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Defense Orientation Conference Association



JB Charleston & The Citadel Executive Summary

June 2016

Thirty of our intrepid group braved the June weather in Charleston, SC recently to visit Joint Base Charleston (JBC), The Citadel and Boeing South Carolina where they are building 787 Dreamliners. Our efforts were rewarded by a forgiving Mother Nature, who kept the temperature and humidity relatively low, and our various hosts who provided a fascinating program. Our hotel was the beautiful Belmond Charleston Place, located in the heart of the historic district with shops, great restaurants and museums just a short stroll away. Many enjoyed the cuisine at the hotel itself and all of us had at least a sampling at our Ice Breaker reception the first evening. The camaraderie and libations were welcomed following an afternoon of Executive Committee and Board meetings.

And speaking of meetings, important decisions were made regarding planned programs for 2017. First and foremost, spouses are welcome to attend our July 10-13 program at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The Executive Committee also firmed up our plans for next year's programs, and here is a summary of what we are planning:

- 1) U.S. Pacific Command and the Philippines: It will have been almost five years since we last stood on the sands of Waikiki or met with the major four-star commands on Oahu. And it has been more than 20 years since the Air Force pulled out of Clark Air Base and the Navy sailed away from Subic Bay. Both of these installations were major bastions in the Cold War. Now, however, the inevitable shifts in politics and strategic reality are resulting in more U.S. aircraft and more U.S. ships going back to the Philippines. The Western Pacific, and particularly the nations bordering the South China Sea, are regaining attention as regional, (and world-wide), concerns emerge. Jakarta and Singapore are also being considered for stops on this program.
- 2) Fort Bragg: We last were here in 2010 when we met with the XVIII Airborne Corps and 82nd Airborne Division. We will get reacquainted with them but also plan to visit the Army Special Warfare Center Recruiting Battalion, the John F. Kennedy School for Special Warfare and other tenant commands.
- 3) Argentina: There has been a major shift in our relations with Argentina following the election of Mauricio Macri as president last year. He is the first democratically elected non-radical or Peronist president since 1916 and Argentina is now a much more U.S.-friendly nation.
- 4) Vandenberg AFB: Vandenberg is home to Space X, (the world's fastest growing (and reusable) launch services provider), missile defense interceptor launch sites, training for missileers, and many other national security elements.
- 5) DOCA's 66th Annual Meeting -- Las Vegas, NV: Nellis Air Force Base, Creech Air Force Base and the Nevada Test Site where nuclear test detonations were conducted up into the 1960's.

More details will be forthcoming about all of these exciting opportunities as plans firm up.

Meanwhile, in Charleston, Wednesday started with a short administrative session and then we were on the bus and headed for Joint Base Charleston. This installation was created in October 2010 by the merging of Charleston Air Force Base, the Naval Weapons Station and myriad other DoD commands as well as Coast Guard Station Charleston. One of only a handful of joint bases in the United States, it provides an ideal example of improved administrative efficiency and resultant cost savings.

Although our program days normally begin with a command briefing to provide a good overview, scheduling conflicts with the squadrons and JBC leadership dictated a different, and very effective approach. We began the morning with a visit to a brand new innovation that the Air Force built from scratch in the wake of lessons learned from the Ebola crisis. They call it the Transportation Isolation System (TIS). In essence, it is an air-transportable module that they can use to transport patients for treatment while keeping them isolated in a sterile environment, providing greater safety for both patients and aircrew personnel. Though Ebola may have faded, at least for now, Zika and other yet-to-be-identified diseases will make the several TIS units that the Air Force has created a valuable and perhaps life-saving asset in the



future. Further down the flight line, we boarded one of many C-17s attached to the two Wings assigned to the base. Besides their unique mission with the TIS these aircraft perform all of the other tasks carried out by the U.S. Air Force C-17 fleet. This aircraft, and the numbers of them that the United States has invested in, give our nation the most flexible, robust and responsive heavy lift capability of any Air Force in the world – by far.

Following the static displays, and some great interaction with the aircrew personnel, we moved on to the Wing headquarters where we were met by Wing Commander, Colonel Rob Lyman, and a host of senior officials who command the various tenant commands aboard Joint Base Charleston. The presentations we received made it clear to us that (1) the joint base concept works, (2) there are a wide variety of critical missions performed here and (3) the talent and commitment of the men and women of our armed forces who perform those missions is second to none.

After a hearty lunch at the Charleston Club on base with some junior Airmen who are serving proudly, we moved on to the Army's 841st Transportation Battalion, just one of JBC's many tenant commands. Their mission is to get the critical equipment to the warfighters on time and on target. During wartime in Iraq and Afghanistan much of the equipment, (tanks, HUMVEEs, fuel, food, ammunition, etc.), was sent ahead and combat units would pick up what they needed to fight and win after they arrived in theater. The philosophy of pre-positioning all of the necessary equipment to combat zones or potential hot spots, though still in use, is giving way to a more expeditionary approach where combat units take what they need with them. This is a bit of a "re-learning" process for the services after more than a decade of war in the Middle East. But with outfits like the 841st, our ability to conduct expeditionary warfare, (and training), is the best in the world. We saw more than 500 M-1 tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, HUMVEEs and myriad Engineering Battalion vehicles packed onto the wharf, mere inches between them, ready to load and ship out within the next few days for an exercise in Europe. And this was less than a third in terms of numbers of vehicles and equipment of some of the load-outs that the 841st performs.

Our final stop for the afternoon was at the Space and Naval Warfare Systems Center Atlantic (SPAWAR). Here, even the scientists and engineers in our group were humbled by the collective genius of the young men and women we met with. The research conducted by SPAWAR is extremely sophisticated and complex, reminding many of us of our visit last year with some of the brilliant scientists at Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories. From studying ways to navigate and find the enemy in dense conditions of salt fog on the open ocean to plumbing the mysteries of human neurological response and conditioning, their analysis spans every aspect of scientific pursuit.

After such a long and fact-filled day we welcomed the chance to gather on the fantail of the aircraft carrier USS Yorktown for dinner and follow-up discussions with officials from the Joint Base. Good food, cool drinks, good friends, a gentle breeze and a great view of the sun setting over Charleston harbor – not a bad way to end the day.



On Thursday morning the weather continued to cooperate, sunny but not too warm or humid, as we made our way to the famed military college of South Carolina, The Citadel, where we received detailed briefings from a prestigious group of administrators and professors. One of only six Senior Military Colleges in the country, the Citadel was founded in 1842. (The others are: The University of North Georgia, Norwich University, Texas A&M, Virginia Military Institute and Virginia Tech). The Citadel is a public school, but not federally funded like West Point, the Naval Academy, the Air Force Academy or the Coast Guard Academy. All of the cadets at the Citadel participate in ROTC, but they compete for the option to accept a commission into the Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine Corps upon graduation. We saw few cadets

on campus since the academic year had ended about three weeks before we arrived, although one young lady, who had just finished her sophomore year, stayed with our group throughout our visit to give a cadet's perspective. After briefings from several senior officials we split into two groups to tour the campus, including a beautiful chapel and the one of the (very Spartan) cadet barracks. An interesting side note: the cadet chapel displays flags from all 50 states since they have cadets from all over the country, and they also display a Confederate battle flag. (Citadel cadets actually fired the opening shots of the Civil War at a U.S. Navy resupply ship that was trying to reach Fort Sumter). The Board of Visitors at the Citadel has voted to relocate the Confederate flag to a museum but they are forbidden by a state heritage law from taking it down. Citadel officials stand ready to move the flag as soon as they are legally allowed to do so by the state legislature.



All too soon we were back on the bus for a short drive to a nearby restaurant for lunch before moving on to Boeing South Carolina where they proudly manufacture and assemble 787 Dreamliners. Our principal briefer and tour guide was a retired Navy captain who spent more than 20 years flying in P-3 Orion submarine hunters before getting a law degree and specializing in aviation law. He showed us how the various sections of each 787 are assembled and how they create the composite material that makes up most of the fuselage. Only about a quarter of an inch of composite separates the passenger from

the atmosphere (or lack of it) at 37,000 feet and yet the material is so strong that they are able to install much larger windows than would be possible on an aluminum-skinned aircraft. Boeing South Carolina has delivered more than 100 of the 787's to airlines around the world and they have grown to almost 8,000 employees who produce an unprecedented number of these amazing aircraft. We had arrived along with the second shift of workers but departed for a quiet evening back at the hotel while they were still hard at work.

Our final day, Friday, was set aside for those who wanted to stay to experience some of the culture and history of Charleston. We began with a guided tour of Boone Hall Plantation, one of many in the area but the only one that is still a working plantation. Today they grow mostly fruits and vegetables but they, and other plantations in the area, once produced bricks – including most of the bricks used to construct Fort Sumter. We then visited Patriots Point Maritime Museum and embarked the National Park Service ferry for a half-hour ride to Fort Sumter, which still stands, (battered but with flag still proudly flying), on a man-made island at the harbor's entrance. All in all, DOCA's first ever visit to Charleston was a fascinating learning experience, and also provided at least some of our members with their first opportunity to sample grits, hush puppies and fried green tomatoes!

