



## **Logistics Officer Association**

### **National Conference**

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**General Norty Schwartz**

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for Delivery  
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## **Introduction**

Thank you for that kind introduction, Colonel Cato, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for inviting me to return to this prestigious forum. It is a privilege to speak here today, and to spend some time with men and women whose work is so vital to our operations everywhere, and to our Nation as a whole. I salute each of you for your professionalism and dedication to the Air Force mission.

This is both an exhilarating and challenging time to serve as a logistics professional; and as a Nation, we have witnessed significant milestones this year, including a wonderful UPS commercial that is a tribute to all of you, regardless of specialty.

But, with challenges still looming in the future, we still must maintain a long view and be prepared to bring our very best effort to a wide variety of potential contingencies. Last week, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM reached its ninth anniversary; and, last month, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM concluded, thereby launching Operation NEW DAWN.

Despite the challenges that we face in both Afghanistan and Iraq, I am confident because you—our courageous and committed service members—have performed admirably. The spectacular drawdown in Iraq is an incomparable case in point. Our Nation called, and you answered in the most exceptional ways. And, your families continue to epitomize sacrifice and love of country, supporting those of us in uniform, and giving us deep personal meaning to our service. I could not be prouder of you, and I salute you.

I also assure you that Secretary Donley and I sincerely appreciate the toll that nearly a decade of Joint and combined operations have taken. Operational demands have stressed our Airmen, and have strained the equipment that helps to assure our success. Undeniably, we owe our accomplishments largely to logisticians of every stripe, who have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with their fellow Airmen and Joint and coalition partners. Logisticians like you assure that supplies



are readily available whenever and wherever they are needed, and maintain an impressive array of warfighting equipment in mission-capable condition, including our aging and battle-worn, but still very capable, aircraft.

I have said many times before—and I am proud to repeat—that our logistical capabilities are the foundation of our Nation’s military power. Your fellow Airmen who fly in harm’s way know this, as do those who operate our growing armada of remotely-piloted aircraft. Our Joint and coalition partners on the ground also truly appreciate the combat airpower that you help to provide, and the combat-enabling work that you perform with such dedication, distinction, and success.

So today, I would like to offer a bit of praise for just a few of the remarkable accomplishments that you and your teammates have achieved this year. I would also like to highlight a few of the developments that have positioned you to achieve future success, despite the challenges that we still face—challenges whose solutions, I am confident, will be envisioned, developed, and implemented by professional logisticians like those gathered here today.

## **Recent Accomplishments in Supporting Combat Operations**

Five years ago, as the new USTRANSCOM commander, I addressed this audience with great pride and expectation about our efforts to transform the defense supply chain, and improve our ability to meet combatant commander requirements. Today, although wearing a different hat, I am just as proud whenever I hear what you do to put timely, tailored, and effective combat power in the hands of warfighters. This year alone, we have already airlifted more than 228,000 short tons of cargo to Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as over one million passengers. In addition, our tanker fleet has offloaded a staggering 780 million pounds of fuel to well over 60,000 aircraft, and we have airdropped over 40 million pounds of supplies to friendly forces in Afghanistan. In turn, enabled by our maintenance and munitions professionals, the Air Force flew more than 28,000 close air support sorties, some 3,000 of which resulted in weapon releases.

As we continue to face mounting challenges worldwide, I am confident that you and your teammates will continue to achieve this high level of performance. In Afghanistan, Iraq, and wherever friendly forces operate, our adversaries have fewer



options to directly counter the effectiveness of our air and space power. Ultimately, a great deal of credit for making this power available to combatant commanders goes to our trusted and reliable logisticians.

And, make no mistake: the credit goes not only to those who have deployed to shepherd supplies, maintain aircraft, and launch sorties. Equally important are aerial porters and logisticians at en route locations, and those who serve at air logistics centers, headquarters and Joint staffs, and the Defense Logistics Agency, to name but a few. Together, you form the “logistics chain,” each link of which is vital to mission success. Again, you have every reason to be as proud, as I am, of the work that you do—and no doubt will continue to do.

## **Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources (BEAR)**

Of course, the full impact of our logistical efforts cannot be expressed in mere statistics of tonnage moved and sorties generated. Agile combat support covers virtually every aspect of Joint and coalition operations, and recent examples of brilliant success are legion. But, let me highlight a particularly compelling example that demonstrates our unique capability not only to deploy incredibly powerful combat forces, but, with virtually unparalleled speed, to bed them down, sustain them, and produce desired effects.

As part of our transition from a Cold War garrison force to an expeditionary force, we invested heavily in Basic Expeditionary Airfield Resources, or “BEAR.” As most of you well know, BEAR includes virtually everything that you might need for airfield operations in an austere environment. Last December, the 49th Materiel Maintenance Group at Holloman Air Force Base, teamed with the 49th Logistics Readiness Squadron and the Army’s Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, to support Joint operations in Afghanistan. They packed, shipped, and set up an astounding amount of BEAR assets, including personnel and aircraft shelters, food service facilities, power and water production and distribution equipment, climate control units, refrigerators, vehicles and associated maintenance equipment, runway lighting, and millions of dollars worth of airfield matting, enough to cover 480,000 square feet—the equivalent of eight football fields.



All in all, the 49th Materiel Maintenance Group shipped and set up 2,910 short tons of equipment to the AOR, including three sets of encampments that house 550 personnel each—enough to support 1,650 personnel in Afghanistan. This tremendous effort exemplifies our unmatched Agile Combat Support—not just to Air Force units, but to our Joint partners in the AOR. And, as Army and Marine Corps units transitioned from Iraq to Afghanistan, the three BEAR encampments were augmented by another dozen BEAR taskings—six from USAFE, and another six from AFCENT. If you seek examples of logistics support to the entire Joint and coalition team, you can easily find them in BEAR support, largely unheralded, for the surge in Afghanistan.

## **Current Challenges of Today's Fiscal Environment**

Providing the world's most advanced logistical support to our warfighters, particularly in remote areas, is a daunting challenge in itself; but, we also face the challenge of preparing for the future by modernizing and recapitalizing our aging fleet. It is especially difficult to do both in today's extremely constrained fiscal environment of mounting national deficits and flattening defense budgets.

We therefore must achieve greater efficiencies by shifting as much from “tail” to “tooth” as possible, to maintain our operational advantage while contending with decreased purchasing power. Since some of that “tail” is actually the critical logistics chain that enables combat capability, logisticians often recall General Leo Marquez's famous quote: “If our aircraft, missiles, and weapons are the teeth of our military might, then logistics is the muscle, tendons, and sinews that make the teeth bite down and hold on. Logistics is the jawbone! Hear that? The jawbone!”

General Marquez was correct; but, in today's environment, logistics is more than the jawbone. It is also part of the brain, because success in creating a broad range of kinetic and non-kinetic effects requires not only our skilled operators, but also, and most assuredly, our talented and innovative logistics professionals. Inspired by many of the ongoing programs whose goal is to transform our logistics enterprise, I am absolutely confident in your ability to help overcome the substantial challenges that we face. Let me discuss just a couple of examples.



## Potential Logistics Solutions to Current Challenges

When the BEAR assets were shipped to Afghanistan, each container was tracked with the help of a Radio Frequency Identification Device, or “RFID.” Our significant progress in using RFID to track cargo containers has inspired an effort to track individual assets as well, with greater accuracy and accountability. The goal of this program, called “Total Asset Visibility,” is to tag each shipped item individually, so that they can be tracked even after they have been unloaded from the cargo container. With this technology, logistics personnel and commanders worldwide will soon be able to more confidently determine the exact location of every asset in the supply system.

Is this wishful thinking? Certainly not to Fed Ex or UPS. This information will be furnished to them through the Expeditionary Combat Support System, whose pilot version went live this past July at Hanscom Air Force Base. ECSS was designed to replace more than 240 Cold War-era systems in use today, none of which share data with each other, resulting in unnecessary duplication of effort and costly inaccuracies. ECSS’s potential to improve Air Force logistics operations represents a possible quantum leap in supply chain management. Along with Total Asset Visibility, ECSS will standardize logistics processes and provide an enterprise-wide view of the supply chain, making efforts more efficient and data more precise.

Now, I’m not suggesting that fielding ECSS will be easy—quite to the contrary. It’s hard and occasionally frustrating work. But I would argue—and I have, to the GAO and others—that we need to get this done, if only one attainable bite at a time. These compounding efficiencies could make all the difference in operating environments with very limited infrastructure, such as Afghanistan, about which Dr. Ash Carter—the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics—has said: “Next to Antarctica, Afghanistan is probably the most incommodious place to be trying to fight a war.”

While you and I are probably not terribly familiar with the word “incommodious,” I think I get the point. Dr. Carter continued: “It’s landlocked, rugged, the road network is much thinner than Iraq[’s], and it has fewer airports.” The potential implications of these circumstances were emphasized at the end of



last month, when Pakistan closed its overland supply routes to our convoys. The efficiency and precision from Total Asset Visibility and ECSS will help us reduce our spare parts inventories and incidents of items getting lost or misplaced; and ultimately, this will enable further streamlining of transportation plans and schedules, which will be vital in austere environments such as Afghanistan, Antarctica, or elsewhere.

## Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, the future of logistics is within our grasp—a future of maximized efficiencies and effectiveness. Rest assured—and this is no news to anyone in this room—there will always be challenges in supporting our warfighters. So, when it comes to the hard work of brainstorming solutions to these challenges, I am grateful to have professional organizations like LOA on our side. For the last five years, I have seen firsthand how valuable this organization is in developing logistics professionals. I praise you for the invaluable fora that you provide logisticians at both the chapter and the national levels, as well as for the scholarships that educate our young professionals.

I now call on you to leverage the brain trust that resides in LOA to tackle the Air Force's logistics and efficiency challenges, and help to devise and identify solutions for senior leader consideration and action. The breakout session at this year's conference to address the LRO/LRS construct is absolutely appropriate and a great start. Moving forward, we must expand the scope, address the broader issues on a more frequent basis, identify obstacles to greater efficiency, and move toward solutions that promise to improve yield and reduce cost.

Ladies and gentlemen, it has been my honor to speak with you today. I look forward to working with you and on your behalf, as together, we tackle the challenge of meeting combatant commander requirements, fulfilling the needs of our Joint team, and managing the reality that fully a third of our budget resources is devoted to logistics and related activity.

Thank you for your attention. I'll now gladly take your questions.