

TODAY'S MESSAGE

26 June 2008

BY: 06/26/2008



Building Partnership Capacity

The Strategic Airlift Capability is a unique program that will provide critical airlift for 15 partner nations, including several nations that would not otherwise have the ability to acquire the extraordinary capabilities of the C-17 on their own.

Bruce Lemkin

Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs

On 11 June 2008, Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England joined six other nations in signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing the Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) program. In the next month, eight other nations are also expected to sign the MOU. The 13 NATO nations and two Partnership for Peace nations, Sweden and Finland, provide the core of nations forming the organization. The United States Air Force, including USAFE, AMC, AFMC, and various Headquarters organizations, with the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA) as the executive agent, is coordinating Department of Defense-wide efforts to establish this fifteen-nation C-17 consortium.

The SAC program enables the employment of strategic airlift forces to support national, NATO, European Union, or United Nations military operations as well as humanitarian relief. It is but one of many initiatives the USAF is pursuing in accordance with the Global Partnership Strategy. The USAF endeavors to build partnership capacity and promote burden sharing among partners. These cooperative efforts enhance interoperability, integrate operations, and foster interdependent capabilities among our friends and partners. Airmen from the participating nations will work side-by-side in operating, maintaining, and sustaining the assigned aircraft, which builds enduring professional and personal relationships leading to greater potential for cooperation in the future.

A multinational Heavy Airlift Wing, commanded by a USAF Colonel, will operate three C-17s out of Papa Air Base, Hungary. The United States is providing one C-17 and the partner nations are purchasing two more C-17s under a Foreign Military Sales agreement. Operational costs are burden-shared based on the number of flight hours. Operations at Papa Air Base will begin later this year, after all participants have signed the MOU.