

A/TA

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Gen. Robert E. “Dutch” Huyser, Lt. Gen. Joseph Smith, Nancy Harkness Love, Gen. William G. Moore, Jr., Col. Joe M. Jackson and Sgt. John L. Levitow.

Camaraderie was promoted by the more than 2,300 individuals — nearly 1,000 more than in 1998 — who attended from around the world, active duty, Reserve and guard, enlisted and officers, civilians and contractors and many spouses.

In comparison, there were 30 people at the first A/TA convention held in Las Vegas in 1968. Today, there are more than 4,500 members in 36 chapters around the world.

Gen. Henry H. Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opened the convention Nov. 4 by congratulating attendees on a job well done, especially in operations in Kosovo and others around the world.

“Air mobility forces have played an important role in everything America’s armed forces have done every day from peacetime engagement activities all the way up to major theater wars because, in fact, you are the fastest means to get us to the global crisis,” General Shelton said.

“For example, within 26 hours of the time that the deployment decision had been made to provide humanitarian assis-

tance to Turkey following their recent earthquake, the search and rescue team out of Fairfax County, Va., was on the ground. It was the first time that they had ever had an off-continent mission and gotten there in time to do any good, and that’s a direct credit to this community.

“The airlift and tanker community has played a critical role not only in Turkey and Taiwan, but in so many other areas around the world in the past couple of years.

“One of the real success stories that we saw in the recent operations in Kosovo, Operation Allied Force, was your ability to move the sheer size and amount of equipment that had to be moved in order to make our operation a success,” the general continued.

“It took a lot of pulling of strings and a tremendous amount of dedication and long hours on the part of many of you in this room. It literally staggers the imagination to think about what you did during that period of time because ... at the same time you didn’t drop any critical missions anywhere else around the globe.”

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan in his speech Saturday night at the annual awards banquet congratulated and thanked the airlift/tanker community on their roles in recent operations.

“So many challenges to our Air Force have been huge, huge efforts,” he said.

“It started last year about this time when we woke up in the desert, a huge effort on the mobility side to bring in all of the strike aircraft we needed for Desert Fox and execute that particular air operation flawlessly,” Ryan said.

“This will be a year of great challenges too. We know that someone will come up and have Operation Deny Thanksgiving or Operation Deny Christmas; we know that’s going to happen to us. But the dedication of the men and women in this room, the people who are always first in, will make sure that in any of those challenges we will be a great success. This is the greatest mobility force this nation has ever had and I’m so proud of everything you’ve done.”

In his keynote address Saturday afternoon, Robertson explained why attendees’ presence at the annual conference is important.

“Your attendance here is important,” the AMC commander said. “You don’t have to take my word for it. The truth is it’s just like your mother used to tell you, actions speak louder than words. So consider the actions of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Hugh Shelton, or consider the actions of the Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Mike Ryan. Both of these men have taken

their schedules to extraordinary lengths to just find time to come here and spend some time with you. The reason why these two men came here — the reason most of you already know — rapid, global air mobility is very important. Mobility matters. It matters more than ever before.”

General Robertson also spoke about what it will take to keep up the rapid, global air mobility into the next century and beyond, including modernizing the C-5, C-130 and KC-135 aircraft fleets; procuring more C-17s; and increasing the numbers of tanker crews in proportion with the number of aircraft to a ratio of approximately 1.8, as was required during Kosovo operations.

He also told the audience about some people programs including establishing Career Flight Incentive Pay for enlisted flyers and the Year of the Family, which over the last year has funded every wing’s number one quality of life initiative.

“It’s important to remember that we all (enlisted, officers and civilians) are working toward one common goal and the convention helped me see that.”

- Rose Alexander
1999 A/TA attendee