

# Mobility Air Forces Strategic Vision - 2015



Air Mobility Command  
U.S. Air Force



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## *Commander's Intent*

This strategic vision responds to our Air Force Strategy's call to action by providing the mobility enterprise a path forward. It represents a peek over the horizon by delivering strategic vectors to guide our 20 year plan. The mobility enterprise is strategically agile and globally responsive, providing Global Reach to support our five AF core missions. Our enterprise is successful because of our Airmen; they lead the way for the movement, positioning, and sustainment of forces with the interoperable employment of airlift, air refueling, and aeromedical evacuation. Through superior training and retention of our best Airmen, the Air Force will be stronger tomorrow than today.

The United States Air Force Core Values are the guide for all members of the Air Force family to understand, live by, and cherish. The ageless values, "Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do" remain the price of admission to our Air Force, guide our ethics, and serve as a beacon for professional conduct...for all of us. Every word matters and our service must live up to these ideals.

Mobility forces support numerous missions for joint and coalition forces. However, our number one priority is to continue to provide superb service to our no-fail missions of Presidential airlift, prime nuclear airlift, and our support to U.S. Strategic Command. To meet tomorrow's operations, our mobility enterprise strategic vectors for the future are:

- Execute and sustain Rapid Global Mobility
- Enhance mobility partnerships
- Prepare mobility forces for tomorrow
- Develop and care for Airmen and their families

As we face a fiscally constrained future we must have the courage to critically examine our processes and be willing to throw out the ones of little value or that are no longer needed. We're going to be a smaller Air Force; we're going to be a slightly different Air Force. But at the end of the day, we'll still be the most powerful Air Force in the world.

Whenever America calls, the mobility enterprise will answer.

DARREN W. McDEW

General, USAF

Commander

*Unrivaled Global Reach for America ... Always!*

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## ***Premise***

The mobility enterprise consists of the air and service components that are assigned or exercise command authority over air mobility forces. This enterprise conducts operations globally in support of United States national interests. Rapid global mobility underpins the other Air Force core missions by providing deployment and sustainment capability and by delivering humanitarian relief where and when needed. This ability to rapidly respond and span the globe is what keeps us relevant as a full spectrum force.<sup>1</sup> Today's air mobility capability, while strong, requires a comprehensive, integrated approach to meet tomorrow's demands across a 20 year planning horizon.

## ***Air Force Strategic Guidance***

The Air Force Strategy, *America's Air Force: A Call To The Future*, mandates that we provide a globally responsive force through our five core missions of air and space superiority; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; rapid global mobility; global strike; and command and control.<sup>2</sup> As the air component to United States Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM), Air Mobility Command provides assigned and allocated air mobility forces to USTRANSCOM, in support of its role as the single manager for transportation and patient movement for the Department of Defense. Air mobility forces enable USTRANSCOM to rapidly project national power and influence—anywhere, at any time.<sup>3</sup> As lead command for the air mobility mission area, Air Mobility Command is entrusted to guide and mature mobility capabilities, operational concepts, and force structure. This document articulates Air Mobility Command's vision for 2035.

## ***Characteristics of the Future Operating Environment***

The mobility operating environment is influenced by four global trends: geopolitics, natural resources, challenges to the global commons, and the speed of technological change.<sup>4</sup> Rapid changes will likely be the norm for the future and will challenge mobility operations. Our success will be measured by our ability to adapt to these changes and aggressively pursue a path of strategic agility. In this context, "agility" is meant to capture the attributes of flexibility and responsiveness.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *America's Air Force: A Call To The Future*, United States Air Force, page 17

<sup>2</sup> *America's Air Force: A Call To The Future*, United States Air Force, page 6

<sup>3</sup> United States Transportation Command, *Our Story 2013-2017*, page 3

<sup>4</sup> *Air Force Strategic Environment Assessment 2014-2034*, page 2

<sup>5</sup> *America's Air Force: A Call To The Future*, United States Air Force, page 8

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We anticipate a future that requires the Air Force to provide rapid global mobility to remote, austere, and distributed locations in contested environments.<sup>6</sup> Advanced threat capabilities, the changing international political scene, and withdrawal of U.S. forces from overseas bases will increase our nation's reliance on rapid global mobility. The availability of air refueling assets will be a major limiting factor for joint operations as users rely more heavily on this capability to enable their operations. A clear understanding of these trends will prove critical in our efforts to posture for the future.

### ***Strategic Vectors for the Future***

#### **Execute and Sustain Rapid Global Mobility**

Mobility forces must focus on increasing the effectiveness of support to the warfighter. In line with the Air Force Vision, we will modernize our capabilities, leverage technology, and increase efficiencies to reduce operating costs and deliver improved capabilities.<sup>7</sup>

In order to provide rapid global mobility for the nation, we must maintain access regardless of the obstacles placed in front of us. Over the past few decades our success in deploying and sustaining forces has been predicated on a viable en route system with access to supporting infrastructure, personnel, and fuel systems. We must maintain and expand this essential capability to project and sustain power. However, proliferation of anti-access and area denial systems demands that we develop capabilities and operational concepts that enable us to fight from a distance and from austere dispersed locations. The right air mobility fleet enhancements are essential to maintaining current and future capabilities. To enhance the survivability of our forces we must research and field defensive systems capable of defeating modern threats and provide stand-off precision point of need delivery systems. Improvements are needed to survive and conduct operations following the employment of chemical, biological, nuclear, or radiological weapons. Emerging concepts, such as swarming remotely piloted or autonomous refueling and cargo delivery vehicles, need to be wargamed and tested to see what advantages they may hold for accessing highly contested areas. In addition to man-made obstacles, weather continues to disrupt 24-hour access to locations around the world. Operations in austere areas drive the need for all-weather approach and landing capability, independent of external navigation aids, and the ability to utilize rough, semi-improved landing zones.

As a global capability, aeromedical evacuation is critical to supporting the movement of casualties with increased efficiency and effectiveness. For the future, aeromedical evacuation operations will pursue

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<sup>6</sup> Global Vigilance, Global Reach, Global Power for America, United States Air Force, page 7

<sup>7</sup> A Vision for the United States Air Force - 2013

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capabilities to safely transport both stabilized and stabilizing patients by air. Operational-clinical synergy of the mission must continue to be enhanced through advanced medical care, in-flight access to electronic health records, and equipment initiatives.

The potential exists for improved support to the warfighter through the use of a secure global command and control capability. Such a system must integrate with joint command and control and support operations in an anti-access/area denial environment. Networked command and control and situational awareness tools will enable commanders and forces to rapidly adapt to events in a complex battlespace.

### **Enhance Mobility Partnerships**

Warfighter success is dependent on our continued teaming with commercial air carriers. To meet USTRANSCOM goals and maintain the surge capacity necessary to meet our nation's transportation needs, we must continue to foster our relationship with industry through the Civil Reserve Air Fleet program.<sup>8</sup> USTRANSCOM and Air Mobility Command recently completed a thorough Civil Reserve Air Fleet study and will implement program changes that ensure its continued viability. Civil Reserve Air Fleet readiness will be a part of our decision calculus and it will remain a vital segment of our airlift enterprise into the foreseeable future.

We have integrated and organized our Active, Reserve, and Guard forces to leverage the unique strengths and perspectives of each in order to execute the mobility mission.<sup>9</sup> With over half of all mobility aircraft assigned to Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command units, we lead the Air Force in operating as a Total Force. The classic and active association mix provides a flexible template to meet operational requirements in both surge and steady state periods while retaining a viable strategic reserve for emergencies. For over 40 years this construct has worked well. To ensure readiness and access to resources, especially when high operations tempo becomes steady-state for a lengthy period, it's essential to optimize the composition and development of our associate programs. We will continually evaluate our Total Force partnerships, to include contingency response forces and Director of Mobility Forces leadership roles, and explore the integrated staff construct. Readiness will be a prime concern as we balance the assignment of aircraft to Active, Reserve, and Guard units, while we ensure timely access and mission responsiveness.

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<sup>8</sup> United States Transportation Command: Our Story, 2013-2017, page 7

<sup>9</sup> A Vision for the United States Air Force - 2013

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Mobility forces supporting combatant commanders and overseas major commands contribute to building key relationships and capabilities with partner nations, promoting U.S. strategic interests, and providing for essential peacetime and contingency access. The Contingency Response Wing enables efficient airlift and air refueling operations. It is the foundation for training, advising, and assisting partner nations on the effective application of air mobility operations. Its Mobility Support Advisory Squadrons mentor, advise, and instruct partner nations' air forces to enable those partners to share the costs and responsibilities of global leadership.<sup>10</sup> More importantly, the relationships built as a result of these efforts lay the groundwork to obtain access to host nation facilities when needed. As enablers of a deployed capability, the Contingency Response Wing and Air National Guard Contingency Response Group work in partnership with the USTRANSCOM Joint Task Force Port Opening capabilities that are synchronized with theater delivery to achieve the greatest possible forward projection capability.<sup>11</sup>

### **Prepare Mobility Forces for Tomorrow**

In both recapitalization and modernization programs, it is critical 1) for requirements to be rigorously validated and clearly understood, 2) that programs use mature technologies ready for integration into mobility aircraft, and 3) that acquisition or modification programs are properly and aggressively managed through a disciplined acquisition process. Improving air mobility requires more than just acquiring aircraft with enhanced performance capabilities. We also need to review processes and make changes where needed to realize the full potential that modernized aircraft and equipment bring to the joint force.

Air refueling capability will be improved through a recapitalized and modernized tanker fleet. The air refueling fleet in 20 years will contain the KC-46 and a second tanker recapitalization increment. We will mitigate the risk of the aging KC-135 fleet by retaining some modernized KC-135s until they are replaced. Future needs include expanded capability to refuel the next generation of remotely piloted aircraft and conduct refueling in contested airspace. In the far-term, next generation tankers must be capable of supporting conventional air refueling via remote or semi-autonomous operations. Additionally, we will examine the potential benefits from operating unmanned tanker aircraft.

For the near to mid-term, the core intratheater airlift fleet will remain an aircraft with medium lift capabilities enabling it to effectively support the majority of intratheater airlift requirements. The existing C-130 fleet, as recapitalized through C-130J acquisition, meets this capability today, but may not be a long-term solution.

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<sup>10</sup> Mobility Support Advisory Squadrons Reach Full Potential, Inside AMC, 14 Jan 2013

<sup>11</sup> United States Transportation Command: Our Story 2013-2017, page 8

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Future Army combat vehicles are anticipated to exceed the C-130's size and weight capability. As such, there exists a need to refine emerging joint needs through a fiscally disciplined approach. The exact requirements for a new aircraft will be dependent on changes in the joint forces' integrating operational concepts.

With most military forces based in the continental U.S., air mobility is vital to conduct rapid deployment operations over intertheater distances. The future intertheater airlift fleet will include C-5Ms and modernized C-17s. The next strategic airlifter capable of delivering outsized cargo, known today as the C-X, will replace the C-5Ms and eventually the C-17s in the far-term. It must be more efficient and effective as we streamline from two platforms to, eventually, one. In developing C-X alternatives, we will explore autonomous systems and the use of remotely piloted aircraft for routine cargo deliveries or to conduct resupply of friendly forces under fire.

### **Develop and Care for Airmen and their Families**

Air mobility operations depend upon motivated, innovative, highly trained Airmen, able to integrate seamlessly with joint and coalition forces. Our Airmen must have the proper tools, education opportunities, and skills required to accomplish our mobility mission. We will continue to support and implement Air Force level programs designed to ensure our families are well supported with Airmen and Family Readiness Centers, quality family housing, child care and youth centers, and access to first-rate health care.

For Air Mobility Command to harness corporate memory and its intellectual capital for readiness and continual innovation, we must become a learning organization. Educating and training our Airmen must include new delivery methods that ensure more effective learning through the continuum of education. We must embrace and incorporate the new content and delivery methods that are becoming available to our youth. Failure to do so can yield "negative learning" and slow the development of our Airmen.<sup>12</sup> Our desire is for Airmen to become lifelong learners and for our leaders to foster a culture of collaboration and calculated risk-taking.

### ***Conclusion***

The mobility enterprise will continue to be an essential element of our nation's defense posture and is necessary for the nation to be globally engaged. Our focus will remain centered on improving effectiveness through a balanced, fiscally disciplined approach to rapid global mobility.

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<sup>12</sup> America's Air Force: A Call To The Future, United States Air Force, page 9