

**2015 Air and Space Conference**

**You've Got to Have Friends: Building Pacific Airpower  
Partnerships**

**General Lori Robinson**

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MODERATOR: Good afternoon. On behalf of the Air Force Association, welcome back to the 2015 Air and Space Conference. Our next speaker serves as Commander of Pacific Air Forces. In this capacity she is responsible for Air Force activities spread over half the globe in a command that supports 45,000 airmen serving principally in Japan, South Korea, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam. Each of you should have a copy of her bio and we're very pleased to have her speak with us this year.

Lori? [Applause]

GENERAL ROBINSON: Thank you very much. Appreciate that. Aloha, everybody. Boy, it's cold here. I'm here to tell you, holy smokes, I was freezing yesterday. Everybody asks us how do you like living in Hawaii, and as Hawk can attest to, David

says well our stuff is there, we just visit it on occasion.

So today what I'd like to do is talk to you about my friends, how we build up Pacific air power and we create partnerships throughout the theater. And we have great friends in the Pacific, and we'll talk about them in a minute.

You know, as I look at the theater, this is what the Pacific looks like. As [Grindon] said, it's 52 percent of the globe, 83 percent of that is water, and as Admiral Locklear said at our change of command, 100 percent of that is air. You can see the statistics, 60 percent of the world's population. And the one that concerns me the most is the last, four of eight world's largest missile arsenals. We should be very concerned, which is why it's incredibly important to have friends. The things around the edge are the things that keep me up at night. And I would like to tell you that I will not talk about all of those, but those are the things that I think about each and every day. But the one that is apparent each and every day

are natural disasters. You know, the theater lives on the ring of fire. Last decade over 80 percent of the world's disasters was in this region. In the past 10 years over 2.4 billion people have been affected by natural disasters, and just since December Pacific air forces have participated and helped in natural disasters. You know one of the things that we do a lot of great training with is humanitarian assistance and disaster response. And it's a great opportunity for us to work together and to train together, and we'll talk about a little bit of that later.

China. Obviously China is something that concerns everybody and when you live in the Pacific it concerns us quite a bit. If you look at the amount of land reclamation that China is doing in the South China Sea and the possibility of militarization of that, it's very destabilizing. Even though there are other nations that have done some land reclamation, over 3,000 acres of land have been reclaimed by China and they've put down a 10,000 foot runway. Additionally, in May China released its new defense

strategy, its ninth white paper. And it's changed its focus from a land base to maritime base. And it's focusing on cyberspace, outer space, nuclear forces, as well as oceans. That's very concerning for us. As we look and it projects from the land to the maritime and then you couple that with the land reclamation, that's very disconcerting. All that being said I've had the privilege to visit China twice. And the first time I went, I went to the Zhuhai Air Show, and we took a C-17 and air crew. And it was phenomenal to watch the Chinese look at that C-17 because that was the C-17 that helped in the 2008 disaster. That C-17 represented what we do in the United States from a humanitarian assistance and disaster response. That evening there was a banquet and the airmen that came with the C-17, the demonstration team that came with the C-17 came to the banquet and sat next to the Chinese demonstration team. And we had the airmen wear their blues, and they wore their blues and what was so fascinating about it was the Chinese asking about the chevrons on the arm -- what are those, what

does that mean. And asking about our professional enlisted force -- what does that mean. And it was phenomenal to watch the interaction through the night. By the end of the night it was a Chinese pilot sitting next to our young airmen sitting next to our pilot. The pictures from that event were phenomenal. And so those are the kind of things that keep us and give us hope that we can continue a military to military relationship.

But if you think about China the last thing that I saw when I was there was the new airplane that they rolled out, and it looks very much like an F-35. And when I think about the F-35 and I think about the technology that that has and I look at what China is doing and other nations are doing and I get incredibly concerned about the capability gap decreasing. While we still have the greatest airmen in the world and we still have the world's greatest Air Force, and we have the greatest technology in the world, that technology gap continues to get smaller and smaller. And for us that should be very disconcerting, because not just

the capability gap, but it's also now our fiscal constraints. If you talk to the Chief and the Secretary they'll tell you a long time ago the easy decisions have been made, and now the tough decisions are there. And as the Secretary mentioned this morning, if we have a continuing resolution our ability to do long-term planning is gone, our ability for stability is gone, our ability to keep that technological edge continues to erode and erode. And so when I think about what China is doing and I think about that capability gap, and what's looming in front of us, whether it's sequestration or a year-long continuing resolution, all that puts uncertainty.

So people say if those things around the edges are the things that keep you up at night, well how do you get any sleep? And so I get sleep when I call the four Ps, presence, partnership, power projection, and people. Presence. We have a regional presence. We have presence throughout the countries, whether it's an installation, whether it's a single Exchange Officer, whether it's a Liaison Officer, we

have presence in that theater. We talk a lot about places, not bases. We talk about where to go so we have our presence. We talk the importance of presence because if you think about virtual presence, is actually actual absence. And so our presence is incredibly instrumental because when we have our presence we can create partnerships. Our presence allows partnerships from big to small, a single airman all the way to a huge exercise. We have Pacific Angel. Allows humanitarian and medical and engineering exercise, small groups. We have subject matter exercise exchanges, safety, security forces. We have also airman to airman talks where we bring folks in and sit down airman to airman. In fact just a couple of weeks ago Bangladesh was in for the first time ever doing airman to airman talks and we figured out what our next 25 engagements are. That's huge business. We have the Center of Excellence of the Pacific Integrated Air and Missile Defense. Another opportunity for us to work together with our allies in the region. We have other opportunities, bilateral

and trilateral exercises, Cope South, where we had Bangladesh C-7 escort C-130s, or Balikatan in the Philippines where we have folks working together in humanitarian assistance and crisis, to a large exercise such as Red Flag Alaska. But we also have another great partnership program, and that's our National Guard State Partnership Program. It's innovative, it's low cost, it gives us the opportunity to build on relationships so people see people over and over and over again, and they build that partnership. Their presence helps build that partnership in Bangladesh, in Cambodia, Mongolia, and the Philippines.

So I say if we have presence and we've built our partnerships, when asked we can power project. Whether that's power project to do what the National Command Authority has asked us to do, or power project to go to a disaster response. That ability to build presence and partnership and allows us to power project whenever we need to, it's a force multiplier. It gives us the opportunity in peace to work together



so when we should be asked we know how to do it. All that is nifty stuff, but you need the people. We need ready airmen, combat ready airmen. We need airmen that are ready physically, emotionally, spiritually, whatever that means. And it's so cool to watch the airmen and their families understand that they are ambassadors in every country, that every time they walk out of their house they walk downtown, they walk on the installation, they're ambassadors. And there are amazing airmen out there and their families. And we have to take care of the families. We have to ensure the families are given the things that they need so that the airmen can focus each and every day on work. It is all about our airmen and their families. I always say the command's success is the airmen's success and their families, and without them I'm just somebody waving stuff around. So presence, partnership, power projection, and it takes great people.

What I'd like to do is talk about a couple of these things that have allowed us to get our better

partnerships and get better presence throughout the country. If you think about this, about last September we did a Pacific Angel in Nepal. And in that Pacific Angel we had Australia, Bangladesh, Mongolia. And this Pacific Angel dealt with health services and engineering of about 100 people. And on the health services we helped over 5,500 people, whether it was optometry, pediatrics, women's health, dental, whether it was sitting down taking care of the young children. What was so neat about this Pacific Angel was that the amount of volunteers that we had from downtown and from the college, it made it the largest Pacific Angel yet in the medical services, and the largest gathering of health professionals in one of our Pacific Angels. And in engineering we helped over 5,500 people. And we worked with the Nepal Army and we went and fixed houses, as you can see painting house, patched leaky roofs, took care of all the construction around. And we had the help of over 2,000 students, and we touched folks in remote locations that we never would have been able to if we

hadn't had such a nice small footprint. And who knew after that Pacific Angel that we would go back to Nepal again, because in April they had an earthquake, 7.8 on the Richter Scale. So many countries went out to help, but some of our other friends were Japan, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Singapore, Thailand, New Zealand. And whether they went and came help, supplied aid or personnel, or allowed for constant over flight, it was those friends that we had talked to before, it was the Nepal people that we had seen before, but everybody had a part. Our engineers from the contingency response group, Canadian engineers, Nepal engineers, all worked together to get the runway open, tested it, made sure it could take the amount of stress that it was going to have, tested runway repair techniques, worked together with the Nepal Army to do that so that they could bring stuff in, supplies in, to win the hearts and minds of the Nepal people. Throughput was incredibly important. And through all of this we and the Nepal Army shared techniques on how do you do runway repair. And then it happened again

shortly after the second earthquake happened and yet again there was U.S., Canada, Nepal, working again to open the runway, working again to ensure that that runway had the throughput necessary to take care of people.

And now, just a month ago, New Zealand went back to go help with Nepal and help now build the houses, rebuild so people have a place to live and a place to go. And it wasn't just the engineers and the runway repair, it was also Singapore sent professionals from their humanitarian assistance disaster response cell along with medical professionals to help with Nepal as they are getting their way through this disaster. That's real friends. But it's the presence that we had and the ability that we had with Pacific Angel that we were able to start that dialogue.

And then next exercise, Cope North, happened in February. Happens every year at Guam; it's a great exercise. This year there were over 2,200 people that participated, to include Australia and Japan, Republic

of Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines. What's really nifty about this exercise is it allows us to do all spectrum training. Whether it's at the high end in dropping ordnance out in the water or whether it's humanitarian assistance and disaster response. We can do both. And in fact in the humanitarian assistance and disaster response we had observers from Singapore and Viet Nam for the first time. And as we do the humanitarian assistance and disaster response -- we were talking about it with my friends, the Air Chief, on Saturday. And one of the things the Nepal Air Chief said was what we learned in the earthquake was our ability to do hub and spoke. How do you move stuff around by hub and spoke. And in fact in this Cope North we did in February we practiced hub and spoke out throughout all of the Marianas. And in fact General Saito and I have talked a couple of times and this upcoming Cope North, what we want to do in the humanitarian assistance and disaster response is to teach academics first, and then brief, execute, debrief, and bring more people in to observe and

participate. It's something we're working very closely with General Saito. In fact during the Nepal disaster General Saito sent me an email and said, Lori-San, here's something we need to work on. And that's the response of air power and how it's important to understand that it needs to be responsive, but sometimes there are things that get in the way. And so let's talk about that too. So this exercise is a great opportunity for us to talk both high end and humanitarian assistance and disaster response.

And then we have Talisman Sabre. What a great exercise. It's every other year, it's by PACOM, directed by PACOM, and this year we had over 33,000 people participate. Starts from California to Australia. This year we started out with seven C-17s, two of which are Australian, with four hundred fifty soldiers in the back. They took off out of Alaska and flew all the way to Australia. Commanded and controlled by the 613th Air Operations Center and Air Vice Marshal Turnbull was the Combined Force Air

Component Commander for the exercise. That's great presence and partnership. And those soldiers that were in the back of those C-17s, on time, on target after departing from Alaska. But as I mentioned earlier, presence can be as great as that exercise Talisman Sabre of over 33,000 people or it can be as small as 1 person, because in that Australian C-17 unit we have an airman there, present every day. He briefed that C-17 mission, flew that C-17 mission, debriefed that C-17 mission, and was a part of the Australian contingent for the entire time. And in fact what's so great is he's present right now as the Australians are modernizing their entire air force through Plan Jericho. It's huge, it's just huge.

And then if it's not Talisman Sabre, Red Flag Alaska. But you know what's so great about Red Flag Alaska is the Executive Observer Program. So a week before Red Flag Alaska we have the Executive Observer Program and it's where invite people from all throughout the region. This year 14 countries participated, to include [Colonel Eckba] who is here

as the Mongolian Air Chief. He participated in all this. It's very, very cool. But, you know, of course it's not a U.S. Air Force exercise if you will if we don't play a little bit of golf. So they started out the Executive Observer Program with a little bit of golf and the foursome that you can see down on the right, they had somebody come visit them while they were on the golf course, and it was a couple of bears. And I'm sure that was an incredibly warm welcome for them. But because the Wing Commander was able to move them on, the bears on, we're thinking about changing his call sign to the bear whisperer. We don't know. But it was amazing. So not only did they get to play golf and meet a bear, but they sat down and did a round table of challenges, of things of lessons they've learned over time. They sat down and exchanged ideas as airmen on how do we do thing together. It was very, very fruitful. But they also during the Executive Observer Program, they were able to see static displays, F-22s, C-17s, they were able to watch F-16 do air combat maneuvering, they were



able to watch live munitions and live fly bomb dropping, they were able to go get a range tour and see what the threat looks like out on the range, they were able to sit and watch everything that was happening there as they were briefing and debriefing, they were able to see how we do taking care of our airmen through combat search and rescue. One other thing that was really cool, you know, I'll start the story back at Yokota where we have great presence, where we have C-130 presence. And our C-130 at Yokota and the airmen there have this great initiative called low cost, low altitude drop. And so they've been practicing on this. In fact they do Operation Christmas Drop every year, been doing it for about 60 years throughout Micronesia. And they drop supplies, gifts, food. They've been doing that for over 60 years. So they were working with their Japanese counterparts and they were doing LCLA. And so what happened was at this Red Flag the Japanese were able to brief their concept to the Executive Observer Program participants and then they were able to fly

and show how it's done for the first time. It was great, it was just absolutely incredible the way that they did that.

And so that Red Flag Observer Program leads right into Red Flag exercise. And so I know everybody knows about Red Flag in this room, everybody knows about Las Vegas, well I'm here to tell you Red Flag Alaska and the range that's there is a jewel. It gives us some amazing training. And in this Red Flag particularly we were able to have F-22s and Japanese F-15s provide escorts, A-10s and F-16s from Osan to provide air interdiction, as well as Korean F-16s to provide air interdiction. We were able to have Duluth F-16s for the first time participate and we were able to have Navy Growlers participate. But of course most near and dear to my heart is Command and Control. So we had USC-3s, Australian Wedge Tail, and Japanese 767. It was incredible. The other thing that was just amazing from this Red Flag was that we had a large contingence of C-130s. And the C-130 community decided that they would do a little exercise within

the exercise and they embedded a little competition called the Pacific Airlift Rodeo. And in that competition they had folks on the ground watching to see, you know, if they were on time, on target with their delivery. I can't think of a better way to demonstrate all our Air Forces' ability to power project, all our Air Forces' capability together. But when I think about it I think about it starting back at Yokota with those folks sitting down in front of a C-130 and thinking about how are we going to work together, or our Raptors and Japanese F-15s working together. But it started with that presence.

So I've had the privilege to command for almost a year now. I've had the privilege to see amazing airmen, not just United States, but airmen all around the Pacific. I've had the privilege to go to things like ACDJ with General Saito within my first week and meet several Air Chiefs. I've had the privilege to go to an Australian air show and meet airmen there and all around. And in fact at the end of this month I have the privilege to go to Singapore

and the Philippines. But it starts with presence and it builds on our partnerships and allows us to power project, whether it's live or in the future, virtual, constructive, but it starts with people.

And so what I really want to do now is show you my friends, your friends, our friends of the United States Air Force, the Pacific Air Chiefs.

[Music Playing]

So may I introduce to you the Dean of the Pacific Air Chiefs.

GENERAL DELGADO: Thank you, General Robinson, ma'am. I am General Jeff Delgado, the Chief of Philippine Air Force.

GENERAL SAITO: Chief of Staff, Japan Air Self-Defense Force.

GENERAL SHRESTHA: Brigadier General Sudheer Shrestha, Chief of Nepalese Army Aviation.

AIR MARSHAL ESRAR: Thank you, General Robinson. I am Air Marshal Abu Esrar, Chief of U.S. Staff, Bangladesh Air Force.

AIR MARSHAL DAVIES: Good day, folks. Air

Marshal Leo Davies, Chief of Australian Air Force.

GENERAL SAMNANG: I'm General Soeung Samnang from Cambodia, Chief of Royal Cambodian Air Force.

SPEAKER: Good Afternoon. [Inaudible] Air Force.

SPEAKER: Thank you. [Inaudible], from Mongolia.

GENERAL ROBINSON: Ladies and gentlemen, our friends. [Applause] Ready? Thanks. All right, guys, thank you. All right. All right, guys. Let's hit it.

SPEAKER: General Robinson, ma'am.

GENERAL ROBINSON: Sir.

SPEAKER: We are very, very happy that you're out in the Pacific and making great friends. Thank you very much for your presentation. Thank you for what you do every day for not only our friends in the Pacific, but our airmen across the globe, and for participating today and all week long in our Conference. As a token of our appreciation I'd like you to have this small token, Mission to Berlin.

GENERAL ROBINSON: Awesome, thank you very much. Thanks.

SPEAKER: It's the wrong theater, I know, but it --

GENERAL ROBINSON: It's all good, it's all good. Thank you. Thank you. [Laughter] [Applause]

SPEAKER: It's the lessons learned that count. Full coverage from this year's conference can be found on AFA's daily report. Please go to the AirForceMag.com to catch up on all the latest Air Force news. We will now break to 3:10. Dessert and coffee is available out in the Exhibit Hall. The Exhibit Hall is open; and please don't forget to stop by the AFA booth and take advantage of our discounted half price memberships. And please make sure to return by 3:10 for the start of the next session. Good afternoon, everybody.

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