



News Release

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AIR MOBILITY VICE COMMANDER DELIVERS CAFB'S NEWEST C-17

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C.-- The vice commander of Air Mobility Command delivered Charleston AFB's newest C-17 Tuesday.

Lt. Gen. John Baker brought in the newest aircraft, bringing the total number of C-17s at CAFB to 45.

Baker spent time at the Boeing facility in Long Beach, Calif., before delivering the aircraft. He said he was impressed with the factory environment there.

The automation of factory work in Long Beach makes the process of turning out aircraft a lot smoother from what he noticed the last time he visited an aircraft production plant 10-12 years ago, Baker said.

Baker also answered some questions many Team Charleston members have on their minds regarding operations tempo and Aerospace Expeditionary Forces deployments.

"There's really no short-term solution as long as we're stretched as we are, particularly on the combat support side," Baker said.

Baker attends AEF Forum meetings about every 10 weeks, he said, and longer AEF rotations is a topic they are trying to address.

"At those meetings we discuss and update the most stressed career fields to find 90-120 days of continuous TDY," Baker said. "We also look at a rolling 12 months to see how many days people have been gone for the last 12 months. The solution is to put more people in those stressed career fields."

The Air Force diverted 1,000 airmen out of basic training to fill those stressed fields, Baker said. Next year, that number will increase by 2,400 over what was originally planned.

"The problem is it takes a lot of time to get those people trained and deployable," Baker said. "That's why I say it's a long-term solution. It'll be at least a year and a half before those people are really able to be deployed."

That year and a half is used for basic training, technical school training, on-the-job training and the awarding of a three level, Baker said.

The number of people in deployable positions is also being increased, he said.

"We have a lot of people out there who would like to go, but don't count against a (unit type code)," Baker said. "As a result, they don't get the equipment and training to be deployable. We're going to fix all that as well."

"There are a lot of five-level folks out there in certain career fields that we need to put on mobility orders," Baker continued.

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“Give them the training, give them the equipment so they are available and can deploy. The more people that are deployable, the better of we are, and that reduces the stress.”

In the short term, Baker said wing commanders and the wing support structure need to have programs in place to help airmen and their families deal with the high tempo of operations.

Family Support Center programs, like free e-mail and phone calls, children’s programs and other programs are “... critically important, particularly as we continue to have to keep people gone for more than 120 days at a time,” Baker said.

Longer AEF rotations aren’t going away, Baker said.

“The world really has changed, and the Air Force has to change with it,” Baker said.

During the Cold War, most of the Air Force would deploy only if World War III started, according to Baker. There were a lot of bases overseas, and the people stationed there would fight in place.

“That’s all changed now,” Baker said. “We brought most of our forces that were in Europe home, so now we deploy to hot spots around the world. We are much more in the expeditionary mindset. We need to think and breathe mobility operations and be prepared to deploy to very interesting places around the world.”

Families need to be aware of this as well, Baker said, so they’re not surprised when their military member is called to go on a moment’s notice.

The Total Force concept, a melding of active-duty, Guard and Reserve forces, will also continue to be a major part of expeditionary operations, because the Air Force, like the other services is much smaller than it used to be, Baker said.

“I want to tell everybody how proud they should be of what we do,” Baker said.

Gen. Tommy Franks, U.S. Central Command commander, and Gen. John Jumper, Air Force chief of staff, recently attended the Airlift Tanker Association Convention, Baker said.

“They both came for one purpose and one purpose only in my view, and that was to tell AMC how proud they are of the job our people have done the last 13 months,” Baker said. “That means a lot.”

(Story by SSgt Melanie Streeter. This story is public domain. You may use any part of it for your publication or newscast. Interviews are available with key base personnel on this project. For more information, please call Capt. Krista Carlos at (843) 963-5589 or Staff Sgt. Jason Smith at 963-5537.)