



# Air & Space Conference and National Convention 2015





**M**ore than 6,800 attendees gathered for the 2015 Air Force Association National Convention and the Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition, dedicating time to better understand Air Force issues.

Top USAF leaders, such as Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James, Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, and CMSAF James A. Cody took the stage at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Md., just outside Washington, D.C. Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter gave a keynote address. All speakers shared with audiences their present challenges as well as their visions for the Air Force's future.

The 67th annual AFA National Convention began Saturday, Sept. 12, with two days of AFA business, followed by three days of conference activity, filled with 50 speaker sessions.

The conference commenced with welcoming remarks by James and an awards ceremony highlighting more than 40 individuals and groups for their contributions to the aerospace community. James, Welsh, and major command leaders presented citations of honor and Air Force crew and team awards, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve awards, and professional, civilian, education, management, and environmental awards.

AFA formally honored the Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year with a ceremonial dinner following a reception sponsored by Northrop Grumman on Sept. 14.

Cody congratulated the 12 airmen during his keynote address at the dinner ceremony.

SSgt. Qunita Humphries, one of the 2014 Outstanding Airmen of the Year, acted as master of ceremonies, and Chief of Chaplains Maj. Gen. Dondi E. Costin led the gathering in prayer. The US Air Force Honor Guard presented the colors and the US Air Force Band provided entertainment during the evening's festivities.

Thanks to financial support from Lockheed Martin, the 12 Outstanding Airmen attended events in and around Washington, D.C., throughout the conference. The "golden dozen" toured Capitol Hill and Arlington National Cemetery and visited the Pentagon.

The conference acknowledged the profound challenges facing today's US defense complex and celebrated the achievements of the airmen operating within it. The event concentrated its focus via military leaders and national defense and policy experts on subjects ranging from cyber, space, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, to nuclear and energy issues.

The first day of the conference, Monday, saw much focus on the changing role of airpower in the US. Tuesday discussions centered on the cyber realm and acquisition in tough budget times.

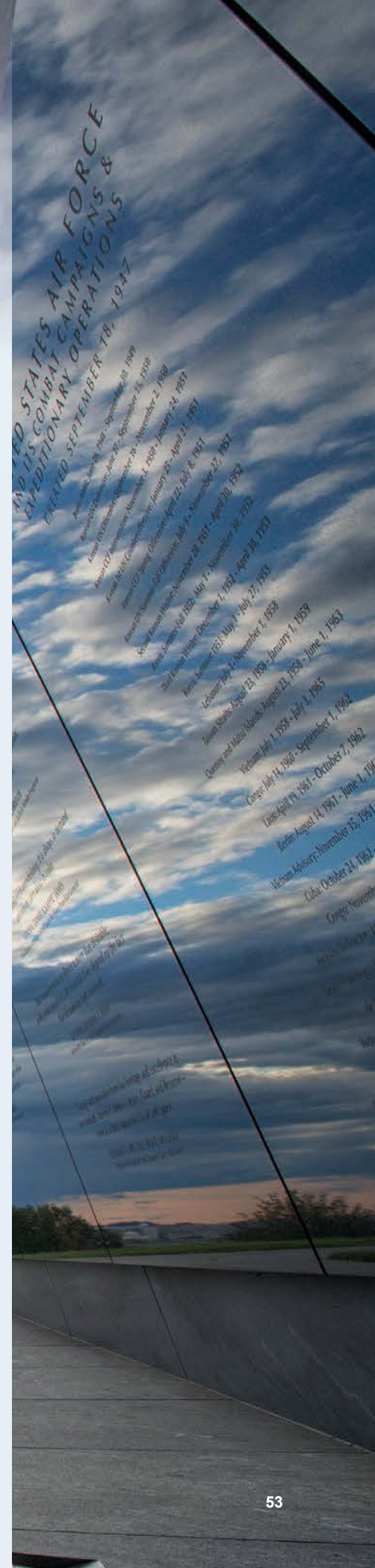
Thirteen senior leaders discussed everything from training to innovation during the Four-Star Forum. At the Command Chief Master Sergeants Forum, leaders addressed areas such as professional development, readiness, resiliency, and force management, offering insight into what affects airmen.

James, joined on the main stage by Welsh, Cody, AFA leaders, and AFA industry supporters, snipped the ceremonial red ribbon with oversized scissors—a sign of the official opening of the technology exposition—on Sept. 14. More than 100 exhibitors showcased their products.

A wreath-laying ceremony took place Sunday morning, Sept. 13, at the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Va. AFA Chairman of the Board Scott P. Van Cleef paid tribute to the lives and contributions of AFA members and friends who have died in the last year. Retired Maj. Gen. William J. Dendinger, AFA's national chaplain, conducted the invocation, homily, and benediction for the event. Van Cleef and Cody read a memorial tribute list of the deceased, and Gen. David Goldfein, vice chief of staff of the Air Force, closed the ceremony by laying a wreath at the memorial.

AFA's Air Force Anniversary Gala toasted the service's 68th anniversary on Sept. 16. Kenneth Goss, a former AFA department director, served as master of ceremonies. During the event, the following were saluted with national aerospace awards:

Retired Gen. Janet C. Wolfenbarger, former commander, Air Force Materiel Command, with the H. H. Arnold Award, recognizing the most significant contribution to national defense by a member of the military; William A.





Photos by Brittany Gray



**Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James (l) and USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh (r) were key speakers at AFA's Air & Space Conference.**

LaPlante, assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition, with the W. Stuart Symington Award, recognizing the top contribution by a civilian in the field of national defense; Lockheed Martin's F-22 Raptor, with the John R. Alison Award, for the most outstanding contribution by industrial leadership to national defense; the Northrop Grumman Foundation, recognized with the AFA Chairman's Aerospace Education Award, for long-term commitment to aerospace education with a significant nationwide impact.

AFA Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented to: retired Gen. Michael V. Hayden, R. A. "Bob" Hoover, and Eugene F. "Gene" Kranz.

This year's annual Spouse and Family Forum focused on the resiliency of our Air Force families. After hearing from James, Welsh, and Cody, attendees heard of challenges to military and veteran caregivers with Steve Schwab, the executive director of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation; addressing caregiver concerns with Lynda C. Davis, the executive vice president of the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors; resiliency in children with Christina App, project director for US social impact at Sesame Workshop; habits of effective military families with Julienne Stathis, senior client partner with FranklinCovey; caregivers' stories with Heather Gray, founder of Finish Strong Ministries; and heard personal stories of wounded, ill, and injured warriors from TSgt. Alex Eudy,

**Evan Dygert (l), the CyberPatriot Mentor of the Year from Winter Springs, Fla., and Chris Sutton, CyberPatriot Coach of the Year from Huntsville Ala., discuss the program before a banquet held during the conference.**

Alyson Eudy, SrA. Justin Deskin, and Heather Deskin.

Frank Beatty, Betty Welsh, and Athena Cody—spouses of Deborah Lee James, Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, and CMSAF James A. Cody, respectively—shared personal stories of resiliency and the issues they focus on in meetings with Air Force families around the world. Attendees were able to tour the Airmen & Family Programs Pavilion, part of the Technology Exposition. The program exhibited tools and resources families can use in recovering from deployments, injuries, or day-to-day realities.

#### AWARDING EDUCATION

Mark Westlake, a physics teacher at Saint Thomas Academy in Mendota Heights, Minn., was honored as the 30th recipient of AFA's National Aerospace

Teacher of the Year Award. Westlake distinguished himself by integrating aerospace into his classroom, school, and community. In addition to teaching grades 9 through 12, Westlake is also a master teacher for the Lemelson-Massachusetts Institute of Technology Program in Cambridge, Mass., where he mentors invention programs in the US. He also moderates the Saint Thomas Academy Experimental Vehicle Team, serves as chairman of the advisory committee for the Solar Car Challenge Foundation, and writes a blog for *National Geographic*. The award recognizes educators for their accomplishments and achievements in promoting and engaging today's youth in science, technology, engineering, and math. As AFA's top teacher, Westlake received a \$3,000 cash award and plaque.



Photo by Jose Ruiz







**Above left: Capt. Jerry Yellin (l), pictured here with AFA President Larry Spencer, spoke about his time during World War II in the Pacific and his organization “Keep the Spirit of ‘45 Alive.” Above right: Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter delivered the keynote address.**

In addition, AFA honored Chris Sutton of Huntsville, Ala., as the CyberPatriot Coach of the Year. Evan Dygert, of Winter Springs, Fla., was named CyberPatriot’s Mentor of the Year. CyberPatriot, AFA’s flagship STEM program, is the nation’s largest youth cyber education program.

**AFA BUSINESS**

Forty-seven state delegations with 207 authorized delegates attended the National Convention where they conducted AFA business, including elections and program management. In concert with AFA’s mission to educate, advocate, and support, the delegates approved a Statement of Policy and Top Issues for 2016, a document that represents AFA’s position on topics of importance to the Total Force, veterans and retirees, and Air Force civilians, as well as key modernization and national security issues.

**AFA ELECTIONS**

In national officer elections, Scott

P. Van Cleef, of Fincastle, Va., was elected for a second term as Chairman of the Board. David A. Dietsch, of Arlington, Texas, was elected for a second term as Vice Chairman of the Board for Field Operations. Richard Bundy of Spotsylvania, Va., was elected for a first term as Vice Chairman of the Board for Aerospace Education. Tim Brock of Oveido, Fla., was elected for a first term as National Secretary. Nora Ruebrook, of Honolulu, was elected for a second term as National Treasurer.

In other elections, national directors elected for a three-year term were: Charles Heflebower of Fairfax Station, Va., Director at Large; Eugene Santarelli of Tucson, Ariz., Director at Large; Joan Sell of Littleton, Colo., National Director, West Area. Tom Gwaltney of Montgomery, Ala., was elected to

fill one remaining year of a three-year term as National Director, Central Area.

Newly elected Region Presidents are: Wayne Kauffman, Far West; Bill Yucuis, Florida; Kevin Grady, New England; Ron Mielke, North Central; Rodgers Greenawalt, Southeast; John Toohey, Southwest; Gary Copey, Texoma.

**DOD AND USAF LEADERS**

Many Air Force leaders participated in the conference as presenters and session attendees. Many senior Air Force leaders also took part in media-only sessions.

Senior Air Force, DOD, and government leadership speaking at the conference included Carter, James, Welsh, and Cody. Other high-level leaders included Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition William A. LaPlante;

**The Four-Star Forum session featured three- and four-star generals along with CMSAF James Cody and was moderated by USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh.**







**CMSAF James Cody addresses an audience. It included many dignitaries.**

Photo by Brittany Gray



**L-r: AFA Executive Vice President Mark Barrett, USAF Secretary Deborah Lee James, A1C Spencer Stone, AFA Chairman of the Board Scott Van Cleef, and USAF Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh after discussing Stone's heroic takedown of a terrorist on a train in France.**

Photo by Lyndsey Akers

Gen. Herbert J. "Hawk" Carlisle, commander, Air Combat Command; Gen. Lori J. Robinson, commander, Pacific Air Forces; Gen. Ellen M. Pawlikowski, commander, Air Force Materiel Command; Gen. John E. Hyten, commander, Air Force Space Command; Gen. Frank Gorenc, commander, US Air Forces in Europe-Air Forces Africa; and Lt. Gen. Bradley A. Heithold, commander, Air Force Special Operations Command.

AFA hosted Pacific Air Chiefs from various countries, who offered their insight during sessions and panels: Air Marshal Gavin Davies, the chief of air force of the Royal Australian Air Force; Air Marshal Abu Esrar, the chief of air staff of the Bangladesh Air Force; Lt. Gen. Soeung Samnang, commander of the Royal Cambodian Air Force; Lt. Gen. Michael Hood, commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force; Air Chief Marshal Agus Supriyatna, chief of the air staff of the Indonesian Air Force; Gen. Harukazu Saito, chief of staff of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force; Gen. Tan Sri Dato Sri Roslan bin Saad, chief of Royal Malaysian Air Force; Col. Shiileg Enkbat, commander of the Mongolian Air and Air Defense Forces; Brig. Gen. Sudheer Shrestha, director general of Army Aviation, Nepal; Air Vice-Marshal Michael Yardley, chief of Royal New Zealand Air Force; Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Delgado, commanding general of the Philippine Air Force; and Maj. Gen. Hoo Cher Mou, chief of the Republic of Singapore Air Force.

A number of other senior officers took part in the conference: Lt. Gen. Christopher C. Bogdan, F-35 program executive officer; Lt. Gen. Arnold W. Bunch Jr., military deputy, office of the assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition; Lt. Gen. Stanley E. Clarke III, director, Air National Guard; Lt.



**SECAF James (I) and Chief of Staff Welsh unveil a painting presented to the Air Force Art Collection by the artist (c) Maj. Warren Neary.**

Gen. Gina M. Grosso, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel, and services; Lt. Gen. John W. Hesterman III, assistant vice chief of staff of the Air Force; Lt. Gen. James M. "Mike" Holmes, the deputy chief of staff for strategic plans and requirements; Lt. Gen. James "JJ" Jackson, commander, Air Force Reserve Command; Lt. Gen. Steven Kwast, commander and president of the Air University; Lt. Gen. Wendy M. Masiello, director of the Defense Contract Management Agency; Lt. Gen. Robert P. "Bob" Otto, deputy chief of staff for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; Maj. Gen. David A. Harris, commander of the Air Force Test Center; Maj. Gen. James R. Marrs, director of intelligence for US Cyber Command; Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Masiello, commander of the Air Force Research Laboratory; Maj. Gen. John F. "Jeff" Newell III, director of strategy, concepts, and assessments; Maj. Gen. Karen A. Rizutti, mobilization assistant to the commander of 24th Air Force; Maj. Gen. Burke E.

"Ed" Wilson, commander of 24th Air Force and commander of Air Forces Cyber; Brig Gen. Duke Z. Richardson, executive officer, Air Force program, tankers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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AFA National Convention Parliamentarian was David T. "Buck" Buckwalter, AFA's former executive vice president. Inspectors of Elections were Gavin MacAloon (chairman), Ron Adams, Lee Barnby, and Gary Copsey. Michael Cooper chaired the Credentials Committee, serving with Vance Clarke, Bob Gehbauer, and Karel Toohey. ★