

## FEATURE

# CMSAF tours Charleston, explains airmen's role in today's Air Force

By Tech. Sgt. Ben Gonzales  
437 AW Public Affairs

In a whirlwind tour of Charleston AFB Oct. 16 and 17, Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray saw first-hand the total force teamwork making this base "one of the finest organizations in the Air Force."

Chief Murray came to Charleston to read the pulse of today's airmen and give a view of what tomorrow's Air Force will have in store as he told bluesuiters throughout the base his view from the top.

"It is absolutely apparent that Charleston is doing things right," said Chief Murray, the 14<sup>th</sup> chief master sergeant of the Air Force. "There is a great amount of teamwork and camaraderie here. I'm impressed with the interaction and blending of missions between the 437<sup>th</sup> and 315<sup>th</sup> wings. I know there are active and Reserve airmen in the same crowd, but I can't tell the difference. That is so important to our total force. The hospitality and professionalism I've seen has been incredible. The extraordinary missions performed for Operation Iraqi Freedom, during the height of operations and as it continues, demonstrates that Charleston has truly shown itself to be one of the finest organizations in the Air Force."

While on base, the Air Force's top enlisted airman visited the First Term Airman Center and attended the Airman Leadership School graduation. The Boiling Springs, N.C., native also worked out at the Fitness and Sports Center, had breakfast with the First Six at the Robert D. Gaylor Dining Facility, and spoke with security forces members at both gates. Chief Murray toured the Aerial Port Squadron, Special

Operations Division, had lunch with the Top III at the Charleston Club, met the Shark Flight of the 437 Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, walked through the 437 Logistics Readiness Squadron and talked with base company grade officers.

One of the main issues spoken throughout his visit was the current status of the Air Expeditionary Forces.

"The timeline is set. We are today in transitional AEFs, called blue and silver, that are 120-day cycles," Chief Murray said. "Silver will be kicking off here in the November timeframe to run through March, and then, in March 2004, we will reset the AEF cycle to 90-day, 15-month cycles and pick back up in the AEF scheduling. We will rotate approximately 17,000 airmen in the November timeframe as we continue to consolidate bases and be able to drawdown some of our forces in Southwest Asia as we support Operation Iraqi Freedom. We must be able to set ourselves to the AEF rhythm and our on-the-job training, exercise scheduling and joint training has to be set into a rhythm. The norm is being an Expeditionary Air Force that has a schedule to execute our missions, whether we are deployed or not. If we continue to bring airmen home and we're not deploying a lot of airmen, they will still have an AEF timeframe, while being ready to deploy. That means the training cycles for on-the-job training, exercise training and spin-up training need to be done in that type of rhythm. We will have a tempo of an AEF process. The goal is to give our airmen as much predictability and stability while being ready to execute our missions and, at any time, also be able to immediately ramp up if we are called upon."

As the Air Force begins to pull airmen away



Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray addresses airmen at the First Term Airman Center as 437<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. James Roy looks on.

Photo by Andre Bullard

from Southwest Asia, it's the perfect time to shape the enlisted force into a more lethal and mobile fighting force with the NCO retraining program.

"We look at what we will need for our projection of air and space power across the board, not just at one operation at a time," said the 26-year Air Force veteran. "(The NCO retraining program) is clearly what we need to be able to sustain our operations well into the future. We have gone through several years of high operations tempo, sustaining operations in Operation Allied Force, into Afghanistan and now Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"During the years we maintained Operation Northern Watch and Southern Watch, we learned what we need to maintain an Expeditionary Air Force, to sustain combat operations and to bring in new missions as well," he said. We learned from all that, and that helps us to shape our force in the future. It's not just shaping our force for what we are doing now; it's taking what we have learned, and making

decisions that shape our force with a long-range plan."

With airmen deployed around the world supporting real-world missions helping in the global war on terrorism, the Air Force has recently adapted a "fit to fight" program to meet today's Air Force needs.

"The fact that our airmen must sustain operations in austere environments for longer durations of time ultimately demands we have a force that is more fit and capable than in the past. We must change our focus on fitness. A new Air Force instruction will take effect in January that couples weight management and fitness together. This gives us the ability to measure our health and fitness aerobically by running, body composition by measurement, and strength training by push-ups and sit-ups. Fitness is no longer just the individual's responsibility. This is a leadership-led change in our Air Force. Our expectations of commanders, officers, senior NCOs and NCOs are to lead our airmen in improving our health and fitness."

## worth repeating

"There is a great amount of teamwork and camaraderie here. Charleston has truly shown itself to be one of the finest organizations in the Air Force."



—Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Gerald Murray

In addition to the changes to the Air Force fitness program, the C-17 has changed the way the Air Force can move people and cargo, and gives the nation a capability vital to the success of operations around the world.

"The only way we could get in and out of Afghanistan is with the C-17 or C-130 aircraft," added Chief Murray. "The Air Force is on path to gain more C-17s. We will evaluate the aging (airlift) fleet; the C-141s will continue to move out of our inventory, and there will be a need for the C-17s to replace those. We are also looking at the age and health of the C-5s, but we will always be dependent on

the best way to be recognized by leadership," said Chief Murray, who made the rank of chief master sergeant in 17 years. "If they are doing their best — and I'm not saying that it's perfect, it's not saying that they are not going to make mistakes — but if they are trying to do their job the best that they can, other people are going to see that and want to help them.

"Also, make a difference in someone else's life in your community," added the chief. "I see so many airmen today who really get involved, like the First Six here at Charleston or the Top III, from churches to little league coaches. That rounds a person out. What they are giving, they normally get back in return. If you want to be a good leader, then ask yourself, 'What do I expect out of a leader?' To practice being a good leader you have to be a good follower. As a good follower you will see what good leadership traits are and then demonstrate that when you have the responsibility. Be disciplined, focused and driven. Add some things like compassion and caring about people to be a good leader and a good citizen."

the need for strategic airlift, which will always need to be assessed based on the requirements we have to carry out a mission."

Travis AFB, Calif., Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, and Hickam AFB, Hawaii, are slated to join Charleston and McChord AFB, Wash., as other bases to be home to the Air Force's newest airlift workhorse.

But success in the Air Force is not based on aircraft or equipment. It takes professional airmen accomplishing a full spectrum of specialties to make the Air Force run as smoothly as it does.

For airmen to be successful members in today's Air Force, "They have got to do their job the very best they can. That is



Photo by Senior Airman Tyrone Pearsall

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray views a model of a C-17 as Chief Master Sgt. Lawrence Strother of the 437<sup>th</sup> Aircraft Maintenance Squadron explains the unit's mission.



Photo by Senior Airman Tyrone Pearsall

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Gerald Murray talks to airmen of the 437<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron.