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AIRLIFT / TANKER QUARTERLY

FALL 2026 | Volume 34 | Number 04

KC-135: 70 YEARS OF REFUELING AMERICAN AIRPOWER Pages 15-16

On August 31, 1956, Boeing's KC-135 Stratotanker took its first flight

2026 A/TA AWARDS Pages 34-58

A SALUTE TO THE A/TA INDUSTRY PARTNERS Pages 61-74





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AIRLIFT/TANKER QUARTERLY
Volume 34 • Number 4 • Fall 2026 • ISSN (2578-4064)

Airlift/Tanker Quarterly is published four times a year by the Airlift/Tanker Association, 7983 Rhodes Farm Way, Chattanooga, Tennessee 37421. Postage paid at St. Louis, Missouri.

Subscription rate: $40.00 per year. Change of address requires four weeks notice.

The Airlift/Tanker Association is a non-profit professional organization dedicated to providing a forum for people interested in improving the capability of U.S. air mobility forces. Membership in the Airlift/Tanker Association is $40 annually or $110 for three years. Full-time student membership is $15 per year. Life membership is $500. Industry Partner membership includes five individual memberships and is $2200 per year. Membership dues include a subscription to Airlift/Tanker Quarterly, and are subject to change.

Airlift/Tanker Quarterly is published for the use of subscribers, officers, advisors and members of the Airlift/Tanker Association.

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Airlift/Tanker Quarterly is quarterly news cycle-dependent and is distributed as follows: Winter: January|February|March; Spring: April|May|June; Summer: July|August|September; Fall: October|November|December [actual distribution dates vary]. The copy deadline for submitted stories, articles, letters, etc., is as follows: Winter: January 2nd; Spring: April 2nd; Summer: July 2nd; Fall [Convention Edition]: September 2nd.

Airlift/Tanker Quarterly accepts advertising for the inside front, inside back and back covers for the Winter, Spring and Summer Editions; and for throughout the Fall Convention Edition.

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PRINTED IN U.S.A.

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On the Cover: Collage Top to Bottom - A U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft flies over aircraft static displays at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma, Aug. 31, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Emma Wright). KC-135 refueling Republic F-105 Thunderchiefs before attacking targets inside North Vietnam in the fall of 1967. (Courtesy photo).

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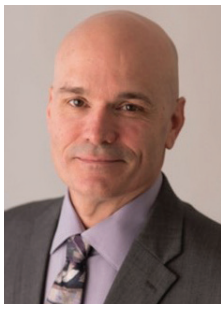
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For full description visit the Association's website at http://atalink.org/scholarships or scan the QRL code below.

AMERICA'S WINGS OF FREEDOM AIRLIFT/TANKER ASSOCIATION

SUPPORTING MOBILITY AIRMEN ★ PRESERVING OUR CULTURE ★ STRENGTHENING OUR BONDS

Chairman's Comments



Gen. Carlton Everhart II, USAF (Ret.)

Welcome to the 58th Annual Airlift/Tanker Association Symposium! It is our privilege to welcome the Global Air Mobility Enterprise back together for our most important professional development event of the year.

This year carries special significance. After the government shutdown forced the cancellation of last year's event, we have an opportunity to reconnect, learn, and move our enterprise forward. More than an annual gathering, this symposium serves as a forum for professional development, knowledge exchange, and collaboration across the global mobility community. It brings together senior leaders, operators, industry partners, veterans, and emerging professionals to share experiences, examine challenges, challenge assumptions, and develop the ideas and relationships that strengthen our ability to execute the mission.

At its core, this event is about people and professional growth. The challenges facing the Global Mobility Enterprise demand more than capable aircraft and advanced technology. They require leaders who can think critically, Airmen who can adapt, teams that can learn from one another, and partners who can turn experience and innovation into operational advantages. This symposium gives us the opportunity to learn from those who have come before us, understand the demands of today, and prepare ourselves for the missions of tomorrow.

This year, we also celebrate 70 years of the KC-135 Stratotanker. For seven decades, the Stratotanker has supported generations of Airmen and countless missions, providing the reach and endurance necessary to sustain operations around the world. Its legacy reminds us that enduring capability comes from more than an aircraft -- it comes from the people who operate, maintain, support, and continually improve it. The KC-135's seven decades of service provide a powerful example of how experience, innovation, and professional excellence can sustain a capability across generations.

The Airlift/Tanker Association's motto captures the spirit of both this milestone and our gathering: **"Honoring the Past, Supporting the Present, Inspiring the Future."** We honor the people and accomplishments that built today's mobility force. We support the professionals executing the mission now. And we inspire the next generation to carry the enterprise forward.

Making this professional development opportunity possible required tremendous effort. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to every member of the Airlift/Tanker Association Committees. Your countless hours, careful coordination, attention to detail, and commitment brought our community back together. You created the environment that allows or enterprise to learn, connect, and grow. Thank you for your professionalism, persistence, and continued service to the mobility community.

I also want to recognize our mobility teammates across the Total Force, including our civic leaders, and our industry partners who deliver global reach every day. The strength of the enterprise comes from our willingness to share knowledge, learn from experience, and work together toward a common purpose. Every conversation, presentation, and professional connection at this event contributes to that strength.

As we gather for the 58th time and celebrate 70 years of the KC-135, let us make the most of this opportunity. Learn something new. Share what you have learned. Build relationships. Challenge ideas and take what you gain back to your teams and organizations. By doing so, we honor the past, strengthen the present, and help shape the future of global air mobility..

Thank you to the committee members who made this gathering possible and sincere thanks to every member of our mobility family for your continued dedication to the mission.

Welcome Back. It is great to have the Global Mobility Enterprise together again.

Honoring the Past. Supporting the Present. Inspiring the Future.

Most respectfully,
Gen. (Ret.) Carlton D. Everhart II, Chairman ■

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President's Message



CMSgt. Larry Williams, USAF (Ret.)

In Air Mobility Command, "mobility" isn't just a mission—it's a language. It's the quiet confidence of aircrews launching into the night and the steady rhythm of the entire support network that ensures global reach never stops. When AMC speaks, it speaks in airlift, in refueling, in the seamless movement of people, cargo, and hope across continents.

From humanitarian relief to rapid deployment, AMC is the backbone of America's ability to project power and deliver aid anywhere on the planet. Every takeoff and landing carry purpose and deliver capability. Simply stated: mobility is what turns strategy into action.

"Rapid Global Mobility" is more than a slogan. It's a promise that wherever the nation needs reach, speed, or strength, Air Mobility Command will answer. It's the assurance that airlift will arrive when the world is at its worst, and that refueling will keep the fight moving when the stakes are highest.

In Air Mobility Command, mobility is the language of readiness, resilience, and resolve—and it's spoken fluently every day. At A/TA, we also speak mobility and share a strong commitment to the total force team that makes it happen.

We recently refined our culture statement to reinforce alignment with the mobility mission and our efforts to Support and Develop Mobility Airmen, Preserve Air Mobility Heritage, Culture and Values, and Strengthen Air Mobility Bonds.

Culture Statement:

The Airlift/Tanker Association is a patriotic, volunteer driven organization grounded in the enduring Air Force values of Integrity, Service, and Excellence. We are united by professional mastery in rapid global mobility, an unwavering commitment to the Air Mobility mission, and the enduring bonds of camaraderie forged through shared expertise and experiences. Together, we honor our heritage, serve today's mission, and inspire future generations while strengthening the global Air Mobility community.

We are excited to have you at our 58th Annual Symposium and Tech Expo and hope you gain a renewed sense of purpose and excitement about the awesome mission you accomplish every day.

Engineer Ready!
Very respectfully,
Larry ■



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AMERICA'S WINGS OF FREEDOM AIRLIFT TANKER ASSOCIATION

Thank you **FOR SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF A/TA SCHOLARSHIP AWARDEES!**

Supporting Mobility Airmen, Preserving Mobility Culture, Strengthening Mobility Bonds

The Day Before the Mission: Why America's Mobility Airmen Must Prepare for the Sorties History Never Schedules

By Col. Matthew T. "Monty" Fritz, USAF, (Ret.)

Every generation of Airmen thinks they will recognize the moment history arrives. In my experience, history is rarely that considerate.

Sometimes it's announced with presidential speeches, breaking news alerts, and maps covered in arrows. More often, the moment arrives quietly. A phone rings in the middle of the night, a crew scheduler calls with a new frag, or a maintenance superintendent starts recalling technicians. Somewhere, a family dinner ends a little earlier than expected because someone simply says, "I've got to go."

The Mobility Air Forces have been living that reality once again.

As I have watched tankers launch, airlifters move across the globe, and familiar aircraft call signs begin appearing in places where the world suddenly pays attention, I have found myself thinking less about where those crews are going than about something else entirely.

I wonder where they learned everything they are about to rely on. Because by the time that an aircraft taxis for a combat mission, a humanitarian evacuation, or a no-notice contingency halfway around the world, the learning part is over. Only mission execution remains.

That may seem like an odd observation coming from someone who now works in the aerospace and defense industry. But before that, I spent twenty-six years in the Air Force, first as a young copilot trying to absorb everything my instructors were willing to teach me, and eventually as an aircraft commander, instructor, flight tester, squadron and vice wing commander, and headquarters leader responsible for preparing others for missions whose importance none of us could predict.

Looking back, one lesson stands above the rest. Combat has never made anyone more proficient. It simply exposes the habits they brought with them.

I didn't fully understand that when I was younger. Like most new pilots, I assumed the calm confidence I saw in senior crews was something they simply possessed. They seemed unshakable when things became complicated. Emergencies unfolded, weather deteriorated, plans changed, equipment broke, and somehow, they always seemed to stay one step ahead of the airplane.

Only later did I realize what I was really seeing. I wasn't watching talent. It was the accumulation of thousands of small moments. Emergency procedures practiced until they became instinctive. Debriefs where instructors refused to settle for "good enough." Mistakes made in training, where they were still inexpensive, instead of in combat, where they aren't. Those moments never make headlines. They're also the reason crews succeed when history eventually does.

That observation has stayed with me throughout my career, but it has taken on new meaning over the last several years as our mobility enterprise has entered an era unlike any I remember. Great power competition has returned. Agile Combat Employment is changing how we think about operating. Contested logistics is no longer an academic discussion. Mobility crews are expected to fly farther, adapt faster, and integrate more seamlessly with joint and coalition forces than ever before. At the same time, our maintainers are sustaining aging fleets while introducing new aircraft, new software, and increasingly sophisticated mission systems.

In many ways, we are asking more of today's Airmen than we asked of previous generations, and rightly so. The world is not becoming simpler. But that reality has caused me to ask a question that I don't think we discuss often enough. How do we create professional mastery in an environment where demands continue to grow while time never seems to increase?

For decades we have measured readiness through metrics that matter: things like mission capable rates, qualification percentages, sortie generation, flying hours, simulator utilization, and inspection results. None of those measures are wrong; In fact, they are essential. I'm simply not convinced they tell the whole story.

If someone asked me today to identify the single best predictor of how well a crew will perform under pressure tomorrow, I wouldn't start with hours. I'd start with repetitions…meaningful repetitions. Not because hours don't matter, but because hours can be deceptive.

Every instructor has watched two crews arrive for the same simulator period. One crew spends the first hour rebuilding procedural confidence. The other walks in already comfortable with aircraft systems, checklist discipline, and crew coordination. Both receive the same amount of simulator time. Only one spends nearly all of it exercising judgment instead of memory.

That's a very different return on investment.

The same principle applies outside the cockpit. Every experienced maintenance officer or production superintendent has watched a young crew chief approach a difficult troubleshooting problem with growing confidence because they have seen the process before, even if only in training. They still have to think and solve the problem. But the fundamentals are no longer competing for their attention.

Preparation doesn't eliminate mistakes. It creates capacity to think, adapt and lead. For that reason, I've become convinced that one of our greatest opportunities isn't building better people after they enter our highest-fidelity training devices. It's helping them arrive there better prepared in the first place.

***Feature Story** continues on page 8 >>>*

That shouldn't be interpreted as criticism of our Weapon System Trainers or full-flight simulators. Quite the opposite. The Air Force possesses some of the finest training devices ever built, and they remain absolutely indispensable. They produce experiences that simply cannot be replicated elsewhere. Their challenge isn't quality. It's scarcity.

Every simulator hour is precious. Every instructor period is scheduled. Every concurrency update, software modification, maintenance action, and operational requirement competes for finite time.

No mobility commander has ever looked at a training calendar and concluded there was too much simulator availability. Yet for years, we've tended to frame the discussion around whether emerging technologies might someday replace those devices. I think that's the wrong conversation. The better question is much simpler: How do we ensure every minute inside those devices delivers its maximum possible value?

That shift in thinking changes everything. Instead of asking how technology can replace existing training, we begin asking how technology can multiply it.

Over the past decade, we've seen extraordinary advances in immersive visualization, digital engineering, portable computing, networking, and mixed reality. Those technologies are exciting, but not because they're new. They're exciting because they finally offer the opportunity to move meaningful repetitions closer to the squadron, the maintenance hangar, the classroom, and even the deployed location.

Imagine a young copilot rehearsing cockpit procedures the evening before entering the simulator. Imagine a boom operator practicing a sequence that was rusty after several months away from the aircraft. Imagine maintainers refreshing complex troubleshooting procedures before walking onto the flight line. Imagine a deployed crew conducting mission rehearsal before tomorrow night's sortie instead of relying solely on memories from home station.

None of those experiences replaces a full-fledged trainer. Every one of them makes the Weapon System Trainer more valuable. That's an important distinction.

During the past several years, I've had the privilege of working alongside engineers, instructors, software developers, and former operators who have been tackling these challenges from an entirely different perspective. What has impressed me most isn't the technology itself. It's the philosophy behind it. The best ideas aren't trying to build another billion-dollar simulator. They're trying to give Airmen more opportunities to practice, make mistakes, build confidence, and refine judgment before those scarce, high-value training events ever begin.

In other words, they're trying to create more repetitions. That strikes me as exactly the right objective. Professional athletes have understood this for generations. Championships are rarely won because of what happens on game day. They're won because thousands of unseen repetitions allow instinct to replace hesitation when the moment finally arrives.

Military aviation has never been any different. We simply have better tools than we used to.

One of the unexpected privileges of retirement has been watching many of the young officers and enlisted Airmen I once flew with become squadron commanders, senior enlisted leaders, instructors, and mentors themselves. They are now shaping the next generation exactly as someone once shaped them.



CymSTAR's CymLITE ATLAS-XR Aircrew Trainer - a lightweight XR device with a virtualized C-5 OFP capable of air refueling and tactical operations training. (Photo by Matthew Fritz).

That has reminded me that training has never really been about airplanes, simulators, or virtual reality. It's about people.

It's about taking a nervous young lieutenant who isn't quite sure they belong and, through countless small moments, helping them become the aircraft commander others instinctively trust. It's about taking a new maintainer and giving them enough confidence to troubleshoot a problem that will eventually determine whether a crew launches on time. It's about building habits so thoroughly that when circumstances become chaotic, professionalism remains steady.

The airplanes will change, and they always have. The software will change faster than most of us can keep up with. Artificial intelligence will find its place, just as every new technology eventually does. I welcome all of that. But I hope we never confuse technology with readiness. Readiness has always been, and will always remain, a profoundly human endeavor.

Somewhere today, a young Airman is sitting through an emergency procedure briefing, climbing into a simulator, turning a wrench on a flight line, or listening to an instructor explain why the smallest details matter. Neither that Airman nor the instructor knows which lesson will one day make the difference. History never tells us in advance which sortie will matter most.

That's why every repetition matters.

Because when the nation calls, there is no time left to become proficient. There is only time to demonstrate the professionalism we had the wisdom to build while the airplane was still sitting quietly on the ramp.

About the Author: *Col. Matthew T. "Monty" Fritz, USAF (Ret.), serves as Director of Business Development for Air and Space Force Programs at CymSTAR, the prime contractor leading the Air Force's C-5, A-10, and E-4B Training Systems. A retired mobility pilot, flight test leader, and commander, he spent 26 years in the U.S. Air Force leading operations, training, and acquisition organizations before entering industry. He remains committed to advancing the readiness of America's Airmen through innovative training, thoughtful leadership, and continued collaboration between the Department of Defense and industry.* ■



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U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Daniel H. Tulley accepts the Air Mobility Command guidon from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ken Wilsbach during the AMC Assumption of Command ceremony on Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, August 3, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Dalton Williams).

Air Mobility Command welcomes new commander

By Air Mobility Command Public Affairs

Air Mobility Command officially welcomed Lt. Gen. Daniel H. Tulley as its new commander during an assumption of command ceremony held at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, Aug. 3.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ken Wilsbach presided over the event as Tulley assumed command of AMC.

"Recent operations like Absolute Resolve and Epic Fury have reminded us that airlift, aerial refueling, aeromedical evacuation, and global logistics are not simply supporting functions," said Wilsbach. "They create options for our nation's leaders, provide freedom of action for combatant commanders, and make the employment of military power possible. In every sense of the word, they enable maneuver."

Gen. Wilsbach also remarked on Lt. Gen. Rebecca Sonkiss's leadership and accomplishments during her tenure as interim commander of AMC.

"These accomplishments speak for themselves, but they reflect something more important than operational success," said Wilsbach. "They reveal a leader who built trust across the enterprise, and ensured every organization understood both its mission and its role in achieving a common objective. I know that a source of inspiration for you, Reba, is the people you serve with every day, and I am so grateful for your steadfast leadership during combat operations. Thank you for your vision, professionalism, and dedication to the command and to our Airmen."

Gen. Randall Reed, commander of U.S. Transportation Command, provided additional comments during the ceremony, speaking to Tulley's leadership background and the pivotal role the command has in delivering rapid global mobility for the Joint Force.

"The expectations are high, but you are well prepared," said Reed. "Gen. Dan Tulley is a proven leader having commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels. Equally as important, his experience in strategy and policy, demonstrating his ability to understand the evolving strategic environment, and he is clear-eyed about the need to deliver solutions to meet national objectives and to be my air component commander."

Prior to assuming command, Tulley served as commander and president of Air University, where he led the U.S. Air Force's center for professional military education, leadership development, research and outreach. He provided a crucial learning foundation for every stage of an Airman's career, developing more than 50,000 resident and 120,000 non-resident officers, enlisted members and civilian personnel annually.

"AMC today reflects no single leader; it reflects generations of professional warriors united by a commitment to the nation, the joint force, and to answer the call," said Tulley. "AMC is a warfighting command – we plan, integrate, and fight alongside every combatant command. We shape the plan, set the force, sustain the campaign, and preserve freedom of maneuver for joint force commanders. When the mission is complete, we bring that force home."

As the commander, Tulley will oversee the employment and integration of approximately 107,000 Total Force Airmen and more than 1,100 aircraft. Through airlift, air refueling, aeromedical evacuation and a global mobility support network, Air Mobility Command delivers Rapid Global Mobility that enables the Joint Force to rapidly deploy, sustain and maneuver combat power across the globe. ■

COMAMC emphasizes air mobility's role in 'Flying and Fixing to Fight and Win' at AFA 2026

By Air Mobility Command Public Affairs

Lt. Gen. Daniel Tulley, commander of Air Mobility Command, joined fellow commanders and senior leaders to address service members, defense industry partners and journalists during the Air and Space Forces Association's Air, Space and Cyber Conference, Sept. 16.

Tulley joined Gen. S. L. Davis, commander of Air Force Global Strike Command, Lt. Gen. Linda Hurry, commander of Air Force Materiel Command and Maj. Gen. Jon Eberlan, Director of Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection, Headquarters Air Combat Command, for a panel discussion focused on the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's operational imperative to fly and fix aircraft to deter adversaries and, if deterrence fails, to fight and win decisively in contested theaters.

Addressing the current tempo of operations, Tulley highlighted that Air Mobility Command has roughly 300 aircraft deployed across several geographic combatant commands, supported by approximately 10,000 Airmen operating at an intense tempo. He stressed that strategic air refueling is only a fraction of the total support required to sustain the Joint Force. AMC also delivers the supplies, the munitions, the sustainment and the base operating support that combatant commanders count on.

"Air refueling is just part of the story," Tulley said. "What strikes me is the lessons that they're bringing back. We've got a generation of Airmen who are going to come back home with combat experience that will be priceless for [countering] our pacing threat."

When asked about managing readiness with a largely fixed inventory of aircraft, Tulley challenged legacy, binary models of preparedness, advocating for systems that measure combat capability in a protracted fight.

"When we think about readiness in Air Mobility Command, we really think about answering four questions: readiness of what, for what, for when, and at what cost. But when we look at the lessons in Ukraine, we also have to ask ourselves: for how long?" Tulley stated. "Readiness in contact is the way we're approaching this."

To illustrate the joint teamwork required to generate readiness in contact, Tulley noted that AFMC pushed forward depot-level capabilities to Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom, where maintenance teams have successfully swapped 30 KC-135 Stratotanker boom assemblies in-theater rather than flying the aircraft back to the United States for repairs.

Turning to the challenges of concurrent global demand and operating across multiple theaters, Tulley explained that AMC functions as the global air component to U.S. Transportation Command, balancing requirements across 11 combatant commands.

"For us, it's really about discerning the requirements across those combatant commands to include TRANSCOM's own, and then their priorities," Tulley explained. "What we really need, and what we're moving towards, is a system that lets us see all 11 combatant commands."

Addressing the pilot pipeline and training constraints, Tulley emphasized that the command is looking at the entire enterprise to ensure experienced aircrews are in operational squadrons.

"At the end of the day, we really need experience in the squadrons," Tulley said, noting that he recently convened a team to examine how the command can simplify its training requirements. "How much time do we spend in training now? What are our requirements for all of our mission sets. How can we simplify that? Always assure we have the basic level of readiness to keep the global transportation system operating, but then tailor the training we need for that high-end fight."

To highlight the reality of operating and fixing aircraft while under fire, Tulley recounted a recent real-world mission where a KC-135 aircrew and maintenance team sheltered during a ballistic missile attack, then immediately emerged to contain a major fuel leak, patch shrapnel holes and repair the aircraft so it could complete a transoceanic flight home for depot restoration. Tulley stressed that readiness is a vital, continuous process for the command.

"Pretty simple for us: train like you fight, train like you will fight in a peer fight," Tulley said. "Training like you fight has got to stress our Airmen. It's got to train them to be ready for those stresses, and then do it again and again and again."

Tulley concluded by discussing the evolution of contested logistics, highlighting that AMC has adapted to track detailed replacement parts for aircraft in contested theaters, alongside combat munitions shipments.

"One of the things I'd say about logistics and supply lines are that we are good, but we're getting better," Tulley stated. "If you can get to the granularity and the precision to say, 'Okay, I need these [Mission Impaired Capability Awaiting Parts] delivered with those munitions,' you're increasing combat capability. You're turning aircraft back into the fight faster."

As AMC continues to operate at a sustained global tempo, Tulley emphasized that the command's advantage rests on its ability to generate, sustain and regenerate combat capability under contested conditions. By integrating maintenance, logistics, training and operational planning across the mobility enterprise, AMC is working to ensure its Airmen and aircraft can support the Joint Force wherever and whenever they are needed. ■



U.S. Air Force Gen. S.L. Davis, commander of Air Force Global Strike Command; Lt. Gen. Linda S. Hurry, commander of Air Force Materiel Command; Lt. Gen. Daniel H. Tulley, commander of Air Mobility Command; and Maj. Gen. Jon A. Eberlan, Air Combat Command's director of logistics, engineering and force protection, discuss the integration and partnerships needed for force readiness at the "Flying and Fixing to Fight and Win" panel during the 2026 Air, Space and Cyber Conference at the National Harbor, Md., Sept. 16, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Teniya Giron).

Air Mobility News & Views *continues >>>*

Exercise Ultimate Caduceus 2026: global patient movement enterprise

By Senior Airman Jordan Lazaro, 375th Air Mobility Wing

Approximately 400 military and civilian personnel gathered to reinforce a shared commitment to patient-centered care during Exercise Ultimate Caduceus 2026 held Sept. 2-12, 2026, at Scott AFB.

The annual patient movement field training exercise, led by U.S. Transportation Command, simulates receiving injured troops from overseas locations at designated aeromedical evacuation hubs and patient reception areas where federal coordinating centers and local partners receive, triage, stage, track and transport patients to pre-designated local definitive care facilities.

"Ultimate Caduceus is about the power of our partnership and a testament to our nation's shared commitment to providing world-class care," said Air Force Col. Christopher Backus, USTRANSCOM command surgeon. "The synergy between our military medical teams and the incredible expertise of our community and interagency partners creates a resilient network that is greater than the sum of its parts. Together, we are ready for any crisis."

The exercise kicked off with hands-on training evaluating the readiness of the patient movement enterprise. Participants were assessed on their ability to scale up forces and deploy sufficient medical assets to provide expedited transport of military patients to locations within the United States for care within a collective effort with our military and industry partners.

"Opportunities like this are crucial for our soldiers to come out and flex their medical skill sets not only with our military, but with industry partners," said Army Maj. Jesse Back, 7450th Medical Operational Readiness Unit officer in charge of the patient insertion team. "Testing our real-world abilities and interoperability away from our home station only makes for a stronger united warfighting team."

A central focus of this exercise was testing the aeromedical evacuation mission, which provides time-sensitive, fixed-wing, critical in-flight care to patients in transit from locations overseas to the United States. Global operations depend on the medical enterprises ability to project, maneuver and sustain the joint force and are made stronger through continued relationships with our partners and allies.

"Working directly with other services builds trust by helping us understand each other's capabilities and work through challenges before we have to do it in a real-world operation," said Air Force Maj. Melissa Cadorette, Air Mobility Command A37 Joint Exercise Division exercise support branch chief. "While this exercise is focused on joint integration across the medical field, my biggest takeaway has been seeing how important communication and coordination are across all organizations involved in patient movement."

Multiple aircraft were involved to make this exercise possible. Air Force C-130J Super Hercules, Army C-12 Huron, Army HH-60 Black Hawks and civilian cargo and passenger aircraft participated, allowing joint and civilian medical teams to train on a variety of airlift platforms. This global patient enterprise provides safe, reliable and scalable patient movement for the Department of War.

"Commercial patient movement services are centered around individual patients," said Anthony Ross, U.S. Transportation Command Defense Health Agency liaison officer. "Ultimate Caduceus provides an opportunity to strengthen our public-private partnerships, test and integrate high-volume commercial capabilities and scale the War Department's capacity to deliver warfighters from the battlefield to care."



U.S. Air Force Maj. Paul Pikman (left), Critical Care Air Transport Team doctor, and Maj. Owen Caron, CCATT registered nurse, perform a simulated patient medical evacuation during Exercise Ultimate Caduceus 2026 on Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, Sept. 8, 2026. After receiving the injured patients, Pikman and Caron performed a medical check prior to transferring the patient to a different aircraft for transportation. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Izcalli X Martinez).

Readiness is a shared responsibility. UC26 is where our community of experts come together to share insight and refine a collective approach to patient care. The exercise is an opportunity to strengthen our integration, test our readiness and ensure our robust network is prepared for any crisis.

"Through joint training and collaboration, participants gain a better understanding of each organization's capabilities, procedures and challenges," said Army Reserve Lt. Col. David Stefl, 807th Theater Medical Command joint task force medical deputy commander. "The success in future operations depends not only on individual technical proficiency, but also on the ability to integrate with partners. Through this exercise we build on these relationships to enhance readiness, improve patient care in operational environments and increase our collective ability to respond effectively when called upon."

USTRANSCOM's role is to integrate efforts with interagency partners to create a seamless community of care. Together, we can move every patient safely and efficiently to the definitive medical care they need anywhere within the United States.

"Federal and industry partners expand War Department medical capacity – testing our interoperability at Ultimate Caduceus increases our readiness to deliver warfighters from the battlefield to the DHA, TRICARE, VA and HHS healthcare networks," said William Walker, Defense Health Agency assistant director of healthcare administration and operations. "Building this foundation now positions War Department leaders to rapidly integrate and scale federal and industry capacity to meet our nation's warfighting requirements."

Exercises like Ultimate Caduceus increase interoperability across medical teams and systems so we can provide the highest level of care for those who need it most. Additionally, it reinforced the importance of preparedness for future conflict and DHA's sacred obligation to provide lifesaving care on and off the battlefield. ■



Presidential Message on the 79th Birthday of the United States Air Force

The White House September 18, 2026

Today, on the 79th birthday of the United States Air Force, I join a grateful Nation in honoring America's airmen—past and present—for defending our liberty, safeguarding our way of life, and ruling the sky and space with exceptional professionalism and valor.

On September 18, 1947, the Air Force was born as an independent branch of the military charged with winning command of the air for America. Every day since, air power has kept our country secure, at peace, and prosperous, and when war has come, it has answered with swift and devastating force.

From the beginning, airmen have stood as our Nation's sentries, avengers, and protectors of freedom, carrying out every mission with overwhelming power and precision, whether performing search and rescue missions, delivering aid to those in need, ensuring the integrity of our nuclear deterrent, or holding the line against our enemies from the air. These patriots carry on a storied legacy of dreamers, pioneers, and visionaries who propelled our rise as a global superpower, and their ability to "Fly-Fight-Win…Airpower Anytime, Anywhere" flows from their unwavering commitment to the warrior ethos and the core values of integrity, selflessness, and excellence.

This summer, in the heart of our Nation's capital, Air Force fighters, tankers, bomber formations, and elite demonstration teams thundered over the National Mall and the White House in celebration of 250 glorious years of American Independence. The pageantry and the sound of freedom turned eyes skyward in awe, wonder, patriotism, and pride, and the impressive display of our arsenal offered an inspiring glimpse of the real-world capability to deploy, defend, and dominate that the world witnessed this year during critical combat operations worldwide.

Our United States Air Force is unmatched in innovation and expertise, with assets and personnel that make our citizens proud and our enemies fearful. As Commander in Chief, I extend my deepest respect to the men and women who wear its uniform, and I pledge to always support them with every resource they need to fly, fight, and win for the American People. On this anniversary, may God bless our airmen and the spouses and families who stand alongside them in service to our great Nation. ■

Air Mobility News & Views *continues >>>*

Keeping the Memory of the Candy Bomber Alive

By Col. Phillip G. Morrison, USAF (Ret.)

During Airventure 26, at Oshkosh, volunteers from the Airlift/Tanker Association joined teams with The Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation and The Candy Bomber Foundation to talk about their organizations. This served to educate the public at the airshow about the power of Air Mobility; how it sustained the starving people of West Berlin, brought them food; but just as importantly how the Candy Bomber brought hope and good will to the children of the city. Over the course of the week the volunteers stood in front of the Berlin Airlift Historical Foundation's C-54 aircraft "The Spirit of Freedom" and told the heroic story of how the impossible idea of sustaining 2.25 million people by air became a reality and cemented the geo-strategic importance of airlift. It was, however, the story of the Candy Bomber that resonated loudest, as parents and children imagined a kindly man risking his career to be the ray of sunshine in the otherwise bleak lives of so many children, whose lives had been ripped apart by war.

Over the course of the airshow, the team dropped over 4,000 parachutes out of the cockpit of the parked C-54 to the awaiting children below and even had some notable guest droppers like the PACAF Commander and Red Arrows Demonstration Team members. As the children waited eagerly to receive their sweet payloads of candy, they learned the story of the straight arrow pilot Gail Halvorsen, who broke the rules and followed his heart to deliver hope in the form of chocolates and gum to the children of Berlin.

The children and their parents were gripped by the stories, that sadly many had never heard before, but it left all with the sense of how important airlift is to our nation and a better sense of how hope and kindness can triumph where bombs and bullets cannot. Many of the children were curious about the giant airplane and could be overheard saying things like "I want to be a pilot, just like the Candy Bomber". Many of the adults were teary-eyed as they clutched their children while listening to the story of Gail Halvorsen and his crew, who inspired so much love and admiration. Future generations of pilots learned important lessons on the ramp at Oshkosh about how Air Mobility is critical to national defense, but everyone who came left thinking about how small acts of kindness can have an outsized impact on the lives of others. We created a legion of Candy Bombers who understand it doesn't require a plane, a parachute or even candy to be just like Gail Halvorsen, it just requires small acts of kindness. ■



Eddie Morrison candy bombing the crowd below. (Photo by Phillip Morrison).



Happy children, who experienced the joy of catching candy parachutes. (Photo by Phillip Morrison).



The Candy Bomber crew poses in front of the C54. (Courtesy photo).



KC-135 refueling Republic F-105 Thunderchiefs before attacking targets inside North Vietnam in the fall of 1967. Eight point nine billion pounds of jet fuel was transferred from KC-135s during the Vietnam War. (Courtesy photo).

KC-135: 70 Years of Refueling American Airpower

By Lt. Col. Mark Hasara, USAF (Ret.)

On August 31, 1956, Boeing's KC-135 Stratotanker took its first flight, beginning a remarkable journey that would transform American airpower. Seventy years later, the aircraft remains a cornerstone of global aerial refueling, supporting combat operations on six continents and generations of American and allied aircrews.

The KC-135 story began with a $16 million gamble by Boeing CEO William Allen. In the early 1950s, Allen recognized that jet aircraft would transform commercial aviation and military airpower. The Air Force's propeller-driven KC-97 could not keep pace with the new B-47 Stratojet already flying and the B-52 Stratofortress. America needed a jet tanker capable of operating at higher speeds and altitudes.

Allen committed approximately two-thirds of Boeing's postwar net profits to develop an entirely new jet aircraft without a guaranteed commercial order. The investment produced the Model 367-80, or Dash 80, the prototype for both the Boeing 707 and the KC-135.

Boeing constructed the Dash 80 behind walls inside its Renton, Washington, facility, concealing the revolutionary project from competitors and much of the public. On July 15, 1954, test pilot Alvin "Tex" Johnston successfully flew the prototype for the first time. Its performance validated Allen's gamble and led to an Air Force order for 29 tankers that September. The production KC-135 made its first flight on August 31, 1956, ushering in a new era of aerial refueling.

The US Air Force's Strategic Air Command asked industry for a new jet tanker in 1954.

Boeing, with the Dash 80 flying, finished third behind Lockheed's L-193. Lockheed's design never got off the drawing board.

The KC-135 became the backbone of the Air Force tanker fleet for seven decades, with 732 airframes built.

From the Cold War to combat

Boeing ultimately delivered 732 KC-135s to the Air Force. At the height of the Cold War, Strategic Air Command relied on a fleet of hundreds of Stratotankers to keep its B-52 bombers airborne and sustain America's nuclear deterrent. The aircraft became essential to the nation's ability to project airpower across oceans and continents.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 provided an early test of the KC-135's strategic importance. Its ability to support airborne bombers and maintain the readiness of America's nuclear forces demonstrated the value of a jet-powered tanker during a major international confrontation.

Vietnam established the KC-135 as an indispensable combat aircraft. Beginning in 1964, tankers refueled fighters, bombers, and reconnaissance aircraft operating throughout Southeast Asia. Aerial refueling extended fighter range, increased time over targets,

***Cover Story** continues on page 16 >>>*

and enabled sustained combat operations. The lessons learned in Vietnam shaped tanker tactics and doctrine for decades.

That experience carried into Operation Desert Storm, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq. During the Gulf War and the Global War on Terror, KC-135s enabled coalition aircraft to conduct operations over enormous distances while maintaining continuous air coverage.

I experienced this capability firsthand. After September 11, 2001, I deployed to the Middle East, helping plan and execute aerial refueling operations for six coalition nations. I served as Chief of the Air Refueling Control Team during operations in Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003. Those missions reinforced what generations of tanker crews already knew: without aerial refueling, modern airpower cannot operate at the scale and distance required.

Fuel is a weapon.

Modernization and an enduring mission

The KC-135's longevity reflects its remarkable adaptability. Replacing the original J57 engines with CFM56 turbofans transformed the aircraft into the KC-135R, delivering greater thrust, improved fuel efficiency, and better takeoff performance. Subsequent avionics and communications upgrades kept the aircraft relevant as military operations evolved.

Today, the KC-135 operates alongside the newer KC-46 Pegasus. Although the Air Force is transitioning to a modernized tanker fleet, the Stratotanker remains essential to America's global reach.

Celebrating 70 years at Altus

From August 29 through September 4, 2026, the KC-135 community gathered around the aircraft's 70th anniversary, with the principal celebration at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma, on August 31 and September 1.

Altus was a fitting location. For nearly seven decades, the 97th Air Mobility Wing has trained the pilots and boom operators who keep the tanker mission alive. The anniversary brought together current and former aircrew, senior military leaders, industry representatives and families.



Retired Air Force and local Altus leadership hold up a specially designed cake for the 70th Anniversary at a banquet held at Altus. Retired Major General Maggie Woodward delivered the keynote speech, discussing her experiences as the Combined Forces Air Component Commander of Operation Odyssey Dawn over Libya in March 2011. (A/TA courtesy photo).



A U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft flies over aircraft static displays at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma, Aug. 31, 2026. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Emma Wright).

Events included KC-135, KC-46 and C-17 aircraft displays, simulator experiences, leadership discussions and opportunities for aircrew mentorship. Retired senior leaders, including Maj. Gen. Margaret Woodward and Gen. Carlton Everhart, shared their experiences with today's Airmen.

The Boom Operator Memorial Ceremony at Wings of Freedom Park was among the most meaningful events. The addition of Tech. Sgt. Ashley Pruitt and Master Sgt. Tyler Simmons, members of Zeus 95, honored the sacrifices of those who gave their lives serving the aerial refueling mission.

The celebration also highlighted the aerospace companies whose contributions made the KC-135's longevity possible. Boeing created the aircraft, Pratt & Whitney supplied its original engines, and CFM International's CFM56 transformed its performance. GE Aerospace, Safran, and aerospace avionics suppliers have contributed to the technology and industrial expertise that sustain modern tanker operations.

A legacy that continues

Seventy years after its first flight, the KC-135 remains a testament to Bill Allen's willingness to take a calculated risk and Boeing's ability to turn that vision into reality. Its legacy is measured not just in aircraft delivered or fuel transferred, but in the combat missions enabled and the lives protected.

Having flown the KC-135 for more than 24 years, I know its greatest strength has always been its people. Pilots, boom operators, maintainers, and support personnel have kept this aircraft relevant through seven decades of extraordinary change.

The celebration at Altus honored that legacy and the generations who built it. Bill Allen's $16 million gamble gave America far more than an airplane. It gave American airpower the ability to reach farther, stay longer, and accomplish missions that once seemed impossible.

Seventy years later, the Stratotanker is still delivering on that promise.

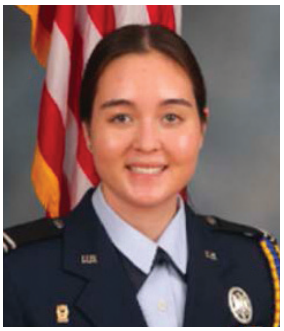
Because Nobody Kicks Ass Without Tanker Gas… NOBODY! ■

ARNOLD AIR SOCIETY & SILVER WINGS SCHOLARSHIP

RECIPIENTS

Recipient of the $10,000 Maj. Gen. James I. Baginski Academic Scholarship

Dear Family of Gen. Baginski and the Men and Women of the A/TA,



My name is Emma Cao, and I am deeply honored to have been selected as a recipient of the Baginski Academic Scholarship. I am currently a senior at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where I study Political Science and serve as the Cadet Wing Commander of Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) Detachment 590. This fall I will begin law school after receiving an educational delay, and upon earning my Juris Doctor, I hope to become a judge advocate. Outside of my academic and military commitments, I enjoy cooking and baking, reading, staying active, and exploring new coffee shops.

Over the past four years, Arnold Air Society has had a profound influence on my life through the friendships, mentorship, and professional development opportunities I have had the privilege of experiencing. The organization helped shape both my personal growth and the direction of my future career. When I received the news that I had been granted an educational delay, I felt immense relief knowing that this generous scholarship would help ease the financial burden of school and allow me to focus fully on preparing for the next stage of my journey.

While writing this note, I took time to learn more about Maj. Gen. James "Bagger" Baginski. I was struck by the breadth of his career and the role he played in strengthening the air mobility mission over many decades. From his beginnings as an ROTC graduate and pilot to his leadership shaping airlift operations and capabilities, his work left a lasting mark on the Air Force. What stood out most, however, was his dedication not only to mission success but also to the people who carry it out.

As someone who hopes to spend my professional life serving alongside Airmen and Guardians, I find that legacy deeply meaningful. Major General Baginski set a standard for thoughtful, principled leadership across a lifetime. I hope that through my own path in the Air Force I will be able to contribute in a way that reflects even a small part of the influence he had those who wear the uniform.

Thank you again for your generosity and for the support you provide to students and future officers. I am truly grateful and will carry the responsibility of this scholarship with great pride.

Very respectfully,
Emma Cao

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Air Mobility in Great Power Competition with China: Sustaining Power Projection Under Constraint

by Emma Cao

Great Power Competition with China has compelled the United States (U.S.) Air Force to reconsider whether its core capabilities can endure in a contested operating environment. Among the most consequential of these is air mobility: the integrated system of airlift, aerial refueling, and global logistics that enables U.S. power projection (Air Mobility Operations 2024). Once treated as a largely uncontested enabler, air mobility now operates under persistent threat in the Indo-Pacific (Santos 2024). While remaining a decisive American advantage, its strategic value depends on whether mobility forces can survive, disperse, and operate in contested conditions.

Recipient of the $10,000 Brig. Gen. Tom Mikolajcik Academic Scholarship

To the Family of Gen. Mikolajcik and the Men and Women of the A/TA,



I am honored to receive this scholarship and sincerely appreciate your support. I am a graduate student in aerospace engineering at NC State University, and I also serve as an aircraft mechanic in the Air Force Reserve. Fun fact, I am actually deployed while writing this note!

With my commitments to school and the military, I have limited time for hobbies, but during breaks or over the summer, I enjoy traveling with my wife, Elizabeth, tinkering with my home computer, and playing a variety of video games.

Like Gen. Mikolajcik, my ultimate goal is to serve as a pilot in the active-duty Air Force. Balancing my education, military service, extracurriculars and financial responsibilities has been challenging, but opportunities like this scholarship make all the difference. Your generosity not only alleviates some of that burden but also reinforces my determination to excel.

Thank you for your support and for believing in my ability to contribute to the field of aerospace. Your investment in my future motivates me to work even harder toward my goals.

Very respectfully,
Nicholas Barber

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Space Force's Need for Organic Launch Capabilities

by Nicholas Barber

Since its establishment in 2019, the United States Space Force (USSF) has relied heavily on commercial launch providers to place national security payloads into orbit, making a departure from the traditionally government-owned launch models of earlier space programs. This shift reflects broader changes in the space domain, where rapid innovation, reduced launch costs, and an increasingly capable commercial sector have reshaped how access to space is achieved. As geopolitical competition in space intensifies, however, questions remain regarding whether reliance on commercial launch alone is sufficient to meet all national security requirements. While commercial partnerships provide clear advantages in efficiency and scale, they may not fully address the need for rapid, responsive, and strategically controlled launch capabilities in contested environments. This essay argues that commercial launch partnerships are not only tenable but essential for routine space access, yet the USSF must retain limited organic launch capabilities to ensure assured access to space.



Recipients of the A/TA $10,000 Undergraduate Academic Scholarship

Dear Airlift/Tanker Association,



I would like to thank the Airlift/Tanker Association for their very generous scholarship. I am currently studying at Auburn University, majoring in economics and participating in the Reserve Officer Training Corps. It is my desire upon completing school to earn a commission in the United States Air Force and hopefully become a pilot. The scholarship will help me fund the pursuit of these goals.

The Airlift/Tanker Association provides a great opportunity for the families of its members and all Mobility Airmen. In addition to scholarships, they offer the opportunity to learn about Air Force heritage. I have learned a lot during the process of writing my scholarship essay, and it has left me wanting to learn more about the history of the World's Greatest Air Force. Additionally, I made the decision to become a member of A/TA in my own right, taking advantage of the student membership opportunity.

Thank you again. As Walt Disney would say "Tomorrow will be better as long as America keeps alive the ideals of freedom and a better life." I feel like A/TA specializes in doing just that.

Very respectfully,
Edward Morrison - Auburn University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

The Man, the Mouse, and their Nation
by Eddie Morrison

Throughout the United States of America's involvement in World War II many American corporations and businesses assisted the war effort, but none had the same impact as Walt Disney. I researched the unique ways The Walt Disney Company contributed to improving the morale of U.S. service members and how their influence spread on the home front as well. The effect that Disney had on the U.S. military and American people during this time through artwork, short films, insignia designs, and training films should not be understated. Disney shared his focus of supporting the war effort through all of these various mediums. He was able to not only entertain soldiers with his films, but he also helped units develop their own identities through patches and insignia that his company produced. Disney's propaganda films were not only educational for service members fighting, but they were also important for informing American citizens of the crimes committed by the Axis Powers. They were also very entertaining since they had humorous elements and included popular characters, most notably Donald Duck. I was able to find several reliable sources that helped to expand upon Disney's endeavors over the course of World War II, including the Walt Disney Family Museum and Smithsonian National Museum of American history website. Disney's previous popularity leading up to the Second World War gave him and his studio a unique platform in which he was able to boost morale for the soldiers fighting. Disney's impact on the military's morale was so great because those young men grew up with Disney movies and characters as a part of their childhoods. What Disney provided was not only patches, insignia, short films, or nose art; it was giving them all a reminder of home and their culture.

To the Airlift/Tanker Association,



I am beyond grateful to be awarded this scholarship. My father's time as an Air Force KC-135 pilot continues to inspire me, as it so clearly modeled a life of service over self. I plan on carrying this principle with me by dedicating my life to a career in global humanitarian work, beginning with my education at UF. The A/TA's generosity and support to military families with scholarships like this one will help to make that dream a reality. Words cannot express my gratitude for this investment in my further education. As my father always reminds me, "To whom much is given, much is expected," and I have been given much. It is truly an honor, and I promise I will make the most of the opportunities in front of me.

With Sincere Gratitude,
Lyla Regans - University of Florida

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

The Echo of D-Day in History

by Lyla Regans

Operation Overlord, commonly known as D-Day, proved to be one of the most significant military operations in World War II and played a vital role in defeating Nazi Germany. This paper examines the importance of the Normandy invasions and how it directly changed the outcome of the war. It ensured Allied victory by breaking open the Western Front and stretching German resources thin, allowing Allies to overwhelm in both an industrial and military field. Germany was already facing devastating losses on the eastern front with the Soviets, and the opening of the second front marked the breaking of their hold in Europe. The taking of the beach also gave the Allies a permanent foothold in Europe, allowing a steady chain of troops, tanks, aircraft, and supplies to support our troops. Along with the industrial impact, it also caused a shattering of the invincible mentality Germany had. Their quick and brutal conquering had come to a halt, and they were driven into survival instead of their previous victories. Operation Overlord was much more than just a successful assault; it was the turning that solidified Allied victory in Europe. D-Day broke Germany's control of the war, caused the collapse of their hold in Europe, and marked the beginning of the end for Hitler's regime.

Recipient of the A/TA - CXAL $10,000 Innovation in Air Mobility Heritage Undergraduate Scholarship

To A/TA and CXAL,



I am incredibly grateful for this academic scholarship from the Airlift-Tanker Association! While working on my essay, I truly enjoyed researching how the strategic use of air mobility shaped key events such as the Berlin Airlift, and I gained an even deeper appreciation for the contributions that men and women in air mobility continue to make today.

This fall I will be attending Texas A&M University, majoring in International Affairs with minors in Russian and Journalism. After graduation, I plan to serve my country by working in national security, with a focus on intelligence and regional issues in Northern Europe and Scandinavia. I have always been fascinated by the multifaceted approach to diplomacy and all the components that encompass international security. As part of my studies, I intend to participate in a study abroad program and broaden my understanding of other cultures while further developing my language skills.

Thanks to this scholarship and the generous support of the Airlift-Tanker Association, I will be able to pursue my academic and professional goals as I progress through college, and for that I am deeply moved. Thank you again for the opportunity to represent this amazing organization through this scholarship.

Best Regards,
Sarah Salmi - Texas A&M University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

by Sarah Salmi

In the (my) following essay, two works of nonfiction, principles of decision-making found in Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis by Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow are applied to scenarios present in the Berlin Airlift, with evidence primarily pulled from Andrei Cherny's, The Candy Bombers. This essay starts by breaking down the three models of decision-making from Essence of Decision for quick and easy reference. Then, it applies these models to key decision points needed to operate the Berlin Airlift, mainly Truman's decision to send in a support mission as opposed to a ground assault, or avoidance of the issue all together. The essay also pinpoints key lessons and concepts that are important for modern day Air Mobility leaders and applies these concepts in context of how they were utilized during the Airlift. Finally, these concepts and lessons are applied to a modern-day conflict, the humanitarian crisis in 2010 Haiti following a massive earthquake that decimated infrastructure.

Recipients of the A/TA $5,000 Undergraduate Academic Scholarship

Dear Airlift/Tanker Association,



I am incredibly humbled and honored to be selected as a recipient of the A/TA Academic Undergraduate Scholarship. Words cannot express how grateful I am for the continued generous support of the A/TA.

With this scholarship, I will head boldly into my final year at Purdue University studying Nutrition and Dietetics. Over the past two years at Purdue University, I have gained a variety of research, volunteer, and shadowing experiences. As part of the Nutrition Science Honors Program, I completed my thesis on poultry consumption and cardiovascular disease with a faculty mentor, presenting at two undergraduate conferences at Purdue University as well as the national conference for the American Society for Nutrition. Through my involvement in Reformed University Fellowship, I have grown immensely in my leadership skills and learned the importance of being surrounded by a community of believers.

Scholarship Recipients *continues on page 20 >>>*

After graduating in May 2027, I will begin my master's degree in Dietetics in August 2027. I am excited to dive into advanced nutrition and gain over 1,000 hours of supervised practice in community, foodservice, and clinical settings. In the future, I hope to become a pediatric clinical dietitian. After shadowing several registered dietitians at pediatric hospitals, I have fallen in love with the world of pediatric nutrition, and I am excited to contribute to this field.

Thank you again to all the A/TA staff for your service, for making this scholarship program possible, and for your incredible generosity. Thank you as well to all the members of the A/TA for your service, and a special thank you to my father for inspiring me to work hard in all my endeavors. I am beyond blessed to have grown up in the air mobility community and to be supported by the A/TA.

Very respectfully,
Ashley Baker - Purdue University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Production Soldiers: The Necessity and Contribution of Women During WWII

by Ashley Baker

With the Selective Service Training and Service Act of 1940, over ten million men left to serve on the front lines of World War II, creating severe labor shortages. Through campaigns led by the War Manpower Commission and patriotic symbols such as Rosie the Riveter, women were encouraged to enter the workforce. Women became essential to the American war effort by serving in defense industries, civilian service organizations, and military units, demonstrating that victory depended on the contributions of the home front as much as the battlefield. World War II was a battle of production, so it was critical that women joined defense industries to manufacture aircraft, ships, weapons, uniforms, and other military supplies. Beyond industrial production, women also served in clerical, communications, and medical roles that became essential during World War II. Women further supported the war effort through military units, including the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service. By 1944, production in the United States was more than double that of the Axis powers, a feat that would not have been possible without the contribution of women.

Dear A/TA Scholarship Committee,



I am incredibly honored and grateful to be selected as the recipient of the A/TA Undergraduate Scholarship. Thank you for your generosity and your commitment to supporting students as they pursue their educational and professional goals.

This fall, I will begin studying Animal Sciences at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Receiving this scholarship not only eases the financial burden on my family but also allows me to focus fully on my studies and my future career. Your support means a great deal to me as I begin this exciting new chapter.

Over the years, I've learned that achieving your goals takes dedication, perseverance, and a willingness to keep learning. Those lessons have shaped who I am and strengthened my passion for working in animal science. Knowing that your committee believes in my potential encourages me to keep working hard and make the most of the opportunities this scholarship provides

Thank you again for your generosity and for making a meaningful difference in the lives of students. I truly appreciate this honor and will carry your support with me as I work toward achieving my goals.

With sincere gratitude,
Ashleigh Carpenter - University of Tennessee

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Jacqueline Cochran's Role in WWII

Ashleigh Carpenter

This paper details the contributions of Jacqueline "Jackie" Cochran during World War II. Although she is widely remembered for her record-breaking achievements in aviation, Cochran also played a major role in the war effort by creating revolutionary opportunities for women in aviation. As World War II progressed, Cochran advocated for women to serve in military aviation and helped organize the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), a group of female pilots that performed vital noncombat tasks including ferrying aircraft and transporting supplies. Through her leadership and persistence, Cochran challenged traditional gender roles and helped pave the way for future generations of women in aviation.

Dear A/TA,



Thank you so much for selecting me as a recipient of the $5,000 A/TA Undergraduate Scholarship. I am incredibly honored and deeply grateful for your support.

Receiving this scholarship will have a profound impact on my academic journey. Beyond contributing to my educational expenses, this award allows me to focus fully on my studies and excel in my coursework. With this support, I can dedicate more time to research, engage deeply with my academic projects, and push myself to achieve the highest standard of excellence in my degree program.

Thank you once again to the entire A/TA organization for investing in my future and empowering me to reach my full academic potential.

Sincerely,
Ava Mohr - University of Southern California

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From powering the legacy C-130s for over 70 years with the T56, to powering the C-130J with the AE 2100, Rolls-Royce is proud to support the USAF mobility fleet. Today, our advanced technologies, reliable engines, and ability to adapt to future needs, position us to provide survival propulsion solutions for Next Generation Airlift and Air Refueling platforms. Rolls-Royce is powering the future for the Air Force.



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WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

The Role of Women in the Workforce in the United States During WWII

by Ava Mohr

Women entered the workforce due to World War II, when millions of men went into military service. Prior to this, women generally remained in domestic roles or did jobs that were traditionally female (teaching, nursing, and secretarial). With the shortage of workers during the war, many women were able to enter industries and career fields that were once male-dominated. These women worked in factories, shipyards, offices, transportation systems, and in military-support services. They were critical to sustaining the United States economy and making significant contributions to the war effort. A national symbol of female patriotism, strength, and resolve emerged as "Rosie the Riveter."

Through discrimination, pay inequality, and social stigma, women showed they could work in a variety of jobs that required hard work and skill. Their success in these types of jobs challenged traditional ideas of what men and women can do and changed the way that society viewed women who worked.

Women from many different backgrounds, including African American women, also contributed significantly to the wartime industry, even though they faced many barriers, such as discrimination based on race and segregation from other races.

The presence of women in the workforce during World War II has had ongoing impacts on American society and the economy. For many women, expectations were that they would leave the workplace following the conclusion of World War II. However, the experiences these women had during the war helped to foster subsequent movements for gender equality and the expansion of opportunities for women in professional careers. My essay will explore a woman's contribution, challenges, and overall impact in America during World War II.

Dear A/TA Members,



Thank you for selecting me as a recipient of the Airlift/Tanker Association Undergraduate Scholarship. I am grateful for the A/TA's generosity and support to students pursuing their educational goals. This fall, I will return to Auburn University for my senior year pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. After graduation, I hope to work as a mechanical engineer, designing and improving the next generation of aircraft for the United States military. The A/TA's generosity allows me to devote more of my time and energy to the opportunities available through Auburn's outstanding engineering program. Thanks to the A/TA's generous support, I have gained hands-on experience through project engineering co-ops and aerospace internships. Because of the A/TA's support, I strive to be a student who not

Scholarship Recipients *continues on page 22 >>>*

only works hard to achieve my own goals but also uplifts those around me.

Thank you for helping me take another step toward achieving my career goals. I look forward to making the most of this opportunity and one day giving back to others in the same way the A/TA has generously helped me.

Sincerely,
Luke Olson - Auburn University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Jacqueline Cochran's role in WWII

By Luke Olson

World War II put a heavy toll on the United States. The loss of service members and military machinery created a critical gap for the long war. One of its key contributors to fill the gap was Jacqueline Cochran. Cochran became one of the most decorated pilots in aviation history while overcoming resistance to establish the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Initially rejected from the United States Army, Cochran's relentless advocacy ultimately earned the WASP's official recognition in 1942. Under her leadership, 1,074 women pilots flew over 60 million miles and delivered 12,650 aircraft across 77 different aircraft types. Her WASP pilots performed critical airlift and tanker ferrying missions that directly supported the United States' air operations. Cochran's discipline and courage proved that men and women alike could meet any military demand placed on air mobility. The largest impact of her service was not characterized by personal achievements, like being the first woman pilot to fly a bomber over the Atlantic Ocean, but rather how she laid the structural foundation for women's full integration into the United States Military as pilots in 1977. Her legacy is a landmark to ATA's mission as she was not only an outstanding contributor to the heritage of air mobility but also inspires every generation forward.

Dear Airlift/Tanker Association,



Thank you for this amazing opportunity to further my education. Researching for this essay was very informative; the stories I had the opportunity to read were enriching. I know they will also be beneficial to all others who now have the chance to read about the strong women of Mobile, Alabama. I can only hope that it continues to motivate many other young girls like myself to serve our country. I am very thankful for your assistance in funding my education as I go to the University of Kentucky to major in Chemistry and join Air Force ROTC.

Once again, thank you so much.

Very Respectfully,
Vanessa Watts - University of Kentucky

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

The Role of Women in the Workforce in the United States During WWII

by Vanessa Watts

During World War II there was a shortage of men in the United States to fill the workforce due to the sending of troops overseas. Consequently, the federal government called on American women to join the workforce and take up jobs to assist war efforts. The women of Mobile, Alabama, serve as a representation of the women in the workforce all throughout the United States. There were large industrial jobs such as factory work and jobs within the shipyards that women partook in. It was because of their efforts that we were able to achieve an incredible level of success in World War II, especially for a country still coming out of a massive economic depression. Through the War Manpower Commission job flyer promoting women to register for war jobs in Mobile, Alabama, we watch how women throughout America rose to the occasion and changed history for good.

Dear Airlift/Tanker Association Members,



Thank you so much for the scholarship opportunity as well as your selection of my essay. The Airlift/Tanker Association has always been a big part of my family and the opportunities given to students of veteran families is unparalleled. Being an out of state student, money stays a constant reminder of the heavy premium that the modern University system puts on education. This scholarship will help greatly in limiting the financial burden, in turn boosting me toward success. Apart from the economic help it means the world not only to be recognized by A/TA on a topic that is prevalent in modern day conversation but be graded by those heavily qualified in their field. Thank you again for the opportunity and the recognition.

Sincerely,
William Welser V

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

More than a Poster: The Indispensable Role of Women in World War II

by William Welser V

This paper examines the indispensable role women played in the United States during World War II and how their contributions reshaped American society. It argues that the war forced the nation to expand beyond traditional gender roles as millions of men left for military service, creating an urgent demand for workers in industry, agriculture, intelligence, aviation, and medicine. Through historical context and examples such as Rosie the Riveter, the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs), military nurses, and codebreakers at Bletchley Park, this paper explores how women became essential to Allied victory. Their

efforts not only sustained wartime production and military operations but also challenged long-standing assumptions about women's capabilities. Although many of their achievements went unrecognized for decades, the impact of their service permanently transformed opportunities for women in the workforce and altered the American understanding of gender roles for future generations.

Recipient of the $5,000 A/TA - Maj. Gen. Don Brown Undergraduate Scholarship

Dear A/TA and the family of MG Don Brown,



Thank you for considering my application and awarding me the A/TA-Brown Undergraduate Scholarship. I am truly appreciative of the opportunities this scholarship will provide as I continue my academic journey.

I am currently attending Texas A&M University at College Station, Mays Business School, majoring in Finance. I am constantly striving to grow and challenge myself. This past semester, I was accepted as an ambassador for a startup company, which has given me valuable insight into how small businesses operate and allowed me to apply what I've learned in the classroom. I am also an active member of Aggie Women in Business at Mays, where I'm expanding my professional network, strengthening my leadership skills, and connecting with driven women who inspire me to keep improving.

I am looking forward to my next year at Texas A&M and am very grateful to the Airlift Tanker Association for supporting my education. Thank you for investing in my future. Your generosity motivates me to continue striving for excellence, and I am proud to represent the mission and values of the Airlift Tanker Association.

With sincere appreciation,
Ellis Burrill - Texas A&M University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

The Race for Knowledge
by Ellis Burrill

Eleanor Roosevelt said it best, "All life is constant education." I believe that learning is a lifelong pursuit, and if you are not constantly educating yourself and growing your mind, you are not living life to its fullest. I am an example of this, currently attending college as a self-funded student worker.

Growing up in a military family, I have learned valuable lessons about what it truly means to learn. My father, a pilot in the United States Air Force, taught my siblings and me to observe our surroundings and appreciate rare opportunities, showing us that you can learn without ever opening a book. Living in different duty stations, meeting new people, and dealing with constant change has shaped how I view education. Knowledge is more than textbooks and articles, while I recognize their importance, they are only part of the process. My father has emphasized the importance of analytical skills, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness. He has encouraged my siblings and me to ask questions, learn through trial and error, and value the lessons along the way because your education can never be taken away from you. You have to stay vigilant in the race for knowledge.

Recipients of the $5,000 A/TA - CymSTAR Air and Space Force Junior ROTC Scholarship

Dear A/TA-CymSTAR JROTC Air and Space Force Scholarship Committee,



I am deeply and sincerely honored to be selected as a recipient of the A/TA-CymSTAR JROTC Air and Space Force Scholarship this year. Words cannot express the full weight of what this award means to me.

From a young age, I have been captivated by flight, by space, and by the idea that human beings are capable of leaving the comfort of this planet and venturing into the unknown. JROTC gave that fascination a framework. It taught me that dreams without discipline are just wishes, and that the path to doing something truly meaningful requires sacrifice, structure, and an unwavering sense of purpose. The Air and Space Force missions have spoken directly to everything I believe about service and ambition.

I am grateful beyond measure. Not just for the financial relief this award provides, but for the message it sends. Knowing that there are people who believe in my dreams and recognize the work I've done means everything to me.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for everything this scholarship represents and everything that it makes possible.

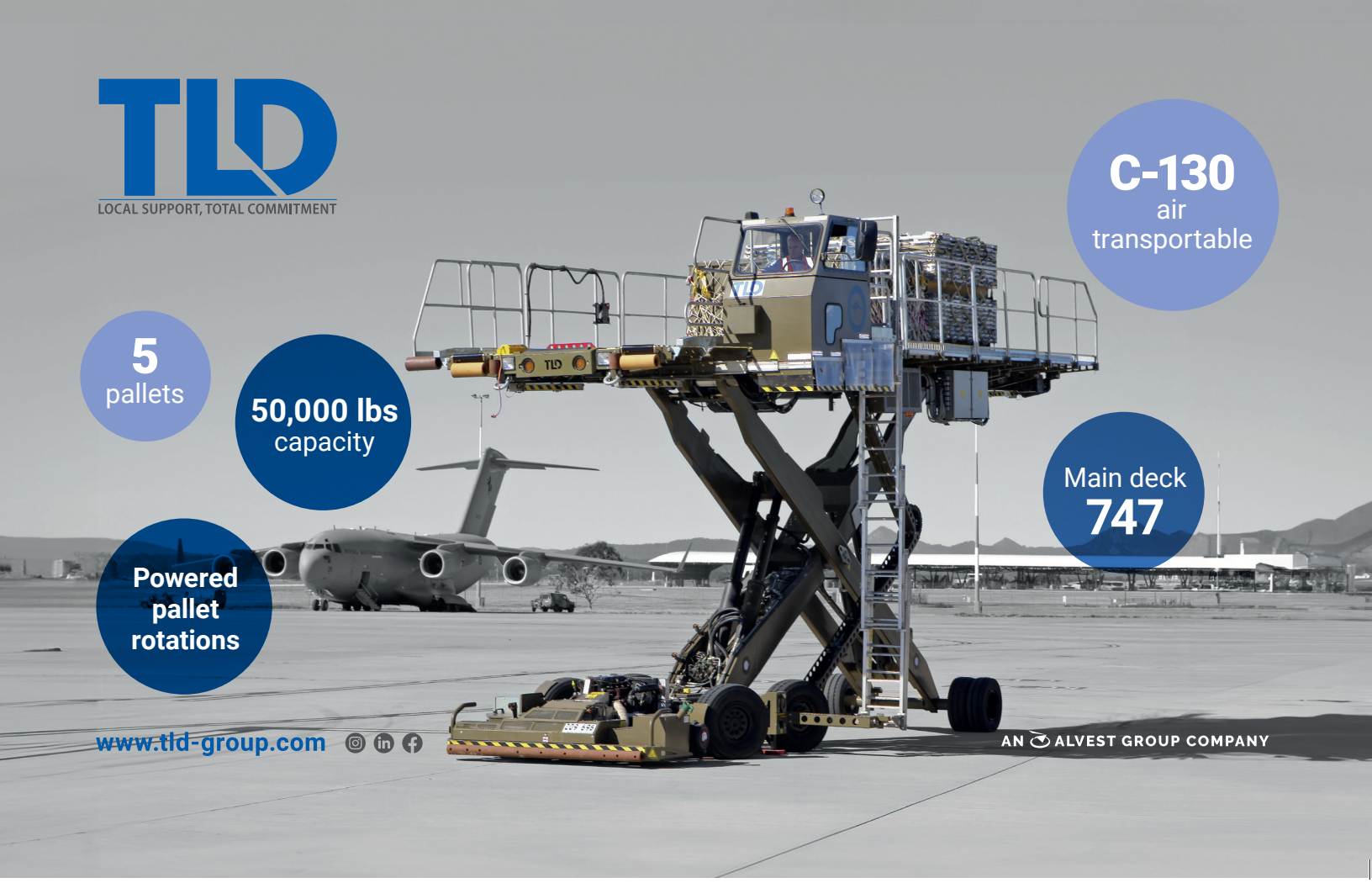
With the deepest respect,
Nicolas Chavez - Texas A&M University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Service: My Father and the Architecture of Military Leadership
by Nicolas Chavez

This essay reflects on my evolving understanding of leadership, obligation, and service through the example of my father's twenty-two-year career in the United States Air Force. Centered on his role as a flight engineer aboard the KC-10, the essay shows military leadership as a form of discipline developed through sustained commitment. The essay sheds light on the tension between individual desire and collective duties, suggesting that effective service often requires sacrificing personal convenience for mission demands.

Scholarship Recipients *continues on page 24 >>>*



The essay extends this balance between professional and military identity to my goals in aerospace engineering and the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. Rather than treating personal employment and service as distinct fields, I propose their joining as a defining feature of modern military careers, especially in my chosen focus on spaceflight operations. Ultimately, the piece shows my goals as both a continuation and reinterpretation of my father's example, emphasizing that leadership is constituted through repeated, often unseen acts of ability, discipline, and commitment.

Dear A/TA and CymSTAR,



Thank you so much for choosing me for the A/TA and CYMSTAR scholarship. This blessing truly means a lot to me and I am forever grateful for your help and support. As you may know I am going up to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and planning to complete AFROTC to earn a commission in the USAF. Thank you again for this amazing opportunity.

Very Respectfully,
Alexander Shaffer - Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

How has your experience in AFJROTC prepared you to lead, serve, and contribute to a mission-focused team, either in military or civilian service?

by Alexander Shaffer

The Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFJROTC) has prepared me to lead, serve, and contribute to mission-focused teams by teaching me that leadership is rooted in responsibility, discipline, communication, and service before self. Throughout high school, AFJROTC became the foundation that shaped my character and leadership. Through leadership positions, community service, competitive teams, and mentorship, I learned how to lead under pressure, work effectively with others, and contribute to goals larger than myself. These experiences prepared me not only for military service, but also for any environment where teamwork, accountability, and mission accomplishment are essential.

Recipient of the $5,000 A/TA - Lockheed Martin Undergraduate Scholarship

To the Airlift/Tanker Association and ProDIGIQ,



Thank you so much for this generous scholarship. I am writing to express my gratitude for being selected as a recipient of the Lockheed Martin Scholarship through the A/TA. I am truly thankful for your support as I begin my journey through college.

This fall, I will enter my first year at the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) as a member of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, majoring in Special Education with a minor in American Sign Language. I am excited to be on this path so I can become a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst and help neurodivergent children thrive. My goal is to spread awareness and promote inclusive environments in schools and communities.

I am interested in getting into community involvement and volunteer work, especially as a possible future sorority member. I have always wanted to be part of a sorority, and I hope to join one so I can build a community and meet new people. This scholarship will motivate me to continue to work hard and stay on track. I cannot wait to learn more about different forms of communication and learning styles so I can better support neurodivergent children in the classroom and beyond.

Thank you again to the A/TA and Lockheed Martin for investing in and supporting students like me. I am deeply appreciative and look forward to honoring your generosity through my studies and future work.

Sincerely,
Lauren Baker - Ole Miss

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

The Mental Harm of Social Media

By Lauren Baker

Technology has completely changed what it's like to be a student today. Classrooms are no longer just about paper and face-to-face interaction. Smartphones and social media are a constant part of everyday life. While technology makes it easier to access information, it also creates serious problems that affect students both in and out of school. One of the biggest issues is mental health. Social media exposes teens to unrealistic expectations, inappropriate content, and constant comparison. This can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Students also no longer get a real break from school or social pressure because they are expected to stay connected all the time. This constant stress makes it harder to focus and fully relax. Technology has also affected attention spans and relationships. Many students struggle to concentrate for long periods of time. Instead of building strong, in-person connections, they often rely on short, surface-level interactions online. Even things like applying to college feel more stressful because students are constantly checking updates and comparing themselves to others. Overall, while technology has clear benefits, its negative effects on mental health, focus, and relationships are becoming too serious to ignore. Finding a better balance between screen time and real life is important to prevent these problems from getting worse.

Recipient of the $5,000 A/TA - ProDIGIQ Military Transition Scholarship

To the Airlift/Tanker Association and ProDIGIQ,



I am so thankful, humbled, and honored to receive the 2026 ProDIGIQ military transition scholarship. After 25+ years in the Air Force, I really did not know what my transition to civilian life would look like. One year in, there are positives and negatives, but I have a better picture of what I want my future to look like. Finding ways to make a difference, mentor, and share my passion for aviation look significantly different as a First Officer at an airline, and I find myself wanting more. This scholarship will enable me to get back into general aviation to teach and mentor future aviators. As an instructor pilot in the T-37, some of my best memories are of helping students achieve their dreams and experience the joy of flight. I can't wait to make an indelible impact on new aviators, and I am incredibly grateful to ProDIGIQ and the Airlift Tanker Association for making this possible.

Very respectfully,
Alexander Fafinski

WINNING ESSAY ABSTRACT

Why My Military Experience Will Assist My Transition to a Career in the Civilian Sector

by Col. Alexander B. Fafinski, USAF (ret)

One of the most important things I learned in the military is that you always need to have a plan; however, even the best plan does not survive first contact with the enemy. Transitioning to civilian life has reinforced this idea, and my plan will need to continue adapting to achieve my mission of providing stability for my family and supporting my daughters in their college decisions. Airline life has not provided the same sense of mission accomplishment I had in the military, so I began to investigate ways to adjust my plan and objectives. This led me to adapt the plan to include getting my flight instructor certificate to teach young pilots, while continuing to fly at the airline. This enables me to give back and have the lasting impact I have been searching for, while supporting my family. In the end, it is not any specific skill that I learned in professional military education or from a mentor that is assisting my transition to the civilian sector. It is the flexibility and resilience to continually adapt my plan that will enable me to achieve mission success. ■

HALL OF FAME

"The men and women of the United States Air Force and our mobility forces, are trained and ready to deploy anywhere in the world in defense of our country. It is their unselfish sacrifice, untiring efforts and outstanding achievements that have contributed immensely to the establishment and to the maintenance of peace in the free world. Not only are their efforts and achievements attained during times of conflict, but they also occur during acts of natural disaster and humanitarian relief efforts. The balance of power and our freedom has been and will continue to be achieved and built on the "Wings of Freedom." The Airlift/Tanker Association wishes to recognize and honor those men and women who have distinguished themselves by outstanding performance above and beyond their duties as members of the United States Air Force. It is for this purpose that the "Airlift/Tanker Hall of Fame" has been established."

A/TA 2026

INDUCTEES:

Lt. Gen. William H. Tunner
Donald W. Douglas
Gen. Laurence S. Kuter
Lt. Gen. Harold L. George
Maj. Gen. Cyrus Rowlett "C.R." Smith
Lt. Gen. Ira E. Eaker
Gen. Robert E. "Dutch" Huyser
Lt. Gen. Joseph Smith
Nancy Harkness Love
Gen. William G. Moore, Jr.
Col. Joe M. Jackson
Sgt. John L. Levitow
Col. Gail S. Halvorsen
Maj. Gen. Winston P. "Wimpy" Wilson
Master Sgt. Roy W. Hooe
Gen. Carl A. "Tooey" Spaatz
John F. Shea
Maj. Gen. James I. "Bagger" Baginski
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Aeromedical Evacuation Legacy Team
Maj. Gen. Robert B. Patterson
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Pioneers of Aerial Refueling
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The Air Transportation Career Field
Col. Lawrence "Rocky" Lane
Maj. Gen. Donald D. Brown
Civil Reserve Air Fleet and Commercial Air Carriers
Gen. Paul K. Carlton
Col. John T. "Coach" Carney



Col. John "Coach" Carney

Article compiled from A/TA contributors

Col. John T. "Coach" Carney is a living legend in the Joint Special Operations world. His special tactics and operations peers refer to him as the "Father of Air Force Special Tactics." Ask anyone in Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) or the 720 Special Tactics Group (STG) "Who's the Coach?" They all know and will share personal stories of how Coach Carney's vision is/was responsible for the capabilities, equipment, tactics, techniques, and procedures that serve them today. Coach Carney's roots started in the Military Airlift Command (MAC) in 1974 and span nearly two decades (1974 – 1991) complicated by many Air Force organizational and command changes. During his time in Airlift/Mobility, MAC leaders recognized Coach Carney's special skills to build teams, motivate airmen, inspire excellence, define requirements, advocate for resources, and produce excellent results. He had mentors and role models, starting with his father, his high school and college football coaches, his ROTC and early career NCOs. His contributions and achievements are embodied in today's special operators and special tactics warriors, Mobility leaders/mentors who recognized Coach Carney's potential and promoted him to become the top special tactics leader and subject matter expert in the Air Force & Joint Special Operations were names you will recognize: Huyser, Ryan, Cassidy, Sadler, Patterson, Baginski—All who occupy a place of honor in Air Mobility Heritage (HOF) Park.



During WW II, the U.S. Army called combat controllers "pathfinders." Their mission was to provide reconnaissance and intelligence in advance of military movements to include coordinating support for close air support and resupply. In Korea and Vietnam, combat controller and pathfinder were a shared duty with both U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force personnel performing the same mission. After Vietnam, CCT became a mission debate between the Army and Air Force, both needed it, but neither were excited to resource it. Combat Control did not have an advocate or the resources to do more than local training and occasional exercise. Within the U.S. Air Force, TAC and MAC used combat controllers differently and minimally resourced the capability. Combat Control was staffed by highly skilled NCOs, most of Vietnam era. To be a CCT officer was not a career path most would choose or one with promotion potential. In 1975, Coach John Carney would change the CCT landscape. As a coach, he saw an opportunity to build a winning team and was ready to make a difference. Coach Carney, used his extraordinary leadership and team building skills to recruit, train and retain young officers and skilled NCOs and Airmen. Coach Carney became their CCT Champion.

The first ten years (1964 – 1974) of Coach Carney's Air Force career could be characterized as unremarkable. He served four years as a Services MWR officer in California, Vietnam, Thailand and then moved to the USAF Academy where he worked in the Athletic Department and coached football. In 1974, after being passed over to Major twice, his personnel officer (Maj. Ron Fogleman) suggested he think about another career, as the Air Force did not have a great need for 27-year-old football coaches who were passed over twice.

Fortunately, USAF Academy football Coach Ben Martin arranged a meeting for Coach Carney to meet with new Academy Superintendent Lt. Gen. Jim Allen who asked Carney what he wanted to do as his final assignment? Coach Carney told Lt. Gen. Allen he would like to become a Combat Controller. Lt. Gen. Allen did not know much about combat control, but made a phone call to MAC Commander, General PK Carlton, who accepted Carney as he had an opening for a CCT OIC at Dyess AFB, Texas. Coach Carney arrived at 463rd Wing at Dyess AFB, five months later the 463rd Wing received an "Unsatisfactory" on their Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) with the lone laudatory going to the 463rd CCT which received an "Outstanding." Carney was a rookie in the CCT world which required him to work with his veteran NCOs to develop a winning team with high morale and tough work ethic -- it worked. This would prove to be the turning point in Coach Carney's career.

Leadership and Job Performance

Col. John Carney has selflessly given 27 years of his life to Air Mobility and our Air Force. Since 1975, he has been the "tip of the spear" leading Combat Control Teams (CCT) and Airmen into harm's way. The CCT motto is "First There" reflecting every Combat Controller's commitment to undertaking the most dangerous missions behind enemy lines leading the way for other forces to follow.:" Coach Carney inspired this mindset. Examples that support Coach Carney's character, integrity, dedication, and achievements follow:

Built a winning CCT team at 463 TAW, Dyess AFB, earning an "Outstanding" rating in Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) in 1975.

1977 Handpicked by the Air Force Chief of Staff, General David C. Jones to standup an Air Force classified special operations counterterrorism capability to address the emerging threat of global terrorism. The task/challenge to organize a specialized CCT (Brand X) to support service component special ops capabilities.

Relocated CCT (Brand X) to Charleston AFB to be closer to U.S. Army and successfully deployed covert capability to Iran in 1980 Operation EAGLE CLAW to rescue 53 American hostages; although the mission failed the capability to support joint special operations units was a success. And would later be employed successfully in 1983 (Grenada) and in 1989 (Panama) and in 1990-91 (Kuwait) and in 2001-2021 (Afghanistan/Iraq/SW Asia)

Coach Carney had to work with many U.S. Army and other government agency senior officers/leaders as he stood up and certified MAC CCT (Brand X) to support CSAF directed classified assignment. As we all know the U.S. Army is very "rank" conscious. Lt. Col. Coach Carney had to work with Army Colonel Charlie Beckwith, Commander U.S. Army Special Forces-Delta to support their readiness training. During training in 1978-1980 Lt. Col. Carney needed help from his boss, AMC/ADO Brig. Gen. Duane Cassidy, to meet and explain to COL Beckwith that if the Army was going to airdrop its soldiers and equipment, they needed to include CCT in planning and execution. Brig. Gen. Cassidy explained that unless COL Beckwith included CCT in the mission planning the U.S. Army would need to find other means than C-130 airlift to get complete training

COL Beckwith relented and included CCT in planning/mission success. Brand X earned the respect of COL Beckwith, establishing a mutual respect for CCT capabilities and support for joint operations missions.

Throughout his career, Col. Carney was the CCT and Special Tactics champion and advocate at MAC, AFSOC and USSOCOM defining mission and equipment requirements obtaining priority and funding. His foresight and knowledge of the joint special operational capabilities ensured Air Force and Special Tactics had the communication, weapons, essential equipment to interoperate with joint counterparts.

Col. Carney developed equipment supply lists to outfit every combat controller with joint comm gear, emergency medical supplies, weapons, uniforms and tactical gear, etc. to operate in austere and hostile environments. His foundational work and including expert airmen who knew the mission resulted in a capability "second to none."

SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF AIR MOBILITY

Col. John Carney has significantly contributed to the advancement of Air Mobility, 1975-1991. More significant is that his contributions helped substantiate and support the decision to activate Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) in May 1990. Even with this organizational evolution and change, Coach Carney's contributions produced clear doctrine and specified capabilities that made the transition/handoff of Special Tactics seamless. USSOCOM experienced zero operational or mission impacts thanks to his expert forward planning. Examples of Col. Carney's individual contributions and the impacts and quality of his actions are included below.

***Hall of Fame** continued on page 30*

Hall of Fame *continued from page 29*

Coach Carney was the doctrinal and operational thought leader…this is why he is called the "Father of Air Force Special Tactics."

While on MAC Staff he defined and enabled CCT organization and force structure to maintain joint special and service operation mission readiness.

During the transition of CCT and Special Tactics to AFSOC, Col. Carney standardized the training and requirements for the 1720 STG—combat ready on Day One.

Col. Carney helped establish lines-of communication between/among service and interagency antiterrorist units. Including standardized communication, unit tracking processes enhancing JCS/COCOM visibility of these critical high demand-low density forces.

Coach Carney was a master team builder and preached the importance of readiness and philosophy "No Room For Error" reference the title of his book.

Coach Carney's "superior and sustained" performance and contributions have been recognized ten-fold by the many successes achieved by Air Force Special Tactics during his time in MAC, but still evident 30 years later in special tactics involvement and successes in OEF (Afghanistan), OIF (Iraq) Provide Promise and Allies Refuge (withdraw from Afghanistan) …to mention a few.

Coach Carney was first advance boots on the ground in 1980 establishing a landing strip in Iran to rescue 53 American hostages.

1983, Col. Carney led the joint special operations recon team into Grenada in advance of the initial assault during Operation URGENT FURY--rescue U.S. students on island.

Established communication and built trust/confidence with USG, DoD, other Service special operations planners, operators, senior decision makers establishing MAC CCT as mission essential to execution and success.

Secured funding for state-of-the-art equipment and capabilities needed to work effectively with U.S. Army and U.S. Navy special operations forces.

1720 STG (Coach's Team) is the most requested unit by Army and Navy Spec Ops units for training, exercises, and real-world events.

Col. Carney is a student of history, closely monitored technological and equipment advances used by other services special operations forces. He advocated and procured state-of-the-art light-weight transportable equipment (e.g. infrared beacons) to use in covert operations. These beacons were used to identify landing ones and saved lives during the 1993 battle of Mogadishu aka "Blackhawk Down" incident.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO THE AIR MOBILITY MISSION, CULTURE AND HISTORY

The most significant "Change" to Air Mobility Mission, Culture and History that can be attributed to Col. John Carney is the recognition that Air Force Special Ops and Special Tactics IS SPECIAL! And that Air Mobility (MAC & AMC) should be proud that it promoted, advocated, and resourced Special Tactics and CCT at a time post-Vietnam when it could have become the orphaned child. The change culminated with the "earned right' to become a separate MAJCOM (AFSOC) in 1990 and Component to USSOCOM. In no way does this take away from the role and contributions Coach Carney played building up Special Tactics and demonstrating it value to the JTF and Combatant Commanders. Today, DoD, JCS and the Services recognize Special Operations and Special Tactics are a proven/tested "force multiplier" in modern warfare. Here are some examples of how Coach Carney's life and work changes the status quo.

Organized, trained, deployed, and led special tactics teams for Grenada (URGENT FURY), Panama (JUST CAUSE), Kuwait (DESERT SHIELD/STORM), N. Iraq/Kurdish people (PROVIDE COMFORT) … Proved Air Force Special Tactics joint force capabilities.

1977 CSAF, Gen. David C. Jones handpicked point man to form USAF counter terrorism special ops CCT. Coach Carney delivered and it's worked for 40 years.

Another opportunity where Lt. Col. Carney's Brand X saved the U.S. Army's bacon was in a mission validation/certification EDRE (Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise) led by U.S. Army COL Wayne Downing (future 4-star) in Alaska. When one of the U.S. Army elements lost radio contact with the main element and were lost, jeopardizing the readiness certification…The CCT members imbedded with each element and the main body (and who's radios worked!) were able to provide maneuver information and create conditions for successful mission certification. The result, Gen. Downey became an outspoken advocate for USAF/MAC CCT (Brand X) and never forgot CCT involvement especially when he became CINC USSOCOM (1993 – 1996).

The changes Col. Carney implemented since joining Mobility/MAC in 1975…created deep doctrinal roots that serve the Air Force, AFSOC, AMC, our service joint partners and established a highly respected, battle tested, special operations/tactics capability with a culture all its own and a heritage and history that has proven a force multiplier in crisis, contingencies and regional conflicts.

In addition, special operations units and agencies are in awe of how capable and effect USAF Special Operations has become.

Finally, Col. John T. "Coach" Carney will always be known as the "Father of Air Force Special Tactics" …now that's a Legacy!

OTHER NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND/ OR EXTRAORDINARY IMPACTS

As President and CEO (1999 – 2013) of the Special Operations Warrior Foundation (SOWF) Coach Carney increased the foundation's resources from $800K to over $17M ensuring support for the children of all services fallen special operations warriors, fully funding college education. In 2013, the number of children supported was approaching 2,000.

Coach Carney continues to engage audiences, military, business, and civilians speaking about Special Operations and Special Tactics. He has addresses DoD and Joint Senior and Intermediate Development Courses (SDE & IDE), he has addresses the A/TA Tony Jannus chapter at MacDill on a number of occasions.

He has mentored and trained generations of special operators and special tactics officers and NCOs. Several of his teammates have been recognized as USAF Outstanding Airmen of the Year and many Combat Controllers have received the highest military decorations including the Medal of Honor and Silver Star for heroism and valor.

This past year A/TA recognized two of AFSOC's Special Tactics officers…A/TA Young Leader Captain Nathan Hamilton (720 STG Hurlburt) and Capt. Kyle Hall (Baginski AMLO Ft Bragg, North Carolina) … showing that Coach Carney legacy lives on!

Col. John "Coach" Carney is an American Warrior, Leader and role model. He is proof that one airman can make a difference if given an opportunity. He is one of our Air Force's, Air Mobility and Air Force Special Operations most distinguished mobility airmen. Coach Carney is without question THE "Father of Air Force Special Tactics." He is a Leader his troops would die for … and his roots are in Air Mobility. ■




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2026 Airlift/Tanker Association AWARDS

The actions of the men, women and/or organizations inducted into the Airlift/Tanker Hall of Fame and those awarded the coveted annual Airlift/Tanker Association Young Leadership Awards, Huyser Aircrew Awards, Halvorsen Award, P.K. Carlton Award for Valor, Specialized Mission Award, Fogleman ASAM Award, Mobility Liaison Officer (AMLO) Award, AFRC Outstanding Unit Award, ANG Outstanding Unit Award, and Commander's Key Support Liaison of the Year Award all have exemplary records of performance detailing numerous instances of their outstanding proficiency and excellence – far too extensive to fully cover in the pages of A/TQ.

The examples used in each of the following short biographical descriptions serve only to highlight their extraordinary service to the Air Mobility Community, the United States Air Force and Our Nation –

YOUNG LEADERSHIP AWARDS

The Airlift/Tanker Association Young Leadership Award is presented annually to twelve individuals who have displayed performance excellence, outstanding professional skill, knowledge and leadership in fulfillment of their duties.

Capt. Hunter Bergman



Capt. Hunter Bergman is an Instructor C-17A Pilot and Aircraft Commander with over 2,000 flight hours, including over 140 combat hours in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is currently assigned to the 535th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii and serves as the Training Flight Commander where he oversees training accomplishments and timelines for 120 personnel in the USAF's busiest C-17A airlift squadron.

Through his instruction as a Lead Airdrop Pilot in a 235-million dollar mobility aircraft, Capt. Bergman also supports numerous allied and multiservice agencies with planning exercises and deploys when directed by the President of the United States.

He is originally from Johnstown, Pennsylvania and earned his commission through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Command at the University of Pittsburgh. He then attended Undergraduate Pilot Training at Vance Air Force Base where he earned Distinguished Graduate for class 20-15.

Following pilot training, he served as a C-17A Aircraft Commander at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington where he supported Operations IRAQI FREEDOM, INHERENT RESOLVE, and ALLIES REFUGE.

Capt. Bergman was then assigned to Joint Base Pearl-Harbor Hickam, Hawaii in 2023 and completed position upgrade to a Formation Lead. Most recently, he was the Mobility Air Forces Lead Planner for Exercise - Joint Pacific Muli-National Readiness Center 26-01, where he organized and designed 175 sorties, 473 flight hours, and two Joint Forcible Entry Operations involving over 700 paratroopers to complete the 15th Wings Combat Readiness Inspection.

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way and shows the way."

- John C. Maxwell

Capt. Erik G. Bowman



Capt. Erik G. Bowman is a Combat Systems Officer assigned to the 418th Test and Evaluation Squadron, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona. After graduating from high school in 2010, he provided essential services at a local clinic for low-income women and children.

His distinguished military career began with his enlistment in the United States Air Force on December 18, 2012. He served as an F-22 Crew Chief at Tyndall Air Force Base and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson before commissioning in 2018. Upon completion of Combat Systems Officer training, he joined the 79th Rescue Squadron, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base.

Capt. Bowman's service includes two significant overseas deployments: to Djibouti, Africa, in 2022 and to the Middle East in 2024. He earned a master's degree in Homeland Security and Emergency Management from Arizona State University in 2021. His exemplary service has been recognized with numerous accolades, including a Meritorious Service Medal, three Air Medals, a Humanitarian Service Medal, and two Air and Space Achievement Medals.

Master Sgt. Michael Campbell



Master Sgt. Michael Campbell is a C-17 Evaluator Airdrop Loadmaster assigned to the 618th Air Operations Center, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, as a Duty Officer in the Global Operations Division. Master Sgt. Campbell enlisted in the Air Force after graduating with a Bachelor of Science from the University of North Florida in 2013.

He graduated from Basic Military Training in August 2013, followed by Loadmaster Initial Qualification school in August 2014. He then graduated Instructor Loadmaster school in 2018 and the NCO Academy in 2022.

He has held a variety of positions within Loadmaster Training and Standards and Evaluations. Additionally, he served as a Flying Training Unit Instructor in the 58th Airlift Squadron.

Prior to his position as a Duty Officer in the Global Operations Division, he was a C-17A Evaluator Airdrop Loadmaster and the Training Superintendent in both the 535th Airlift Squadron and 15th Operations Support Squadron where he ensured the safety and execution of C-17 Airdrop Operations within U.S. Pacific Command area of responsibility and enhanced the readiness for over 50 enlisted aviators.

"Leadership to me means duty, honor, country. It means character and it means listening from time to time."

- George W. Bush

Staff Sgt. Enrique C. Guzman



Staff Sgt. Enrique C. Guzman is an Air Traffic Control Watch Supervisor assigned to the 22d Operations Support Squadron, McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas. Staff Sgt. Guzman enlisted in the Air Force from Houston, Texas and graduated technical training school with distinguished graduate in December of 2021.

His first assignment and upgrade training base was McConnell AFB, Kansas, where he trained and certified as an Air Traffic Control Specialist in July of 2022. He was initially assigned as Air Traffic Controller and moved into the Tower Watch Supervisor position in April 2025.

In August 2025, Staff Sgt. Guzman deployed to the 349th Air Expeditionary Wing as a Senior Watch Supervisor in Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station, Ceiba, Puerto Rico, where he led seven USAF and USMC air traffic controllers for joint air traffic services entailing thirty-two multirole aircraft, solidifying the opening of a multilateral theater across the U.S. SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility. He and his team directed 18,000 sorties between ten assigned mission generation force elements (MGFE) and civilian transportation aircraft, safeguarding the arrival of Joint Service aeromedical evacuations, distinguished visitors, and civilian medical evacuations.

Staff Sgt. Guzman developed an air traffic controller training program which included a training standard operating procedure, three syllabi with 120 core objectives. This effort facilitated the first-ever Federal Aviation Administration credentialling for USAF controllers on a former U.S. Navy airfield after being formally closed for 22 years.

In his current role, Staff Sgt. Guzman manages 26 personnel across the Air Traffic Control Tower, responsible for safe and expeditious air traffic operations for 20,000 flights annually, supporting operations for six KC-46 and KC-135 squadrons.

Young Leadership Awards *continues >>>*

Staff Sgt. Lauren M. Hotaling



Staff Sgt. Lauren M. Hotaling is Evaluator KC-46 Boom Operator assigned to the 32d Air Refueling Squadron, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, where she is also serving as a Training Instructor.

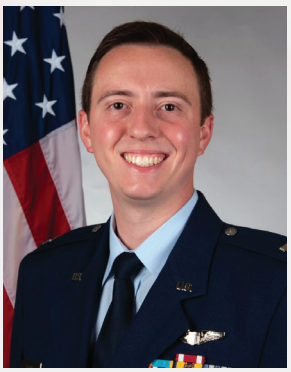
Staff Sgt. Hotaling entered the Air Force and arrived at Lackland Air Force Base in October 2020 where she attended the Enlisted Aircrew Undergraduate Course and the Basic Boom Operator Course. She then completed KC-10 Basic Boom Qualification in December 2021 and served as a Boom Operator on the KC-10 aircraft, deploying to Al Dhafra Air Base and earning an Air Medal.

Staff Sgt. Hotaling went on to complete the KC-46 Basic Boom Qualification Course in March 2023, followed by the KC-46 Instructor Upgrade Course in October 2024. In 2025 she deployed to Al Udeid Air Base where she executed a high-profile jet rescue for which she earned recognition from the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force.

Prior to her current position, Staff Sgt. Hotaling worked in Standardization and Evaluations, 32d Air Refueling Squadron, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. As a Department of Training Instructor and Evaluator Boom Operator, she assists in leading a 12-member team that oversees 98 Aircrew with 20,000 annual training requirements and schedules training across a 4,000-hour flying program and a fleet of 24 KC-46 aircraft valued at $7 billion.

She was recently selected as the 2025 305th Air Mobility Wing Airman of the Year. Staff Sgt. Hotaling is also recognized this year as the Specialized Mission Award Winner.

Capt. Thomas C. Jacobs



Capt. Thomas C. Jacobs is an Instructor C-5M Pilot and Aircraft Commander assigned to Headquarters 18th Air Force, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He is designated as a Phoenix TORCH Officer and serves as Chief of Operations.

Capt. Jacobs earned his commission as a Distinguished Graduate of Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps at Rochester Institute of Technology in 2017. Upon entering active duty, he was selected to participate in the Pilot Training Next experiment, a course of flight training which served as the catalyst for the largest transformation to military flight training in six decades.

Capt. Jacobs was later selected as a T-6A First Assignment Instructor Pilot at Vance Air Force Base where he trained, evaluated, and certified aspiring military aviators from the United Stated and allied nations. Later, he served as an Instructor C-5M pilot and aircraft commander at Dover Air Force Base, where he commanded numerous sorties in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE.

In 2023, he executed the longest C-5M mission in history, flying over 35 hours and traversing 9,300 miles in support of Exercise MOBILITY GUARDIAN 2023. As a Phoenix TORCH Officer he previously served as the 618th Air Operations Center's Deputy Chief of Strategic Plans, where he led operational-level planning for the Air Force's largest Air Operations Center and synchronized planning with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Combatant Commands and units throughout the Mobility Air Force.

In his current role as Chief of Operations, Capt. Jacobs serves as the Eighteenth Air Force Commander's principal advisor and Action Officer on all operations and rated matters for eight wings and over 20,000 Airmen operating 272 aircraft worldwide.

His military awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Aerial Achievement Medal, as well as Air and Space Commendation and Achievement medals with multiple oak leaf clusters.

"A genuine leader is not a searcher for consensus but a molder of consensus."

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

- John Quincy Adams

Tech. Sgt. Kalif D. Richardson



Tech. Sgt. Kalif D. Richardson is an Evaluator KC-135R/T Boom Operator assigned to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, and currently serving as the Readiness Flight Chief. Tech. Sgt. Richardson was born and grew up in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, and graduated from Charlotte Amalie High School in 2015.

He completed Basic Military Training and Technical School in 2016 as an In-Flight Refueling Specialist on the KC-135R/T and was assigned to the 350th Air Refueling Squadron at McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas. During this assignment, he deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and INHERENT RESOLVE flying numerous combat sorties.

He quickly advanced to becoming Inflight Refueling Instructor until his move and assignment to the 909th Air Refueling Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan in May of 2021. Upon arriving at Kadena Air Base, Tech. Sgt. Richardson took over as Non-Commissioned Officer-in-Charge of the 909th's Awards & Decorations shop handling records and decorations for 140 personnel in the sole active-duty KC-135 squadron in the Pacific region. He quickly upgraded to an Evaluator Boom Operator and was selected to fill in as an interim Command Chief Executive assistant for a month.

He was later by name requested to serve as the 18th Operations Group Chief Executive Assistant, where he served in the Air Forces' largest combat Operations Group, encompassing over 900 Airmen, 13 Fighter, Command and Control, Rescue, Air Mobility, Aeromedical Evacuation and Intelligence-Surveillance-Reconnaissance squadrons, operating 81 aircraft valued over $4 billion in support of Commander, U.S. Pacific Command objectives.

Tech. Sgt. Richardson has filled additional roles as an Interim Operations Superintendent and Additional Duty First Sergeant. He is continuing his education, working toward a master's degree in Business Administration and Human Resources at Columbia Southern University.

Tech. Sgt. Cody R. Seiber



Tech. Sgt. Cody R. Seiber is a Security Forces Counter-Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program manager assigned to Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. He is 32 years old. He attended Chenango Forks High School, graduating in May 2011.

After graduating from high school, Tech. Sgt. Seiber went on to attend college at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, where he received a scholarship to play soccer. While attending college with a full class schedule, he worked nights at the college and in the local police department as a dispatcher.

Tech. Sgt. Seiber knew he wanted to serve in the military, so he graduated a full year early to subsequently enlisted in the Air Force in 2014 and arrived at Lackland AFB, Texas, in December 2014 for basic training.

Upon graduation, he received a direct-duty assignment to the 509th Security Forces Squadron, Whiteman AFB, Missouri, arriving in July 2015. Prior to arriving at Scott AFB, Tech. Sgt. Seiber has held multiple Security Forces positions and certifications including Patrolman, Base Defense Operations Controller, Flight Sergeant, and Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of Plans and Programs.

He is the Security Forces Counter-Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Program Manager at the Major Command level. His military awards include the Humanitarian Service Medal for actions during Operation Allies Refuge, Air Mobility Command's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, and Security Forces Higher Headquarters Noncommissioned Officer of the Year. Recently, in June, he completed his master's degree in Homeland Security Counterterrorism through American Public University System.

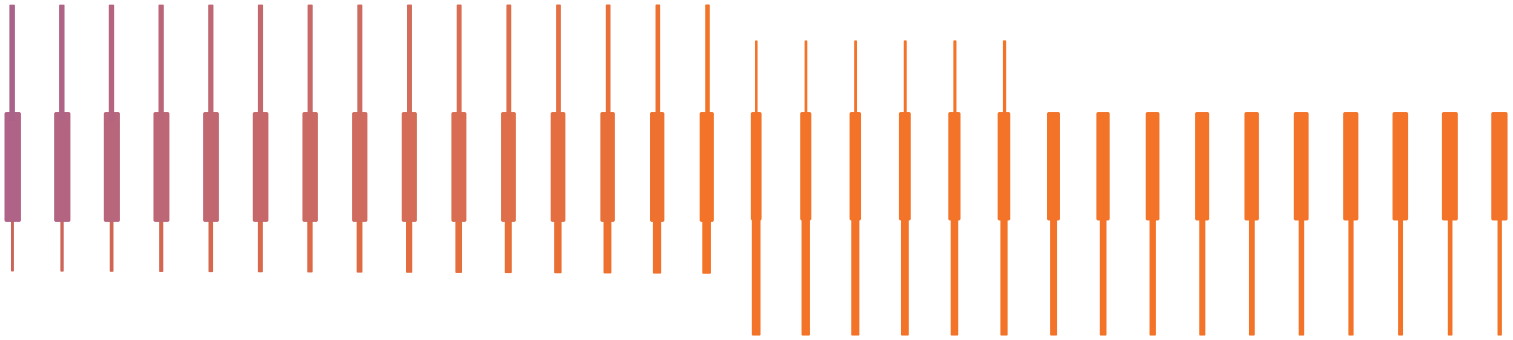
Young Leadership Awards *continued on page 40*



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"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

-John F. Kennedy

Capt. Ryan R. Robb



Capt. Ryan R. Robb is an Instructor C-5M Pilot assigned to the 618th Air Operations Center, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. As the Chief of Strategic Airlift Allocations, he leads a team of experts overseeing the daily allocation and mission management of AMC's C-17 fleet. Capt. Robb graduated and commissioned from the United States Air Force Academy in 2018 earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Aeronautical Engineering.

He graduated from Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training in December 2019, transitioning to C-5M training at Lackland Air Force Base for Pilot Initial Qualification where he was awarded Distinguished Graduate.

At Travis Air Force Base, Capt. Robb flew over 1,300 hours, upgrading to instructor pilot to teach over 60 pilots to ensure a sustained pool of combat-ready aviators. He attended Squadron Officer School at Maxwell Air Force Base, where he was awarded Distinguished Graduate and recently completed a Master of Science Degree in Aeronautics - Aviation Leadership from Liberty University.

"It is essential to employ, trust and reward those whose perspective, ability and judgement are radically different from yours. It is also rare, for it requires uncommon humility, tolerance and wisdom"

- Dee Ward Hock

Capt. Kayla L. Ross



Capt. Kayla L. Ross is a Logistics Readiness Officer assigned to 921st Contingency Response Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, California as the Logistics Flight Commander. After graduating from Orange Park High School in the top 10% of her class in May 2007, she accepted a full-ride scholarship to play volleyball at Bevill State Community College where she earned her Associate of Science. In 2012, she enlisted in the USAF as a Security Forces Apprentice. Stationed with the 822nd Base Defense Squadron at Moody Air Force Base, she proved her resilience and dedication during three deployments while diligently continuing her education.

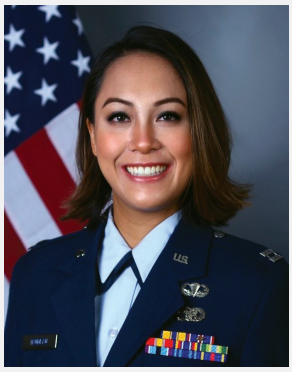
Her leadership potential and academic drive culminated in her selection for the AFROTC program at Valdosta State University, graduating as a Distinguished Graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership in May 2019. Upon commissioning, Capt. Ross embarked on her career as a Logistics Readiness Officer.

Her second assignment took her to the 36th Logistics Readiness Squadron at Andersen Air Force Base, where her performance led to her being handpicked as the Executive Officer for the 36th Mission Support Group.

She then transitioned to the 735th Air Mobility Squadron at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, where she held a series of critical leadership roles, including Air Terminal Operations Officer in Charge, Air Freight Officer in Charge, and Maintenance Operations Officer. Her time at Hickam was also marked by a deployment with the J4 for the Security Assistance Group – Ukraine.

In her current role at Travis Air Force Base, Capt. Ross leads the 921st Contingency Response Squadron's most diverse flight, a 56-person team comprising nine different Air Force specialties. She recently deployed in support of Operation SOUTHERN SPEAR. Her military awards include the Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal with 5 oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Achievement Medal, Combat Action Medal, Meritorious Unit Award with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Air and Space Outstanding Unit Award with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters.

Capt. Andrea E. H. Trudeau



Capt. Andrea E. H. Trudeau is a Logistics Readiness assigned to the 86th Logistics Readiness Squadron as the Flight Commander, Deployment and Distribution, Ramstein Air Base, Germany. She is designated as a Phoenix Horizon-Mobility Officer and qualified as an Air Advisor Mission Commander. Capt. Trudeau earned her commission as a graduate with military distinction from the United States Air Force Academy in 2020. She was the Top Graduate and Distinguished Graduate at the Logistics Readiness Officer Course at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas in 2020.

She leads 171 Airmen across four Air Force Specialty Codes, supporting the headquarters for U.S. Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa, Third Air Force, three tenant wings, more than 120 mission partners, and the Department of War's largest overseas population of roughly 56,000 U.S. citizens. Additionally, she directs transportation and customs clearances, command's sole Aerial Delivery Operations capability the only Consolidated Personal Property Shipping Office, the Air Force's largest Joint Mobility Processing Center, and the installation's deployment readiness functions during campaigning and contingency operations at the Department of War's premier power projection platform.

Prior to her current position, Capt. Trudeau was the Logistics and Readiness Flight Commander, 621st Contingency Response Support Squadron, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. As an Air Advisor and Mission Commander, Capt. Trudeau has led teams in Mauritania, Tanzania, the Philippines, Rwanda, Senegal, Kenya, Italy, and Germany. She is also a certified Department of War Peace & Security Advisor and an Air Force combative instructor, as well as a Language Enabled Airman Program Scholar in both French and Spanish.

To further challenge her skills and language development, she earned her Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française awarded by the French Ministry of Education, certifying her French language abilities as an independent user based on internationally accepted standards.

In 2022, Capt. Trudeau earned a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University where her focus explored military operational environments, risk management, policy, & communication, and logistics applications.

In 2025 and as a graduate with distinction, she earned a doctorate in strategic leadership where her research focus was in strategic messaging and communication of shared stakeholder value and investment in peace and security initiatives with global impacts.

Tech. Sgt. Michelle E. Waite



Tech. Sgt. Michelle E. Waite is a Heavy Aircraft Integrated Avionics Craftsman assigned to the 86th Maintenance Group, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, serving as the Lead Quality Assurance Inspector. After graduating from George West High School and attending one year of community college, she enlisted in the United States Air Force on 4 August 2015. Upon graduation, she continued to Sheppard Air Force Base, Wichita Falls, Texas where she completed her technical training and was presented with the Academic Achievement and Distinguished Graduate awards.

Her first assignment was at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona in April 2016 where she served in a variety of volunteer positions, including President and Secretary of the unit's Booster Club, and as an active member for Hair Cuts for the Homeless. Tech. Sgt. Waite deployed three times to Kuwait, Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates and served two temporary duty assignments while continuing her bachelor's degree in Aeronautical Engineering and completing her Community College of the Air Force degree.

She then received orders to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan where she continued to volunteer for roles as President of the Booster Club for two consecutive years while serving as the Additional Duty First Sergeant. While stationed at Kadena Air Base, she dove into her duties of Dedicated Crew Chief and Flying Crew Chief, flying nine headquarters-tasked missions for Pacific Air Forces. Her outstanding performance continued as she graduated Airman Leadership School and the Non-Commissioned Officer Academy with the Distinguished Graduate and the Academic Achievement awards.

Tech. Sgt. Waite has also completed the United States Marine Corps Sergeant's Course where she was awarded the Director's Writing Award. After being reassigned to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, she was handselected and interviewed for the position of Quality Assurance Inspector as the Subject Matter Expert in her career field. Her exceptional work ethic earned her the position of Lead Inspector and Weight and Balance Manager.

Tech. Sgt. Waite was the Commander's top choice to fill the First Sergeant position for the Maintenance Group during a 164-day shortfall. She was recognized as the Group Volunteer of the 4th Quarter award for 2024, Group Non Commissioned Officer of the First Quarter of 2025, Group Team of the Year 2024, Group Non Commissioned Officer of the Year 2025, US Air Forces Europe Team Chief of Safety Aviation Maintenance 2025, and her squadron's Lance P. Sijan nominee in 2025.

She remains involved in her unit and community having served as President of the Maintenance Group Booster Club, Secretary for the Maintenance of the Year Award Ceremony Committee, and as Lead Chairman of the Senior Master Sergeant Release Social.

Her military awards include the Air and Space Commendation Medal, Air and Space Achievement Medal, Air Force Good Conduct Medal with 2 bronze oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. ■

HUYSER AWARDS

The Airlift/Tanker Association Gen. Robert E. "Dutch" Huyser Awards are presented annually to a Wing/Group level or below Pilot, Loadmaster, Flight Attendant, Communications System Operator, Flight Engineer, Boom Operator, Aeromedical Evacuation Technician, Navigator/Combat Systems Operator, and Flight Nurse for sustained excellence in airmanship.

PILOT
Maj. Ryan J. Lofgren



Maj. Ryan J. Lofgren is a KC-46A Evaluator Pilot assigned to the 32d Air Refueling Squadron, 305th Operations Group, 305th Air Mobility Wing, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. He attended the University of Arizona and earned a Bachelor of Science in Information Science and Technology. He was commissioned through Officer Training School in Montgomery, Alabama in February 2014. Maj Lofgren then attended Undergraduate Combat Systems Officer Training at Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. In 2018, Major Lofgren attended Undergraduate Pilot Training at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi, where he graduated in September of 2019.

He has deployed numerous times in support of Operations INHERENT RESOLVE, RESOLUTE SUPPORT, SPARTAN SHIELD, ROUGH RIDER, MIDNIGHT HAMMER, and ABSOLUTE RESOLVE. Prior to his current position, Major Lofgren was the Director of Wing Mission Planning as well as Deputy Chief, Wing Tactics in the 305th Operations Support Squadron. He manages a four thousand hour flying hour program and fleet of 12 KC-46 aircraft valued at $3.5 Billion while directing a 55-member operations, training, and standardization & evaluations team and leads the squadron in the absence of the squadron's Operations Officer.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT
Senior Master Sgt. Aisya L. Hinson



Senior Master Sgt. Aisya Hinson an Evaluator Flight Attendant assigned to the 86th Airlift Wing, Ramstein Air Base, Germany and serves as the Senior Enlisted Leader for Plans and Programs. She enlisted in the Air Force in August 2002 as a Command Post Apprentice after graduating from high school in Blackwood, New Jersey. In 2008, SMSgt Aisya Hinson retrained into the Flight Attendant career field. Her distinguished career as a Career Enlisted Aviator includes roles such as Enlisted Executive to the 15th Operations Group Commander, Executive Airlift Formal Training Unit Superintendent, and Interim First Sergeant.

She has over 3,200 flight hours across the C-37A, C-40B, C-32A, and C-17A airframes. Her extensive operational background also includes serving as the Operations Superintendent at the 1st Airlift Squadron which is considered the Mobility Air Forces' largest flying unit. She led and mentored 270 Aviators and advised leadership on operations, manpower, and readiness for a fleet of C-40B, C-32A, and C-17 aircraft tasked with supporting the Vice President, First Lady, Secretary of State, Secretary of War, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. SMSgt Hinson has accrued over 432 combat hours while deployed in support of OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM, ENDURING FREEDOM, and RESOLUTE SUPPORT.

LOADMASTER
Tech. Sgt. Robert L. Hutton



Tech. Sgt. Robert L. Hutton is an Instructor C-130J Loadmaster assigned to the 37th Airlift Squadron, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, where serves as the Section Chief of Aircrew Development. He was born and raised in South Bend, Indiana and entered the Air Force in November 2016. Following Basic Training, he completed the Basic Loadmaster Technical School in February 2017 and the C-130J Initial Qualification Technical School in August 2017. Since then, he has accomplished assignments in Germany and in the C-130J Formal Training Unit at the 314th Operations Group, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas.

Tech. Sgt. Hutton has accumulated more than 2,000 total flight hours with more than 100 combat flight hours in support of Operations INHERENT RESOVLE, SPARTAN SHIELD, and ROUGH RIDER, and in support of the Combine Joint Task Force Horn of Africa.

FLIGHT ENGINEER
Staff Sgt. John D. Neputi III



Staff Sgt. John D. Neputi is a C-37A Flight Engineer assigned to the 65th Airlift Squadron, 15th Operations Group, 15th Wing at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii where he serves as the Non-Commissioned Officer-in-Charge of Flight Engineer Training. The 65th Airlift Squadron operates two C-37A aircraft supporting the Commander, USINDOPACOM, Commander, US Forces Korea, and Commander, Pacific Air Forces. He attended Mountain Vista High School, graduating in May 2014.

Staff Sgt. Neputi entered the Air Force in November 2015 and began his career as a Maintenance Team Member. Following Basic and Technical training, in May of 2016 he was assigned to the 96th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisianna as a B-52H Crew Chief. In 2020 he cross-trained and became a E8C Flight Engineer and was reassigned to Robins Air Force Base, Georgia in the 12th Airborne Command and Control Squadron. In 2022 he entered the Executive Airlift community as a C-37A/B Flight Engineer with the 89th Airlift Squadron, Joint Base Andrews. Throughout his career Staff Sgt. Neputi has deployed two times and accumulated a total of 1,100 flight hours across two airframes.

COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM OPERATOR
Staff Sgt. Michael J. Marcovitch



Staff Sgt. Michael J. Marcovitch is a Communication Systems Operator assigned to the Presidential Airlift Group, Joint Base Andrews, Maryland where he serves as Non-Commissioned Officer in charge of Air Force One training and is trusted with Presidential communications aboard Air Force One. Staff Sgt. Marcovitch graduated from Brunswick High School in May 2017. After graduating high school, Staff Sgt. Marcovitch was locally employed with a construction company in Strongsville, Ohio.

He enlisted in the Air Force in December 2017. He finished his technical training as a Airborne Mission Systems Specialist as a distinguished graduate and was then hand-selected and assigned to the 89th Airlift Wing on Joint Base Andrews, Maryland. While assigned to the 89th Airlift Wing, Staff Sgt. Marcovitch became a Communications Systems Operator on the C-32A/C-40B aircraft and was trusted with the safe, protected, comfortable, and reliable transport of the Vice President of the United States, and others of the most senior national leaders. Over his career, Staff Sgt. Marcovitch has flown over 305 sorties and has accrued 1,545 flight hours.

BOOM OPERATOR
Master Sgt. Jeffrey R. Jaskela



Master Sgt. Jeffrey R. Jaskela is an Evaluator In-Flight Refueling Operator assigned to the 50th Air Refueling Squadron, MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, where he is currently serving as the Operations Superintendent. Master Sgt. Jaskela entered the Air Force in March 2013 as a Boom Operator aboard the KC-135. He has extensive experience in Air Education Training Command having served as an instructor to both Initial Qualification and Instructor candidates. During his career, he has led many flying squadron shops as Flight Chief, has been designated as the Operations Group Standardization and Evaluation Superintendent, and has served as an acting Senior Enlisted Leader.

Master Sgt. Jaskela has logged over 3,100 flight hours, including 131 combat missions in the KC-135R/T. He has deployed seven times in the United States Central Command area of responsibility as a KC-135R/T boom operator in support of Operations INHERENT RESOLVE, FREEDOM'S SENTINEL, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, SHIELD WALL, and MIDNIGHT HAMMER.

Huyser Awards *continues on page 44 >>>*

AEROMEDICAL EVACUATION TECHNICIAN
Tech. Sgt. Tanis M. Anderson



Tech. Sgt. Tanis M. Anderson is an Aeromedical Evacuation Technician assigned to the 375th Aeromedical Evacuation Formal Training Unit at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. He enlisted in 2010, completing Basic Military Training at Lackland AFB, Texas, and was assigned to the 22d Flight Medicine Clinic at McConnell AFB, Kansas. In 2015, he became an Aeromedical Evacuation Technician at Scott AFB, Illinois, where he deployed eight times and progressed to Flight Examiner and Flight Chief of Standardization and Evaluation.

Currently, Tech. Sgt. Anderson is the Flight Chief of the Operations Flight and supports Global Health Engagements with the Defense Institute of Medical Operations to assist other countries to develop their own Aeromedical Evacuation platforms. He also serves as an additional duty First Sergeant, advising the commander on morale, discipline, and wellness, while ensuring the unit's readiness. He is pursuing a Master's in Business Administration with a minor in Human Resource Management at McKendree University.

"For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy wihtout fighting is the acme."

- Sun Tzu

NAVIGATOR/COMBAT SYSTEMS OPERATOR
Capt. Hunter L. Kruse



Capt. Hunter L. Kruse is an MC-130J Instructor Combat Systems Officer (CSO) assigned to the 8th Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida. He attended Asheville Christian Academy, graduating in 2014, and then commissioned from ROTC at the University of North Carolina Charlotte with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering in 2019. Upon graduation, he attended Specialized Undergraduate CSO Training at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida. He then completed MC-130J formal training at Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque, New Mexico, earning Distinguished Graduate.

His following assignments included the 9th Special Operations Squadron and 6th Special Operations Squadron at Cannon AFB, New Mexico. He participated in numerous exercises, contingency operations, and one deployment across multiple Areas of Responsibility. Captain Kruse now serves in the 8th Special Operations Squadron as an Executive Officer and has recently participated in exercises and contingency operations in support of USSOCOM's objectives.

FLIGHT NURSE
Maj. Jessica W. Sprunger



Maj. Jessica W. Sprunger is an Aeromedical Evacuation Flight Nurse assigned to the 18th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Japan, where she is currently serving as the Ground Training Element Chief. Maj. Sprunger is a registered nurse and commissioned into the Air Force in November 2015. Maj. Sprunger has a diverse clinical background serving as the Element Chief and as a Clinical Nurse at three inpatient units.

In her current role, she supervises the nursing care and management of patients in flight and is responsible for managing aeromedical evacuation crewmembers on assigned missions. Prior to assuming her current position, she was the medical surgical nurse at the Air Force joint medical-surgical and labor and delivery unit at Yokota Air Base, Japan. ■

$5000

MILITARY TRANSITION SCHOLARSHIP

If you or someone you know is transitioning out of the military you should look into the Airlift/Tanker Association–ProDIGIQ Scholarship.

Current A/TA Members with a
separation or retirement date within the
Current Calendar Year
OR
Current A/TA Members Who Have Retired
Within the Last Five Years are Eligible.*

Scholarship will be paid directly to the Trade School, Certification, Under Graduate, Graduate or Post Graduate Program the member has been accepted into. Scholarship Includes offer of monthly Mentorship Sessions with ProDIGIQ and an opportunity to apply for an internship with ProDIGIQ.

ProDIGIQ

Details and application guidance are available at the Mission Tab under Scholarships on the A/TA Website: https://atalink.org or scan the QR code below:

*MUST have honorable/general/medical discharge.
If retired, must be retired less than 5 years by 31 December



The A/TA Enlisted Education Grant Program

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The A/TA Enlisted Education Grant (EEG) Program is designed to help A/TA enlisted members achieve their educational goals. Recipients are free to use their $400 Enlisted Education Grant money for tuition, books, transportation, etc…

Airlift/Tanker Association Enlisted Education Grants are available to Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve members pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees.

EEG CRITERIA:

★ *Current Membership in the Airlift/Tanker Association*

★ *Enlisted Member in Grades of E-1 through E-9*

★ *Commander's Recommendation*

★ *Assigned in an air mobility operational and/or support function (an augmentee on a mobility or maintenance support team, for example), OR, anyone directly or indirectly supporting the USAF Airlift or Air Refueling mission.*

★ *Must be a current member of Airlift/Tanker Association during the entire course which you are using to apply for the grant.*

★ *Checks will be issued upon completion of a course with proof of a grade of C or better in an accredited degree program.*

★ *Application must be postmarked within three (3) months of course completion.*

★ *Annual members are limited to $400 per year. See website for more details.*

★ *Student financial need is not a criterion*

★ *May not be used for a lower or lateral previously awarded degree*

Additional details and forms are available online at www.atalink.org

If you meet the criteria, apply today! The A/TA wants to help you continue your education, so you, too, can soar like an eagle.

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AIRLIFT/TANKER ASSOCIATION

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AMERICA'S WINGS OF FREEDOM AIRLIFT/TANKER ASSOCIATION

CXAL connected alliances

You know of someone worthy of Induction into the A/TA Hall of Fame. Nominate them!

The Airlift/Tanker Association established the Hall of Fame award in October 1988 and it is the highest honor the Association can bestow.

Recognizing the achievements of the highly trained men and women who defend our great nation is the Association's highest priority and one of the main reasons that the organization exists. America's unique global and enduring Air Mobility Mission would simply not happen without the unselfish sacrifice and untiring dedication of these Aeronautical Icons.

With that purpose in mind, the intent of the Hall of Fame Award is to recognize individuals or mission groups demonstrating sustained superior performance significantly contributing to the advancement of Air Mobility.

All nominations for the 2027 Hall of Fame should be emailed to the A/TA Administrators at ata@atalink.org no later than 2 April 2027. For complete nomination guidelines click the Mission tab then the Hall of Fame tab on the Association website at www.atalink.org.

"That some achieve great success, is proof to all that others can achieve it as well."

- Abraham Lincoln

HALVORSEN AWARD

The Airlift/Tanker Association Col. Gail S. Halvorsen Award is presented annually to an outstanding Air Transportation (2T2XX) specialist for sustained excellence in aerial port operations.

Tech. Sgt. Holden B. Anderson



Tech. Sgt. Holden B. Anderson is assigned to the 509th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, where he serves as the Non-Commissioned Officer-In-Charge of the Air Transportation Function. Tech. Sgt. Anderson entered the Air Force and attended Basic Military Training in August 2013. He completed Air Transportation technical training at Fort Gregg-Adams, Virginia in November 2013, and has since held a variety of positions in the Air Transportation career field. Over 12 years of active duty service, he has been stationed at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, Aviano Air Force Base, Italy, and Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri. He is a 2018 graduate from the Airman Leadership School at Aviano Air Base, Italy, and completed an Associate's Degree in Transportation from Community College of the Air Force, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama in 2024.

In his current role, he oversees the Air Force's sole B-2 air transportation mission, as well as the 442 nd Fighter Wing's cargo and passenger deployment operations, transporting approximately 1000 short tons of cargo and over 2000 passengers in support of contingency, exercise, and humanitarian missions annually. Additionally, Tech. Sgt. Anderson manages Whiteman AFB's deployment readiness training. Instructing 200 hours annually to over 400 TFI Airman, he is charged with ensuring each unit on Whiteman AFB is prepared to deploy safely, effectively and efficiently. Tech. Sgt. Anderson was the Booster Club Vice President for the 509 Logistics Readiness Squadron and oversaw 3 different committees and 12 morale events, ultimately raising $6,500 for his unit. Additionally, the commander of the 509th Logistics Readiness Squadron selected Tech. Sgt. Anderson to organize the unit's annual Combat Dining Out event, rallying a 12-member team to raise $1.2K over 34-hours and boosting camaraderie for 310 personnel from his unit. ■

"Too often the ground personnel are taken for granted or overlooked in major air events that are outcome centered..."

- Col. Gail S. Halvorsen, "The Berlin Candy Bomber"

In order to provide our bases with the resources they need, we must control a lot of moving parts. Responsible for securely managing cargo and passengers, Air Transportation specialists ensure that everything and everyone on a military aircraft is transported safely and quickly. From food and medical supplies to helicopters and ground vehicles, these professionals are responsible for coordinating the valuable people and supplies we ship around the world. Qualifications for the job include having a thorough understanding of passenger and cargo movement functions, completion of a basic air transportation course, and experience in functions such as processing cargo and loading and unloading an aircraft. Air Transportation specialists must possess a valid state driver's license to operate government motor vehicles and must have completed 7.5 weeks of Basic Military Training as well as Airmen's Week, and they must be between the ages of 17 and 39.

CARLTON AWARD FOR VALOR

The Airlift/Tanker Association General P. K. Carlton Award for Valor is presented annually to an individual who demonstrates courage, strength, determination, bravery and fearlessness during a combat, contingency or humanitarian mission during the previous calendar year.

Capt. Grant R. Steffens



Capt. Grant R. Steffens is a KC-46 Aircraft Commander assigned to the 32d Air Refueling Squadron, 305th Operations Group, 305th Air Mobility Wing, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. He is currently serving in the role of Tactics Flight Commander where he leads an 8-member team responsible for the development, instruction, execution, and cross-command dissemination of KC-46 tactics, techniques, and procedures, ensuring worldwide warfighting tactical currency and proficiency of 98 squadron members. Capt. Steffens entered the Air Force in April 2020 through the United States Air Force Academy with a bachelor's degree in Geospatial Science. He completed Undergraduate Pilot Training at Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi and subsequent KC-46A Pilot Initial Qualification at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma. Capt. Steffens has more than 480 combat flying hours in support of Operations INHERENT RESOLVE, ROUGH RIDER, and SPARTAN SHIELD.

During the first four months of his deployment to the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility, Capt. Steffens flew the most combat sorties out of the 300-tanker aircrew deployed in AFCENT. During this period, he and his aircrew led the largest KC-46 formation in Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER and flew the first KC-46 sorties of Operation ROUGH RIDER and the 12-Day War. Constantly volunteering for the highest risk missions, he qualified for three Air Medals with combat "C" devices and drove his squadron to earn the Gallant Unit Citation for "extraordinary heroism in hostile action". This was only the ninth Gallant Unit Citation awarded in the history of the USAF! The Director of Operations, Air Forces Central had waived his aircrew's 30-day flying time three times, giving them the opportunity to lead and refuel during four named operations. Capt. Steffens actions enabled his squadron to fly more combat sorties than any other squadron deployed to CENTCOM, providing 80% of CENTCOM's airborne fuel and enabling the most kinetic strikes for a limited US offensive in the past 16 years. The Director of Operations, AFCENT nominated his aircrew for a Combat Action Medal. He and his crew were the first KC-46 aircrew to be shot at by hostile missiles, requiring him to perform threat reactions twice while continuing to refuel F-15s that would later shoot down additional missiles. The Director of Operations, AFCENT nominated Capt. Steffens for a second Combat Action Medal! He volunteered to fly in the largest US-led attack against the Houthis, dodging cruise missiles that were launched towards his aircraft and fueling 230 strikes on enemy targets. He was also retasked while airborne to support Iraq's the first U.S. Troops in Contact within the borders of Iraq in 20 months. He and his crew set up an unpublished low altitude holding pattern to refuel F-16s that defended the troops, enabling strikes on 12 enemy targets. He also directed the response for two F-16s experiencing fuel emergencies. He navigated his aircraft through two adversarial nations at low altitude, putting himself, crew, and aircraft at grave risk to refuel and escort both F-16s to safety. For his heroic actions, he earned the 305th Air Mobility Wing's nomination for the Doolittle Trophy and the General Hoyt Award, the 305th Operations Group's Copilot of-the-year award and the Commander of Air Mobility Command nomination for the Distinguished Flying Cross. During another deployment, the airfield to which Capt. Steffens and his crew were returning following an eight-hour combat sortie endured multiple "Alarm Red" and "Alarm Black" conditions for detected enemy missile launches. During this period, Capt. Steffen's unit received a time-critical order to immediately depart their expeditionary air base due to an imminent strategic ballistic missile threat. He and his crew landed, received zero crew rest and then within three hours of being notified they completed the contingency loading of their KC-46 with as many pieces of maintenance and support equipment as they could load during repeated "Alarm Red" warnings. Because they had very few passenger seat kits available at the airfield, his crew creatively utilized 463L pallets and cargo straps as emergency personnel transport configuration for 149 personnel directly to the pallets on the KC-46's cargo floor. With only a best approximation of actual weight and balance, the aircrew taxied and departed, conducting the USAF's first recorded operational flush and saved 149 Airmen before inbound missiles struck the airfield. This action was the first recorded KC-46's emergency airlift of personnel, validating the emergency procedure for 10 KC-46 wings and three Major Commands. After flying for eight hours to safety, Capt. Steffens landed and offloaded the 149 passengers and received additional mission updates from the air operations center. It was 10 hours after landing before he and his crew were finally able to crew rest. Once again, they were alerted with only six hours of sleep and their crew rest waived again to immediately depart in a nine-ship KC-46 formation, acting as an air bridge that air refueled and "dragged" coalition fighter aircraft back into theater to support the defense of the Arabian Peninsula. After another 10-hour flying sortie, they returned to base and were then informed about the details for Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. They received a partially complete plan from the air operations center and stayed late into the night to study and work with the tacticians mature the plan into a feasible option before they were able to get at least five hours of sleep. Once again, leadership waived their crew rest tasked them to lead 78 Airmen and 10 KC-46s a mission that HQ AMC called "the most complex and consequential air refueling leg of Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER."

Operating with the utmost operational security from a contingency airfield, Capt. Steffens and his crew took off and led a formation of five KC-46s, joining another five aircraft as part of a larger package of 10 KC-46 aircraft, hitting every milestone of the operation flawlessly down to the exact second. To achieve this mission success, Capt. Steffens led his crew to accept significant risk and employ the aircraft well outside standard operating parameters, including reduced communications and other indicators. He blazed the trail with previously untested USAF tactics for the first time during operational employment that successfully mask the combined formation's presence while air refueling seve B-2 bombers driving the formation non-stop to Iran to deliver 14 GBU-57A weapons. Capt. Steffens led the formation through so many significant and classified challenges during Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER that the Commander of Air Mobility Command nominated their squadron for additional Distinguished Flying Crosses - 27 in total – more than any other participating tanker squadron. His leadership and actions directly enabled the largest B-2 mission in US history, the second longest B-2 mission ever, the USAF's first operational flush, and the KC-46's first emergency airlift of personnel. ■

SPECIALIZED MISSION AWARD

The Airlift/Tanker Association Specialized Mission Award is presented annually to an outstanding individual whose performance of duties in support of an aerial air mobility mission is exceptionally noteworthy during crises, contingencies, or humanitarian airlift. This award is presented to career fields not covered by the Huyser Award categories.

Staff Sgt. Lauren M. Hotaling



Staff Sgt. Lauren M. Hotaling is an Evaluator KC-46 Boom Operator currently assigned to the 32d Air Refueling Squadron, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, where she is serving as a Training Instructor. She is also being recognized as one of this year's Airlift/Tanker Association Young Leaders.

She was individually recognized by both the Commander, Air Mobility Command and the Commander, Air Force Global Strike Command for leading 12 Airmen in generating the largest KC-46 formation of Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER to accomplish what has been called "the largest, most complicated & highly classified air mobility mission ever!" She was also commended for having instructed four new boom operators and for flying the 305th Air Mobility Wings' highest visibility tanker missions. Her actions enabled the extraction of a high value target; a mission that was overseen in real time by the President of the United States, Secretary of War, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the National Security Council. While deployed to the U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility, she identified and resolved three in-flight emergencies and refueled 12 emergency aircraft. Her actions drove the highest sortie generation rate of 99% across the USCENTCOM area of responsibility and earned her the wing's safety award. Her leadership to accomplish low altitude air refueling training events and establish associated new tactics, techniques, and procedures during Exercise BAMBOO EAGLE resulted in her efforts being published by Headquarters Air Force Public Affairs and her earning the wing's Red Erwin Award.

Some of her other significant accomplishments leading 12 other Airmen through high risk weapon engagement zones on a 35-hour combat mission during Operation MIDNIGHT HAMMER. Putting herself at grave personal risk, Lauren volunteered to fly to a forward operating base under imminent threat of enemy missile attack. She executed a time-critical rescue mission of a damaged KC-46 and flew it to safety before enemy missiles struck her location. During a separate mission, she landed from a seven-hour combat sortie in "Alarm Red" but continued to lead nine Airmen to load her unit's 20 aircraft to execute the USAF's "flush". Her actions contributed to saving 458 Airmen before enemy missiles later struck their air base. She is credited with flying the most combat sorties of the 600 tanker aircrews deployed to the Air Forces Central area of responsibility. For her actions, she earned a Commendation Medal for Heroism with "C" Device and three Air Medals with "C" Devices. The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force and Commander, Air Forces Central selected her actions as 'the defining Amn story of the 12-Day War' to highlight to leaders across the Air Force. She was later nominated by the Air Forces Central Director of Operations to serve on the 9 AF's Peace and Security Council. As the most junior member representing the USAF, she provided valuable information to diplomats and officers from six nations and was credited with helping to reduce allied response time to hostilities from days to just hours. A valued member of her squadron, she was credited with planning 80% of AFCENT's tanker sorties, and enabled her unit to fly more sorties than any unit that was deployed to AFCENT during that period. ■

"Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

Flying crew chiefs are specially trained maintenance personnel who attend a six-week maintenance special operations course in addition to the hundreds of hours of training it takes to become 7-level maintainer. From fueling the aircraft and checking the oil, to troubleshooting a major system malfunction, flying crew chiefs earn their stripes every day.

FOGLEMAN ASAM AWARD

The Airlift/Tanker Association Gen. Ronald R. Fogleman ASAM Award recognizes the top graduate of the Advanced Studies of Air Mobility (ASAM) program, an Air Force-sponsored intermediate developmental education program taught at the USAF Expeditionary Center. The award recognizes excellence across a broad range of criteria, including peer review, leadership, written and oral presentation of research, academic performance and physical fitness.

Maj. Kelsey M. Dees



Maj. Kelsey M. Dees is a C-17A Instructor Pilot currently assigned to the 6th Airlift Squadron, 305th Air Mobility Wing, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, where she is currently serving as the squadron's Chief of Staff. She graduated from the USAF Academy with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry in 2014. Following completion of Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma, in 2016, Maj. Dees was assigned to the 16th Airlift Squadron Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina. Maj. Dees has served in a variety of positions throughout her career including squadron executive officer, Chief of Mobility Aircrew Development, wing executive officer, Division Chief for Global Aircraft Recovery at the 618th Air Operations Center, Deputy Branch Chief for Officer and Civilian for Development, and Junior Executive Officer to the Commander, Air Mobility Command, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.

She graduated from Advanced Study of Air Mobility, earning a master's degree in Operational Management from the Air Force Institute of Technology in 2016. She is also a graduate of the Advanced Instrument School at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and the Aircraft Maintenance Officer Course-Bridge at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. Maj. Dees' numerous awards and decorations include the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters, an Aerial Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with one service star, and the Inherent Resolve Campaign Medal with one service star. ■

"Remember that our nation's first great leaders were also our first great scholars."

- John F. Kennedy

The ASAM program is a 13-month course of study in Global Reach concepts, and graduates earn an Air Force Institute of Technology accredited Master of Science in Logistics degree. Prospective candidates for the course go through a highly competitive Central Designation Board process before being selected as students in the program, and the curriculum is comprised of four additional components including Expeditionary Center courses, Air Command and Staff College courses, a Graduate Research Project, and site visits. Upon graduation, students take on assignments serving the Department of Defense, war-fi ghting commanders, Joint Staff, Headquarters Air Force, Air Mobility Command, Strategic Command, Doctrine Centers, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, and the United Nations.



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A/TA 2026

Maj. Gen. James I. "Bagger" Baginski
AIR MOBILITY LIASON OFFICER (AMLO) AWARD

The Airlift/Tanker Association Major General James I. (Bagger) Baginski Award is presented annually for significant performance and achievement including specific individual accomplishments, mission impacts and results in support of joint, allied, coalition, partner operations and the global mobility enterprise as an Air Mobility Liaison Officers (AMLO) during the previous calendar year.

Maj. Christian A. Fontaine



Maj. Christian A. Fontaine is an Instructor C-130J Pilot currently serving as an Air Mobility Liaison Officer (AMLO) at Operating Location B, 621st Mobility Support Operations Squadron where he supports United States Army commanders at Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, Georgia. As an AMLO, Maj. Fontaine is the Commander, Air Mobility Command representative to the 3rd Infantry Division regarding air mobility training, planning, and execution in support of global combat operations. Maj. Fontaine grew up in Kingsport, Tennessee, and received his commission from the United States Air Force Academy in 2014. He went on to graduate Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas in 2016. Since then, he has planned and led U.S. Air Force components in three multinational exercises. Among other various airlift squadron roles, he also served as a flight commander, squadron chief of training, and squadron director of staff.

Since arriving at his current assignment, Maj. Fontaine has served as his operating location chief as well as Deputy Chief of Standardizations and Evaluations for the 621st Air Mobility Advisory Group. Maj. Fontaine is a Senior Pilot with more than 2,400 flying hours, including more than 550 combat hours flown over three deployments in support of Operations RESOLUTE SUPPORT, FREEDOM'S SENTINEL, and OCTAVE QUARTZ. More recently, he has deployed to the U.S. Department of State to coordinate support provided by the U.S. Department of War for evacuation of Americans from Middle Eastern conflict zones using military aircraft, as well as deploying to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to coordinate support provided by the US Department of War during immigration enforcement operations. ■

Maj. Gen. James I. "Bagger" Baginski served in a variety of leadership roles during his 30 years in the Air Force (1954-1984), he served in a variety of leadership roles, from commander, 374th Tactical Airlift Wing to HQ Military Airlift Command Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Personnel. He had a direct, pervasive, and long-lasting influence on air mobility, from the C-5 modernization and C-141 stretch programs to enhanced aircraft and aircrew air refueling capabilities. As Director of Mobility, Joint Deployment Agency, he advanced the services' joint transportation planning policy, systems, and procedures. An Airlift/Tanker Association (A/TA) founding member and Board of Advisors Chairman, he helped lead the A/TA in transitioning from a reunion type airlift organization to a professional air mobility association.

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Ad courtesy A/TA

AIR MOBILITY COMMAND MUSEUM

1301 Heritage Road, Dover AFB, Delaware 19902
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A/TA 2026

Maj. Gen. Stanley F. H. Newman

ANG OUTSTANDING UNIT AWARD

The Airlift/Tanker Association's Major General Stanley F. H. Newman Air National Guard Award recognizes the most outstanding Air National Guard Wing or Group contributing to overall success of the Mobility Air Force mission. The unit embodies the spirit and essence of the Citizen Airman – balancing the operational demands of today's global mobility operations and maintaining a viable strategic reserve for tomorrow, while embracing responsibilities to their State, civilian employer, community and family.

101st Air Refueling Wing

The 101st Air Refueling Wing, Maine Air National Guard distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious service from 01 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. During this period, the MAINEiacs deployed 345 airmen for an incredible 45,000 days in support of Operations SPARTAN SHIELD and EPIC FURY. The 101 ARW was the first on the ground in Israel, standing up operations at a major international airport, with no traditional infrastructure, and built the largest tanker base in the U.S. Central Command area of operations despite constant threat from ballistic missiles and one-way attack drones. Their expertise and bravery were ultimately responsible for the delivery of 174M pounds of fuel to over 10,000 combat aircraft. Simultaneously, the 101 ARW created the Minuteman Express to ease stressed mobility supply lines and delivered over 1.1 million pounds of critical aircraft parts, supply items, and morale packages to 11 locations across two Areas of Responsibility. The 101 ARW provided tireless support for an 11-ship detachment supporting around-the-clock Bomber Bridge operations and provided 300 transient deploying Airmen with "Just in Time" tactical training and airspace awareness to maximize their readiness for the most dynamic operating environment in decades. ■



MAINEiacs

Maj. Gen. Stanley F. H. Newman was born in Chicago, Illinois, and moved to Oklahoma in 1948 following World War II. He enlisted into the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942, and become a pilot. He fl ew 57 missions in P-51s while in the Ninth U.S. Army Air Forces, in Europe. After World War II, he joined the Oklahoma Air National Guard, becoming its commander before retirement. His career includes service in Korea and Vietnam. Among his awards are the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, Meritorious Service Medal and 14 Air Medals.

Lt. Gen. James E. Sherrard III
AFRC OUTSTANDING UNIT AWARD

The Airlift/Tanker Association Lieutenant General James E. Sherrard III Award is presented annually to the most outstanding Air Force Reserve wing or group that distinguished itself in the performance and support of the Mobility Air Forces mission. The unit embodies the spirit and essence of the Citizen Airman, balancing the operational demands of today's global mobility operations, maintaining a viable strategic reserve for tomorrow while embracing responsibilities to their civilian employer, community and family.

913th Airlift Group

The 913th Airlift Group, Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, Air Force Reserve Command, distinguished itself by outstanding achievements from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026. During this period, the 913th Airlift Group executed high-velocity global mobility operations, projecting combat power by deploying across two Combatant Commands despite a severe structural manning deficit. Showcasing unparalleled Joint Force interoperability under fire, personnel executed critical tactical ground handling to evacuate over 400 civilians and coalition partners during Department of State operations amidst active Iranian kinetic threats and orchestrated the urgent transport of captured extremists to deny adversary leverage during Syrian destabilization.

Further amplifying strategic deterrence, the unit's logistical mastery enabled the extraction of a civilian hostage, the recovery of a downed pilot and F-16C aircraft, and the rapid generation of Aircrew Flight Equipment to secure a strategic force relocation from Federal Iraq to Iraqi Kurdistan. As a catalyst for tactical innovation, the Group pioneered Agile Combat Employment by validating Aircrew chemical and biological decontamination metrics, engineering Navigation Warfare tactics to counter near-peer Global Positioning System spoofing Additionally, the Group drove a massive joint airlift portfolio with its active-duty host wing, led the enterprise-level 2026 "Port Dawg Memorial Run" to bridge Air Mobility Command and Air Force Reserve Command operations, and institutionalized the joint Diamond Sharp awards to elevate enlisted morale. Finally, the unit's rigorous execution of the Commander's Inspection Program resolved critical operational gaps, surging unit efficiency by 20 percent. ■

Lt. Gen. James E. Sherrard III had a most distinguished career – from his early days as a C-130 airlift pilot to his tenure at the highest levels of Air Force Reserve leadership. General Sherrard twice served as vice commander as well as the tenth and longest-serving Chief of the Air Force Reserve and Commander, Air Force Reserve Command. General Sherrard with his leadership and influence has spanned the depth and breadth of the Air Force Reserve Command, including the command of three tactical airlift wings and both air mobility-focused numbered air forces. A true champion of air mobility, among his awards are the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (3 OLC) and the Armed Forces Reserve Medal with hourglass.

COMMANDER'S KEY SUPPORT LIAISON AWARD

The primary purpose of the AMC Commander's Key Support Liason of the Year Award is to recognize an AMC key person who has diligently worked with unit leadership to plan, coordinate and execute the unit's Key Support Program. The program impacts mission readiness and retention by ensuring families have appropriate information and resources to meet their needs. The AMC Commander's Key Support of the Year is selected by AMC leadership.

Cassandra Rael



Mrs. Cassandra Rael was a Key Support Mentor for the 12th Air Task Force, Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. Mrs. Rael was born in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. After graduating high school in May 2001, she enlisted in the Air Force and served for 11 years, with service highlights including overseas assignments in Japan and Afghanistan and a tour as a Professional Military Education instructor. Since transitioning from active duty, she has dedicated herself to serving the military community and local area. Mrs. Rael is very active in her local military community including Protestant Women of the Chapel (PWOC) where she leads small group women's Bible studies and led the prayer committee, as well as volunteer efforts at First Baptist Academy in the local community. As a Key Support Mentor, she leverages her extensive military background and strong local ties to guide and assist service members and their families. Mrs. Rael has completed her master's degree in biblical studies with the goal of becoming a writer.

She is credited with establishing Air Mobility Command's first-ever Air Task Force Key Support program. This effort included the synchronizing of command teams from seven units to support 446 of the USAF's first formally trained Mission Ready Airmen and their families experiencing an average of 181 average days of temporary duty during the entire training pipeline. During this time, she led a wing-level Spouse Deployment panel that united nine base agencies to equip 96 families with critical details applicable to the deployment area of responsibility. Her actions that crystalized the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's intent and guidance for the pilot Unit of Action model were lauded by the USAF LeMay Center as a Lessons Learned "Best Practice!"

She also designed the "Valor Harbor" initiative which established a support network of 112 families and orchestrated nine fellowship events over a period of six months to focus on mental health and connection. These actions were in a partnership with Army spouses and mirroring similar deployment models. For the children of the unit, Mrs. Rael's team led a Mock Kids Deployment that leveraged the skills of the 12 ATF First Sergeant and the Integrated Resiliency Office to host 65 children across the seven component units. The goal was to simulate an out-processing line and aircraft assembly with the nine supporting agencies. Her efforts were essential in fortifying foundational support for 336 warfighters.

With a continuing emphasis on connection, Mrs. Rael forged an information link between the deployed 378th Air Expeditionary Wing commander, seven of the component unit key spouses, and 168 families from three geographically separated units by hosting weekly touchpoint events and helping to navigating eight crises. Her personnel efforts included personally providing live-in care for four displaced children." ■

Key support people are specially trained volunteers who promote individual, family and unit readiness. They are a support system that encourages peer-to-peer support year-round. They meet the vital needs of spouses and provide an informal sounding board through an informal network. They are a part of the leadership team in each unit. The AMC Commander's Key Support Liason program evolved from an idea to develop an organized program where military spouses help other spouses. Key support people work closely with the commander, commander's spouse, First Sergeant, and the Airman and Family Readiness Center.



AIRLIFT/TANKER ASSOCIATION

$10,000

SCHOLARSHIPS



Two $10,000 Airlift/Tanker Association Undergraduate Academic Scholarships will be Offered Annually for the Spouses, Children and Grandchildren of Members in Good Standing.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Applicants will be required to submit a 4-page essay and accompanying abstract on one of several topics of interest to the A/TA Board and members of the Association.

APPLICATION PROCESS

For full description visit the Association's website at http://www.atatalink.org or scan the QRC below.

SUPPORTING AIRMEN*PRESERVING OUR CULTURE*STRENGTHING OUR BONDS

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR SYMPOSIUM SPONSORS

The Airlift/Tanker Association is extremely fortunate to have outstanding backing from corporate and industry supporters to help us further the Air Mobility mission! We would like to especially recognize those companies who assisted the Airlift/Tanker Association with costs associated in conducting this year's symposium.

- Marty Chapin

Those companies as of 9 October 2026:



Boeing

CXAL Connected Alliances

GE Aerospace

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company

Northrop Grumman

ProDIGIQ, Inc.

Viasat

(>$10K)



Beacon AI

L3Harris Technologies

Leonardo DRS

Million Air - An Aviation Services Company

($2.5K - $10K)



Abilene Military Affairs Committee

CymSTAR LLC

Leadership Council of Southwestern Illinois

Metrea Strategic Mobility

Specular Theory, Inc.

USAA

Versar Global Solutions

(Up to $2.5K)

SALUTE TO OUR INDUSTRY PARTNERS

America's Aerospace Industry plays an integral role in providing our country's decisive military edge; and, the A/TA's Industry Partners play a vital role in assuring the success of the Association.

(Industry Partners as of 9 October 2026)

AEG Fuels

AEG Fuels (Associated Energy Group) is a global leader in aviation fuel supply and international trip support, serving military, commercial, and general aviation clients across more than 3,000 locations worldwide. Since its founding, AEG has built a reputation for reliability, competitive pricing, and responsive service, offering fuel supply, ground handling coordination, permits, overflight and landing rights, and trip planning support for operators navigating complex global logistics.

AEG's client base spans corporate flight departments, commercial airlines, fixed-base operators (FBOs), and government agencies, all of whom rely on the company's extensive network and 24/7 operational support to keep missions and flights moving smoothly, regardless of destination. With deep expertise across defense, commercial aviation, and general aviation sectors, AEG combines industry knowledge with a hands-on, client-first approach.

Backed by a global team and a strong network of trusted vendor and sponsorship partnerships, AEG Fuels continues to expand its footprint, delivering dependable fuel solutions and trip support services that keep the aviation industry flying forward.

Airbus

Airbus Americas, Inc. is the U.S.-based operation of Airbus, a global leader in aerospace, defense, space and related services. Airbus has contributed more than $187 billion in the U.S. since 1990 to the U.S. economy annually and supports over 275,000 American jobs through its network of suppliers. Airbus Americas, Inc., headquartered in Herndon, Va., offers a broad array of advanced solutions to meet U.S. military and commercial requirements, including fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, homeland security systems, public safety communications, defense electronics and avionics, and threat detection systems.

Abilene Military Affairs Committee

The Abilene Military Affairs Committee (MAC) has supported Dyess AFB and the Air Force for over 50 years by cultivating an outstanding relationship between the community and the military. The most visible example is the "World's Largest Barbeque" held every spring, at which over 4,000 airmen and their families are served a free barbeque meal. The MAC has also completed several upgrades for the base, including DV quarters, the Linear Air Park, Base Ops Lounge, Memorial Park, and has supported countless base events. Abilene won the AMC Outstanding Community Support Award so many times that AMC disqualified the city from further competition and renamed it the "Abilene Trophy", which is now judged every year by the Abilene MAC. In addition, the 300+ volunteers of the MAC engage with senior military leaders and elected officials at local, state, and national levels to advocate for Air Force and community issues.

Aero Adapt

Aero Adapt understands the unique requirements of government and defense clients who operate various sensitive aviation missions into Australia and across the Indo-Pacific. We work with numerous domestic and foreign government agencies and defense organizations—ensuring efficient and successful execution of these missions.

Our ultimate goal is to expand our reach into the Indo-Pacific in the defense arena—increasing the resiliency and agility of the Australian Defense Force and their partner forces operating in the region. We will do this by providing world-class aviation services and presenting turn-key solutions for our clients—anytime, anyplace.

Our experience and expertise includes but is not limited to providing regional logistics, training, and multi-lateral exercise support to coordinating Guest of Government and Heads of State visits within Australia.

Aero Adapt is available 24/7 to organize:

- Ramp/ground handling
- Airport authority coordination
- Customs, Immigration and Quarantine coordination
- Catering
- Fuel
- Crew logistics, transport and accommodation
- Diversion support
- On-site supervision
- Off-airport cargo logistics

Altus Military Affairs Committee and the City of Altus

The Altus Military Affairs Committee (MAC) was established in 1952 by community leaders to forge a lasting relationship between the community and base. The MAC mission is to sustain Altus AFB as a viable military installation by promoting base growth through community support and protecting one of our nation's most valuable assets. The Committee's vision is "to have the best air force base and community relationship in the U.S. Air Force." To accomplish their mission, committee members engage in a variety of activities including raising financial support, planning and attending community/base functions, building social and professional relationships with base personnel, engaging Senior Air Force leadership, interacting with elected officials and staff at local, state, and federal levels, and serving as a liaison to the community. For the past 60 years, MAC and community members have also organized and attended the annual Altus Quail Breakfast currently hosted by Senator James Inhofe.

AutoFlug & East West Industries, Inc

Autoflug, founded in 1919 by the German aviation pioneer Gerhard Sedlmayr Autoflug has been inseparably linked to the mission of rescuing people and ensuring their safety on land, water and in the air. Since then, the company has established itself as a globally recognized supplier and partner of national and international customers in the aviation and defense industry. For more than 100 years, Autoflug develops, produces and services a wide range of textile, mechanical and electronic components and systems with the goal to save lives following the company's own claim "Thinking safety".

East/West Industries, a woman-owned small business, is a world leader in the development and manufacturing of aviation seating, life support systems and aviation ground support equipment. Founded in 1968, our focus has always been saving aircrew lives. With products supporting 25 military and commercial aircraft, we're consistently recognized by major OEM's and the DoD for being a top supplier with a laser-focus on quality. East/West also provides services to several international customers. Every East/West team member fully understands the criticality of our work – producing top-quality products is literally a matter of life and death. As a "mini-prime", we boast a wide range of capabilities that span the entire product life cycle, from engineering, manufacturing and quality to logistics and product support. Our seasoned engineering and manufacturing professionals' pride themselves in finding unique solutions to meet the specialized needs of our customers.

Highlighted Products

MULTIBASE

Based on this background and its decades of experience in the safety area, AUTOFLUG has developed the MULTIBASE a modular concept of an independent cabin within the aircraft cabin to enhance the multi-role capabilities of aircraft by enabling quick-role changes.

Aviation Products

Our wide range of products include crash attenuating seating systems(qualified as high as 30G), walk around and emergency oxygen systems, and cargo handling equipment. Always designed to keep the aircrew safe and able to perform their mission.

Avfuel Corporation

Avfuel - a global supplier of aviation fuel and services. Having served the aviation industry for 50+ years, Avfuel connects a diverse array of customers with systems and solutions to attract more business and conduct operations efficiently and effectively. Airlines, freight and cargo companies, corporate flight departments, airports and municipalities, FBOs, helicopters, and the military represent just some of the customers that benefit from Avfuel's innovative solutions.

Avfuel's fueling network includes 3,500+ worldwide locations and 675+ Avfuel-branded FBOs throughout North America and Europe. Aircraft owners and operators benefit from Avfuel solutions, including preferred into plane rates on jet fuel through Avfuel Contract Fuel, international flight support and trip-planning solutions through Avplan Trip Support, AVTRIP loyalty rewards, and sustainable aviation solutions through AvfuelZero. Customers also enjoy access to reliable supply, advantageous training and operational systems, marketing support, credit and financing, tax assistance, and a variety of aviation insurance coverages through Avsurance. Learn more at https://www.avfuel.com/

BAE Systems

BAE Systems, Inc. and its 33,600 people are part of a global defense, aerospace and security company with 85,800 employees worldwide. We deliver products and services for air, land, sea and space, as well as advanced electronics, security, information technology solutions, and customer support and services. Our dedication shows in everything we create and deliver—from advanced electronic systems to cyber operations and intelligence analysis, from combat vehicles to naval weapons, and from ship maintenance and modernization to vehicle upgrades and services. We push the limits of possibility to provide a critical advantage to our customers where it counts. Learn more at www.baesystems.com

BGR Aviation

The most experienced rely on BGR because we can handle it all! Our experienced ground crews provide quick and efficient turn times.

BGR also features:

- Newly rehabilitated 11,440-foot long and 200-foot wide runway
- 24/7 Tower & Dispatch services
- No noise ordinance
- Easy, uncongested access
- Extensive experience with all kinds of aircraft - airlift, refueler, fighter, bomber
- Cat II and Cat III operations
- Qualified to handle Class 1 hazardous materials
- U.S. Customs & Border Protection District Field Office

- Headquarters on site available 24/7
- Strategic location - First stop on the Great Circle Route

Upcoming infrastructure projects to continue to improve BGR and ensure we're here for you for many years to come include:

- Fuel Farm and Hydrant System Upgrade
- Taxiway Alpha Rehabilitation
- Implementation of a Safety Management System (SMS)

Learn more at https://fbo.flybangor.com/

Baxter Aerospace

At Baxter Aerospace, we design, manufacture, and test mission-critical systems that protect lives, enable global Internet connectivity, and drive clean energy innovation. Learn more at www.baesystems.com

Boeing

Boeing is the world's largest aerospace company and leading manufacturer of commercial jetliners, defense, space and security systems, and service provider of aftermarket support. Boeing's Defense, Space & Security business unit provides solutions for the design, production, modification, service and support of commercial derivatives, military rotorcraft, satellites, human space exploration and autonomous systems. It helps customers address requirements through a broad portfolio that includes the KC-46 aerial refueling aircraft. Boeing Global Services delivers innovative, comprehensive and cost-competitive service solutions for commercial, defense and space customers, regardless of the equipment's original manufacturer. As the leading manufacturer for commercial and defense platforms, Boeing is positioned to provide unparalleled aftermarket support for mixed fleets worldwide. With engineering, digital analytics, supply chain and training support spanning across both the government and commercial service offerings, Boeing Global Services' unsurpassed support keeps the C-17, KC-135, and KC-10 operating at high efficiency. Visit us at boeing.com.

Bombardier Defense

Bombardier Defense is a division of Bombardier Group that designs, develops and delivers a range of capabilities to operators worldwide with hundreds of specialized aircraft in service, over 3M fleet hours and more than 170 operators in 60 countries. Bombardier's Challenger and Global families of aircraft represent the ideal platform for missions ranging from ISR to VIP transport to medical evacuation.

We pride ourselves in offering custom services tailored to our clients through solutions ranging from turnkey packages comprising the complete design, building, testing and certification activity, to specialist engineering support and technical oversight for customized services to the mission requirements. Learn more at www.defense.bombardier.com/en

Booz Allen Hamilton

For more than 100 years, military, government, and business leaders have turned to Booz Allen Hamilton to solve their most complex problems. As a consulting firm with experts in analytics, digital solutions, engineering, and cyber, we help organizations transform. We are a key partner on some of the most innovative programs for governments worldwide and trusted by their most sensitive agencies. We work shoulder-to-shoulder with clients, using a mission-first approach to choose the right strategy and technology to help them realize their vision. www.boozallen.com

Borsight, Inc.

Established in 2008, Borsight, Inc. is a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) located at the Ogden-Hinckley Airport in Ogden Utah. We perform high-quality aircraft modification work for the United States Air Force (USAF), Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve. We proudly maintain a complete in-house, full-breadth design, manufacturing, integration, and installation workforce, which is largely staffed by former military personnel with aircraft operations, engineering, and maintenance experience. Borsight's business is integrated aircraft solutions. Our solutions are created by providing full-service integration of ready solutions for datalink and voice communications equipment. This includes electronic, mechanical, product, and systems design; software and cybersecurity; and depot management of spares and repairables. We also provide sourcing, manufacturing, kitting, installation, and Field Service Representatives (FSRs) within the continental United States and around the world. Visit us at www.borsight.com

CAE

At CAE, we equip people in critical roles with the expertise and solutions to create a safer world. As a technology company, we digitalize the physical world, deploying software-based simulation training and critical operations support solutions. Above all else, we empower pilots, cabin crew, maintenance technicians, airlines, business aviation operators, and defense and security forces to perform at their best every day and when the stakes are the highest. Around the globe, we're everywhere customers need us to be with approximately 13,000 employees in more than 240 sites and training locations in over 40 countries. CAE represents more than 75 years of industry firsts—the highest-fidelity flight and mission simulators as well as training programs powered by digital technologies. We embed sustainability in everything we do. Today and tomorrow, we'll make sure our customers are ready for the moments that matter. Visit www.cae.com to learn more.

CXAL Connected Alliances

Connected Alliances (CXAL) brings together the wide range of expertise, best practices and solution capabilities needed to solve challenges and scale to achieve value in the public and private sector. Our approach is comprised of a continuous evolution cycle that anticipates and supports the demands of ever-changing world and conditions, an intentional consortium building solution teams from traditional, non-traditional, government and NGOs, and a behavior model shaping a delivery culture for collaboration, trust and integrity. Visit our website at https://cx-al.com to learn more.

CymSTAR LLC

CymSTAR is the prime contractor for the U.S. Air Force C-5 Training System, E-4B Training System, and A-10 Aircrew Training System. As a premier aircrew training systems integrator, CymSTAR provides engineering, training services, and simulation products to the U.S. Armed Forces, Allied nations, and leading aerospace organizations.

With more than 20 years of experience, CymSTAR specializes in the modification, upgrade, development, integration, and sustainment of training systems designed to prepare military personnel for mission readiness and operational success.

CymSTAR is proud to be a HUBZone-certified small business, employing more than 200 skilled professionals across the United States. We understand our customers' unique needs, and our team is committed to delivering customized solutions tailored to their specific requirements.

Whether you are looking to enhance your aircrew training programs, develop new capabilities, or sustain existing systems, CymSTAR is your trusted partner — Proven. Reliable. Unmatched. For more information about CymSTAR's comprehensive range of products and services, visit www.cymstar.com

Columbia Southern University

Columbia Southern University is an online university based in Orange Beach, AL that has proudly served active-duty military members, veterans and their families for over 30 years. CSU's dedicated military support staff is comprised of current and former military members who understand the unique needs of these students and enables them to be successful by maximizing their professional and personal potential.

CSU offers certificate, associate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in fields such as business administration, criminal justice, fire administration, health care administration, human resources, occupational safety and health and more. With caring, highly trained faculty and staff, CSU incorporates the latest instructional technology and provides affordable, accredited-quality online education that promotes lifelong learning and success. Visit ColumbiaSouthern.edu/Mil or call (877) 347-6050 to learn more.

David Clark Company Incorporated

David Clark Company Inc. (DCCI) is the world leader in headsets for military, marine, and general aviation, specializing in communication solutions for any high-noise environment. Our Worcester, MA, facility has been manufacturing headsets and communication systems for over half a century. Pilots, both civilian and military, fire departments, coastal interdiction personnel, NASA, and many other government customers are very familiar with the high quality, durability, and serviceability of our products.

Cubic DTECH

DTECH Edge Compute and Networking platforms enable edge users to connect, secure, and analyze mission-critical data with trusted, scalable and intuitive edge technologies for a decisive advantage. Our platforms are mission-engineered for the edge with computing and networking capabilities, mission proven through reliable equipment that can survive challenging environments, and mission-forward by continually innovating for the next mission. Learn more at www.cubic.com/dtech

Electra.aero

Electra's fixed-wing, dual-use, hybrid EL9 aircraft can take off and land in 150 feet opening access and travel routes for both the commercial and defense markets. Electra's EL9 enables access to helicopter-sized areas in austere or remote environments while maintaining the safety, cost, and long-range benefits of a fixed-wing aircraft. The EL9's ability to carry people, access austere locations, carry 1,000 lbs. over 1,000 nautical miles, generate 600 kW of expeditionary power, and possible all-battery quiet operations represents next-generation capabilities for mobility and special operations forces.

Embraer

Embraer is a global company with more than 50 years of aerospace expertise. In addition to the A-29 Super Tucano, an advanced training and light attack aircraft, and the C-390 Millennium, a multi-mission military transport aircraft, it offers a complete line of integrated solutions for air, space, sea, land, and cyber systems.

With more than 8.000 aircraft delivered and solutions present in more than 60 Governments and Armed Forces, Embraer offers solutions for land applications such as Command and Control (C4I), sensors, ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance), information systems, communication, border monitoring and surveillance, naval combat and management systems, and integration of geostationary satellites for communication and observation. In the cyber area, it provides complete solutions for business protection and defense and security applications. Learn more at our website: embraerds.com

FSI Defense

Governments and military agencies rely on FSI Defense for mission-training programs and proven advanced technology simulators, visual systems and displays designed to enhance safety and ensure proficiency. The company provides training, training systems and support worldwide for all types of aircraft used by military and government organizations.

Brands: Courseware Development & Instruction, FlightSmart, Level D & below Aviation Training Devices, MissionFit, MixedReality Flight, Virtual Aircraft & Engine Trainers, VITAL1150 Visual Systems

Field Aerospace

A U.S. owned and operated business, Field Aerospace is conveniently located in close proximity to Tinker AFB Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Equipped with 160,000 sq. ft. of facilities that include offices, hangars, and manufacturing/industrial space, as well as a skilled staff of over 300 technicians, mechanics, engineers and other highly skilled personnel.

Our capabilities include aircraft modifications and upgrades, professional project and program management, aircraft maintenance, end-to-end special-mission aircraft services, certification and installation services, logistics, training support and many other custom services. Our integration capabilities include avionics (military and commercial), communications (voice, data links, satellite, secure), ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance), and special purpose mission systems. Learn more at www.fieldaero.com

Fly Boys – Gear for Pilots (PIVOT Case)

PIVOT is a product division of Fly Boys – Gear for Pilots. Already known for our dedication and understanding of the military pilot needs and operations, PIVOT is considered the new standard not only in commercial EFB but military aviation as well. PIVOT's patented technology features a variety of tablet cases with built-in connectivity to a truly universal mounting plate. Every PIVOT case has and will have the same connection, making PIVOT uniquely future proof. This feature is saving commercial and government users millions of dollars in unnecessary equipment and deployment costs.

Designed by a former military pilot, PIVOT addresses the specific needs unique to EFB in the cockpit. A wide variety of options exist for protecting and mounting devices – allowing for full interchangeability between users and aircraft, anywhere in the world.

The PIVOT system is currently in use at over 80 airlines around the world, helping them to reduce complexities, increase device and data utilization and portability to retain full readiness. These same concepts apply to military operations and as a result PIVOT is the fastest growing solution in the DoD for EFB. Contact PIVOT and find out more about our concept of #efbmadesimple – flyboys.com — pivotcase.com

GE Aerospace

GE Aerospace is a world-leading provider of jet, turboshaft and turboprop engines, components and integrated systems for commercial, military, business and general aviation aircraft. GE Aerospace has a global service network to support these offerings.

Gander International Airport Authority

Gander International Airport (CYQX) has served as a strategic military staging point and technical stop since 1938. In its role as a joint civilian/military airport, CYQX hosts over 2,000 military aircraft annually ranging from F18s to C5s and everything in between. CYQX is an optimal staging point for military operations with strategic positioning for transatlantic flights and exceptional service on the ground. All services are provided 24/7 with no curfews or abatements. Gander has a proven track record in meeting the high standards demanded by military users and looks forward to accommodating your operation.

Gateway Facilities ULC

Gateway Facilities is the contracted ground handling provider for Canadian Department of National Defence (DND) military aircraft operating through Halifax Stanfield International Airport (CYHZ/YHZ).

Our experienced team currently supports United States Air Force (USAF), United States Marine Corps (USMC), Royal Air Force (RAF), NATO and other Allied military aircraft transiting Halifax. Gateway's team includes former military logistics and liaison personnel who understand military operations, terminology, chain of command, mission priorities and the importance of rapid, accurate co-ordination. This experience allows Gateway to work effectively with aircrews, loadmasters, logistics personnel and mission planners—from initial coordination through aircraft departure.

Gateway has access to substantial aircraft parking areas capable of supporting aircraft up to and including Boeing 747-size aircraft. We provide U.S. military operators with a single point of contact for aircraft handling, cargo movements, ground support equipment, fuel coordination, crew requirements, aircraft parking, and mission-specific logistical support. Learn more at www.yhzgateway.com/

Hilton Software LLC

Hilton Software was founded in 2003 to develop outstanding multi-platform mobile solutions for Commercial and Military operations. Hilton Software is a prime contractor for the United States Department of Defense and the United States Department of Transportation. To date, Hilton Software has won over $50M in Government contracts.

Hilton Software is responsible for developing two advanced mobile software applications, WingX and Aero App. WingX has become a trailblazing application leading the way in game-changing features. Aero App is used throughout the United States Department of Defense and internationally by our United States Government Foreign Partners. Hilton Software has also become a pioneer in moving aeronautical geo-intelligence information to the cloud, providing fast and secure data. Our goal is to build enhanced capabilities and to promote safety through the integration of industry best practices, innovation and quality.

For more information, please visit www.hiltonsoftware.com.

Georgia Tech Research Institute

The Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) is the nonprofit, applied research organization of the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). GTRI is a designated University Affiliated Research Center (UARC) and leverages its science and engineering expertise, in collaboration with Georgia Tech, to enhance the impact of our collective research output. We advance technology and provide innovative solutions to:

- Enhance State of Georgia economic development.
- Serve National Security.
- Improve the human condition.
- Educate future technology leaders.

Jeppesen ForeFlight

Jeppesen ForeFlight provides mission-ready planning and situational awareness tools tailored to military aviation operations. Supporting military pilots and flight crews worldwide, ForeFlight offers secure, flexible solutions for mission planning, navigation, weather analysis, and data management designed to meet the unique demands of training, operational, and deployed environments. www.jeppesenforeflight.com

Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation

Gulfstream has served government customers with special mission aircraft since 1967. With advanced technology, extraordinary cruising altitude, impressive range at speed and interior flexibility, Gulfstream airframes are ideal for special missions. Today, more than 200 Gulfstream aircraft support governments in more than 40 countries around the world, including the U.S. Aircraft are configured for priority transport missions, security operations, advanced medevac and research. Gulfstream Customer Support delivers tailored service to special mission clients around the world.

Gulfstream's next-generation aircraft family features a Gulfstream for every mission, including the G400, G500, G600, G700 and G800, and represents industry-leading capabilities and technology in terms of high-speed performance, cruising range, size and cabin configurations.

Learn more, visit www.gulfstream.com/special-missions

JetZero

JetZero is an American aerospace company transforming both commercial and military aviation by developing blended wing body (BWB) aircraft. Founded in 2021 and headquartered in Long Beach, California, the company integrates the fuselage and wings into a single aerodynamic structure to increase aircraft range, expand payload capacity, and reduce fuel burn over legacy tube-and-wing aircraft.

JetZero was awarded a $235 million U.S. Air Force contract to build and fly a full-scale "Jet-1" prototype to demonstrate the BWB's efficiency and dual-use applications for commercial and military aircraft. Partnering with Northrop Grumman and its subsidiary Scaled Composites, JetZero has received advance commitments from United Airlines, Alaska Airlines, and Gulf Air, with its first production factory set for Greensboro, North Carolina.

Knight Aerospace

Knight Aerospace exists at the exciting intersection of aerospace, military, and medical technology. Our mission is to modernize aerospace transportation to be modular, adaptable, and customizable in an ever-changing world. We have established ourselves as the industry leader in providing quality and reliable "Quick-Change/Roll-On Roll-Off" modular and palletized systems. Knight's products allow its customers to quickly adapt their aircraft to fit their current needs. It has longstanding working collaborations with aircraft manufacturers, the U.S. defense community, and foreign militaries. For example, our newest product is an Aeromedical Biocontainment Module that allows for isolated medical transport units to be installed into a cargo aircraft in under one hour.

L2 Aviation

L2 Aviation provides global aircraft modification support services including avionics engineering, system design, repair, certifications, kitting and installation. Our customers include OEM, airlines, government/military, and business aviation. L2 specializes in complex avionics certified designs, integrated solutions, and remote installations focused on reducing aircraft downtime. L2 Aviation makes great planes BETTER!
Learn more at www.L2Aviation.com

L3Harris Technologies

L3Harris Technologies is an agile global aerospace and defense technology innovator, delivering end-to-end solutions that meet customers' mission-critical needs. For more than 65 years, L3Harris has delivered superior performance to the U.S. government, our allies and leading corporations throughout the world. L3Harris knows the critical role our products and services play in the protection and defense of freedoms worldwide. L3Harris delivers integrated solutions for global Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations, assured communications systems, and provides modernization, upgrade, sustainment, maintenance and logistical support for a wide variety of aircraft and ground systems for military, government and commercial customers. L3Harris is one of the world's preferred sources for highly customized design, integration and certification of mission communication systems and interiors for VIP/Head-of-State aircraft. With 400-plus locations worldwide, customers in over 100 countries with more than 48,000 employees, L3Harris has the capacity to modify and service hundreds of aircraft 24/7, supporting customers and the men and women who proudly serve our country. L3Harris is accelerating innovation and providing affordable solutions to fast forward to tomorrow.

Leonardo DRS

Leonardo DRS provides customers with the exact solutions they need, exactly when they're needed. Sustainment solutions, such as survivability, liquid logistics and life cycle sustainment, demonstrate their value every day to keep operations running at peak efficiency. DRS Land Systems is a business unit of Leonardo DRS headquartered in Saint Louis, Missouri with a 100-acre heavy equipment manufacturing facility in West Plains, Missouri, providing state-of-the-art engineering for and manufacturing of complex welded structures that meet the demanding requirements of today's Warfighter and commercial customers.

DRS Land Systems is proud of our unwavering support to Air Mobility Command Global Air Mobility Mission. Our system level overhaul, worldwide part supply, and globally positioned field service representatives ensure that both the Tunner 60K and the Halvorsen 25K Aircraft Cargo Loaders are mission ready to aid AMC airman in meeting their global commitments.

See the full range of our capabilities at www.leonardodrs.com

"There exist limitless opportunities in every industry. Where there is an open mind, there will always be a frontier."

- Charles F. Kettering

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Company

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration, and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products, and services.

Lockheed Martin Aeronautics is known for building and supporting the finest military aircraft in the world, which include the C-130 Hercules; C-5 Galaxy; P-3 Orion; U-2 Dragon Lady; F-16 Fighting Falcon; F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning.

The C-130 Hercules has earned its reputation of a proven workhorse supporting multiple missions around the world. From aerial refueling to search and rescue, fighting wildfires and special operations, the C-130 Hercules stands ready for its next mission. And for whatever the future holds. www.lockheedmartin.com/C130



MDS Coating

With more than 20 years of field-proven experience in the harshest environments, our BlackGold® protective coating for gas turbine engines reduces maintenance costs, fuel savings, and emissions while increasing engine time-on-wing. Learn more at https://www.mdscoating.com/



Massif

Massif is a leading supplier of flame-resistant, high performance protective apparel to the U.S. military and other professionals who work in extreme environments. Over the past 20 years, Massif has revolutionized the look and feel of flame-resistant clothing with innovative fabrics and forward-thinking designs, offering a new generation of high-end gear that sets the industry standard for protection, performance and comfort. www.massif.com



MIL2ATP

MIL2ATP offers a complete training package to help military pilots transition to airline flying. Learn more at mil2atp.com



Mattermost Government Solutions

Mattermost is an open source platform for developer collaboration and secure mission focused chat ops. Mattermost is currently deployed across the DOD in support of critical missions worldwide. Learn more at https://mattermost.com/solutions/industries/government/



Marshall

Marshall is one of the largest independent aerospace and defence companies in the world that delivers innovation and excellence in engineering, support solutions and services on civil and military aircraft platforms. Headquartered in Cambridge, UK, and with facilities in the USA, Canada and in the United Arab Emirates, we proudly serve a global customer base.

Marshall specializes in the conversion, modification, maintenance and support of civil and military aircraft and the provision of personnel, training and technical advice. Marshall is renowned and respected worldwide for quality of service, engineering excellence, flexibility and reliability. www.marshallgroup.com



McClellan Jet Services

McClellan Jet Services is a full service FBO open 365/24/7 and is located at the Sacramento McClellan Airport (KMCC). The airport is the site of the former McClellan Air Force Base. We have a 10,600 ft by 200 ft concrete runway with no weight restrictions and ample ramp that can support exercises of all sizes. McClellan Jet Services holds the Government fuel contract and charges no fees. We are also a great stop off before heading across the Pacific.



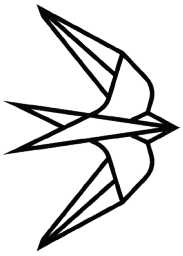
Mass Virtual

Mass Virtual leverages the latest transformative extended reality (XR) capabilities by fostering a customer-involved culture, award-winning team, and enterprise software platform, MassXR, to deliver customer-specific solutions. After fielding hundreds of XR solutions worldwide, Mass Virtual's team has honed its expertise in advanced architecture design, delivering digital solutions that are beyond words. This team continues to evolve the training landscape by utilizing MassXR to digitize training resulting in higher student retention, reduced time to train, and increased trainer availability. Mass Virtual's passionate team's foundation of creativity, ethics, and collaboration results in an empowered workforce ready to solve your challenges. https://massvirtual.com/



Merlin Labs

Merlin is a growth stage autonomy startup, building the world's most experienced pilot. The company's technology enables our customers to operate with reduced crew on existing platforms, while enabling uncrewed operations on future platforms. Primarily backed by Google Ventures, Merlin is dedicating $150M in research dollars to autonomy for civilian and defense mobility missions. Their current contracts include a $105m IDIQ with USSOCOM for C-130J operations and a CRADA with AMC/AFRL to enable integration and first flight onboard a KC-135 by mid-2025. The company is based in Boston, with offices in Denver and Auckland (NZ). The company maintains a dedicated flight test facility in the Mojave desert, adjacent to Edwards Air Force Base.



Metrea Strategic Mobility

Metrea Strategic Mobility (MSM delivers contracted air-to-air refueling services across a wide range of military operations to include; training, deployments, redeployments, depot inputs/outputs, exercise support, test support, etc. MSM serves as a force enabler, helping customers fulfill under-resourced refueling requirements.

Our KC-135R aircraft are equipped with two wing-mounted Multi-Point Refueling System (MPRS) pods which facilitate refueling with probe equipped Navy, Marine Corps and Allied nation aircraft. They are also equipped with an air refueling boom to refuel receptacle equipped receivers, such as US Air Force aircraft.

As the only company with KC-135s, Metrea offers a refueling service that seamlessly, safely, and professionally integrates into military aviation training and operations. Learn more at www.metrea.aero/msm/

MilKEEP

MilKEEP, LLC

Today, every large-scale enterprise maintains critical records in the cloud. The world's greatest Air Force should be no different. Right now, the vast majority of Air Force flight records still exist only on paper. MilKEEP aims to change that.

MilKEEP digitizes and stores military flight records for service members from all branches. It also converts military flight records to airline standards, making the application process seamless.

MilKEEP serves well beyond the individual. Bringing this data to the cloud creates a secure digital backup for government records. MilKEEP harnesses the power of this information unlocking a host of possibilities to gain efficiencies and readiness at the enterprise level. Safe, Secure, Proven. MilKEEP creates time saving tools for America's military! Learn more at www.milkeep.com

MILLION AIR™

Million Air - An Aviation Services Company

Million Air FBOs are well known throughout all branches of the Armed Forces as the preferred "Military FBO" where the military flight crew always comes first. Million Air has 36 locations, 21 with the DoD fuel contract: KAEX, KBZN, KELP, KGPT*, KBUR, PHJR*, KIND, KVQQ*, KCWF, KMFR, KMWH*, KSFB*, KRIV, KRME*, KSGU*, KHSA, KSYR, KTLH*, KFOE*, KVCV*, KNYL*. * Hot Fuel Approved

Training does not have to be tedious, performed at a boring destination, or with a business who sees you as just another aircraft and crew. Why not train hard where you are appreciated and pampered at the same time?

You can stay focused on the air-work, and our highly dedicated and trained ground crew will take care of everything after the landing. From seeing you get a real meal, hot fuel, quick-turns, IP/Student rooms for training command flights, to debriefing quarters and start carts... we have your back! In addition, we offer oxygen/nitrogen refills, aircraft and airport security, as well as concierge services, should you have some free time.

MODERN AVIATION

Modern Aviation

Modern Aviation is a growing FBO network delivering exceptional service and industry - leading safety. Learn more at www.modern-aviation.com

NORTHROP GRUMMAN

Northrop Grumman

Northrop Grumman is a leading global aerospace and defense technology company. Our pioneering solutions equip our customers with the capabilities they need to connect and protect the world, and push the boundaries of human exploration across the universe. Driven by a shared purpose to solve our customers' toughest problems, our employees define possible every day.

OMEGA AIR

Omega Aerial Refueling Services, Inc.

Omega Air is the global leader in contracted refueling services to the US Military and its allies. With more than 22 years of experience supporting the warfighter, Omega has earned an exceptional reputation by providing highly reliable and cost-effective strategic aerial refueling around the globe. Omega delivers seamless military support with commercial efficiencies delivering mission completion rates of 99%.

Omega uses highly reliable and thoroughly proven tanker platforms, the B-707 and the DC-10. These workhorses have been modified by Omega to ensure the highest possible redundancy. Omega has offered probe and drogue aerial refueling services for 22 years, and now offers boom aerial refueling services as well. Omega is able to maximize efficiency by overseeing most of the key components that go into the final product. These specialties include its own FAA 145 engine repair station, engineering support for modifications and R&D, maintenance scheduling, flight line maintenance, supply chain for spare parts and operational aircrews. www.omegaairrefueling.com

Omni Air International

Mission-focused and ready to serve, Omni Air International is a leading provider of worldwide passenger ACMI and charter services supporting U.S. and allied troop transportation, sports teams, subservice for other airlines, humanitarian and evacuation/disaster relief flights. From our start in 1993, we built our airline on safety and reliability, demonstrating our can-do spirit in 150 countries around the world. Our infrastructure, mature processes and extensive international experience enable us to respond to short-notice requests with seamless execution.

Omni Air International is an FAA Part 121 air carrier with flag and domestic authority and is an IOSA registered carrier. We've been a proud Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) participant since 1995, flying missions into 380 airfields last year alone. Our fleet of fuel-efficient B767-200ERs, B767-300ERs and B777-200ERs features modern cabins and technology, including the latest seatback entertainment and contemporary lighting.

We are honored to provide transportation services to the military community. Learn more about Omni Air International at www.oai.aero

PETRA DATA

Petra Data Inc. is a veteran-founded defense AI company purpose-built to deploy AI into operational reality. Through its subsidiaries, Vista Sora and Mazer Intel, Petra Data delivers AI-enabled mission planning for air operations and autonomous drone swarm coordination with canopy-penetrating ISR imaging. Our platforms are designed for the conditions warfighters actually face: edge-deployable, resilient, and built to perform when the environment doesn't cooperate. Petra Data exists to give warfighters the decision advantage they need, where they need it.

Vista Sora aids planners in rapidly visualizing the operating environment from initial exploration to real time monitoring with AI agents that plan, replan, and adapt as the situation evolves.

Mazer Intel combines computational imaging to reconstruct what's hidden beneath vegetation with coordination technology that keeps hundreds of drones flying safely without centralized control.

"Gold is good in its place; but living, brave, patriotic men, are better than gold."

- Abraham Lincoln

Oshkosh AeroTech

Oshkosh AeroTech supplies aerospace ground equipment (AGE) and material handling products for military applications. Product families include conditioned air, and bleed air carts for fighter and cargo aircraft. Oshkosh AeroTech supplies a range of ground power units supplying military grade 270VDC, 28VDC and 400 Hz power. Oshkosh AeroTech air and power models are available for use in hangar central systems, on the tarmac with towable carts, aboard Navy ships, in extreme (60ºC) desert environments, and as combination carts supplying both air and power. Combination carts also include pneumatics, power and hydraulic packages (AGPU) for rotary aircraft. Cargo handling equipment includes the Atlas and Halvorsen hi-lift loaders in 3, 4, and 5 pallet configurations, air-transportable loading docks, and pallet transport devices. Oshkosh AeroTech supplies military-capable deicers and passenger steps. Aircraft handling equipment for fighters and cargo aircraft includes heavy-duty conventional tow tractors and towbarless tractors suitable for use in the hangar and on the ramp. Military AGE from Oshkosh AeroTech designs include a number of all-electric or diesel / electric hybrid models. Oshkosh AeroTech products can be equipped with iOPS equipment monitoring and telematics capabilities. Learn more at www.oshkoshaerotech.com/

PHANTOM PRODUCTS INC

Phantom Products, Inc. is a third-generation family-owned business that designs and builds specialized lighting systems for US Military and Law Enforcement.

Since 1943, our family of engineers has been protecting US Service Personnel at home and abroad.

From WWII when we designed "floating water lights" for the US Navy to navigate the mine laden waters of Japan; to the Multiple Launch Rocket Systems' covert Phantom Map™ lights in the mid 1980's; to today, when every US Army Aviator wears a "combat-multiplying" Phantom Warrior® flashlight and our Phantom AZL-15® Expeditionary Airfield Lights are used by CCT Airmen worldwide—we work hand in hand with Soldiers, Government Civilians and Prime Vendors to save lives while reducing weight and cost. We believe there is no higher calling than wearing the uniform of the US Military.

It is our family's honor to design and build lights in America so that our troops come home to their families safely.

"Excellence is not a skill. It is an attitude."

- Ralph Marston

Parker Aerospace

Parker Aerospace is a global leader in flight control, hydraulic, fuel, inerting, fluid conveyance, thermal management, and engine systems and components used on the world's fleet of aircraft and aeroengines.
Phone: 949-833-3000
Website: www.parker.com

PatchPlus Consulting, Inc.

PatchPlus Consulting, Inc. is a Service Disabled Veteran Owned and Woman Owned Small Business (SDVOSB/WOSB) established in 2002. PatchPlus is focused on providing exceptional Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance (ISR), Space, Cyber, Command & Control (C2), and Air Mobility Operations technical expertise combined with practical operational experience to our customers. With graduates from the USAF Weapons School, Joint National Intelligence University, and National Defense University, PatchPlus is a team of recognized experts in the Intelligence, Targeting, Space, Cyber and Air Mobility operations fields. Our professionals have provided support and advanced training to U.S. and Allied/Partner tactical units and ISR planning to Combatant Commands, conducted high interest studies for senior Pentagon officials, presented government agency views to Congress, and supported Advanced Technology Development for DoD Research and Development (R&D) organizations. Learn more at www.patchplusconsulting.com

Port City Air

Portsmouth International Airport at Pease (KPSM), home to the 157th Air Refueling Wing and the Pease Greeters, has a rich and loyal history of serving and honoring our military. Port City Air (PCA), caretakers on the civilian side of the field continues this tradition by offering exemplary service for all military branches visiting Portsmouth, NH. As awardees of the DoD military fuel contract currently and in the past, PCA welcomes all types of military traffic, from the most basic trainer to the largest of transports with an emphasis on exceeding expectations.

Our mission-friendly, strategically located airport offers an 11,321 foot runway, 24/7 Customs, no PPR requirements, a fleet of complimentary crew cars, concierge service second to none and a ground staff well versed in providing operational support. We are your "boots on the ground" and pride ourselves on doing our part to make each mission an operational success. Please ask about our "Lobstah Run"! Say "Please" and we'll always say "Thank You" with our dedicated service!

Prestwick Aviation Services

Glasgow Prestwick Airport stands as Europe's premier military refuelling location, perfectly positioned on Scotland's stunning southwest coast and the Northern great circle route.

Our strategic location is ideal for military aircraft crossing the North Atlantic Ocean to and from the USA, as well as being located within close flying proximity to several major NATO land & sea exercise areas in the United Kingdom.

The airports flexible operating hours, open 24/7/365 with no restrictions ensure that military operations can proceed without interruption at any time. Prestwick Aviation Services enhances this advantage by offering all services in-house co-ordinated through a single point of contact, including DLA & NSPA aircraft refuelling, aircraft ground servicing, cargo handling and much more.

The combination of our strategic location, round-the-clock availability, and integrated services provision makes Prestwick Aviation Services the optimal choice for military aviation support in the United Kingdom.

For more information on Prestwick Aviation Services, visit https://prestwickaviationservices.com/

ProDIGIQ, Inc.

Headquartered in California, ProDIGIQ is a technology company focusing on innovative products and services for the aviation industry. Our expertise is in airfield and airline management, situational awareness and reporting.

ProDIGIQ offers innovative products including Airfield Management, Operations Management, Safety Management, Maintenance Management, Asset Management, Training Management and Aircrew Scheduling Systems. ProDIGIQ is honored to be currently supporting the US Air Force and welcomes you to stop by and meet our team. Learn more at https://www.prodigiq.com/site/aviation-software

QinetiQ, Inc.

QinetiQ's LAST Armor® (Light-appliqué Armor Systems Technology) is a supplemental, protective interior armor solution that provides high performance military ballistic protection. Our LAST Armor is used on a variety of military tactical vehicles including fixed and rotary wing aircraft. Both modular and permanent solutions can be easily installed without any tools. Our armor solution offers superior strength – five times stronger than commercial hook and loop products. LAST Armor has been used on thousands of combat air and land vehicles since its debut in Operation Desert Storm in 1991. For more information visit https://www.qinetiq.com/en-us/

COLLINS AEROSPACE | PRATT & WHITNEY | RAYTHEON

RTX

With more than 180,000 global employees, we push the limits of technology and science to redefine how we connect and protect our world. With industry-leading capabilities, we advance aviation, engineer integrated defense systems for operational success, and develop next-generation technology solutions and manufacturing to help global customers address their most critical challenges. The company, with 2025 sales of more than $88 billion, is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. Learn more at www.RTX.com

Robertson Fuel Systems

Robertson Fuel Systems, LLC (Robertson) a HEICO company, of Tempe Arizona is the world leader in design, development, production and sustainment of crashworthy and crash resistant fuel systems as well as refueling and defueling single point systems supporting both domestic operations and Agile Combat Employment (ACE) and special fueling operations in Austere locations. Learn more at https://robertsonfuelsystems.com/

Rolls-Royce North America

Rolls-Royce is a leader in the defense aero engine market. For decades, we have powered military operations around the world, safely transporting service members on their missions and bringing them back home. Our AE engine family has delivered more than 86 million flight hours, demonstrating dependable power across a number of military aircraft, including the workhorse of the U.S. Air Force: the C-130. Rolls-Royce is proud to have been chosen to reengine the B-52 for the Air Force and extend the life of the iconic bomber by 30 years. From combat to transport, to helicopters and lift systems, our engines and pioneering service solutions ensure that our customers have world-leading technology to meet the mission when and wherever it is. Learn more at www.rolls-royce.com.

SD Government

SD Government is a leading global operator of customized, secure end-to-end satellite connectivity services that deliver assured global access to networks, voice, data and video applications, and data on land and in the air. Each solution is scalable from simple point-to-point links to complete end-to-end, global solutions that are fully interoperable and seamlessly integrated with government networks for enhanced situational awareness and a faster response.

Providing customers with solutions across GEO, MEO and LEO satellite constellations, encompassing L, Ku, Ka and Mil-Ka frequency bands, SDG delivers innovative turnkey capabilities for military and government operators globally. The portfolio of services includes the provision of equipment, systems integration, ground networks, satellite airtime, training and 24/7/365 support.

Government customers trust SD to deliver resilient, agnostic solutions at the highest quality of service and customer support provided by an expert team of military veterans and technical experts familiar with handling complex communications requirements to support mission success.

SD Government is located at Satcom Direct World Headquarters in Melbourne, Florida.

"You don't concentrate on risks. You concentrate on results. No risk is too great to prevent the necessary job from getting done."

- Brig Gen. Charles E. "Chuck" Yeager, USAF (Ret.)

SNC

SNC is a trusted global leader in aerospace and national security. Our innovative solutions enable connected protection through command, control and communications systems, as well as ISR, cyber, electromagnetic spectrum management, and other high capabilities for systems across all domains – sea, land, air, space and cyber.

As a longstanding leader in defense technology, SNC is at the optimum intersection of commercial, defense and non-traditional contractors. We are one of the only privately owned mid-tier A&D contractors and we pride ourselves on our ability to invest early and often to ensure mission success on or ahead of schedule. It's part of our mission to always stay one step ahead; working on solutions today to solve the problems of tomorrow.

Founded in 1963, SNC is owned by Chairwoman Eren Ozmen and CEO Fatih Ozmen.

Specular Theory, Inc.

We are an award-winning technology company and SBIR firm that develops leading-edge VR/AR/Ai immersive training products for commercial and defense. Current customers include U.S. Air Force, Google, Accenture, and Zodiac Aerospace.

Founded in 2013, Specular Theory is a highly specialized and sought after immersive software company with decades of experience working in Hollywood Visual effects, AAA gaming, and consumer technology. As an early pioneer in this medium, Specular Theory has won more awards across categories than any other company in the space including winning the Walmart V-commerce Competition, the first-ever Streamy Award for Best VR, and Top 10 finalist in Richard Branson's Extreme Tech Challenge.

Our multidisciplinary expertise and deep understanding of how USAF can adopt immersive technologies provides an asymmetric competitive advantage. This is validated by our extensive award-winning track record, our unique background in Hollywood and Big Tech, and our ability to build successful, scalable products and systems. Learn more at www.speculartheory.com

Stratom, Inc.

Stratom is a global leader in the development of autonomous ground vehicles, ground support equipment, and robotic systems for commercial and defense applications. Specializing in autonomous cargo movement, munitions loading, robotic refueling, and robotic hazardous liquid transfer, the company's military-proven tools, methods, technologies and strategic services solve the most difficult logistics and operational challenges. Whether in safe, controlled settings or dynamic and challenging terrain, Stratom provides unique solutions to meet each customer's specific needs. With its extensive expertise in R&D, engineering and system integration of autonomous technologies and solutions, Stratom, a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business, is the go-to expert for global corporations, local businesses and government institutions. See more at www.stratom.com/

TITAN Aviation Fuels

TITAN is a leading global supplier of aviation fuel with over 600 branded locations in the United States. In addition to providing a secure supply of aviation fuels, TITAN provides a full array of non-fuel support services including a pilot loyalty program, aviation card processing, aviation insurance, quality control Training, ATLAS FBO Management Software, equipment leasing and financing, an online aviation parts store, and a customer focused mobile application. To learn more about TITAN Aviation Fuels and the services offered, please visit www.titanfuels.aero

TLD America

TLD develops, manufactures and supports Aerospace Ground Equipment for both the military and commercial markets. Learn more at https://www.tld-group.com/

Terma Inc.

Terma Inc. is a global provider of Self Protection Systems for mobility, special mission, fighter and rotary wing platforms.

Our Family Electronic Warfare Controller, ALQ-213 and ALQ-253, integrates any combination of EW subsystems into a coherent and complete systems solution on any type of aircraft. It provides added capabilities in terms of EW On-Board Training, Sensor System Correlation and Automatic Threat Response. The ALQ-213/253 is fielded on more than 2,500 aircraft globally – including various versions of the C-130H and C-130J.

Terma SAS-CMDS is a Counter Measures Dispenser System that accommodates advanced expendables. Compared to traditional CMDS systems, the SAS-CMDS provided increased flexibility and protection.

Terma Inc. is a subsidiary of Terma AS, a Danish Defense firm and is headquartered in Atlanta, GA and have locations in Washington DC, Warner Robins, GA and Ft. Worth, TX. Learn more at www.terma.com

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."

- Henry Ford

The Pilot Network

TPN is the world's premier online aviation networking community. Learn more at thepilotnetwork.com

USAA

USAA Provides insurance, banking, investment and retirement products and services to 10 million members of the U.S. military and their families. Known for its legendary commitment to its members, USAA is consistently recognized for outstanding service, employee well-being and financial strength. USAA membership is open to all who are serving or have honorably served our nation in the U.S. military and their eligible family members.

For more information about USAA, or to learn more about membership, visit usaa.com.

Viasat

Viasat is a global communications company that believes everyone and everything in the world can be connected. For more than 35 years, Viasat has helped shape how consumers, businesses, governments and militaries around the world communicate. Today, the Company is developing the ultimate global communications network to power high-quality, secure, affordable, fast connections to impact people's lives anywhere they are—on the ground, in the air or at sea. Learn more at www.viasat.com

VIRANIM

Viranim Technical Solutions (Viranim) is an SBA-certified Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) headquartered in Clearfield, Utah. Specializing in high-end Information Technology and Engineering Support Services, we deliver exceptional solutions in IT, cybersecurity, program management, logistics, and engineering to federal and Department of War (DoW) clients.

With over 50 years of combined executive experience supporting defense contracts, Viranim is committed to integrity, outstanding client support, strong work ethics, and community involvement. We empower air mobility and national defense missions through innovative, reliable technology solutions that enhance operational readiness and efficiency.

Viranim is proud to partner with the Airlift/Tanker Association to advance the vital objectives of America's air mobility enterprise. Learn more at www.viranim.com

Woodward Aviation (CYYR, CYQX, CYYT, CYDF)

Woodward Aviation is one of the largest jet fuel suppliers in Newfoundland and Labrador. With four locations strategically placed in Gander (CYQX), Goose Bay (CYYR), St. John's (CYYT) and Deer Lake (CYDF), Woodward Aviation is ideal for tech stops and crew rests for transatlantic flights. Woodward Aviation has over 60 years experience handling and refueling military aircraft and currently holds the Canadian military contract at all of their locations. From providing complimentary crew transportation to fuelling C5s, Woodward Aviation is a one stop shop for all your missions needs on the east coast of Canada.

Versar Global Solutions

Headquartered in Washington, DC, Versar Global Solutions provides full mission lifecycle solutions for challenges faced by our government and commercial Customers in the natural, built, and digital environments. With nearly 2,000 team members around the world, and a rich legacy spanning more than 70 years, Versar Global Solutions delivers a broad array of planning, analysis and risk management solutions, project and program management, operations and maintenance services, and information technology applications for environmental management and remediation projects, mission critical facilities and installations, and in support of readiness and contingency operations. Learn more at https://www.versar.com/

World Fuel Services

With an absolute focus on operational effectiveness, World Fuel Services develops tailored, integrated solutions to meet Defense and Military Aviation requirements wherever and whenever they are needed. With a track record of delivery excellence on a global scale, including in high-risk operational environments, we deliver safe, sustainable, and innovative fuel and energy solutions worldwide.

Leveraging our extensive experience in military operations, we have the full capability from supply chain build outs to testing and managing extreme operational conditions to help you deliver your mission, on time and on budget.

Your military flight operations demand fuel supply reliability. We deliver multiple grades of high-quality military jet fuel for Defense, and Military around the world. Our fuel and energy solutions are relied upon to sustain military operations, safely and securely.

Our goal is to be the world's leading responsive, reliable, and resilient provider of Defense & Military energy solutions. We proudly hire and train veterans and active-duty members of the military for a trusted operational partnership you can count on. ■

Industry Highlights



Brig. Gen. Marty Chapin
USAF (Ret)

Welcome to Orlando and our annual Airlift/Tanker Association Symposium and Tech Expo! This event is the culmination of a year of hard work planning, coordinating, and executing the premier symposium dedicated to the Air Mobility mission; and more importantly, the Mobility Airmen who make it happen. Much of this work is done by volunteers who support our organization simply because they understand that this mission and these Airmen are what underwrite nearly every other capability in the Department. I'm proud to be one of those volunteers and I hope each of you enjoy attending this year's symposium…and the Halvorsen Exhibit Hall in particular…as much as I have enjoyed helping to bring it all together.

Any sharp-eyed readers may note that these are the exact words I started my article with for last year's symposium edition of the A/TQ. Sadly, those words rang a little hollow with the cancellation of our annual event in Nashville. That said, I put a lot of thought into that introduction, so I wanted to make sure it got used to proper effect!

Rebounding from last year's cancelled symposium proved to be more challenging than many of us thought. What initially seems to be a straightforward process of reservation rollovers or cancellations, turned out to be much more complex than I expected. And if I am honest, there was even a little concern over how all of you would react to last year's unfortunate outcome. Would we face headwinds getting everyone back on board in the exhibit hall? Would there be lingering concerns over another government shutdown? How much support would A/TA continue to have from our partners in industry following an unprecedented event like that?

I am extremely pleased to relay that any concerns I might have harbored have been soundly put to rest. First, all of you were more supportive than I would have ever imagined, to include countless expressions of understanding for the predicament we faced. On behalf of the entire Board of Officers, we are profoundly grateful for your understanding. Just as important, the response to exhibiting with us in 2026 has been record setting. This year we will see more exhibitors, more companies, and more new companies than we have had at A/TA in many decades.

In light of what looks to be another record-setting symposium and exhibit hall, it's worth reflecting on why we do what we do. Why does all this matter? This brings me back to another theme that I highlighted last year: the importance of the Air Mobility Community. My point last year was that amid all the uncertainty, change, and sometimes even angst that surround our daily lives, for me A/TA provides a place of comfortable familiarity. Officially, we capture this in our A/TA mission to "Support Mobility Airmen, Preserve Mobility Culture, and Strengthen Mobility Bonds"…but I think "comfortable familiarity" works too.

It does not matter if you are a life-long partner from industry, an active-duty Airman (or Soldier, Sailor, Marine, or Guardian!), a Reservist or member of the Guard, a retired Airman, or some combination of the above. If you are here, you are part of our Air Mobility community. I hope this feels like family. I hope you sense how much this community cares about the mission and those that execute it every day. And I hope you feel good about what you bring to our mission and our Airmen. I know "feeling good" about being here doesn't help with your Contact/Networking Report that you probably owe back to Corporate, but I think it still plays an important role in bringing you back year after year.

It is this sense of community and family that makes A/TA different from every other convention, symposium, or trade show that I have ever attended. The speakers, the seminars, the access to senior mobility leaders, and the professional development are real, and they are excellent. What sets us apart is walking into a hall and recognizing the mission in the faces around you. If you are returning to the family again this year, "welcome home!" If you are new to A/TA, I hope you come away from this year's symposium feeling good about your time here. Either way… we are glad you are here!

Please enjoy Orlando, the Gaylord Palms, and this year's symposium. Find an old friend. Make a new contact. Sit in on a seminar or a keynote; they are open to everyone. And spend an evening in the Heritage Room. It'll make you feed good…I promise.

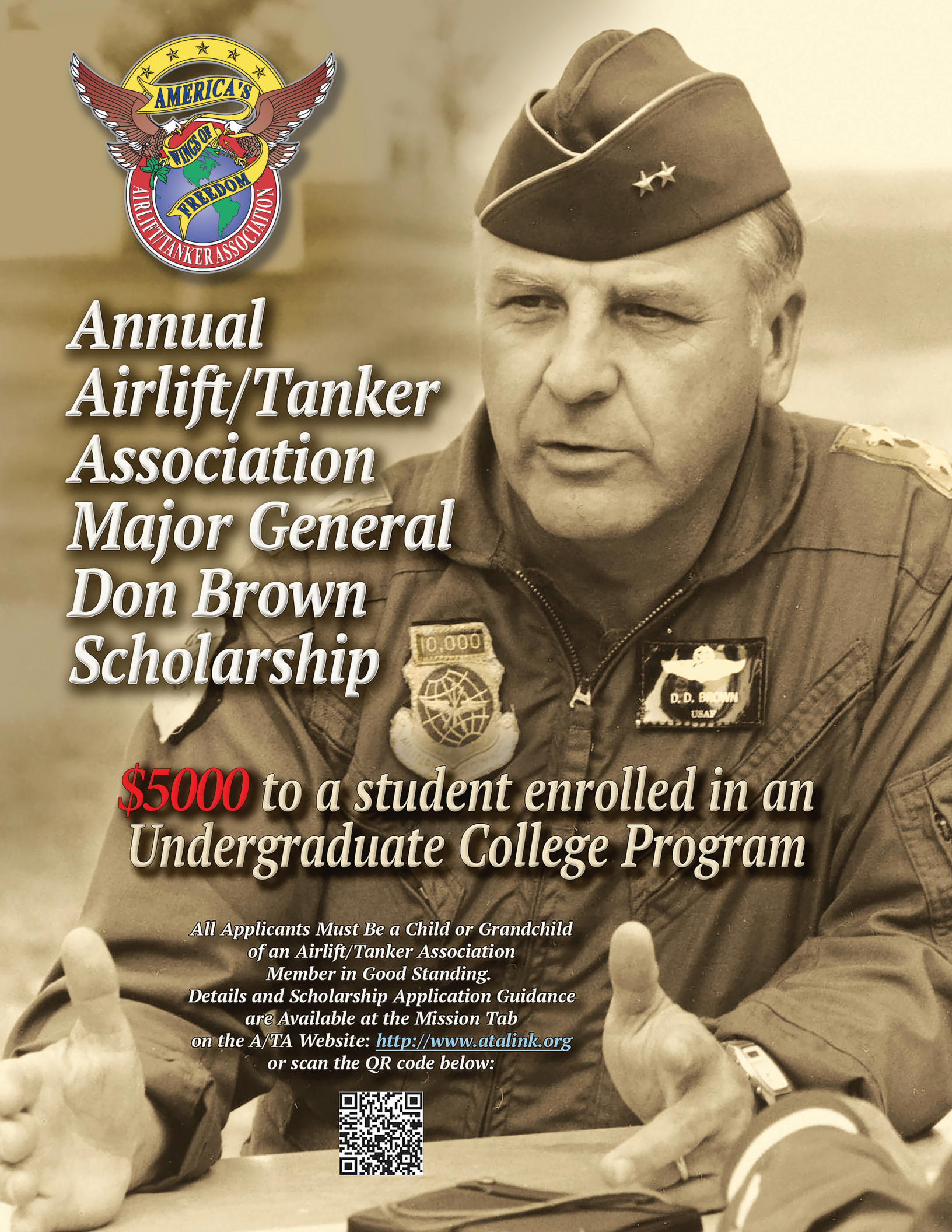
I look forward to meeting as many of you as this whirlwind week allows. I'll see you on the floor!

Marty Chapin
A/TA Vice President Industry
industryvp@atalink.org

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A/TA Industry Partnership remains a bargain at the annual rate of $2200. Industry Partner benefits include a reduced exhibit rate, opportunity to select your exhibit location (based on established criteria), a write-up with your logo in the convention issue of the *Airlift/Tanker Quarterly* (as well as a listing on our website) and five "free" individual memberships. A new and exciting benefit for our Industry Partners is our Industry Partner News page on our website. This is a place where you can share information about new products/services or company news. Contact Sondra Hart at ata@atalink.org or 423-902-2297 to become an A/TA Industry Partner today.





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AIRLIFT/TANKER QUARTERLY
Volume 34 • Number 4 • Fall 2026 • ISSN (2578-4064)
AN AIRLIFT / TANKER ASSOCIATION PUBLICATION
The Airlift/Tanker Association
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