



Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Welcome. Well, good afternoon everybody. I'm super excited to be here with a very esteemed group of panelists on a critically important topic. And we've certainly seen much discussion about the Indo-Pacific region over the course of the AFA in the last couple of days, but I think we can get really pointed here in some of the challenges we have going forward. And I'm personally excited to be here because, as it turns out, I actually served in the Pacific with all three of these panelists. At the time, when I was back as a PACAF commander in 2016 to '18, at the time Cruiser was my 11th Air Force, and of course multi had it in that role, but my 11th Air Force Commander. Mini was the Deputy J3, Deputy Director of Operations up at PACOM. And Tony, we had just been together in Korea, then he remained in Korea, commanding the special ops forces there. So really great to be reunited with this team, and a lot's happened since we were there together.

And one of the things that happened during that time was actually the birth of ACE, Agile Combat Employment. In fact, as a PACAF commander, we were trying to determine how do we fight in this new environment that we find ourselves in? We had come to the conclusion that doing business the way we were was just not going to be effective. And we had this crazy idea that turned into ACE of how do we be more distributed like we see some of the other services do, and what historically we've done, but we had gotten away from. We had thought about how do we fight in this different way? And it turns out change is hard and we found ourselves in this dilemma where we knew we had to do it differently, but we had to get the traction to be able to do that.

And one of the culminating moments was when then Chief General Goldfein said we could come to Corona and we could brief at Corona. And we ended up taking an entire day at Corona, Corona being and where all the general officers get together and we spend entire day war gaming, and war gaming how we would fight in the Pacific. And one of the things that we found by doing that and spending some time to really show the why that we had to change turned out to be really important. And a couple of shout-outs to some key members at that time. Pulse Wills was the fire that really drove a lot of the meat on the bones of this, and then Nomad Strohmeyer, who was just a big brain thinking through it. And we put together this presentation for Corona that lasted the entire day.

We had this big map, the big map about half the size of this auditorium, it seemed like, that we could actually walk through the Pacific and not just see it on PowerPoint slides, but actually walk through it and see the challenges that we were going to be faced with to fight there. And then coming out of that, I think we made the pitch and it stuck that everyone was now not about should we do this, but it's about how do we do this? And that was a culminating change, I think thanks to Chief Goldfein, allowed us to do that. And then we went and gave that brief a hundred times probably, but it took some courage. And I'll highlight Cruiser. Cruiser was the 11th Air Force Commander, as I mentioned, and there was a wing commander there named Moto. Moto Nimi now, down at ACC. He had the courage to go out there and try it, not PowerPoint it, try it.

Let's take some F-22s and let's take them out there and deploy them and see if we can't operate. Did it work perfectly? Heck no. But you know what? We learned a lot by doing that and I think that's what started us on this adventure that we're continuing on today. And so now, as you look at this panel, I'd like to hear a little bit more about how are we actually going to be able to compete? How are we going to be able to effectively fight against a peer adversary if called upon to do so? I'd like to open up to the panelists or some opening comments, and really thinking that this is critical to our future and critical to what we as an Air and Space Force really need to be focused on. I'll start with Mini.

Gen. Mike Minihan:



All right, good afternoon everybody. For AFA, thank you very much. Certainly you, General O'Shaughnessy, sir, just very humbled to be here. On behalf of Chief Jamie Newman and the 110,000 total force Airmen of Air Mobility Command, it's a treat and an honor to be here. The first piece of feedback I got from my speech last year on this very stage was from the cameraman who just reacquainted himself with me and he said, "Do not get off the stage or move around." The second piece of feedback I got is both my bosses are here this year, so I'll be good. I'll be tethered.

Part of the Mobility Manifesto from last year was really four things. First, Airmen are the magic, and that's been affirmed and certainly shouted loud and clear through this whole conference. So Airmen are the magic. Lethality matters most. Lethality matters most. At the end of the day, we have to be in a position where, if called upon, the force can be lethal. That's within the Air Force, that's certainly amongst the Joint Force, and it extends to our partners and allies. We are the mobility. Air mobility command is the maneuver force. We are what the entire Joint Force, regardless of their agility concept is, is relying on to make them successful. So air mobility is the maneuver force.

And then last would be we need to invest our American tenacity now to win. And so what tenacity looks like now is doing what you just described when it comes to the demonstration of ACE and its predecessor, Rapid Raptor, and the planning that needs to happen. I'll talk a little bit about that. The single most motivating force that's driving my headquarters and all echelons below it right now is that if this goes down in the Pacific Theater, Air Mobility Command will be the most relied-upon force in the history of warfare. That's not just a comment on the task that needs to be done, but that's a comment on what's at stake if we don't get it right. And so I don't say that from a position that's seeking sympathy, nor am I coming at you from someone who's trying to be overly self-inflated here. It's just facts. So this team's up for it. I look forward to describing the benefits of what happened for Mobility Guardian, and I'm grateful to share the stage with these two heroes. Thank you.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks Mini, and I definitely agree with you that your team's going to be absolutely critical to success in the Pacific. I don't think anyone knows it better than Cruiser does, so over to you, Cruiser.

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

Yeah, Amen to that. Hi, everybody. Good afternoon. Thanks for being here. I'd like to say thanks to AFA. Orville, thanks for setting up another great conference. These are really valuable to all of us because we get to see people that we don't normally get to see in our everyday lives and have some really valuable engagements. And thanks to General O'Shaughnessy for being our moderator and grilling us with some good questions and giving us an opportunity to share our perspectives. And it is fantastic to be on the stage with General Minihan and General Bauernfeind, because we and our folks work together every single day in the Pacific, they're obviously in other places, to execute our strategy. And I said it last year, I'll say it again because the objective for the United States hasn't changed in the Indo-Pacific, and that is a free and open Indo-Pacific. And when we say that, we often think that's for us, and it is, but it's also for all of our allies and partners. They share the same objective with us. And they may not say it exactly like that, but they share it.

And what we mean by that is that each of the countries that are in the Indo-Pacific are free to decide for themselves the course for their future, and even what they're doing in this day. And certainly we know there's at least three countries in that region that don't want a free and open Indo-Pacific. They actually want to impose their national wills on their neighbors and others around the globe, and so we all together as allies and partners have our work cut out for us. The good news. In the last year, we are



having more and more success with joint operations. We're having more and more success with working with allies and partners and becoming interoperable, and even with some interchangeable.

I'll just share with you that even the Europeans are coming out. We had a lot of number of Europeans that have been out into the Indo-Pacific. And oftentimes the countries from the Indo-Pacific say, "Hey, why are the Europeans here?" And I say, "Well, they have interests out in Indo-Pacific and they see perhaps that some of their interests could be threatened, and they're interested in demonstrating that they intend to protect their interests," and so it's fantastic. We've had the Germans, the French, certainly the Italians have been there, the Brits have been there, and it drives the Chinese crazy when they come out and it makes me very happy. So it's really good to be here today. And just one final note on Agile Combat employment, ACE. Thanks for bringing that up, General O'Shaughnessy, but there's not a member of PACAF that is not expected to execute ACE. Every single member is executing ACE. And I expect every PACAF member to figure out what their multi-capable Airmen roles are because we're going to need everyone. Thank you.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Thank you, Cruiser. Tony?

Lt. Gen. Tony D. Bauernfeind:

No, General O'Shaughnessy, thank you very much for being a part of this panel, and to my teammates and seniors here to the right, thanks for guiding and taking the best care of our special operations air commander Airman that have supported y'all over the years. And I just look back on this panel knowing that General Vincent Brooks would be proud of the group that's assembled here, that his mentorship moved us forward. But Secretary Kendall, Chief Brown, thank you as well.

From AFSOC's perspective, and speaking both from an Air Force lens and a SOCOM lens, it is clear that China's the pacing challenge and the priority. I will tell you, not only has the NDS been exceptionally clear in this aspect, but General Fenton as he came into SOCOM has made it very clear that we are going to pivot and return to our roots with the unconventional warfare, regular warfare, and those activities we need to do to support the Joint Force, to enable General Wilsbach's force, to enable General Minihan's force, to enable Admiral Williams' force. And it's been very clear, and that prioritization has been coming very clear. And I've heard rumor once or twice that Secretary Kendall has highlighted China as a priority, so it's not lost on AFSOC where the priority is, and we're moving quick in that direction.

And I would offer to you as we've looked at it, as we span both Air Force and SOCOM, we look at it from three lenses, and it's the lens of prepare, prevent, and propel, to prevail. In the preparation phase, we see it from two angles. One is we got to really increase our readiness, to be ready for the future fight. Not only the integrated deterrence and the campaigning that we have to do on the battlefield today, but where the readiness will come. There's a lot of debate if and when this will come. Our job is to deter and make sure it never comes, but should it come to bear, we'll be ready for that fight. But it's also investing heavily into our allies and partners, because our allies and partners are going to be key as we go forward.

I really love Secretary Austin's note that the big bet is through our allies and partners. And so we're really leaning in hard, with the assistance from the Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs, to double down on allies and partners from AFSOC and really get after exchange programs to where we can open up those connective tissue that'll open up that access and placement that we need in the future.

But from a prevention perspective, it's important that we continue to lay down those efforts that we're leaning forward into for the Joint Force, those campaigning activities. We've got to be on the field to



win, like we saw recently with a lot of the exercises. It's those deterrent activities that are important for us. And so we're closely linked with Special Operations Command, PACAF, and increasing linkages with Pacific Air Forces are what are those activities we can do to continue that integrated deterrence? And then finally is an acknowledgement that should that fail and we have to go on the high-end conflict, our job is to deliver Joint Force effects that enable everyone's high-end requirements. And so Air Force Special Operations Command is leaning in hard to what are those capabilities and training we need as we move forward. So really excited to share with this panel some of the efforts that we're going into.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Thank you, Tony. And you highlighted a critically important point, and that is as we look at the Department of Air Force, we look at the senior leadership within the Department, whether it be Secretary Kendall, whether it be Chief CQ Brown, and see the relentless focus on this area becomes critically important because we do have to do things differently and that will require resources, that will require effort, and having that leadership at the top focus on this is critically important. But we also have to get our Airmen and Guardians out there doing the business. And so Mini, can you tell me a little bit more about your top priority to compete, fight, and win the Indo-Pacific? And specifically maybe a little bit what you saw as far as the greatest challenges, and what you see in some of your exercises like Mobility Guardian, where you've actually been able to get the Airmen out there doing the business?

Gen. Mike Minihan:

Certainly. Again, on this stage last year we talked about two problem statements when it came to the challenge as I saw it from the Air Mobility Command perspective, the first one being that we're not ready to fight and win inside the first island chain. The second one being that the Joint Force isn't as ready, integrated, or agile as it thinks it is. Also threw down pretty strongly that we would be by August of '23, so here we are. We intentionally drove Mobility Guardian to a place where all the loose ends were not cleaned up. We strained ourselves, not trained ourselves. We went from an idea of an exercise to execution of an exercise in a little bit longer than a year and at a scale which really is more of a combatant command style exercise than a MAJCOM exercise.

So what did we get? We got the ability to explode into theater. One of our main goals, can we get out of home station and explode into theater rapidly? Can we establish the hubs and spokes that everybody's relying air mobility command to do so that they can be successful? And then can we operate at the tempo required to win within those hubs and spokes? So we did not get there early. We did not stop and wait for cargo to follow us. If a plane was broke, a plane was broke and we expected Airmen to go from the deploy to the employee phase immediately. If there was a vol the next day and they were there, then the vol was serviced. If there was a vol the next day and something was wrong with the plane, the jet, the crew, then the vol didn't get serviced. So we got enormous insights both into our strengths and in our improvement area.

It was revealed pretty quickly to me that there were three bins of concerns as we laid out how we were going to categorize the insights. The first being command relationships, the second being command control, and the third being that explode into theater, which is a fancy way to say just basic fundamentals, blocking and tackling. I can confidently answer 100% that we are ready to fight and win inside the first island chain and that the Joint Force is more ready, more integrated, and more agile than it was a year ago. But I also ascribed to a recent quote by Admiral Paparo who said, "I will never admit to being ready enough. I will never admit to being ready enough," and I'll build on that a bit. I will never admit to being ready enough, I will never admit to being integrated enough, and I will never admit to being agile enough.



So there's work to do here. There is incredible amounts of work to do here. The way I describe it to my team, and if you're an A student, you got to bristle up a bit on this. Where we were to where we are, A plus. Both a comment on the effort, the professionalism, the passion, the expertise that relies by the entire team well beyond air mobility command, and also a comment on the amount of gap that we closed. But from where we are to where we need to be is more like my GPA from Auburn, about a C. That's solely a comment on the distance that still needs to be gained. I have full confidence that in a year we'll be able to pull that grade up to the A range as well.

Three things that I want to highlight that were pretty magnificent with Mob Guard. Our ability to explode out of theater. We got out of home stations at 92% rate, which was incredible. We intentionally made it hard. We did not stop because the weather was bad. We did not go around Guam because Guam had a recent typhoon. We trimmed down our UTCs so that we intentionally put some tension on it, and our explode into theater was really good with lots to improve on. I want to brag about the integration, and it speaks to something that both Tony and Cruiser said recently. The integration is absolutely incredible. Not only amongst the Air Force as we worked with not only the team that's represented up here on the stage, but Tom Busier and his team and many others as we covered down on all the things. Oh, by the way, Mobility Guardian happened. We moved the President to the NATO summit. We're still running Ukraine support all day long. Typhoons in the Pacific. All the normal stuff that happens to geographic, and functional combatant command still happened, so our integration was exceptional.

Our partner and ally integration was off the charts. Normally you walk into a mission planning cell that's multinational and you see a desk of Japan, a desk of UK, a desk of US, a desk of this. When you walked into this mission planning cell and we had Five Eyes plus Japan and France, everybody's wearing each other's patches, everybody's at each other's planning tables, everybody's helping fill out the forms, do the planning. We actually had the Aussies lead the largest airdrop that we did in Mobility Guardian, and we had the Japanese and the Kiwis lead, some of our AE echelons, so that integration was off the charts in the most wonderful way. And I would expect that, and we should take a lot of confidence in that.

Last, I'll brag about two things. The first would be we did a palletized effects drop. So for me, palletized effects are much more than just the kinetic side, but this was the kinetic side. Dropped a JASSM ER off of a C-17 for the first time. It was an exquisite shot, and my expectation is we will continue to build that development, build on what AFSOC laid out for the Air Force team when it comes to the other than fighter and other than bomber application of those type of weapons. And I feel confident that that can be in a really good spot.

And the last I'm going to talk about, and then save it for a later question, but I'll talk about the real need for connectivity in the mobility fleet. I'm driving for what I'm calling 25 by 25, 25% of the fleet by the year 2025, with roll-on kit that requires minimum intrusive evasive modification of the airplanes, affordable technology that exists now and has been demonstrated. I'm talking Arctic, I'm talking Intelligent Gateway, I'm talking Adam's Kit, I'm talking Trick Kit. These things are game-changers for the mobility fleet. The single biggest contribution to survivability for a tanker or an airlift platform is connectivity. Thank you.

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

Would you mind if I jumped in-

Gen. Mike Minihan:

Yeah, please do.



Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

... because I do want to amplify some of what Mini was saying. While Mobility Guardian was happening, we were also doing a Northern Edge and they actually were combined intentionally, and so I'd like to compliment General Minihan because we have been telling our commanders in PACAF to be bold and to take risks, and that's exactly what he did by executing Mobility Guardian, especially when he connected it with Northern Edge. And so in the midst of the very extensive exercise that Mobility Guardian was, Northern Edge was as well. And you mentioned it, the Super Typhoon Mawar hit Guam a few days before it started, and we actually had to rearrange a lot of where some of the aircraft were going because of the damage on the island, which is an absolutely perfect agile combat employment exercise.

And in fact, another part of just resilience, I told the 36-wing team at Guam when I went and visited after the typhoon, I said, "Think about a potential attack by somebody with ballistic missiles and how much damage could happen in one day on the island and compare it to what you experienced with the typhoon. Which one would be greater, do you think?" And the Typhoon clearly did more damage than a fairly extensive attack might damage, and yet the airfield came back in about 24 hours and there was about almost \$5 billion worth of damage on the airfield, yet we had the airfield open well before even electricity and water was running on most of the island. And that was allowing your jets to get in there, our jets to get in there, and so fantastic opportunity to combine those two exercises.

Number one, to advance our capability to do agile combat employment and to demonstrate what we're capable of. And we all know that Northern Edge and Mobility Guardian happening concurrently is a small subset of what we would be required to do in a major theater of war. But nonetheless, we are advancing our capabilities. And General Brown mentioned it in his remarks earlier about the infinite gain. And every time we do an agile combat appointment, and as general O'Shaughnessy mentioned a few years ago, we had a PowerPoint idea, we tried it and every single time we do an agile combat employment exercise, we develop another list of things we have to work on.

And so that is exactly what we're asking all of you to do is help us to take off the list and then add stuff to the list that makes this even better because we are never going to be finished getting better at agile combat employment and integrating the force, whether it's the US Air Force or the other services or allies and partners. And so Mini, thanks so much for your leadership and courage to do Mobility Guardian at a tough time and yet we got a lot out of it. Thank you.

Gen. Mike Minihan:

Thanks, brother.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

So a little historical tidbit. We talk about ACE today and everyone understands what ACE means, but at the time you have to be a bit of a salesman to actually push these things up the chain, so we were trying to figure out what could we use. One of them was of course ACE, but the other was AC/DC, and so we came back, cool rock band or ACE with that Air Force heritage, and I think we were smart and ACE is where we're at today. It was probably a good plan. But Cruiser, can you expand a little bit more? Last year, about a year ago today, you announced that ACE was IOC. That was a pretty big announcement and really a lot of work had gone into that. Since then, you've continued to make progress just as you were alluding to. But what are the things you're looking for for FOC and what are the things that you've been making progress towards FOC on?

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:



You bet, so thanks. I would say that the difference between IOC and FOC is the complexity of the problem set. So IOC, we didn't have much in the way of bases that were contested. So logistics wasn't really contested, comm wasn't contested, and you weren't having to work through CBRNE type activities while you were executing ACE. As we move closer and closer to FOC, those are the sorts of things that we will ask our Airmen to be able to fight their way through. So execute ACE, execute the ATO, but you're going to have logistics challenges, you're going to have comm challenges, you're going to have a challenge just surviving on the base from the attacks. And so we have got to be able to do all of that. And as we go forward in time, those are all things that we're practicing.

And then in addition to that, IOC was relatively small, so we had two hubs and four spokes. When we get to FOC, ultimately the entire AOR is going to have to be in an ACE mindset. So all of air mobility command will have to be operating in an ACE construct. All of AFSOC will have to be operating in an ACE construct. And of course all of PACAF, including all that we take on from air combat command that comes in and other places, in addition to our allies and partners who might be with us, and we've got to be able to command and control that. It quickly expands to an extremely difficult problem set to make sure that you know where everybody's at, what everybody's doing, what everybody's going to do, and that they are fueled up, have munitions, have the right cargo, have the right missions to execute at the right time and place.

And so FOC is going to be extremely difficult. We're up for it, and every day I ask the wings to make ACE a part of their everyday activity in some way. And that's the way that we will achieve FOC is if it's not a special thing that we do every few weeks or every few months, but that we do it every day and it's just muscle memory.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Great. Thanks, Cruiser. And as we know as we fight in the Pacific that AFSOC brings some really unique and critical capability to the fight. So Tony, can you talk a bit about some of the transformational efforts that you have going on within AFSOC that are going to be really significant for the Pacific region?

Lt. Gen. Tony D. Bauernfeind:

Yes, sir. I look forward to it on all approaches from three perspectives, people, organization, and technology. And from the people perspective we thought we were clever. We did not realize that AC/DC was being looked at in the past and it was dropped on the table. We clearly picked it up on the people front because we have established what was called the Air Commando Development Center. And we've acknowledged after two decades of going to CENTCOM with the GWAC fight that we had gotten in a rut of where we were going. And we acknowledged that as we move forward with the dynamic, strategic environment that we're facing, that we've got to purposely develop our Airmen and our commandos for not only the mission that's in front of them that's being tasked, that's coming down the pike 18 months, 12 months, six months out, but also that high-end fight as we going forward.

And what underpins all of that as we're developing them is instilling the concept and the culture of mission command, and purposely exercising our air commandos to instill and execute that mission command and putting them in those situations where it's expected, because we know our adversaries are going to do that to us and we have to build that now. So I'm really excited with our Provisional Air Commander Development Center and they're already doing that as we purposely develop our special operations task units, task groups, and joint task forces that are purposely deploying right now to the CENTCOM, AFRICOM and soon to the Indo-PACOM Theater in the next few months, so that is going in the right direction.



Organizationally, we're purposely transforming AFSOC into what's been announced as the Power Projection Wings, and acknowledging that within AFSOC we bring four particular missions to bear. Soft mobility, soft ISR, soft strike, and soft air to ground integration, all to enable the Joint Force. Whether that be the air component commander or the soft component commander, we have to bring those capabilities forward. So we are organizing our wings and such that we will have those power projection wings to support the five primary regions as we're moving forward.

And then from an equipment and technology perspective, we acknowledge that for special operations to be effective for the Joint Force, we're going to have to be in the deep battle space, and we're going to return to where we were in the eighties and nineties when Air Force Special Operations Command had some of the premier contested capabilities. So we're going to work with industry, we're going to work with our acquisition professionals to bring both those onboard and offboard capabilities that we need to get our air commandos in position to support the Joint Force with the effects that the Joint Force needs to be effective as it moves forward.

We're also leaning into the acknowledgement that has been discussed here that our operating bases and our runways will be under stress, and so we're approaching this acknowledging that we have to have runway agnostic capabilities. So under General Slife's leadership, we established the MC-130 amphibious capability to see how can we put MC-130s on the surface of the Pacific Ocean, and that engineering effort is continuing forward. We're also continuing to partner with DARPA to develop a high-speed vertical takeoff and lift capability, something that may in one day replace our CV-22 force, but with some tough demands. For us to be effective, we've got to be able to stay with the assault force, and the assault force is going to be at speeds that our CV-22s and our rearing force just cannot keep up with. So we've asked DARPA to get for high-end capabilities to really increase the speed requirements, and we know it's going to be technologically hard, but with our DARPA teammates will know they'll bring those capabilities forward.

But we're also dealing with the capabilities we have now. We're returning to conducting highway landings, dirt strip landings, just demonstrated in Korea. We just demonstrated again in Montana. MC-130 lands in a highway strip, quickly follows in, sets up a refueling site, F-35s land, refuel the F35s. They continue on to their weapons school mission and then we bring in MQ-9s and use satellite launch and recovery capabilities to bring the MQ-9s in so they can continue on. And we're demonstrating that satellite launch and recovery in combat as you speak, extending the range of what those MQ-9s can do for the force, and very proud of that bottom-up innovation as we're moving forward.

And then the final transformation that we're really leaning into is what I'm considering from my perspective, our top acquisition priority as we work with everyone in this aspect of re-looking the architecture under our ISR fleets. In this perspective, we're calling the program Adaptive Airborne Enterprise. And if you can imagine that when we look at how we built our MQ-9 fleet, some studies will say it's between 150 to 200 Airmen to maintain a single MQ-9 orbit 24/7, 365. We cannot afford that moving forward. We have to be able to use our group four, group five UASs to expand the capability as we go forward and to be able to get dozens, if not hundreds, of these UAVs out into the battle space.

Now, imagine if those group four and group five UASs have the ability to air launch dozens of group one and group two UASs and they can now start to stitch together and form that sensing grid or that common network that will augment other joint capabilities, that will enable the targeting that our Joint Force needs or the communications pathways that our Joint Force needs. And I'm really excited to see where that's going for AFSOC. So we're leaning in hard into the transformation and excited to see where the future's taking us.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):



Great. Thanks, Tony. And we have the Secretary and the Chief here, so I'll throw a softball to each of the commanders and say what's the top priority things that you need, one or two things that you need, from the Department of the Air Force for you to be successful? Over to you, Mini. No pressure.

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

More money. We do need some more resources. So as we talked about agile combat employment, one of the things that we're trying to do is build out more airfields so that we have places to go. And so a lot of our strategy there is taking many of the World War II airfields that frankly are overgrown by the jungle, and there's still concrete or asphalt underneath that jungle. We scrape the jungle away and now we have an airfield. It takes some resources. So we're not making super bases anywhere. We're looking for a place to get some fuel and some weapons, maybe get a bite to eat and take a nap and then get airborne again, so that would take resources.

And then as we know, with China as the pacing challenge, they've been modernizing to have a fight with us potentially for the last 20 years and we need to modernize. And so there's a number of weapons systems that we could use and we are working on those like the E7, F-15EX, joint strike munition, and AIM-260. These kind of weapons and weapons platforms are ones that will help us to deter the Chinese as they consider violence in the region.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks, Cruiser. Tony?

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

Now that three of my bosses are in here, you can go second.

Lt. Gen. Tony D. Bauernfeind:

I would love to say more resources, but I think we know that that's going to be a challenge as we move forward. I would offer that what we look for at AFSOC is the continued prioritization and the continued laser focus on the problem in front of us. As we have moved forward, we now have that vision, that point on the horizon for which we can align our entire force towards. We do realize that the geopolitical environment can move us in multiple directions, but by having that laser focus, it now gives an opportunity for all of our Airmen to prepare, to train, to develop, to be ready for what's in front of them. Because if we are 100% ready for that pacing challenge, we can handle anything that's thrown at us, so I've just asked that we continue to maintain that prioritization and that focus, and some resources.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Thanks, Tony. Mini? Good.

Gen. Mike Minihan:

I realize that resourcing goes to the trusted and prepared. So in Air Mobility Command, we aim to be both, and so 25% of the fleet connected by '25 is a significant advance in the capability we have now. Roughly 3% of my fleet has the connectivity I think we need. If the normal programming were to let happen, it gets up to about 15. If we can accelerate up to 25, we can make an enormous impact on the battlefield instantly. And yet we allow for the normal maturation of technology to happen too, so it's not so much that we don't commit the whole fleet and we can incorporate things that come down later, so we're really going to drive hard for this 25 by '25.



It's not lost on me that the leadership has been extremely unified and I think very loud and clear on what the priority here is here. So I feel that the messaging is consistent from the top and our job as Airmen, our job as a headquarters specifically, is to do everything in our power to organize and train and equip the talent that's out there that exist in the forces from the wings and the squadrons and the NAFs and everything to make sure they have everything they need to be successful. And going back to the Paparo statement, are we ready? Absolutely. Are we ready enough? No. So this priority of the pacing challenge, the priority of resourcing to get after the things that we can do, quick fixes to make ourselves better instantly, that's where we need to go.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Great, thanks. Cruiser?

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

Would you mind if I tagged onto something that Mini said because it would make sense to all of us that the Air Mobility Command would want to have his fleet connected, but as the CFAC for the region, I actually want that too. And we've seen this play out in exercises multiple times where a mobility platform, whether it's a tanker or one of the details, would take off. And in the time that they took off, so they got their intel brief when they left, and en route to wherever they're going to go to, which could be 12 hours before they actually get there, the dynamics have changed in the AOR. And in exercise, we lose a tanker, we lose a cargo aircraft because they didn't even know there was a threat there.

And for those of us that have flown with jets that have glass on them and you have situational awareness and you can see the picture and you can look at something and it's instantaneously, you get situational awareness. You know where your friends are, you know where the foes are, you know where the threats are, and you can make adjustments on the fly. There's many of the platforms in AMC, all they have is voice comm and they might not even have that, so we absolutely need AMC to be connected.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Great, thanks.

Now, as a nation, we always fight as a Joint Force and we fight with allies, partners, and friends. All three of you have had some significant experiences on joint assignments. I'll open it up to anyone. Any thoughts on how that has influenced the way you command now and the things that you think are important and the way you think that we're going to be able to compete, fight, and win in the Pacific.

Gen. Mike Minihan:

Yeah. I'm going to cry like a baby. You get me one way. You get me frosty, I'm moving around, or you get me the crybaby version of Mike Minihan. I'm here because of enormous investment by the joint team, incredible Airmen that invested in me personally and professionally. And I'm also the recipient of enormous investment by soldiers, sailors, marines, and Guardians that took the time to chisel, refine, improve, and essentially to set me up for the opportunity that I have now. Except for my time in Air Mobility Command, my entire geo time has been when with the joint team. So what you get out of that perspective is, one, is an appreciation for how talented the entire joint team is. And then two, you get enormous appreciation for our Airmen, their families, and what our role is in making everybody else successful, whether we're supporting or supported.

So there is enormous value in the joint experiences as well as serving overseas, and that's what motivates me each and every day. I know the clock is ticking here. There is no doubt in my mind, and



this is how I end all my things when we talk about challenges. We are going to win. Our job is to make it unfair, and that is a reflection of the Airmen, from the headquarters all the way down to the lowest echelon. There is no doubt in my mind that we're going to win. Our job is to make it unfair and to give that Airman and that family every tool necessary to be successful. Thank you.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):

Excellent.

Lt. Gen. Tony D. Bauernfeind:

General Wilsbach, thanks for giving me the opportunity to follow that. I will tell you that the only way we are going to win is as a Joint Force and with our allies and partners, and I have benefited from growing up in a joint-minded force. Special Operations is joint by design and that's just the way we live. And I can tell you that I am extremely proud of what we can do when we come together, because we all look at problems differently. It's the diversity of thought that the Joint Force can bring forward. We can solve problems differently, we can bring different capabilities to bear. And that's one of the things I'm focused on as the AFSOC commander in these power projection wings is we're thickening the relationships we have with our Joint Forces at the tactical elements, not just in exercise but also in garrison, because I owe that to General Wilsbach.

When General Wilsbach says, "I have 10 problems that I need soft nation to solve for me in a war fight," I need to bring forward to him solutions that originate out of Naval Special Warfare, Army Special Operations Command, Marine Special Operations Command. And it will not all be in Air Force Special Operations Command because we can bring a pallet of options that enable the Joint Force, and that is absolutely critical to our development as we move forward. And again, excited to see this moving forward because our Airmen and our squadron commanders, group commanders, wing commanders are leaning into this hard, and that's where the innovative thought is occurring. And I have full confidence they're going to bring the solutions so we can enable General Wilsbach's force. Thank you.

Gen. Kenneth Wilsbach:

Yeah, my colleagues are a hundred percent correct and I know we're over time now a little bit, but I'll just say my two cents about joint. One thing about the Pacific, I've been there a long time, had a lot of tours there, and I can tell you that right now is the most joint it's ever been. One of the reasons is that we plan everything. Even the day-to-day things that are happening right now started as a joint planning effort. So our team at PACAF gets together with Pac Fleet, USAR Pac, the Guardians and the Marines, and they sit down at the table before we even decide to do anything. Anything. There's a joint planning team and it's planned first, and then we execute it and we count on one another.

And so my advice to those that haven't had much chance to work in the Joint Force is go do some joint stuff and listen to what your colleagues from the other services have to say and consider that they might have a solution that you didn't think of and see if you can incorporate it, and then offer what we can provide for the solutions and put it together. I found that our young people make this pretty easy. They just know that it can be done and they make it happen day in and day out, and so I'm really proud of our young people that are really improving the Joint Force, because General Minihan's exactly right. We are going to win. And one of the reasons we're going to win is because we know how to do joint and combined better than anybody.

Gen. Terrence O'Shaughnessy, USAF (Ret.):



Great, thank you. So mindful of the time, I would just close by saying I'm certainly full of confidence hearing these leaders talk about how they are going to compete, fight, and win in the Pacific. We have the right leaders focused on the right things, and I think it's testament to our entire Airmen and Guardians that are out there, of having that force that is dedicated to ensuring that failure is not an option and that we are postured to win. Thank you all very much.