Airman Killed in Afghanistan

Lt. Col. John Darin Loftis, 44, of Paducah, Ky., was killed in an insurgent attack on the Afghan Interior Ministry in Kabul, Feb. 25, according to the Defense Department.

Assigned to the Air Force Special Operations School at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Loftis was serving with the 866th Air Expeditionary Squadron in Kabul when a gunman shot him.

Loftis was one of two US military officers killed in the attack on the ministry that was seen as retribution for the accidental burning of several copies of the Koran at Bagram Airfield. Also killed was Army Maj. Robert J. Marchanti II.

Fluent in Pashto, Loftis was the chief plans advisor for the AIPak Hands program, which trains US service personnel in Afghan and Pakistani culture and language.

Djibouti Crash Kills Four Airmen

Four airmen assigned to Hurlburt Field, Fla., were killed in the crash of a U-28 intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance aircraft near Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti on Feb. 18.

Capt. Ryan P. Hall, 30, of Colorado Springs, Colo.; Capt. Nicholas S. Whitlock, 29, of Newnan, Ga.; 1st Lt. Justin J. Wilkens, 26, of Bend, Ore.; and SrA. Julian S. Scholten, 26, of Upper Marlboro, Md., died in the crash, the Defense Department said. They were returning from an Operation Enduring Freedom mission.

Hall, a U-28 pilot, was assigned to the 319th Special Operations Squadron. Whitlock, also a U-28 pilot, and Wilkens, a combat systems officer, were members of the 34th SOS. Scholten, a mission systems operator, served with the 25th Intelligence Squadron.

The Air Force is investigating the cause of the accident.

Locklear Takes PACOM Reins


Locklear previously commanded US Naval Forces Europe, where he had been assigned since October 2010.

Rewinged Warthog

Boeing and the Air Force recently rolled out the first rewinged A-10C ground-attack aircraft in a ceremony at Hill AFB, Utah.

“This enhanced wing assembly will give the A-10 new strength and a new...

Budget-Strategy Mismatch

The Pentagon’s Fiscal 2013 budget request doesn’t match the new national defense strategy, which emphasizes air- and sea power rather than land forces, according to Todd Harrison, a senior fellow at the Center for Budgetary and Strategic Assessments.

“If you look at [Fiscal] ’12 to ’13,” the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps all gain, while “the Air Force goes down,” Harrison said in an address at a Feb. 17 Mitchell Institute for Airpower Studies presentation.

Air Force-specific “blue” funding—including money passed to other defense and intelligence agencies—actually declines three percent in the Fiscal 2013 budget proposal. At the same time, Army-specific funding rises four percentage points, while Marine Corps funding effectively rises by one percent.

Unlike the Air Force, ground services are funding personnel costs through the overseas contingency budgets instead of their baseline budget. As a result, they manage to maintain high personnel levels even as USAF has been forced to cut end strength.

That “saves” the Army $4 billion and the Marines $1 billion respectively, said Harrison.

While USAF paid the price up front, the other branches will find it difficult to maintain force levels “when we are no longer in combat operations,” said Harrison.
An HC-130 King and an HH-60 Pave Hawk, both from the Air National Guard, JB Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, practice refueling maneuvers. These aircraft and their crews perform combat search and rescue missions and have been heavily tasked to support operations worldwide.

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The Feb. 15 rollout followed the Air Force’s proposal earlier in the month to eliminate five A-10 squadrons from the Fiscal 2013 budget.

“We’re reducing 102 A-10s” but “there are still going to be 246 A-10s left in the inventory,” Chief of Staff Gen. Norton A. Schwartz said at a Pentagon briefing in early February.

Balking at BRAC
Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee are concerned about the two new rounds of Base Realignment and Closure proposed by the Obama Administration for 2013 and 2015.

“I have serious questions whether we save any money from a BRAC process,” Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.) said during a Feb. 14 hearing.

Sen. James M. Inhofe (R-Okla.) said he would oppose more rounds of BRAC, arguing that the US military is already being reduced “to an unacceptable level.”

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta, testifying at the hearing, told the Senators...
that as a former Congressman whose district had been affected by a base closure, “I recognize how controversial this process is for members and for constituencies.” However, he insisted that in his opinion BRAC “is the only effective way to achieve needed infrastructure savings.”

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) voiced support for consolidation, saying, “It’s appropriate to consider another round” of BRAC.

**F-16 Refresher**

The Air Force requested both a service life extension and upgrade for 350 F-16s in its Fiscal 2013 budget request. Aimed at keeping the fleet viable until F-35s enter service in strength, the service life extension program would include a “full-scale durability test and structural modifications to add eight to 10 years of service life to each airframe,” according to USAF’s budget overview, released in February.

A further Combat Avionics Programmed Extension Suite will be added to a select number of SLEP airframes and would modernize those F-16s with a more capable active electronically scanned array radar, new cockpit displays, data link enhancements, and an improved defensive suite.

Notional plans call for an initial contract for 30 SLEP kits in March 2016, followed by a second contract for 48 additional kits in January 2018.

The F-16 SLEP effort would be a “depot-level upgrade program,” according to a USAF spokeswoman.

The Air Force announced it plans to SLEP a portion of its F-16 fleet in 2017; airframes receiving the CAPES improvements would re-enter service in 2018.

**18-Hole Nuclear Tee Off**

In the first full year of the New START nuclear weapons agreement, the US and Russia each completed 18 on-site nuclear inspections—the maximum permitted under the treaty.
Since New START entered into force in February 2011, the two countries also exchanged 1,800 notifications through the treaty’s risk-reduction centers, according to a summary issued by the State Department.

To enhance stability and trust, the US notified Russian counterparts “every time a heavy bomber ... moved out of its home country for more than 24 hours,” as required by the rules, the Feb. 5 news release noted.

The Air Force exhibited a B-2A stealth bomber for the Russian delegation and conducted a one-time demonstration of the denuclearized B-1B bomber.

In exchange, Russia gave US observers their first look at the RS-24 mobile ICBM system, which can deploy independent warheads on several different targets.

**Slimming USAFE**

The Air Force is inactivating two Europe-based squadrons as part of the Pentagon’s posture change emphasizing Asia and the Middle East.

The 81st Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem AB, Germany—an A-10C unit—and the 603rd Air Control Squadron, based at Aviano AB, Italy, will get the axe, according to a Pentagon’s Feb. 16 announcement. Despite losing the 81st FS, Spangdahlem will still be home to F-16s and retain its flying mission.

Overall, the US is reducing its footprint in Europe from roughly 80,000 troops to a new level of some 70,000 by 2017. Army forces will account for a significant part of the drawdown, with the inactivation of two Germany-based infantry brigades (the 170th and 172nd) as well as V Corps headquarters in Wiesbaden.

Pentagon officials announced the cuts the same day Defense Secretary Thomas de Maizière in Germany and Defense Secretary Ash Carter announced the cuts in Washington, D.C.

**Radar Re-up**

The B-1B Lancer strike radar upgrade successfully completed operational flight and ground trials at Dyess AFB, Tex., in February, paving the way for fleetwide upgrades.

The Reliability and Maintainability Improvement Program—which replaces the Lancer’s radar transmitter, receiver, processing computer, and software—promises to greatly improve the aircraft serviceability and mission readiness, according to testers at Dyess.

“The existing B-1 radar system is more than 20 years old and has not had a hardware upgrade since it was initially fielded in 1985,” said SSG. Trevor Helm, B-1 crew chief with Dyess’ 337th Test and Evaluation Squadron. “Prior to RMIP, we were losing a lot of time by having to continuously replace parts on the radar system,” he said.

The “RMIP increases the mean time between failures of the current radar system by nine times that amount, significantly increasing B-1 aircraft availability,” added Lt. Col. George Holland, 337th TES commander.

**F-35 Commencing at Eglin**

At the end of February, the F-35A strike fighter was finally cleared to begin initial operations with the 33rd Fighter Wing at Eglin AFB, Fla.


“This is an important step for the F-35A,” he continued. Qualified pilots at Eglin, which is home to the joint F-35 schoolhouse, are now able to conduct “unmonitored flights” to gain familiarity with the aircraft, as well as iron out new maintenance and logistics infrastructure for the Lightning II.

Initial F-35A flights “will be limited, scripted, [and] conducted within the restrictions and stipulations of the MFR [military flight release],” stated an Aero- nautical Systems Center news release.

ASC officials at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, issued a military flight release for the Air Force variant Feb. 28.

Senior service officials said that Eglin-area orientation flights, with test pilots at the controls, were to begin in early March.

**Police Presence**

NATO member states have agreed to extend their Baltic air policing mission, providing fighter cover to member states Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania beyond 2014. The decision was made at a February summit in Brussels.
Recruiting Marine Hueys for USAF

The Air Force wants to acquire three UH-1N helicopters from Marine Corps stock to replace operational losses from its own Huey fleet, said Lt. Gen. James M. Kowalski, head of Air Force Global Strike Command.

The three helicopters would replace Hueys lost in accidents over the past few years—one each from AFGSC, Air Education and Training Command, and Air Force District of Washington, Kowalski said.

“I am very pleased today’s decision by the North Atlantic Council to further authorize NATO air policing in the Baltic States with a continuous presence of fighter assets of their own, 14 Alliance air forces deploy fighters to Siauliai AB, Lithuania, on a rotating basis. Begun after the Baltic states joined the Alliance in 2004, the fighter rotations were extended through 2014 by an agreement two years ago. NATO members, however, left the most recent commitment open-ended. “I warmly welcome today’s decision by the North Atlantic Council to further authorize NATO air policing in the Baltic States with a continuous presence of fighter assets, then NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said Feb. 8. 

“This mission continues to demonstrate the Alliance’s commitment to collective defense and solidarity for all its members.”

F-16s of the Royal Danish Air Force handed the mission off to F-4 Phantoms of the German Luftwaffe, which arrived on an eight-month deployment to Siauliai, Jan. 4.

Hurry Up and Wait

Replacing the T-38 trainer must take a back seat to more pressing Air Force procurement needs, according to Air Education and Training Command boss Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr. Rice said he is comfortable with the service’s Fiscal 2013 budget request that pushes initial operations with the new trainer, dubbed T-X, out to 2020.

“We’ve got some other things on the plate that are very important to us,” such as the F-35, KC-46, and future long-range bomber, Rice told reporters at the Air Force Association’s Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando, Fla., earlier this year.

A program to replace the aircraft with brand-new machines was cut from USAF’s budget, which is why the service is looking for other ways to replace the helos to meet missile field security needs, said Kowalski. Hueys at the Air Force’s three ICBM bases recently began standing continuous 24-hour security-response alert, he noted.

Given current crew and asset constraints, however, only one helo—in the sense that the United States with a continuous presence of fighter assets of their own, 14 Alliance air forces deploy fighters to Siauliai AB, Lithuania, on a rotating basis. Begun after the Baltic states joined the Alliance in 2004, the fighter rotations were extended through 2014 by an agreement two years ago. NATO members, however, left the most recent commitment open-ended.

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Given current crew and asset constraints, however, only one helo—rather than the three required to carry a full security-response team—sits alert at any one time, said Kowalski.

To stretch the life of the Huey fleet, “we’ve taken a look at upgrading the cockpits, looking at night vision compatibility, and safety improvements, he said.

Because the Baltic NATO states lack fighter assets of their own, 14 Alliance air forces deploy fighters to Siauliai AB, Lithuania, on a rotating basis. Begun after the Baltic states joined the Alliance in 2004, the fighter rotations were extended through 2014 by an agreement two years ago. NATO members, however, left the most recent commitment open-ended.

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The War on Terrorism

Operation Enduring Freedom

Casualties
By March 15, a total of 1,900 Americans had died in Operation Enduring Freedom. The total includes 1,897 troops and three Department of Defense civilians. Of these deaths, 1,500 were killed in action with the enemy while 400 died in noncombat incidents.
There have been 15,460 troops wounded in action during OEF.

CAS Shuffle
The Air Force recently reshuffled close air support assets in Afghanistan to meet the anticipated demands of ground forces in the coming months.
Air Force Reserve Command A-10s of the 303rd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron operating in southern Afghanistan out of Kandahar traded bases with Air National Guard F-16s of the 451st Expeditionary Fighter Squadron at Bagram Airfield in the north.
“This movement postures close air support to best support the campaign plans in the long and short term,” said Col. Kevin Blanchard, vice commander of the 451st Air Expeditionary Wing at Kandahar Airfield.
“The reset should provide the regional commanders the best air assets for the environment and operations each commander will encounter,” added Blanchard.
In addition to aircraft, the two units moved a combined 900 personnel and 438 units of cargo without missing a single combat sortie request.

10K Bone
A B-1 Lancer with the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing flew the type’s 10,000th combat mission on a recent sortie over Afghanistan.
Flying from an air base in Southwest Asia, the aircraft reached the fleet milestone on Feb. 26, less than 14 years after the type’s combat debut in Operation Desert Fox over Iraq in December 1998, according to wing officials.
“After launching the first combat sortie, I never thought I would have the opportunity to participate in the 10,000th,” said SMGSgt. Deidre Nickolson-Edie, who prepped aircraft for both historic flights.
“It’s a testament to our airmen who train day in and day out to continue to ensure that we are able to fly such a diverse and always-evolving weapon system,” she added.

The 21 Spartans
The Army wants to find a way to keep C-27J Spartan transports already acquired by the Air Force in service supporting ground troops in the field, said Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno.
While USAF is planning to disestablish the aircraft, Odierno said the few C-27s already deployed to Afghanistan will remain in country supporting ground forces until congressional and defense officials decide the aircraft’s final fate.
The Army’s fleet of C-23 Sherpas, used for supplying bases and ferrying parts, “are old [and] no longer effective,” meaning the service is loathe to sink money into needed upgrades, said Odierno.
Instead, “I’d like to keep the C-27s that we’ve already purchased” perhaps even adding a few additional airframes to replace the Sherpa fleet.
“We haven’t purchased that many, and that’s the problem,” Odierno said. The Air Force planned to acquire a total of only 38 airframes. So far, the Air National Guard has received more than 20, intended for use providing direct support to Army units in the field.

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Instead of the C-27J, the Air Force says it will use more-capable C-130s for combat resupply missions.

Guardsmen evacuated the victim from the container ship MCS Beijing, flying him to a hospital in San Jose, Feb. 4.
Although the ship was far out to sea, “the Coast Guard knew they could depend on our specialized capability” to reach the victim, said Col. Steven J. Butow, 129th RQW commander. “This is a prime example of how the 129th and California National Guard [are]
ready to support civilian authorities at a moment’s notice,” he added.
The mission was the 948th recorded “save” for Moffett aircrew and para-rescuemen.

Eagle Rebuild
Craftsmen completed the painstaking rebuild of an F-15E Strike Eagle at Robins AFB, Ga. It had been severely damaged by an in-flight fire during a training sortie near Shaw AFB, S.C., in August 2010.

Completely replacing the aircraft’s aft fuselage, technicians at Robins modified the aircraft’s structure to accept the standard engines used on F-15s at Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C., the aircraft’s home base.
“The actual scope of what we did to the aircraft is tremendous,” said Ed Fuller, Robins’ 561st Aircraft Maintenance Squadron project manager. “It was an incredible effort by a lot of people,” he added. “We saved the Air Force from the loss of an aircraft.”

The aircraft, which had arrived at Robins on a flatbed truck, flew to Seymour Johnson under its own power on Feb. 3.

Cockpit Fog
Fog inside the cockpit caused an F-16C to overshoot the runway at an air show last July, an Air Combat Command accident investigation board concluded in February.
The Alabama Air National Guard aircraft was on final approach to Wittman Regional Airport, south of Oshkosh, Wis., when the air-conditioning system malfunctioned, fogging up the canopy and blocking the pilot’s external view.
The pilot, assigned to the 100th Fighter Squadron, followed proper defogging procedures, but was unable to clear the windscreen.
Unable to judge the aircraft’s angle of attack, the pilot touched down without deploying the airbrakes, leaving inadequate stopping distance upon rollout.
To ensure the crowd’s safety, the pilot stayed with the aircraft, overrunning the 8,000-foot runway by 300 feet. Neither the pilot nor any bystanders were injured, but damage to the aircraft in the July 28 mishap was an estimated $5.4 million.

Polish Partnering
Air Force F-16s and C-130s will begin regular training rotations to Poland later this year, with the creation of a Poland Aviation Detachment.

Tasked to “strengthen our working relationship” with the Polish Air Force, the detachment’s permanent staff of 10 will manage some four USAF C-130 and F-16 rotations each year, according to the Air Force budget documents.
Poland flies both the F-16 Block 50 fighter and C-130E airlifter.
The memorandum of understanding signed last June also notes the possibility that fifth generation aircraft, such as the F-22, could deploy to the country.

Both US Air Forces in Europe and State-side units will send aircraft to the Polish Air Force’s 32nd Tactical Air Base near Lask in central Poland.

New and Improved Viper

Lockheed Martin has unveiled a revamped version of its F-16 multi-role fighter, introducing the Fighting Falcon’s latest incarnation—the F-16V—at the Singapore Air Show. The “V” denotes Viper, a name that a F-16 pilots themselves have bestowed on the fighter.

The improved version features an active electronically scanned array radar and an upgraded mission computer. Several cockpit improvements have been made as well, the changes based on operator experience from USAF and international customers, according to Lockheed Martin’s release announcing the variant.

“We believe this F-16V will satisfy our customers’ emerging requirements and prepare them to better interoperate with ... fifth generation fighters,” said George Standridge, Lockheed Martin Aeronautics vice president for business development.

Mortuary Penance

The Air Force will change its mortuary practices at Dover AFB, Del., based on recommendations of an independent government panel, Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley announced in February.

The Defense Health Board panel, chaired by retired Army Gen. John P. Abizaid, recommended granting full Uniform Code of Military Justice authority to Dover’s mortuary affairs commander. Donley said USAF will comply, calling the measure an “essential tool in maintaining command discipline” and needed to prevent future lapses in a mission where the service has a “solemn obligation ... to its flawless execution.”

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta and Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev., had called the measure “an essential tool in maintaining command discipline” and needed to prevent future lapses in a mission where the service has a “solemn obligation ... to its flawless execution.”

While the F-16V configuration is an option for new production jets, elements of the improvements are available as upgrades to earlier-model F-16s, according to the company.

Lockheed Martin touts the V configuration as “an innovative solution to affordably retrofit” AESA radar to existing F-16s.

Slow Lightning

Over the next five years, the F-35 strike fighter program will be reduced by roughly $15.1 billion, according to the Future Years Defense Program released in January.

The Defense Department will delay procurement of 179 aircraft originally slated for delivery to USAF, the Navy, and the Marine Corps from Fiscal 2013 to Fiscal 2017, said Robert F. Hale, DOD’s comptroller.

The program remains one of the Pentagon’s largest, however, budgeted for $8.9 billion in Fiscal 2013 alone.

The purpose of the delay is to allow testing and final development to catch up to production, Hale said at a Pentagon budget briefing in February. Despite previous delays and restructuring, there is still more “concurrency”—meaning development and testing in tandem with production—that Pentagon leaders are comfortable with, said Hale.

Italy Trims F-35 Buy

Italy’s defense ministry is cutting F-35 strike fighter procurement by nearly a third, from 131 to 90 aircraft. “It’s a significant reduction that
is coherent with our need to reduce spending,” Defense Minister Giampaolo Di Paola told a joint meeting of Italy’s legislative bodies in mid-February.

One of the original F-35 development partners, Italy had agreed to a $19.9 billion purchase of 69 F-35A conventional takeoff and landing aircraft and 62 F-35B short takeoff and vertical landing variants.

Italy’s announcement closely follows the Pentagon’s decision to postpone ordering 179 aircraft between Fiscal 2013 and 2017 to allow more time for F-35 testing before significantly ramping up aircraft production.

Di Paola didn’t specify how the cuts will be apportioned between the two variants Italy has on order.

**New to the X-Files**

Air Force Research Lab officials have revealed a new “X-Plane”—the remotely piloted X-56A Multi-Utility Technology Test Bed, jointly developed with NASA and Lockheed Martin.

The experimental twin-turbojet aircraft, which features quick-change wings, will be used by AFRL to investigate control problems associated with lightweight, highly efficient wing designs.

Experiments with the X-56 will aid in developing high-aspect-ratio wing technology that the Air Force could apply in future transport and remotely piloted aircraft designs.

The X-56A’s initial wingspan is 28 feet, and the aircraft weighs just 480 pounds.

The design incorporates an additional dorsal mounting pylon to facilitate adding a third engine or alternate wing designs.

Initial flights exploring gust loading and aerodynamic flutter are slated to begin this summer, said officials.

**Boneyard Laser**


The modified Boeing 747-400, which is configured to shoot down boosting ballistic missiles, began testing at Edwards in December 2002. It was equipped with several lasers, including a high-power chemical laser that fired from a nose turret.

Trials culminated with the successful shootdown of both a solid-fueled rocket and liquid-fueled missile in February 2010, “proving the viability of directed energy for missile defense,” said Lt. Col. Jeff Warmka, director of the ALTB Combined Test Force.

“...to invest in MQ-X,” James said at an Aviation Week-sponsored event in Arlington Va.

**Coping With the Aussies:** A USAF KC-135 refuels an F-16 over the Pacific Ocean during Exercise Cope North in February. Royal Australian Air Force fighters and AWACS aircraft participated in the exercise for the first time, at Andersen AFB, Guam. They joined Japan Air Self-Defense Force and USAF fighters flying air combat drills against F-16 aggressors from Eielson AFB, Alaska.

More than 1,000 airmen from the three countries participated in the two-week exercise.
Instead, USAF will spend Fiscal 2013 observing “what plays out” with the Navy’s Unmanned Carrier-Launched Airborne Surveillance and Strike—or UCLASS—RPA, said James. USAF has purchased for testing a single General Atomics Predator C Avenger—a stealthy, jet-powered RPA in the Reaper class—but the service has “no intention to press that forward” as a Reaper replacement, said James. Instead, USAF will continue procuring the MQ-9 at a rate of 28 aircraft per year until it can field 65 combat air patrols with a surge capacity of 85 “orbits,” James said.

Although Air Force officials have emphasized that the MQ-9 is not survivable in contested airspace, James claimed “we can upgrade the Reaper if we need to.”

Nuclear Directorate

The acquisition and care of the Air Force’s entire nuclear arsenal is now the responsibility of a newly minted Nuclear Capabilities Directorate at Kirtland AFB, N.M.

Organized under Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center at Kirtland, the NCD directly oversees the purchase and sustainment of nuclear reentry vehicles, cruise missiles, and free-fall bombs, in addition to nuclear support equipment. Officials simultaneously inactivated the 498th Nuclear Systems Wing, which previously oversaw many of these tasks, transferring its responsibilities to the NCD, under the Air Force’s overhaul of the nuclear force structure and oversight.

“We owe this wing and its people a great debt of gratitude and thanks for what they accomplished in the transformation of the nuclear enterprise,” said Brig. Gen. Garrett Harencak, AFNWC commander, unveiling the directorate’s new insignia Jan. 27.

Lockheed Delivers 250th Super Herk

Lockheed Martin delivered the 250th C-130J Super Hercules from the production line at Marietta, Ga., to its new home at Dyess AFB, Tex., the company announced.

The Super Herk went to the 317th Airlift Group on Feb. 16, exactly one week after a C-130J became the first new airframe to join the group’s 39th Airlift Squadron on base.

“Since the J model was first introduced, it has been the workhorse of airlift worldwide. This milestone is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the C-130 enterprise,” said Lorraine Martin, then Lockheed Martin’s vice president for C-130 programs.

Dyess’ new bird is the second of 11 airframes Lockheed Martin is slated to deliver to the Texas base this year.

Upon receiving the 28th and final C-130J in 2013, Dyess will host the world’s largest C-130J force, according to the company.

Onward With AFNet

AFNet, the service’s single, centrally administered computer network, has successfully expanded to 48 installations, including 34 main operating bases, 13 geographically separated units, and Air Force Reserve Command’s headquarters.

“For years, cyberspace systems and capabilities were acquired via ad hoc methods by individual units, and by the time we made our first moves toward a single Air Force network, we were dealing with a security nightmare,” said Air Force Space Command boss Lt. Gen. Michael J. Basla. AFNet is “designed to address this issue.”

“Today, the AFNet migration is our No. 1 cyberspace initiative,” he said at the Air Force Association’s Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando, Fla., in February.

With more than 187,000 users already transitioned to AFNet, the result is a “much more defensible construct,” he said.

Shifting to AFNet are Barksdale AFB, La.; Laughlin AFB, Tex.; Osan AB, South Korea; Yokota AB, Japan; and Vance AFB, Okla. All other Air Force locations worldwide are expected to complete the transition in 2013, Basla said.