each Winter Edition of A/TQ, the edition that follows the convention, features photos and an overview convention happenings – and this edition is no exception – although a little different. The Team Robins Chapter ran the following two stories in their chapter's newsletter, and they offer a look at the convention from a new perspective: what attendees learn and experience – they are offered here, with the chapter's permission:

Highlights from A/TA Symposium 2004

By Capt Christopher Holland

For those who missed the 36th Annual Airlift/Tanker Association Symposium in Dallas, Texas, make your plans to attend next year in Nashville, Tennessee! Team Robins was well represented in Dallas among the nearly 3,400 attendees. We were fortunate enough to hear speeches by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, Air Force Chief of Staff General John Jumper, and USTRANSCOM/AMC Commander General John Handy. On top of those highlights, we were all able to renew old friendships and foster new ones, all while browsing displays set up by our key industry partners.

The symposium truly kicked off Friday morning when the group was addressed by Lieutenant Generals Daniel James III and John Bradley, commanders of the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve respectively. They spoke about the amazing dedication and

contributions that the guard and reserve have given to the Total Force since 11 September 2001. Our ability to work together as the most powerful Air Force in the world is predicated on understanding the sacrifices these two components of our force make.

General Richard Myers followed with the keynote address. He spoke very clearly about the impact that Air Mobility assets have

had during the War on Terrorism. Most noteworthy was the fact that 8.5 million people recently voted in Afghanistan national elections. A large portion of that number was women who

literally prepared for death in their tradition and cast ballots under threat from the former Taliban regime. Not counting small skirmishes, no violence was encountered. Air Mobility allowed that to happen. Further, 25 million people in Iraq now have hope. Hope to live free of fear, repression, and tyranny. General Myers

General Handy and General Jumper both expressed their extreme thanks toward those that support all of us on a daily basis: Our Families.

expressed President Bush's confidence in each of us. As General Myers was about to explain just how complicated an upcoming mobility mission was going to be, President Bush stopped him and indicated that he knew we could handle it and he didn't need to know the details. That is trust!

General Handy and General Jumper both addressed the symposium on Saturday. Both brought messages of thanks and encouragement. Specifically, they both expressed their extreme thanks toward those that support all of us on a daily basis: Our Families. Please take the time to thank your family today and everyday for what they do. They sacrifice just as much, if not more, than we do so we can execute the mission as well as we do!

Aside from getting to hear from our senior leaders, we all had ample opportunity to attend smaller seminar sessions. I could go on with more from each of the five seminars that I attended, but would rather just leave you with some numbers from one of them. I believe these numbers put what we do in perspective. We lose track

of the big picture when we are in theater flying missions and even while working in the Combined Air Operations Center. Brigadier General Paul Selva, Tanker Airlift Control Center Commander, gave an update on our efforts: Since 7 October 2001, Air Mobility Command has moved 1.9 million people throughout the world. An average of two million pounds of fuel is off-loaded by our tankers EVERY DAY in the Iraq/Afghanistan region. Outside of that region, 2.5 - 3 million pounds of fuel is off-loaded, including nearly 1 million pounds in support of Homeland Defense efforts EVERY DAY. Balad Air Base, Iraq has taken over as the busiest aerial port in the world processing and moving 580 tons of cargo per day. These numbers are simply amazing when you sit back and think about the capability we bring. It has become normal for many of us to accomplish these missions, but please realize there is nothing normal about the impact we are making!

I hope to see you in Nashville in 2005!

A Young Airman's Perspective on the 2004 A/TA Convention & Symposium

Commentary by A1C Vincent Maiuri

"I spent 20 years flying fighters and U2's. Never once got called a fighter pilot or a Reconnaissance pilot. Spent one damn year flying C-123's and I'll forever be known as an airlifter." This quote by Air Force Medal of Honor Winner Col (ret) Joe Jackson, meant to be humorous, set the whole tone of the 2004 A/TA convention for me.

As I looked around on my first day at the 36th Annual A/TA convention in the luxurious Adam's Mark Hotel, I instantly felt ill at ease. There were 3000+ people and only one of me. I desperately looked around for someone I knew, person after person passed while I searched, but I searched in vain. At that moment, I thought coming to the convention was probably not my best idea ever. However, I turned out to be wrong. That initial feeling of uneasiness quickly disappeared when a Chief Master Sergeant stuck out his hand and proceeded to chat with me for about 30 minutes. Picture me there, an A1C talking to someone whose time in the Air Force was longer than I had been alive. Not once did I feel like I was being condescended or looked down on, he made me feel like I was his equal even though I have scarcely been in the service for two years. We were just two Airlift/Tanker guys talking to one another. Tragically, I cannot remember his name. If that had been an isolated incident, I might

"That initial feeling of uneasiness quickly disappeared when a Chief Master Sergeant stuck out his hand and proceeded to chat with me for about 30 minutes."

have come to the conclusion that it was just a case of one super cool Chief. Luckily, this was not a singular occurrence. Rather than the exception, it was the rule. While we may have been separated by rank, the feeling I got was we were all peers because we were all a part of the Airlift/Tanker community.

Truly, it is difficult to describe the feeling of camaraderie that I felt there. The best analogy I can give is that the Airlift/Tanker Association is akin to the Marines. I am not necessarily comparing our mentality, though we are gung ho about what we do and how we do it. No, I am comparing Heritage and Tradition. Have you ever talked to a former Marine? You ALWAYS know that he was a marine. Whether he started in the Marines, or in the Navy, Army, or Air Force if he was in the Marines, he's a Marine and will always be known as a Marine. Being an Airlift or Tanker person is the same thing. No matter where you started or where you finished up, if you spent time in our community, you will always be a part of us. That is the feeling I was left with after talking to that Chief Master Sergeant. Someday, If I find myself in the position of that Chief, I only hope that I can make that lost Airman feel even half as welcome as that Chief made me feel.

"It Takes A Team"

When Gen. John W. Handy, commander of Air Mobility Command and U.S. Transportation Command addressed the 36th annual Airlift/Tanker Association convention, he spoke of modernizing equipment, but his primary focus was on people.

"Why am I here? One big reason - to thank each and every one of you for what you are doing for our great nation," said

Reflecting on his travels around the vast transportation network with its Army, Navy and Air Force components, he said that people often ask him what they can do to contribute.

"If you look at what we do, the answer is obvious," said the general. "There are 156,000 people [in U.S. Transportation Command] and each and every one of them is needed to do the job that we do. It takes an entire team."

The general expressed his humility and amazement as he enumerated the mobility team's accomplishments in the Global War on Terror.

"Think about moving 1.7 million people 12,000 miles and back,"

he said. "Think about moving 4.7 million short tons of cargo; (off-loading) 2.2 billion gallons of fuel; and (flying) over 900 million air miles. Think about 23,000 patients evacuated out of the theater of operations ... and not losing one single patient in that entire process. That is simply incredible!

"That speaks to our aircrews; it speaks to our backend medical capabilities. It speaks to the team work we have in Air Mobility Command," said General Handy.

"...It takes maintenance people, it takes rated people, it takes administrative people, medical people, and on and on. None of us can make do without everybody else." Pointing at the audience of over 3,000 military, civilian employees and contractors, he exclaimed, "That incredible team is you!"

It's all of us pulling together - active, Guard and Reserve; bluesuiters, civilians and our corporate partners [and their families] - who make all this happen," he said.

"It's a team of Americans..." ■

A Look at the 2004 A/TA Convention & Symposium...





See you Next Year in
Nashville October 27-30, 2005

Battlelab Demonstrates New Propeller Balancing System

The Air Mobility Battlelab recently demonstrated a new in-flight propeller balancing system that can greatly reduce propeller vibration levels and ground maintenance requirements.

Currently C-130 Hercules propeller balancing procedures are similar to spin balancing the wheel of an automobile, officials said. Technicians must spin an out-of-balance propeller to determine where an imbalance exists, add or subtract small propeller weights to adjust the balance, and spin the propeller again to see if the balance is right. This process is repeated until the propeller is balanced.

The problem with the current procedure is it can take several attempts to get it right, which makes the procedure time consuming and manpower intensive, officials said.

Also, once the aircraft is airborne, the aerodynamic forces acting on the propeller blades actually change the balance of the propeller and nullify the ground-balancing effort, officials said.

The solution is an active balancing system which constantly monitors propeller balance during flight and makes the necessary balance corrections in a matter of seconds.

"(This system) is and does just that," said Michael Corson, battlelab project manager. "It's an electromagnetic balancing system that determines an imbalance condition and repositions two weighted rings to counter the imbalance. An electronic controller continuously monitors propeller balance and makes corrections automatically."

The battlelab installed the new system on a C-130 Hercules assigned to the 913th Airlift Wing from Willow Grove Air Reserve Station, Pa. Aircraft maintenance technicians from the 913th Maintenance Group worked closely with contracted engineers to install the system on the demonstration propeller. After a successful ground demonstration, the propeller was installed on the C-130 and flight tested at Willow Grove by officials of the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center's test directorate.

Data gathered during the demonstration showed the system is very capable of performing highly accurate balance corrections automatically during flight. Its performance offers the potential to greatly reduce ground maintenance time and actions.

"The system worked well beyond expectations," Mr. Corson said.

Former A/TA Officer Named to the Air Force Retiree Council

Retired Air Force Colonel T. P. Williams to Represent Area VII: Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma

The Air Force announced 28 January 2005 that Air Force retired Col. Thomas P. Williams was selected as the Air Force Retiree Council member to represent Area VII (Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma). Col. Williams served on the Airlift/Tanker Association Board of Officers, as both Secretary and Treasurer, for many years. His service on the Board was instrumental in helping to build the A/TA into the professional organization it is today.



Col. T. P. Williams
USAF, Ret.

In Colonel Williams' area of responsibility are seven Retiree Activities Offices serving nearly 50,000 members of the Air Force retiree community, including more than 42,000 retired members and more

than 6,000 surviving spouses.

The Ohio native enlisted in the Air Force in April 1951 and then, following the footsteps of his brother, who was already an Air Force pilot, he entered the Aviation Cadet Program. After earning his earning pilot wings and second lieutenant bars Oct. 25, 1952, he flew B-26s in Korea prior to the armistice.

He was reassigned to Bolling Air Force Base, Washington DC, in 1954 where he was an aide de camp, an instructor pilot on B-25, C-45, C-47, C-54, U-3 and U-4 aircraft. He also attended Squadron Officers School and graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelor of Science in Military Science.

Following a remote tour to Dhahran Air Base, Saudi Arabia, as an instructor pilot on C-47s and C-54s, he flew C-130s at Dyess AFB, Texas, from January 1961. He attended Air Command and Staff College in 1965; completed Master of Science requirements in Business Administration at George

Washington University; was promoted to major and assigned to Ankara, Turkey as Airlift Advisor, Turkish Air Force, flying C-130s and C-54s.

As a lieutenant colonel selectee, Colonel Williams flew C-130s and performed mission commander duties at landing zones in the Republic of Viet Nam while stationed at CCK Air Base, Taiwan. He completed the Air War College Associate Program and was reassigned to 19th Air Force, Seymour-Johnson AFB, N.C., in 1970, as an airlift planner, and then went on to command the 48th Tactical Airlift Squadron, Forbes AFB, Kan.

In 1973, having been selected for promotion to colonel, he was assigned to Headquarters, Tactical Air Command as director, Airlift Division, and deputy director, Aircrew Standardization and Evaluation. When C-130s were assigned to Military Airlift Command, he transferred to MAC headquarters as deputy director, Aircrew Standardization and Evaluation. In July 1978, Colonel Williams went to Little Rock AFB, Ark., as 314 Airlift Wing deputy commander for resource management. He retired from the Air Force in November 1982.

Colonel Williams' post Air Force retirement activities include the Rotary, Order of Daedalians, Airlift/Tanker Association, Air Force Association, the Military Officers Association of America, the Ford Motor Car Company Dispute Settlement Board, Little Rock AFB Community Council. He also worked as general securities registered representative and for a contractor to the Joint Readiness Training Center.

Concerns involving the Area VII retiree community should be brought to the attention of the RAO director at the individual base. Addresses of RAO directors are listed at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afretire>; Click on Retiree Council and then on Area VII. Retirees and family members who would like to be RAO volunteers should call the phone number of the nearest RAO director.

AMC Commander Awards GWOT Service Medal

The men and women of Air Mobility Command are once again being recognized for their service. Gen. John W. Handy, commander of AMC and U.S. Transportation Command, has approved the award of the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal to active-duty personnel assigned to AMC.

"This is a well-deserved honor for everyone who supported the Global War on Terrorism, directly or indirectly," said



General Handy. "No matter if it's on the ground or in the air, AMC Airmen are consistently meeting the needs of combatant theater commanders, and this recognition reflects their unwavering service-before-self approach to the mission."

The AMC Personnel Directorate will work with base military personnel flights to do a mass update for members of qualifying organizations.