

**Air Force Release**  
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## **Building Partnership Capacity – In Strategic Airlift**

*Activating the C-17 Strategic Airlift Capability program is a great achievement for the USAF team, which overcame huge obstacles in taking a vague notion for an airlift consortium and turning it into a viable multinational program in less than two years. This is a true example of Building Partner Capacity!*

Bruce Lemkin  
Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force  
International Affairs

[Last] month, 12 nations, ten NATO and two Partnership for Peace, reached final agreement to activate the C-17 Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) program Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The SAC nations have informed the Secretary General of NATO, thus putting into operation the NATO Airlift Management Organization (NAMO) and the NATO Airlift Management Agency (NAMA). NAMA will be responsible for acquisition and sustainment of the three C-17s, one provided by the USAF as its contribution, and two others acquired via Foreign Military Sales.

The multinational Heavy Airlift Wing (HAW) at Pápa Air Base, Hungary will be established very soon. The 12 person HAW advance team, composed of personnel from the US, Sweden, Norway, and Hungary, deploys to Pápa Air Base in Oct 08. This team will prepare for the arrival of the first C-17 in Spring 2009 with initial operational capability in Summer 2009. Hungary is ensuring the Pápa Air Base infrastructure is prepared for the arrival of the aircraft, and the city of Pápa is committed to creating a welcoming environment for the HAW members and their families.

This multinational partnership provides NATO and individual nations the capability to conduct strategic airlift individually or as part of a coalitions. This strategic airlift allows for the rapid deployment of forces, supplies, and equipment to meet the growing demands for operational support and humanitarian relief around the world.

As the lead agent, the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA) coordinated the almost two years of hard work across the Department of Defense and the USAF, to reach this important milestone. In the near future, SAF/IA will transfer lead agent responsibility for the execution phase of the program to EUCOM/USAFE.

In this precedent-setting program, the SAC team overcame many legal, financial, and policy challenges as well as competing national interests. The experience in establishing this program will pay dividends in establishing future cooperative efforts to build partnerships and promote burden sharing. These cooperative efforts enhance interoperability, allow integrated operations, and foster interdependent capabilities among our friends and partners, meeting many of the objectives of the USAF Global Partnership Strategy.