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EDITORIAL STAFF:

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Mr. Kenneth E. Masterson
Business Manager

Lt. Col. Hal Lansing
USAF, Retired
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Ms. Dawn L. Bakse
Editorial and Advertising
Coordinator

Cover Art:

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GLOBAL REACH: A JOINT PERSPECTIVE

Questions and Answers
Concerning America's
Global Reach Capability

"In the recent past, we have witnessed and participated in some incredible moments in history. Events ranging from war in the Persian Gulf to revolutionary changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, have caused the United States to reassess the basic tenets of our nation's military strategy and structure. Despite these external changes, America remains essentially an island nation, dependent on global markets and maintaining security interests around the world. In addition, despite the demise of the Soviet threat, America needs a strong and responsive military force because the world remains a dangerous place. Therefore, air mobility must be capable of projecting power around the world . . ."

**- Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman,
1993**

In response to the monumental changes in America's strategic environment, significant changes have been made in both the Joint and Air Force communities. In an effort to explain some of these changes, *Airlift/Tanker Quarterly* technical advisor Mr. Hal Lansing developed a series of questions to be asked of several of America's top mobility decision makers. Their answers are both interesting and enlightening. They follow a brief overview of America's global reach infrastructure by Association member Major Gregory P. Cook, currently assigned to the Mobility Forces Division at Headquarters, United States Air Force —

Air Mobility and US National Security

To deter, to fight, or to lend a helping hand, America's air mobility team supports the nation and her allies across the spectrum of conflict. Working jointly with other Services to satisfy wartime and peacetime operational requirements, USAF airlift and air refueling team members contribute a wide array of capabilities while supporting the President, the Department of Defense, and joint warfighting commanders. Operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to every corner of the globe, air mobility forces provide and enhance Global Reach, Global Power, and Global Presence to achieve America's national security objectives.

As we approach the 21st century, an increasingly chaotic and unstable international environment continues to challenge and shape America's national security concerns. Threats to national interests or international crises can occur at any time and place, often unexpectedly and simultaneously. The nation's military forces must remain prepared to act on a moments notice anytime, anywhere. Rapid, global mobility is the cornerstone of our national military strategy, with airlift and air refueling providing tremendous speed and flexibility in deploying, employing, and sustaining US military forces. Across the spectrum of conflict, from peacetime engagement and deterrence to full-scale war, air mobility forces stand ready to implement the national military strategy as a key component of joint operations worldwide.

Air Mobility Support of Joint Warfighting

Air mobility forces operate as an integral part of a larger joint warfighting team, working closely with air, land, and naval forces to meet operational requirements for the unified commands:

US Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM)

US Atlantic Command (USACOM)

US Pacific Command (USPACOM)

US Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM)

US Central Command (USCENTCOM)

US European Command (USEUCOM)

US Special Operations Command (USSOC)

US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM)

US Space Command (USSPACECOM)

A functional unified command, USTRANSCOM is the single transportation manager for the Department of Defense (DoD), with global responsibility to support combatant commanders' transportation requirements. Its air component, Air Mobility Command (AMC), provides strategic air mobility assets to support national air transportation needs during military operations, contingencies, and exercises worldwide. AMC's Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC) exercises centralized command and control for all airlift and air refueling missions operating in support of USTRANSCOM. Once validated mission taskings flow from USTRANSCOM, the TACC plans and coordinates mission requirements with the user, then tasks units for execution. When USTRANSCOM needs US-based C-130s to temporarily augment theater airlift assets or to satisfy specific transportation needs, the TACC coordinates C-130 mission requirements through Air Combat Command (ACC), the air component of USACOM. When C-130s are required to support contingency operations worldwide, ACC provides them as part of larger force packages for geographic warfighting commands, including USPACOM, USEUCOM, USCENTCOM, USSOUTHCOM, and USACOM.

Air Mobility Missions

Air mobility aircraft perform a variety of missions in support of joint operations, including the airlift and/or airdrop of personnel, supplies, and equipment to



locations around the globe, and air refueling for allied and multi-Service aircraft. Air mobility aircraft also provide worldwide aeromedical evacuation of patients, participate in special operations, and support other national security requirements. The

synergistic combination of airlift and air refueling provides the nation with the ability not only to rapidly project and sustain combat forces, but the flexibility to reposition them quickly between and within theaters of operation as well.

Airlift

Airlift's fundamental operational objective is to quickly transport combat, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance forces anywhere in the world and sustain those forces once deployed. Strategic airlift delivers critical combat elements during the early phases of a conflict, joins troops and supplies with prepositioned and forward deployed assets, and provides rapid delivery of high priority sustainment items. Military aircraft like the C-5, C-141, C-17, and KC-10 satisfy the bulk of strategic airlift requirements, with additional transportation provided by civil carriers that are under peacetime airlift contracts or are mobilized for war under the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) program.

Theater airlift also provides the combatant commander with added flexibility to deploy, move, and resupply combat forces within an area of operations. Theater airlift can be a powerful combat tool when used as a maneuver element for tactical redeployment of forces. In a classic example of operational maneuver, C-130 aircraft enabled the famous "left hook" encircling movement during Operation DESERT STORM by transporting troops and equipment deep into the Iraqi desert.

Some commands require unique airlift support, especially USSTRATCOM and USSPACECOM. Due to their sensitive nature, the airlift of nuclear weapons and space systems requires special handling and operational procedures, which are accomplished by specially trained crews and unique aircraft such as the space cargo-capable C-5C.

Other air mobility aircraft play a key supporting role in US government and diplomatic efforts worldwide. Special Air Missions (SAMs) aircraft, specially configured with extensive air-to-ground communications, support the President, Cabinet members, congressional delegations, and statesmen during sensitive missions with time, place, or other special requirements. Physical and communications security are integral to their mission. The SAM fleet is a diverse mix of long, medium, and short-range aircraft suitable for both large and small passenger loads, and includes the C-9, C-20, VC-25, and C-137 aircraft plus the UH-1N helicopter.

Operational Support Airlift (OSA) aircraft, including the C-12, C-21, C-22, and C-26, further complement mobility forces by satisfying high priority, small volume airlift requirements that cannot efficiently be moved by other means — such as intelligence materials, emergency resupply of parts or equipment, or the transport of high priority government, command, and staff personnel.



Air Refueling

Air refueling provides global mobility and power projection by extending aircraft range, payload, and endurance. By supporting large airlift flows, fighter deployments, and strike operations, tanker operations help to minimize dependency on forward bases and reduce force closure times. Air refueling also provides joint or combined airpower assets with the capability for rapid deployment and force employment within hours to virtually any location in the world.

Air refueling forces also perform a vital support role for USSTRATCOM in deterring nuclear attack. The nation's air refueling fleet was originally designed to support nuclear-armed strategic bombers under the Single Integrated Operational Plan, or SIOP. Tankers continue to support SIOP today, with air refueling aircraft providing support for bomber force generation, execution, employment, and subsequent bomber survival, recovery, and reconstitution. SIOP-committed tankers also refuel USSTRATCOM command and control aircraft, which allows them to operate around-the-clock, if necessary, in support of USSTRATCOM operations.

The KC-135 forms the bulk of the nation's air refueling fleet, and can air refuel the full range of US and allied aircraft in support of combined, joint, and special operations. It is capable of offloading fuel to receivers equipped with either the probe or a receptacle, but it must be configured on the ground as drogue/boom changes cannot be made in flight. Current initiatives will provide the KC-135 fleet with limited capability to refuel both receptacle and probe-equipped aircraft during a single mission.

The KC-10 is a dual-role tanker/airlift aircraft that can be used for cargo/passenger airlift, air refueling employment operations, or to simultaneously support aircraft deployment/ redeployment and cargo transport requirements. The aircraft can use either its flying boom for receptacle-equipped aircraft or an internal hose-reel drogue unit for probe-equipped aircraft. Changes in the offload system can be made in flight. The KC-10 is itself air refuelable, which enhances its operational flexibility.

Airdrop

Airdrop or combat aerial delivery operations may be required when forces or material cannot be landed due to lack of airfields, hostile threats, or other factors. Airdrop capabilities directly support the national military requirement for the



ability to rapidly deploy airborne forces throughout the world on a moment's notice. Many of the Army's forced entry concepts rely heavily on airdrop, and it remains an integral part of Army doctrine. Strategic brigade airdrop includes the

airdrop and airland insertion of a mix of equipment and personnel over great distances. Large combat airdrop operations were successfully conducted during the initial phases of both Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada in 1983 and Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama in 1989. Recent US humanitarian efforts in Bosnia also depended heavily on the airdrop of food and relief supplies.

Aeromedical Evacuation (AE)

Air mobility aircraft provide timely airlift of seriously ill or injured military personnel, military family members, and other Department of Defense patients during peace and war to medical treatment centers worldwide. AE missions are flown primarily by C-9 aircraft within the continental US, the Pacific rim and Europe, with the C-141 used to transport patients between theaters. During war, the C-130 plays a significant role in transporting casualties from forward battle areas to major airfields for treatment or evacuation. In addition to this organic capability, DoD depends heavily on the aeromedical segment of the CRAF during wartime mobilization. The Global Patient Movement Requirement Center (GPMRC) at USTRANSCOM validates and schedules patient movement requests from military hospitals and clinics worldwide.



Special Operations

Air mobility forces provide airlift and air refueling support to United States Special Operations Command forces for joint/combined training, contingencies, low intensity conflict, and other missions as directed by appropriate authority. While Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) provides the bulk of air mobility assets for special operations, including specially modified C-130s and helicopters, AMC augments USSOC when required with aircraft that have greater range, speed, or lift capabilities. Aircrews receive special training in mission planning and tactics, and must be capable of conducting covert, clandestine or overt operations.

The Future of Air Mobility

As the cornerstone of America's national security strategy, air mobility forces will play a prominent role in addressing the challenges of the next century. With the nation's security and international stability increasingly dependent on leaner, highly mobile U.S.-based forces, the existence of a credible power projection



capability complements our force presence overseas and deters potential adversaries. In this environment, air mobility forces will continue to be America's primary choice for both national and international crisis response.

Often the first to appear on the scene, the arrival of air mobility forces signals U.S. resolve, restores stability, and sends a strong message to our opponents that the nation is prepared to act.

Working jointly with other services to satisfy unified command requirements, airlift and air refueling forces will provide tremendous speed and flexibility for the conduct of US military operations across the spectrum of conflict. From peacetime operations to full-scale war, air mobility forces stand ready to deter, to fight, or to lend America's helping hand.