

A black and white photograph of a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter in flight, carrying a Humvee. The helicopter is on the right side of the frame, with its main rotor blades blurred from motion. The Humvee is suspended from the helicopter's hoist. The background is a plain, light-colored sky.

Ready, Set, Globe

■ By Gen. Darren W. McDew

A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter carries a Humvee during a training mission at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., on Sept. 6, 2014. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Clayton Lenhardt)



The U.S. Transportation Command sets the globe to meet dynamic threats and ensure deployment and distribution assets are postured to support an immediate and decisive response.

The joint force's ability to project power globally at the time and place of its choosing serves as the foundation for the nation's comparative strategic advantage. For 30 years, the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) has deployed and sustained personnel and equipment in support of national interests during natural disasters, epidemics, and acts of war.

Today, at USTRANSCOM, we stand ready to project power when needed, but we face a much different strategic landscape than we did only a few years ago. Rival powers pose a complex and sophisticated global threat, and emboldened regional actors and violent extremist organizations continue to complicate our strategic calculus.

Through our global presence and worldwide asset visibility, USTRANSCOM is uniquely positioned to shape the joint logistics enterprise to counter these emerging threats. Ultimately, this command enables strategic flexibility by setting the globe for logistics.

Today's Environment

Amidst an ever-changing environment, the most glaring implication for the joint deployment and distribution enterprise (JDDE) is the increased risk of facing contested logistics operations. Because of the rise of nation-state actors and the continued efforts of nonstate actors to invoke fear and instability around the world, the U.S. military is in competition or conflict in every domain.

The risk is further complicated by the military's significant reliance on commercial transportation assets. The steady reduction of the maritime fleet since World War II, coupled with current pilot and mariner shortages, has created a dependence on commercial transportation service providers to move the bulk of the force. In fact, when the nation goes to war, commercial industry moves 90 percent of the military's equipment.

Given these considerations, US-

TRANSCOM has refined its assumptions to plan for attrition in organic sealift and airlift fleets, denied access to strategically critical nodes, increased cyber vulnerabilities, and global mission command of disparate mobility forces. Yet our preparation for the challenges of our time cannot exist solely on paper.

To meet dynamic threats, we must set the globe for agile response and provide the president with options, regardless of a threat's location. The nation demands our intellectual rigor to ensure the global distribution network (GDN) and the strategic assets that comprise the JDDE are postured to support an immediate and decisive response, when required.

In a contemporary environment filled with global uncertainty and rising geopolitical tensions, the logistics enterprise must always be ready. The United States can no longer weight its logistics efforts to one theater if it expects to retain the ability to respond swiftly and decisively when disaster strikes elsewhere. It must not be shackled to the practices of the past; it must change the theater-specific lens through which it views and assesses threats.

Setting the Globe

The 2016 National Military Strategy introduces the concept of the global integrator. In this role, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assists the secretary of defense in strategic planning and direction of the armed forces, effectively setting the globe. In support of the global integrator, USTRANSCOM specifically sets the globe for logistics, continually shaping the nation's ability to act within the transregional, multi-domain, and multifunctional threat environment.

Through USTRANSCOM's newly appointed role as the joint deployment and distribution coordinator, I exercise coordinating authority for JDDE operations and planning and collaborate with other combatant commands, the services, commercial industry, and interagency partners to



Members of the 766th Transportation Battalion participate in the U.S. Transportation Command Joint Transportation Reserve Unit rotary-wing familiarization exercise at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., on Aug 3, 2013. (Photo by Capt. Shamika Hill)

align and harmonize global logistics functions.

Setting the globe for logistics means building resilience within the JDDE, maximizing scarce strategic transportation assets, and leveraging the breadth of the GDN. This requires a combination of balancing resources previously employed in a theater-centric paradigm and regularly using the worldwide network of modes, nodes, and routes. Therefore, setting the globe involves two key concepts: balancing the globe and using the globe.

Balancing and Using the Globe

In an iterative process among the secretary of defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, services, and combatant commands, and considering current events and national-level strategic guidance, USTRANSCOM manages appropriate resources to

balance the globe for logistics. Balancing the globe means finding an equilibrium between the capabilities and capacity required to meet emerging threats, all while staying in line with secretary of defense priorities and authoritative guidance.

During the past 16 years of conflict, the Department of Defense stockpiled logistics resources in certain regions of the world and habituated the use of specific nodes for deployment and distribution by necessity. Establishing a balanced posture means redistributing these resources to ensure we can contend with any threat, regardless of the geographic area of responsibility from which it emanates.

In practice, balance also means positioning and repositioning mobility assets and developing realistic mobilization timelines across the Army Reserve, National Guard, and com-

mercial providers. We have to understand total organic and commercial capacity, capability, and infrastructure to link our lift resources to the requirements they meet. Having the appropriate authorities in place to shift these mobility assets at the speed of war informs and expedites risk-based decision-making about when and where to weight our efforts.

To help achieve balance, USTRANSCOM integrates execution across the GDN. Using the globe means we leverage a whole-of-nation approach to engage with allies and partner nations to expand access to assets and infrastructure. The command facilitates rapid deployment options by keeping the GDN ready in strategic locations and ensuring infrastructure exists when and where it is needed.

The network is resilient when it consists of a robust mix of military and commercial modes, nodes, routes, and support. Using this approach, USTRANSCOM coordinates activities across the JDDE to preserve options. And options create opportunities.

USTRANSCOM's ability to leverage the GDN using our components and commercial transportation providers, combined with enhanced diplomatic relationships and increased global access, provides responsive and comprehensive options to meet the nation's strategic challenges. Furthermore, by setting the globe for logistics, USTRANSCOM improves the joint force's timeliness and agility, decreases risk, and builds decision space for the president.

When called on, USTRANSCOM provides the nation with a strategic advantage and stands ready to project power across the globe. Whether it is disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, or decisive combat power, we deliver!

Gen. Darren W. McDew is the commander of USTRANSCOM at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois.