

**Major General Corey J. Martin  
J3, Transportation Command**

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**Moderator:** Good afternoon and welcome. I'm Thom Shanker. I'm the Director of the Project for Media and National Security at George Washington University and I'm really honored to have as our guest for this Defense Writers Group Major General Corey J. Martin of the Air Force who serves as Director of Operations, J3 of course, of U.S. Transportation Command.

General once again, sir, welcome. We're really honored to have you here today for our discussion.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Thom, thank you. It's an honor to be with you. I appreciate you assembling the group to hear about TRANSCOM's part of the new operation. Thank you.

**Moderator:** As per our format, General, I'll ask the first question and then we'll go to the correspondents for an hour, and the last couple of minutes we'll turn back to you for any wrap-up.

I was intrigued, General, last week up on Capitol Hill General Mark Milley, the Chairman of course, told Congress that the NEO was, in his words, a tactical success but a strategic failure. That to me was a very powerful thought.

Now I know that you were not part of the political discussion or the political decisions, but as the Director of Operations can you give us some insight into the tactical challenges that that NEO faced? In particular, what's your insider's view, sir, of how TRANSCOM coordinated all the tactical global elements with the interagency and with the foreign partners for that mass evacuation?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Thanks for that question, Thom. You're right, a lot of great work by the men and women of Transportation Command in August. And I think it's fitting that Transportation Command was well positioned to take on an operation like this based on our global responsibilities and some of the

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interconnectedness that you talked about.

One thing that maybe is not known is some of that connectivity started early. So it started with planning. Even though the timing of this event was not known and was a bit of a surprise, it was not starting from scratch. So there had been planning, and Transportation Command, some people in my Directorate of Operations, were integrated with Central Command and with the Joint Staff as far back as April when the President directed the retrograde operations out of Afghanistan. So that planning for a potential NEO spanned that operation. Then even after June, after the completion of the retrograde, they continued to revisit the NEO plan knowing again, likely, whether it was months or a year, that we would do that.

So I think one important point is we didn't start from scratch.

Another one that maybe is less known is that General Lyons is the Commander of Transportation Command and has standing authorities that really allow for rapid and agile repositioning of mobility forces. So it allows me as the Director of Operations to direct the operational movement of C-17s, KC-135 aircraft, without having to go to the Pentagon or to ask the Joint Staff or the Secretary of Defense in order to have operational control. He already has operational control of those mobility assets and those personnel. So that allowed that direction of operational movement to be ready to take combat forces literally almost overnight to Hamid Karzai International in the face of the advancing Taliban to secure that airfield and allowed for the movement of evacuees out and then the redeployment of the combat forces we needed.

Then I think maybe even more to the core of your question is that there was a lot of coordination at General Lyons' level, so he was multiple times a day able to talk to the Secretary, to the Chairman, to fellow combatant commanders. At my level at least twice a day the Director of Operations at the Joint Staff had myself and then the combatant commands that were involved - Central Command, European Command and Northern Command. We talked multiple times a day.

Then at TRANSCOM we were a global operations center which is really the heartbeat of operations at TRANSCOM, more than just the J3. All elements of TRANSCOM. But that is where at kind of an action officer level there was integration with Department of

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State personnel, Customs and Border Patrol, FAA, and of course internally the habitual relationships we have with other combatant commands that allowed us to identify if there were seams within the DoD or within the interagency and quickly address those.

So I think foundational, those are three things that come to my mind. We have pre-planning. We're postured globally in a way to have an immediate force be ready to go anywhere in the world, kind of tonight or decisive force when we need it. We have that in place. There are authorities that allow us to do that. And then we have habitual relationships both within DoD and the interagency that allow us to quickly collaborate on a problem set like the evacuation out of Afghanistan.

**Moderator:** Thank you for that, sir.

The first question goes to Lolita Baldor of the Associated Press.

**DWG:** General, thanks a lot.

My question goes to some of the impact that the NEO had on your aircraft and the crews. I'm wondering if you can address that, because I know there had to be some refurbishments, et cetera. Can you talk about the strain on the force as well as on the aircraft. And looking ahead, how are you postured to do what remains of the NEO which is getting a lot of the Afghans from the Middle East and Europe into the U.S. Thank you.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Lolita, thank you. I think the heart of your question is what we call readiness. So our aircraft and our air crews clearly as we look back, were ready to take on this operation. So we look at just the maintenance reliability of an airplane like the C-17 during this operation which was over 90 percent reliable. So every 20 times it was scheduled to take off, 18 or 19 times it was ready to go. So that was a testament to the maintainers that made those aircraft ready and then continued to keep them ready throughout the operation, far from their home stations as well as crews that were able to continue to turn. So the readiness to begin the operation was there.

And to your point of just the strain on the aircraft and the crews, I immediately as a former crew member myself, would put myself in their flight boots and just look at some of the amazing things that they were doing. Clearly you'd have to go to some of

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the crew members themselves to get the stories of what they went through. But the aircraft and the air crew both, coming out of what we call a surge operation. So to just give you an idea of scale, today for instance probably 60 plus or minus a few C-17s are doing global missions around the world today. Ten, plus or minus a few, C-5s for instance.

During that period of time, that surge in August, we had 60 C-17s that were just focused on the Central Command area of responsibility. So a surge in that area.

Then globally at the peak, nearly 100 C-17s in operation. So there was a surge of aircraft, and obviously a surge of crews. So any time we surge like that, both the aircraft and the air crew need time to kind of regain that readiness.

So that is occurring right now. As I said today there are probably 60 plus or minus a few C-17s flying around so it's not like they've taken a knee and stopped, but the aircraft have to look at some maintenance that would be deferred during a surge operation. And the crews not just from a rest standpoint, but our crews, when you talk about readiness, they have to be ready to do a NEO evacuation. They have to be ready to respond to a humanitarian disaster. They have to be ready to take on a near peer adversary. So they train for that. Part of that reconstitution period for the few as well as just kind of recovering from the pace they were at, is also having training opportunities to focus on some of those different mission sets that Transportation Command is responsible for being ready for.

That hopefully gets at your question on kind of the readiness piece and how the aircraft will get a little extra attention following a surge as well as the air crew.

The second part of your question, there's still work to be done, and there is still work to be done, there are still between 10,000 and 15,000 of the Afghan evacuees that are outside of continental United States that will flow to the U.S. That movement was paused for a while. It was because there were cases of measles identified. All the evacuees have been administered MMR, the 21 day waiting period that the Center of Disease Control recommended for a wait time. That time period of receiving shots and waiting has concluded in many places in Europe and in Central Command.

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So on Tuesday the first flight out of Europe took off and arrived in Philadelphia, in the U.S. And today, in fact as I was walking in here, the second flight was probably landing and a third flight had just taken off. So that process of continuing movement out of European Command and Central Command is underway, and I believe a flight will leave from Central Command either later today or tomorrow. So that process has started again. However, that is using commercial aircraft, either contracted by the Department of State or that is contracted by the Department of Defense. So in this story certainly as I talk about Transportation Command, even though commercial aircraft are not something that we own in Transportation Command, they are invaluable. They're vital to our day-to-day mission and this would be an instance where a passenger aircraft, a civilian airliner, tailormade for the transportation of large quantities of people, not necessarily a C-17 or a C-5 aircraft. So we're able to use really the best tool for the job. But that movement of the evacuees has restarted. I hope that gets at your question.

**DWG:** A quick clarification, you said a second flight was landing, first flight had taken off, and then you said a flight will leave CENTCOM later today. So is that four total or did I converge two of them.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Your math is correct. There was a flight that completed on Tuesday. Two have departed Europe today. I was just saying that I think the first of those two today schedule wise should have already touched down in America. And then yes, there is scheduled to be a flight out of Central Command as well today.

Starting this weekend I think we'll see a more consistent daily movement as again, the timelines that were required for the MMR shots reach the 21 days, we'll have more of a consistent flow.

**Moderator:** The next questioner is Kimberly Underwood of Signal Magazine. Are on on? Okay.

Rachel Cohen of Air Force Times.

**DWG:** Thanks for doing this.

You've mentioned the commercial fleet a couple of times now. I'm wondering what this whole experience taught you about working

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with commercial entities going forward for really large-scale things. Whether you think TRANSCOM needs to increase the number of companies that it works with and what the challenges you faced during the evac were because they're commercial and not military.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Thanks, Rachel. I maybe touched on it earlier, but there is an enduring relationship between Transportation Command and commercial industry. In this case we're talking about commercial air, but there's also commercial sealift on a daily basis that is doing a preponderance of the sealift for Transportation Command, so there's an enduring relationship with industry.

Within that, any commercial airline could bid for work with Transportation Command. But the companies that are within the Civil Reserve Air Fleet pool that do get preferential contracting to be in that pool so that in a time of national need, Transportation Command can recommend and the Secretary of Defense can activate craft.

So we are working with the commercial partners on a daily basis, so this was just an extension of a robust relationship that we have with them.

Our Deputy Commander in particular, because of some of the challenges that happened during COVID, has really deepened that relationship specifically with the air carriers over the last year and a half as we've worked through some of the challenges during COVID. So the timing of needing some of that support during this operation I think was good in the sense that there's a very tight relationship between Transportation Command and the commercial carriers.

So your question of is it sufficient, our Air Mobility Command runs that CRAF program and their reports continually, despite some of the setbacks of COVID, is that CRAF is sufficiently subscribed to for the needs of Transportation Command.

**DWG:** I'm wondering about just given the department's focus on I guess the strategic competition now and not great power competition, but talking about the vulnerability of military assets to do really large-scale operations. I mean commercial airplanes would be more so. So I'm wondering how you think your relationship as TRANSCOM with companies should be as the threat environment kind of changes for whatever you guys might have to

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do in the future.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Excellent question. Regardless of the environment, the commercial aircraft will work in a low threat environment, in a non-contested environment or the lowest contested environment that we can. What changes over time as the environment gets more contested as far as there will be a decision of how far from the United States are they able to operate? What locations allow them, without the advantage that the organic military aircraft have of defensive systems and crews that have been trained in certain tactics, techniques and procedures to work in that environment.

So it's not really a change in the relationship as much as the threat levels will dictate on the locations that commercial airliners can go. And I think it's important to know that that is a call that they are always able to make even in a time of CRAF activation. From a safety standpoint the carrier would always have the ability to say that whatever they were undertaking, if they deemed that unsafe, that they would be able to bring that to TRANSCOM.

So the relationship I think unchanged. Just as the operational environment changes and becomes more contested, some locations that maybe 10 years ago that we would think in a hiring conflict that a commercial aircraft would fly into, possibly they would not go that far anymore.

**DWG:** Hi, Kimberly Underwood. I'm sorry I wasn't able to unmute earlier. Thanks, General, for your time today.

I had a technology related question. I wanted to ask based on your experience with the evacuation, are there any technologies that you'll be looking for as far as command and control to improve operations? Are there any demand signals that you'll send or that you have sent or will send as far as technology you'll need for the future from the major commands or other organizations that support you? Thank you.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Thanks, Kimberly. A larger after-action report activity is underway so we'll have more robust findings. If you're just asking for kind of some initial thoughts, two that I would offer that would have IT connections to them, and I'll do this one that's more about command and control second to your question.

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The first one is we found that there was an urgency to get, for instance, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne out of Fort Bragg and they were flying out of the air base at Charleston because Pope's Runway was under construction, so to get the 82<sup>nd</sup> out of South Carolina there was an urgency to do that. So velocity was paramount in order to get them to Hamid Karzai International [HKIA].

That does not necessarily allow some of our systems that we rely on for what we call in-transit visibility to kind of keep that pace. So I think we have some systems that are used to a more deliberate process of deploying a unit and are not necessarily as agile as they need to be when a unit that is on alert for any number of missions around the world gets a specific mission and then now has realized it has to maybe [care] and tailor what equipment it's going to use for that mission.

So I think we need to look at the process that allows for a much more rapid response and the IT that would be nimble enough to keep up with that.

We did not allow IT limitations to make airlift a limiting factor. We made sure that airlift was there. And we needed just the basic information to make sure that it was going to be a safe flight with whatever was on board from the Army. But that comes at a sacrifice of a bit of the overall visibility of numbers of things and which aircraft they're on. So that's I think one initial thought and I'm confident that will probably come out in a more formal after-action report.

For the second point, I think this operation would speak to the utility of a Joint All Domain Command and Control system that has more wide sensors and a greater sharing of information. So even though this was a very focused operation and not at all on the scale of a war plan, it was obvious that there was time still spent on point to point communications to discuss individual data points, numbers of people cleared to travel, or airplanes and where they were at, that if there was a system more like what I think JADC2 - Joint All Domain Command and Control system envisions - that you would have authoritative data that is shared more quickly at different echelons. It did not, again, inhibit a successful completion of this exercise, but it highlights I think areas that if we were going to take an operation like this, scale it to a larger exercise, you would want to have that type of interoperability without human interface needed to accelerate



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operations.

**Moderator:** The next question is to Eric Schmitt of the New York Times.

**DWG:** Thanks for doing this.

Just a question about the evacuation. Obviously the extreme circumstance under which you did that, but are there already lessons learned that you've been able to start drawing from that and looking ahead for future operations?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Thanks, Eric. I think the ones that come to mind immediately are the ones I shared with Kimberly, that just because in that early days of where there was that urgency to go we realized that we were changing processes. And really, I think as a Director of Operation, what I would like to do is just be able to have what we call kind of our normal battle rhythm, our normal processes. Be able to be scaled to any operation. And I did not see that that was the case right away with that.

There's other kind of I'd say maybe lessons. There's a feeling sometimes that it's all about the aircraft and how many aircraft you can have. And I just talked through the tremendous amount of C-17s involved. They were involved directly. Of note, the C-5s were flying more than normal to help make up for some of the missions that those C-17s were pulled from.

Remember, global operations for Transportation continued. This was clearly the priority, but we continued operations around the globe. So you have this idea that sometimes aircraft is all it takes to make an operation go. I think one of the lessons that started to emerge early is that it's more than just aircraft. You need places to put the aircraft. So there's this idea of nodes.

We have a robust posture already and it's a key part of what Transportation Command has. Relationships with allies and partners that allow for overflight clearances. Allow for access to their countries as needed at times. And in some cases there's basing. So that access, that basing and overflight is key.

So in an operation like this we needed to have access. So it's the nodes. It's the ability to have the throughput or the flow of personnel.

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So I'd say early on another lesson was for coming into an operation of this scale, and really I'd say in some ways an unknown scale of evacuees. I'd heard ranges from maybe 40,000 to 200,000. That's a wide range to plan for. Early on we knew there had to be more places as we extracted people from HKIA at the greatest velocity possible. Because of the timeline and because of the threat you then needed to have enough places to put them as they flowed through the system back to the United States.

So in addition to thinking about some of the processes and IT things that I mentioned earlier, I would say something for people outside of Transportation Command - because that's something we know. We know the nodes are as important as the capability of the mobility assets. But that I think is a lesson that the greater community realized in the early days of this operation.

**Moderator:** Next questioner is Tony Capaccio of Bloomberg.

**DWG:** A couple of questions. What support did TRANSCOM at your level receive from the intelligence community such as NRO in terms of imagery that added or assisted in preparation of the intel threat briefings for pilots going into the airport?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** I don't know if I'll talk specifically about individual organizations, but our --

**DWG:** In general.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** In general it's invaluable to have a global system of intelligence community, and we have habitual relationships, liaison officers here in our headquarters from a variety of intel organizations. We have individuals that are embedded with others. So that relationship I think one, allows that individual that's here at TRANSCOM that can sit and listen to the TRANSCOM Commander during one of his update briefs, know exactly what type of information or what gaps he has, can go back and find ways to fill that.

Again, I won't talk specific, but the intelligence community as a whole was very beneficial. And the level of the ISR, the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance that was present that really allowed in this case to focus on largely one area was very important as we had our air crews going in and out of what

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was a contentious environment, a higher threat environment than they were flying out of Europe and other places.

Very valuable, and those relationships are in place on a daily basis and bore fruit for this operation.

**DWG:** And the other thing, those Army CRAMs, they seemed to have played an unheralded role in protecting aircraft from getting destroyed on the ground which would have compounded what was already seen as fiasco. How crucial was it to keep those relatively unknown CRAMs in place at the airport right up until the end for air defense?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** The CRAM - Counter-Rocket Mortar Systems - are one really valuable piece to a network of protection that we would like to have in place around bases. You're right, that is really the ground piece of protecting an aircraft while it's on the ground. I'll tell you from 30 years in the service and many deployments, I'm very appreciative of the warnings that CRAMs have given, and I've been in Baghdad and other places, so very valuable. So you want to keep those in place as long as possible to give protection to assets and personnel and infrastructure on the ground.

Again, that in concert with defensive systems that are on aircraft, in concert with some of the training, the tactics, the procedures that air crew have to go in and out of environments that might have any kind of surface to air threat. The training that the soldiers and the marines and the ground airmen that were on the ground that they were working with, all those kind of in concert. But yeah, CRAM was something we paid attention to and were glad that it was in operation.

**DWG:** The day before the penultimate day when there were five projectiles, we're hearing that CRAM actually saved a C-17 from being hit, potentially being hit or likely being hit. Is that accurate?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** I won't get into that specifically, but this is one of those places where we can look back and say it was successful in that there were no C-17s damaged or lost and that was due to many reason, but the CRAM protection certainly could be one of those.

**DWG:** Who's doing the after action report? Is that TRANSCOM or

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is that an interagency report?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** I can't speak for the interagency, but I know that the Joint Staff, and we have our role in Transportation Command to do an after action report that will ultimately roll up, I think it's going to be at the Joint Staff level. But I do know that internally at Transportation Command we are working an after action report that we will make available to the Joint Staff.

**Moderator:** The next questioner is Jim Garamone, DoD News.

**DWG:** Thanks for doing this, General.

You touched on it before saying that it's not just aircraft that do these things. You noted the ties with the foreign nations, with other nations. But it's also all about people. It's not just the air crews. It's the maintainers, in various and sundry places, it's the ops guys in everywhere from Scott Air Force Base to HKIA.

Do you have an idea of how many people from Transportation Command were involved in this operation?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** I don't, but that is something that we probably can follow up with. You hit at a very good point. When we talk about Transportation Command, the point I made earlier about the authorities that General Lyons has, he has operational control over a lot of not just the mobility assets and the air crew, but other enabling personnel was well. And you're right, I mentioned earlier just the reliability of the C-17 during this timeframe, the maintainers.

The contingency response forces which fall under Transportation Command and that were forward at HKIA, and really they were going in with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. In General McKinzie's priorities, he knew the importance of having that unit on the ground. Not only were they going to be able to increase the throughput, what we call a working maximum on ground, a working MOG of aircraft and their presence when they got their forces there, increased it from two parking spots that could be worked up to eight parking spots that could be worked, and that was not just for U.S. aircraft, that was any aircraft coming through.

Their ability, when the Turks relinquished control of controlling

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the aircraft and the airfield, they have that specialty within the contingency response force and they are controlling aircraft coming in and out of the airfield. So what we call some of the enabling forces that are under Transportation Command were very necessary, and I do not know the number exact enough to tell you how many maintainers went forward, how many transportation specialists went forward. Not just to HKIA but some of the other en-route locations to ensure that there was velocity of movement through European Command locations and through other Central Command locations.

So I'll take that as a note and see if we can get you a number that kind of gives you a magnitude of that. In addition to the number of air crew that were involved. All of that would be considered Transportation Command.

And as I talked about earlier, our global operation center that is a small footprint of 24x7 individuals on a daily basis, immediately grew to dozens, about 100 24x7 workers during a crisis period. So all of that adds up to people involved in making sure that those last five C-17s get off the ground on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August successfully.

**DWG:** How many nations sent their own aircraft in?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Possibly, to get the right answer on that, maybe a Department of State question, our relationship with some of the other countries. To my knowledge, it was about 30. About 30 nations had aircraft that flew in. And what I think is important about that is that while they were flying in to extract their citizens, many of them took other Afghans at risk. So you see that number of 120,000-plus that came out that was several thousand that did not have to come out on a U.S. military aircraft, off of a C-17 or a C-130, because other nations came in. I'm going to give you 30 as the number that I've heard, but I don't have that list of 30. The State Department may have a precise number for you.

**Moderator:** Courtney Albon of Inside Defense.

**DWG:** My question is on a little bit of a different topic. The KC-46 over the summer was approved for some limited operations on a few mission sets. I wondered if you could speak to kind of what the operational impact has been on having the KC-46 somewhat available. And then also can you tell us a little bit about what

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some of the next interim capability releases might be between now and the end of the year?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Great question. For specifics on the KC-46 I would defer to Air Mobility Command and the Air Force, but yes, the interim capability release has allowed the KC-46 to do some boom refueling in addition to the drogue refueling that's been approved on like F-18 aircraft prior to that. I think the C-17 is one of those aircraft that is part of that interim capability release.

So you saw the ability, even like the Afghanistan NEO, where air refueling assets played a somewhat hidden role but a very important role. Some of that was increasing the velocity of getting the combat forces out of the U.S. and into HKIA. So air refueling over the Atlantic. The KC-46 was involved in that operation.

But also hundreds of air refueling sorties that were continuing to happen in Central Command over Afghanistan with the amount of air power that was poised, if needed, at HKIA. Ultimately not needed. But the air refuelers played a very important role.

So the KC-46, the more the KC-46 gets operationally ready it will be able to take on greater roles and it will allow some of the other aircraft, the KC-10s and KC-135s to not have to do as many of those roles.

So we look forward to more of the interim capability release. I cannot give you a forecast of what the next aircraft might be. Again, that would be Air Mobility Command would be able to answer that. But KC-46 has had that addition of capability and then TRANSCOM will use it [when they can].

**Moderator:** Brian Everstine of Aviation Week.

**DWG:** Thank you.

We have heard for a couple of years now from General Lyons that refueling was the most stressed part of TRANSCOM and that has sort of changed with some Air Force planning.

Can you talk a little bit more how you've seen that on the operational side? What changes has the Air Force done to free up more refueling?

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**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Air refueling, very important. It's a concern of General Lyons along with some other mobility actions. In our sealift forces certainly air refueling has been highlighted recently in some strategic mobility concerns.

Again, for specifics, not really in the realm of my job as the Director of Operations, but I know that the Air Force has made some changes to the divestment of KC-135s and KC-10s in order to keep more of them available, so that is a positive from a Transportation Command standpoint, essential as we look at the number of air refuelers that are needed not just on a day to day basis but really if we get into a crisis or a conflict with a near peer, that is when it's going to be most required.

The delay of the KC-46 to reach its full operating capability is kind of accentuated that decrement of air refueling assets. So back to Courtney's question, as we have incremental gains that frees up some of the other aircraft that were having to do the missions that now a KC-46 can do to do other missions. Over time that is part of what is going to help that air refueling situation. But clearly that's still something that Transportation Command is focused on to ensure that if we are called upon for conflict that we will have the requisite air refueling capability to go forward. So we're still making sure that we get to that point with KC-46, so full operational capability.

**DWG:** I guess to continue the thread of refueling and the Afghan operations can you talk a little bit about how that played out in your planning, for example, of trying to keep two 17s on the ground as brief as possible so they would be refueling as they take off out of Kabul. That sort of thing. How did refueling play into your plans?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** One already discussed, there is the ability to air refuel transatlantically and that can do a couple of things. That can allow an airplane to extend its legs and either overfly an intermediate staging base or to go direct. So that's important.

One, it obviously is faster because you're not taking that couple of hours to be on the ground. Also, any time a plane lands there's a chance that it will have a maintenance problem and not be able to go. So very important for that.

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I already also talked about how there was air superiority, there were strike there were ISR aircraft that were overhead, ready to be employed and they have to be air refueled in order to stay on station longer.

I would say a third one, though, that was not necessarily planned or foreseen, I talked about the need for nodes. There were times where certain locations, planes were getting backed up and not able to land, so air refueling allowed for a C-17 that had sometimes 400-415 Afghan refugees, to stay aloft long enough to sequence in to land and not have to go to a location that was not ready to accept refugees.

So there was a lot of agility in a forced extension role that the air refuelers played during the evacuee operations.

**Moderator:** Thanks. The next question is from Franke Wolfe of Defense Daily.

**DWG:** I was just wondering on the tankers. You mentioned the 90 percent reliability for the C-17, so I wanted to see if the parts that you had to have obviously, and what if any kind of parts shortages you're seeing or what industry might be able to do in terms of specific parts if you're facing any shortages on both for the airlifters and tankers. Also what the reliability rates were for the KC-135s and KC-10s, if you know.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Frank, I don't have an answer for you really on either of those. I think for the parts piece, I would think our Logistics Directorate, maybe A4 potentially, would know that. I do not and I do not have the maintenance rates for either the KC-135 or the KC-10 during that time.

Again, Air Mobility Command may be a good source for that. That's where I've heard the number of 90-plus percent for the C-17, was from Air Mobility Command. But I'm sorry. I don't have that information.

**DWG:** That's okay. It sounds like the maintainers were obviously a big part of this but in terms of that percentage were there any other things that you know that contributed to that reliability rate there? Just in terms of either equipment or process or anything that would lead to that 90 percent?



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**Maj. Gen. Martin:** I'll certainly offer that the greatest one is that airman maintainer that sent the plane from home station and the maintainers that were forward based to keep the aircraft turning. I don't think there's anything else that surpasses that.

The second one is that during contingency operations there is a difference in the level of equipment acceptance that a crew can make and that leadership can direct. So that kind of tactical level control falls to the air operations center that has tactical control of those aircraft.

So I think, as I talked about earlier, part of the reason there is time for C-17s to reconstitute is because there was deferred maintenance. So as you talk about process there is the ability to defer some maintenance for the urgency of the mission or for air crew to take less essential equipment not working. And there are charts for aircraft commanders to make that determination of what they can approve at their level and what equipment they would have to call up to the tactical control level of command to make those decisions.

So I think between those two, that helps increase the reliability rate of an aircraft. But it also, after a surge, it requires that time to then take care of some of that maintenance that was deferred before.

**DWG:** In terms of JADC2 can you give us any example of where the point to point communications you were alluding to during the NEO where JADC2 would have helped? Can you give us an example of --

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** There's probably better examples, but from a data standpoint, you talk about any time you have limited resources you want to be able to put them against the highest priority missions. So one area during the flow of the NEO operations is there was the initial screening of passengers at HKIA, but then when they got to an intermediate staging base these was a more fulsome clearance process, biometric, biographic data, Customs and Border Patrol running checks on individuals. That type of data and knowing when a group of people was cleared and at what location that group of people was cleared, that could help us focus on that's where that next commercial aircraft that was available should go to that location.

As I said, if I think more about it, I think there will probably

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be better examples than that, but that is one - it's data. If you have authoritative data on that, you could make decisions, skipping echelons and that. Without it it sometimes takes some kind of a point to point communication. An email, a spreadsheet, pick up a phone and call. So I think that type of data that immediately an organization like the 618<sup>th</sup> Air Operation Center or even back up to our Global Operation Center, to have that data and be able to reposition forces at an operational level to get after the highest priority mission is important.

**Moderator:** The last person on our question list is Dmitry Kirsanov of TASS.

**DWG:** Thank you very much for doing this, General. Appreciate it.

I wanted to ask you about former Soviet Republics of Central Asia. Did the United States via TRANSCOM use overfly basing rights while taking people out of Afghanistan? And if yes, how expansively? Could you speak about this a little.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** I actually for that, just to make sure I get you an accurate answer, I would say I'd defer to the Department of State for the contributions of the former, the Central Asia states. I don't want to speculate on exactly what overflight was used. Again, that's something at the Air Operation Center they were planning the missions and would know exactly which countries provided overflight and which ones didn't, so I don't want to speak incorrectly.

**DWG:** Staying on the subject more or less, did you have any interactions with the Russians over this? Because I still remember times of the Northern Distribution Networks, the times when the United States actually used the Russian airspace to deliver U.S. servicemembers and even weapons to Afghanistan. Did something like that happen now?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** At my level, no. I did not interact with the Russians, but you are correct, the Northern Distribution Network for years was a very necessary route in and out of operations. But for this, very much the ground lines of communication were really cut off and non-existent based on the rapid advance of the Taliban. That's what really drove this to an air centric operation where from a TRANSCOM perspective we wanted to make sure that airlift was not going to be a limiting factor on

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fulfilling our President's dictates to get individuals out of Afghanistan rapidly.

**Moderator:** Paul Shinkman has messaged, so he will have the last question from U.S. News.

**DWG:** Hi, General. Thanks very much for doing this.

I'd like to change the subject a little bit and ask you about China's latest provocations near Taiwan. From your current position, what do you see in the brazenness of China's air missions into its ADID? And what concerns do you have for how that might affect your mission in the future?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** From my position I would say the mission of TRANSCOM is to be able to deploy and sustain our Joint Force globally at a time and place of our nation's choosing. So that is what our intent is. So we will continue to operate in the global commons. That is really where Transportation Command is on a daily basis in the global commons, and I expect that we will be able to continue to do that.

**DWG:** on that, we've heard for years about China's ability to potentially exploit and actually exploit choke points at sea. Do you have any concerns about the U.S. military's ability to move around that theater by air, particularly in the event of a conflict or some other form of escalation?

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Again, I think with our mission to be able to kind of go to deploy and sustain at the time and place of our choosing, that will, as the environment changes, might cause us to go to different locations than we normally do, so we would be able to both by air or sea look at options to aggregate or disaggregate in different places. Maybe not the normal hubs that are seen, but air power is really inherently a very agile, flexible, medium so it I think will allow for some of that change in location is needed.

**Moderator:** General, as we approach the end of our hour we want to invite you to spend the last couple of minutes with any closing comments from your chair. And of course to accept our sincerest thanks for your time today.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** Thom, thank you, and thanks to the Defense Writers Group. I appreciate your interest in the part that

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TRANSCOM played. It's part of this historic mission. And although it's historic, I'll say in some ways this is what Transportation Command does and can do on a daily basis. The posture of the mobility assets, the personnel, the command and control that allows us to do that mission that I talked about of deploying and sustaining the force and really the authorities to quickly rebalance mobility assets wherever they're needed is that highest priority mission. So I think this was an opportunity to demonstrate that.

I appreciate you guys have covered a broad swath of what happened. A couple of areas that I maybe would want to highlight is, we didn't touch on aeromedical evacuation, but global patient movement is another piece of Transportation Command. From today, OB doctors and nurses flying some of the Afghan OB patients and their families back for care, to responding within hours of the bombing on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, to be able to go in and bring injured Afghans and Americans out. So aeromedical evacuation along with airlift and air refueling and our commercial partners and our enablers like the contingency response forces, all those. I did want to make sure I mentioned them as well.

If I can, the last piece kind of more on a personal note. I think it's purely coincidental that this happened on 7 October, but I take notice that this is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the start of Operation Enduring Freedom and it's one of those dates on the calendar that catch my attention because I was overhead Afghanistan on the opening night of Operation Enduring Freedom in a C-17 doing airdrops. So it's one of those dates that catch my eye. Unfortunately some other dates too, like 3 May that catch my eye because some members of my command that were flying an OEF mission died during that flight with Shell 77.

So I'm mindful of that as we hit the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and I think in some ways I'm glad that as our operations of Afghanistan ended that I was able to play a role in that as well, kind of seeing the last act after seeing the first act. So I just wanted to make mention of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of OEF as we close today. But I do appreciate your time and your interest in Transportation Command.

**Moderator:** General, let me offer our sincerest thanks to you, Transportation Command and all of your staff, and to all the correspondents who joined us today. Thank you too for attending this session of the Defense Writers Group. Have a terrific

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afternoon.

**Maj. Gen. Martin:** You're welcome.

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