More than 5,600 attendees filled the halls and corridors of the Air Force Association’s 2011 Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition. It featured speeches by top USAF leaders and a record number of professional development sessions and briefings, in addition to a full array of aerospace and defense technology exhibits.

This year’s conference took place Sept. 19-21 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center overlooking the Potomac River, in National Harbor, Md., just outside Washington, D.C.

On Monday, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton A. Schwartz launched the conference with opening remarks, presenting several of AFA’s National Aerospace Awards alongside Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley. Laurels included AFA’s Citations of Honor, top crew and team awards, and Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command honors.

Fifty students from the US Air Force’s Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, Ala., visited the conference and technology exposition and were joined for the first time by 130 airmen from Air Force Materiel Command, all thanks to financial support from Boeing and the KC-46 Tanker Team.

Visitors were hard-pressed to choose among a record 68 presentations, briefings, and panel discussions over the three-day conference. Topics ranged from strategy to terrorism to personal development, and featured newsmaker speeches and appearances by prominent figures from the Air Force past and present.

The technology expo grew as well, boasting displays from across industry and the Department of Defense. It featured 126 exhibitors, including a Boeing KC-46A cockpit and boom-operator station mock-up, an AgustaWestland AW139 helicopter, BAE’s Hawk jet aircraft training system trailer, and cockpit training simulators of Hawker Beechcraft’s AT-6 and Rockwell Collins’ KC-135 Block 45 cockpit upgrade.

The combined Air & Space Conference and Technology Expo drew some 73 members of the media, in addition to members of Air Force Public Affairs covering the event for internal communications.
The AFA National Convention was held Sept. 17-18. On Sunday morning, Sept. 18, AFA members and their guests assembled at the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Va., for a solemn salute to those who died in the past year.

During the early morning service, AFA National Chaplain retired Maj. Gen. William J. Dendinger delivered a homily and Donley, CMSAF James A. Roy, and AFA Chairman of the Board S. Sanford Schlitt laid a wreath in memory of the dead. The Memorial Tribute, listing the names of 27 departed AFA members, was read by Schlitt, Justin M. Faiferlick, Vice Chairman of the Board for Field Operations, and George K. Muellner, Vice Chairman of the Board for Aerospace Education.

AFA lauded the Air Force’s 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year at a formal awards dinner Sept. 19, preceded by an evening reception sponsored by Northrop Grumman.


With generous support from ATK, the 12 Outstanding Airmen met with congressional leaders on Capitol Hill, visited the White House and Pentagon, and toured the monuments and memorials in and around Washington, D.C., throughout the week.

AFA’s Air Force Anniversary Dinner was held Sept. 21, toasting the monumental achievements of leaders in the Air Force and the broader aerospace community. Honored guests were again treated to entertainment by the US Air Force Band with Patrick Coulter acting as master of ceremonies. AFA honored:

- Gen. Duncan J. McNabb, commander of US Transportation Command, with the H. H. Arnold Award, recognizing the year’s most significant
contribution to national security by a member of the military.
- Rep. C. W. Young (R-Fla.), with the W. Stuart Symington Award, recognizing the year’s top contribution by a civilian in the field of national defense.
- United Launch Alliance, supplier of national security space program launch vehicles, with the John R. Alison Award for the top industrial contribution to national defense.
- National Science Foundation, with the AFA Chairman’s Aerospace Education Award, for long-term commitment to aerospace education.
- Heavy bombardment crews of World War II; Commando Sabre Operation fast forward air controllers—call sign Misty; retired Gen. Larry D. Welch, former Chief of Staff and head of Strategic Air Command; retired Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Stafford, defense consultant, former astronaut, and test pilot; and Natalie W. Crawford, senior fellow and Project Air Force director at the RAND Corp., with AFA Lifetime Achievement Awards.

AFA Education Award
Nancy Hoover, a teacher at the L. C. Bird High School in Midlothian, Va., was presented AFA’s National Aerospace Teacher of the Year award. Every year, AFA presents the honor to an elementary-through-high school teacher for exemplary efforts at nurturing and developing students in STEM: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Air Force Leaders Attending
Air Force leaders mingled with attendees throughout, and a good number spoke during the seminars and took questions from airmen during Wednesday’s Four-Star Forum.
Among the leaders speaking at the conference were Donley, Erin C. Conaton, undersecretary of the Air Force, Schwartz, Breedlove, McNabb, and Roy.

Above: World War II heavy bomber crew member George Kuchenbecker and TSgt. Amy Winn take a break from the events. Right: George Muellner, AFA Vice Chairman, Aerospace Education (l), and Gen. Edward Rice, AETC commander (r), present the AFROTC Cadet of the Year award to Matthew Stazenski.


Election of AFA Officers

Schlitt, of Sarasota, Fla., was elected for a second term as Chairman of the Board. Faiferlick, of Fort Dodge, Iowa, was elected for a second term as Vice Chairman of the Board, Field Operations. Muellner, of Huntington Beach, Calif., was elected for a second term as Vice Chairman of the Board, Aerospace Education. Edward W. Garland, of San
Antonio, was elected for a first term as AFA National Secretary. Leonard R. Vernamonti, Clinton, Miss., was elected AFA National Treasurer for a second term.

Other AFA Elections

Rick Hartle, Layton, Utah, and Donald Taylor, San Antonio, were elected National Directors at Large, and Donald R. Michels, Lawrenceville, Ga., was elected from the East area.

Newly elected Region Presidents are: Scott P. Van Cleef, Virginia, Central East Region President; Michael Emig, Florida Region President; Robert J. Wilkinson, Massachusetts, New England Region President; Ronald L. Garcia, North Dakota, North Central Region President, Gayle White, Colorado, Rocky Mountain Region President; Robert Hale, Nevada, Southwest Region President; and Robert L. Slaughter, Texas, Texoma Region President.

AFA Business

There were 209 registered delegates representing 35 states, the District of Columbia, Europe, and the Pacific region at the National Convention.

Delegates received a briefing on AFA’s CyberPatriot program and listened to presentations by Kevin Estrem, President of the Lance P. Sijan Chapter, AFA’s Chapter of the Year, and from retired Lt. Gen. John A. Bradley on his charity work in Afghanistan. Delegates also heard a recorded message from Rep. Clifford Stearns (R-Fla.), co-chair of the House Air Force Caucus. Those in attendance received status updates from Chairman Schlitt, Vice Chairman Faiferlick, and Treasurer Vernamonti.

The delegates approved AFA’s 2012-14 Strategic Plan as submitted by the Board of Directors, but rejected a recommendation that would separate AFA’s National Convention from AFA’s annual Air & Space Conference after hearing the ad hoc committee’s report on the issue, as well as a board-approved change to the constitution on the search and nominating process.

Delegates reviewed and unanimously approved AFA’s annual Statement of Policy and Top Issues, as presented. The delegates also approved a Board recommendation to reject proposed changes to convention representation and voting procedures.

Acknowledgments


AFA National Convention parliamentarian was Joan Blankenship. Inspectors of elections were Ross B. Lampert, chairman; Arthur J. Rooney; and Ronald Powell. Fran C. Shaw chaired the Credentials Committee, serving with Geri Sutter and Helen F. McGregor.

The Air Force Association is indebted to these and other volunteers assisting AFA staff members during the convention.