

Commander of newest MAJCOM defines success, introduces command at AFA

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by Master Sgt. Russell Petcoff, Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs Office

9/18/2009 - WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- The commander of Air Force Global Strike Command stressed the importance of skilled and dedicated Airmen to the nuclear enterprise during a question-and-answer session following his address at the Air Force Association's Air & Space Conference and Technology Exhibition Sept. 16.

Praising Airmen who support and operate Minuteman III's and nuclear-capable bombers, Lt. Gen. Frank G. Klotz, AFGSC commander, emphasized "how incredibly important what they do is every day, whether it's walking the fence line at a weapons storage area, or performing maintenance on one of these systems, or operating it from a launch control center or from a cockpit." The remarks came in front of a crowd of about 125 people in the main conference room in the National Harbor Convention Center in Oxon Hill, Md.

Establishing Global Strike Command entails more than simply consolidating Air Force nuclear assets into one command, the general said; it requires skilled Airmen being fully involved in the mission.

"This new command reflects the Air Force's firm and unshakeable conviction that strategic nuclear deterrence and global strike operations are a special trust and responsibility -- one that we take very seriously," the general said.

"With the new command's activation, we began the road toward consolidating Air Force assets in this critical mission area under a single command," he added. "One that will serve as a single voice to help maintain the high standards necessary in stewardship of our nation's strategic nuclear deterrence forces."

In response to a question from the audience about a reported feeling among some people that the stand-up of AFGSC was simply a sign that Strategic Air Command "was back," the general was clear.

"Global Strike Command is not the Strategic Air Command," General Klotz said. For example, he noted, that the new command won't have the refueling aircraft that were assigned to SAC. He did note, however, that AFGSC assumes the "honors and lineage of SAC." In fact, during the Aug. 7 activation ceremony, AFGSC inherited the campaign streamers from the SAC flag. He also said that he hoped the new command would inherit the same professionalism, discipline, excellence, pride, and esprit of its famed predecessor.

The general further addressed the issue of experienced personnel, saying it was the command's "most significant challenge." Developing experience and expertise is "not something we'll be able to do overnight," but it will take time to develop and re-establish, he said.

As a new MAJCOM, General Klotz said the command has a unique opportunity to define and chart its own future.

"Everyone down in Barksdale is the 'first-ever' in that job, for now and forever," General Klotz said. "I think the opportunity to create something new -- to know that whatever you do is going to have a lasting impact on the command -- is a powerful incentive for people."

He said this opportunity is bringing "very promising talent" into the command.

This is the first time since 1982 that the Air Force has created a new major command from whole cloth, General Klotz said.

The general said the launch of the new command "marked a major milestone for the Air Force's nuclear deterrence and global strike missions."

"We now have a single command to represent this enterprise -- as a key element of the larger set of capabilities the Air Force provides the joint team and the nation," General Klotz said.

The nuclear mission requires a special responsibility, General Klotz said. "For if there is one unchanging, immutable truth about this awesome capability, it is that it demands our constant and undivided attention."

During the question-and-answer session, the general fielded a question about how will he know AFGSC has achieved success.

Success will come when we see adherence to standards and discipline infused throughout the entire command, General Klotz said.

"When we achieve that, I think we can say that we are approaching success," he said. "But in this business the standard is perfection. It is something you have to pay constant attention to."

Reinvigoration of the nuclear enterprise is one of the top five priorities of Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz. The secretary and the general "endorsed a nuclear roadmap designed to ensure that as long as nuclear weapons are a part of our national strategy, they will remain safe, secure and reliable," General Klotz said.

These actions will strengthen two legs of the United States' nuclear triad, according to the general. He discussed the importance of both ICBMs and bombers. AFGSC takes over the Minuteman III mission Dec. 1 and its nuclear-capable bombers Feb. 1. He said the ICBM mission is the most responsive to national leadership.

"The Minuteman III force presents any potential adversary with an almost insurmountable, insoluble, challenge should he contemplate attacking the United States," General Klotz said. "Because, [the adversary] cannot disarm the ICBM force without nearly exhausting his own forces in the process, and at the same time, leaving himself vulnerable to our sea-launched ballistic missiles and bombers. He has no incentive to strike in the first place."

AFGSC also assumes responsibility of 8th Air Force and its nuclear-capable bombers Feb. 1. The general said the B-52 and B-2 bombers offer "flexibility and versatility" and are also "critically important" to the second leg of the nuclear triad.

"They can be used to signal resolve and intent through very visible steps to increase their readiness or to deploy them to different locations," General Klotz said.