



2024 DOCA Conference #5

Trip Report for Newark, NJ

September 9-10, 2024

Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and West Point

Prepared by Executive Vice President Bruce Burda

We had a small group of eight attendees for this interesting trip to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst and the U.S. Military Academy (or West Point). We stayed in Newark which was a central point to drive South to JBMDL and North to West Point. For those that missed the reorganization from the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process in 2009, the former contiguous installations of Fort Dix, Lakehurst NAS, and McGuire AFB were all combined into one very large joint service base.

Monday, September 9: Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JBMDL)

JBMDL and 87th Air Base Wing

Day One was spent on JBMDL which is a joint installation organization commanded by U.S. Air Force Colonel Anthony L. Smith, who is also the commander of the host wing, the 87th Air Base Wing (87th ABW). The JBMDL Deputy Commanders are U.S. Army Colonel Mitchell Wisniewski III, Commander of the Army Support Activity, and U.S. Navy Captain James Howell, Commander of the Naval Support Activity. We started our visit by going to the Headquarters, 87th Air Base Wing and meeting the Deputy Commander, Colonel Lamont Morrow (who is not dual-hatted within the JBMDL joint command). He briefed us on the JBMDL Installation Command organization and its role and missions. In addition, he highlighted the 87th ABW mission and responsibilities.

JBMDL is the Defense Department's only tri-service installation and home to nine wings or brigade equivalents with units from five different services—Army, Navy, USMC, USCG and USAF. Spanning 42,000 acres, the 87th ABW supports 88 mission partners by providing installation support to all mission commanders and sustaining mission-ready expeditionary service members to their combatant commanders.



Their mission, “Warfighters Supporting Warfighters,” reflects DoD efforts to deter and defeat adversaries of the U.S and our allies and partners. Their vision is to be America’s Premier Joint Warfighting Base and focuses their Total Force members to be postured and ready with a credible worldwide force to assure, deter and defend in a growing and complex global security environment.

JBMDL is the most strategic East Coast installation that serves as a vital hub for global reach and power. Located in central New Jersey, the installation provides a wide range of capabilities, including airlift, air refueling, combat airpower, global reach and responsiveness, and mission support. It is one of the largest military installations in the country, with more than 52,000 active-duty service members, civilians, and family members.

In addition to its military mission, JBMDL is also an important economic engine for the region, generating more than \$4.8 billion in economic activity each year and supports more than 65,500 direct/indirect jobs in the local community. It is the second largest employer in New Jersey behind only the state government. JBMDL is committed to being a good neighbor and partner, and it works closely with local and state officials to support the needs of the community.

The JBMDL has overall authority for the base and has operational control for base security. With all three key service commands embedded in the JBMDL chain of command, it is set up to develop the best joint solutions to emerging problems and facilitate relationship management. Lastly, Colonel Lamont said the 87th ABW is an unusual organization that has two of four groups of a traditional Air Wing, with the Mission Support Group (fire department, security forces, civil engineering, dining and MWR units, etc.) and Medical Group (all medical clinics and personnel) falling under its command. The other two groups—Operations and Maintenance Groups—are under the leadership of the 305th Air Mobility Wing

305th Air Mobility Wing (AMW)

The 305th AMW is commanded by Colonel Kathleen Hasson. The Wing’s Executive Director, Mr. Mike Polhemus, provided a wing organization and mission briefing within the base Passenger Terminal. Their mission motto is “Generate – Fly – Deliver “ and the wing vision is “Warrior Airmen, Ready to Dominate and Win.” The wing’s mission is to extend America’s rapid global reach by generating, mobilizing and deploying 11 C-17 Globemaster IIIs and 13 KC-46 Pegasus aircraft to conduct strategic airlift and air refueling missions worldwide. In November 2021, the wing began transitioning from the older KC-135 air refuelers to the new KC-46 Pegasus aircraft. Additionally, the Wing operates two of America’s largest strategic aerial ports supporting the delivery of cargo and personnel to combatant commanders

abroad. Uniquely, as a result of the Joint Base transfer, the 305th AMW directs the operations of two geographically separated airfields--one at McGuire and another at Lakehurst. The 305th AMW commands two group organizations, the 305th Operations Group and the 305th Maintenance Group.



The mission of the 305th Operations Group is to deploy worldwide from America's Eastern Gateway, to perform rapid, global aerial refueling and airlift in support of tactical, strategic, reconnaissance, transport, and bomber forces in benign to high-threat and chemical

warfare environments. The group is comprised of the 2nd Air Refueling Squadron, 6th Airlift Squadron, 32nd Air Refueling Squadron, 911th Air Refueling Squadron, and the 305th Operations Support Squadron. The group has air operations support personnel and crewmembers who fly the C-17 Globemaster III and KC-46A Pegasus in support of worldwide operations.

The 305th Maintenance Group provides rapid global mobility and consists of four squadrons with more than 1,700 active-duty military members and civilians inspecting, repairing, generating, and launching assigned KC-46 and C-17. Additionally, the Maintenance Group operates two of Air Mobility Command's busiest aerial ports located at JBMDL and Baltimore International Airport. The Maintenance Group generates 24-hour strategic airlift, aerial refueling, and aerial port capability to support the wing mission. They provide highly trained personnel and equipment to support safe, timely maintenance and port operations. The group has successfully deployed in-theater and provided home station support for numerous exercises and operations, including Operations NEW DAWN, SOUTHERN WATCH, NORTHERN WATCH, NOBLE EAGLE, IRAQI FREEDOM, ENDURING FREEDOM, INHERENT RESOLVE, as well as recurring Presidential and Vice-Presidential support.

We had a nice lunch at the golf course where we were able to visit with several Airmen and civilians from the wing to learn more about their work and personal perspectives. Prior to departing, Douglas Lempereur, Chairman of DOCA's Investment Committee, presented

\$3,000 checks to two non-profits on the base. The first one was the JBMDL 5-6 Council that supports the professional development of and creates opportunities for assigned E-5 and E-6 enlisted leaders from all service organizations.

The second recipient group was the Military and Family Readiness Center that supports the social, financial, and MWR needs of the joint military community with regular programs for service members and their families.



They operate two centers on base from which they conduct service programs such as Relocation Assistance, Transition Assistance Program, Military Family Life Counselors, Voting Assistance, Financial Readiness, and the Exceptional Family Member Program.

U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center (USAFEC)

After lunch, we drove to the HQ USAFEC headquarters building to get a mission briefing from Colonel Scott Wiederholt, the Deputy Commander. The Expeditionary Center is the Air Force's Center of Excellence for Expeditionary Agile Combat Support and Rapid Global Mobility training and education with about 14,000 assigned Airmen at over 40 locations in the U.S. and overseas. Its mission is, "Airpower...from the Ground Up!" providing oversight for the Global Air Mobility Support System, Joint Base installation support, world-wide contingency response, and building partnership capacity mission sets within the global mobility enterprise. More succinctly, they work to help Airmen be more war-ready to project, connect, maneuver and sustain the joint force around the world by conducting pre-deployment training across nearly all the USAF functional job positions. They do this through classroom education and simulated deployed field training on their campus.

The Center also provides administrative control for five wings and two groups within Air Mobility Command, to include the 87th Air Base Wing and the 621st Contingency Response Wing at JBMDL; the 515th Air Mobility Operations Wing at JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii; the 521st Air Mobility Operations Wing at Ramstein AB, Germany; the 628th Air Base Wing at JB Charleston, S.C.; the 43rd Air Mobility Operations Group at Pope Field, N.C.; and 627th Air Base Group at JB Lewis-McChord, Wash.



In addition to training and preparing Airmen to deploy and execute their missions globally in established and austere locations, the Expeditionary Center also has dedicated Contingency Response (CR) forces with Air Base opening and contingency response capabilities for the Joint Force. This unit, the 621st Contingency Response Wing, has oversight responsibility for organization, training, and equipping CR forces and developing capabilities, command relationships, and standard operating procedures codified in doctrine. Their goal is to ensure the service understands, trains, exercises, and employs CR forces as they are designed.

621st Contingency Response Wing

Our last stop of the day was to the 621st Contingency Response Group (CRG), where we met Colonel John Foy, the Group Commander. He enthusiastically provided a short mission briefing and then escorted us around his alert facility to show us the unit's organized storage area full of equipment, vehicles, water, food, and other supplies needed to autonomously execute their mission anywhere in the world. They always have a group on alert with an 18-hour alert requirement to be loaded and take off from JBMDL. Col Foy stated the Wing vision is "Always ready, Always resilient, Always forward" and it drives them every day. They are one of the subordinate units under the command of the USAFEC.

The 621st Contingency Response Wing is a highly specialized team of Airmen that rapidly deploy to open airbases, coordinate air mobility operations, enable joint interoperability, and advise partner nations. From wartime taskings to disaster relief, the 621st CRW extends Air Mobility Command's reach in deploying people and equipment around the globe.

Established in March 2005 and based at both JBMDL (621st CRG) and Travis AFB, CA (821st CRG), the 621st CRW consists of approximately 1,500 Airmen in three groups, 13 squadrons and more than 20 geographically separated operating locations aligned with major Army and Marine Corps combat units. The wing maintains a ready corps of light, lean

and agile mobility support forces able to respond as directed by Air Mobility Command, to meet Combatant Command wartime and humanitarian requirements around the world.



These two Contingency Response Groups provide the core cadre of expeditionary command and control, airlift and air refueling operations, aerial port, and aircraft maintenance personnel for deployment worldwide as mobility control teams and airfield assessment

teams. These teams rapidly survey, assess and establish contingency air base lodgments and expand existing AMC support infrastructure. Each CRG consists of three Contingency Response Squadrons who rotate the alert status and one Contingency Response Support Squadron.

The Contingency Response Squadrons perform aircraft quick-turn maintenance, airfield management, passenger and cargo movement, and command and control of personnel, aircraft, supplies threat assessment, force protection, air traffic control, weather, airfield systems maintenance, finance and contracting. The Contingency Response Support Squadrons deploy contingency response forces to locations where the enroute support for AMC's global air mobility operations is insufficient or nonexistent. In garrison, each CRSS manages and maintains the wing's assigned equipment as well as facilitating training for and equipping 621st CRW assigned personnel.

The 621st Air Mobility Advisory Group contains the 571st and 818th Mobility Support Advisory Squadrons (MSAS), 321st and 621st Air Mobility Operations Squadrons (AMOS) and the 621st Mobility Support Operations Squadron (MSOS). Each MSAS unit focuses on the mutual exchange of air mobility concepts and procedures with partner nations in the development of their air mobility systems -- the 818th MSAS is primarily focused on operations in Africa, while the 571st MSAS is trained to operate in Central and South America.

The 321st and 621st AMOS provide operational, level-of-war planning and execution of theater airlift, air refueling and aeromedical evacuation missions. The squadrons accomplish this role by augmenting existing Air Mobility Divisions (AMD) or Air and Space

Operations Centers within the theater, or by standing up an independent AMD in austere environments. While performing AMD duties, AMOS personnel synchronize scheduling of all theater-owned airframes and aircrew to meet the theater commanders' mobility objectives.

The 621st MSOS is comprised of Air Mobility Liaison Officers (AMLO) and Expeditionary Air Ground Liaison Elements (EAGLE) who provide air mobility expertise to Army/Marine/Special Operations units at the Regiment, Division and Corps levels. Dispersed globally across 20 locations and 16 time zones, AMLOs are fully embedded with their aligned joint units to support any exercise, deployment or contingency. In addition, the EAGLEs located at Joint Base MDL advise and assist joint interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners with cargo preparation, passenger movement, cargo documentation, and command and control capability.

The Air Force has supported mobility operations all over the globe with operations such as INHERENT RESOLVE in Iraq and Syria, UNITED ASSISTANCE in Africa, and humanitarian assistance deployments such as, Hurricanes Irma, Maria, Matthew, and Katrina, and the Haiti and Pakistan earthquake relief operations.

Recently, the 621st CRW played a vital role in the largest non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) when closing Bagram Air Base and evacuating from Kabul, Afghanistan. The U.S. Air Force, in support of the Departments of Defense and State, moved forces into Afghanistan to facilitate the safe departure and relocation of U.S. citizens, Special Immigration Visa recipients, and vulnerable Afghan populations from Afghanistan. The 621st CRW deployed Airmen from the 621st and 821st CRGs as well as the 621st Air Mobility Advisory Group to support the mission. These operations highlight the diverse missions Airmen perform and are tributes to the 621st CRW's enduring capabilities and readiness to provide support whenever and wherever the requirement exists.

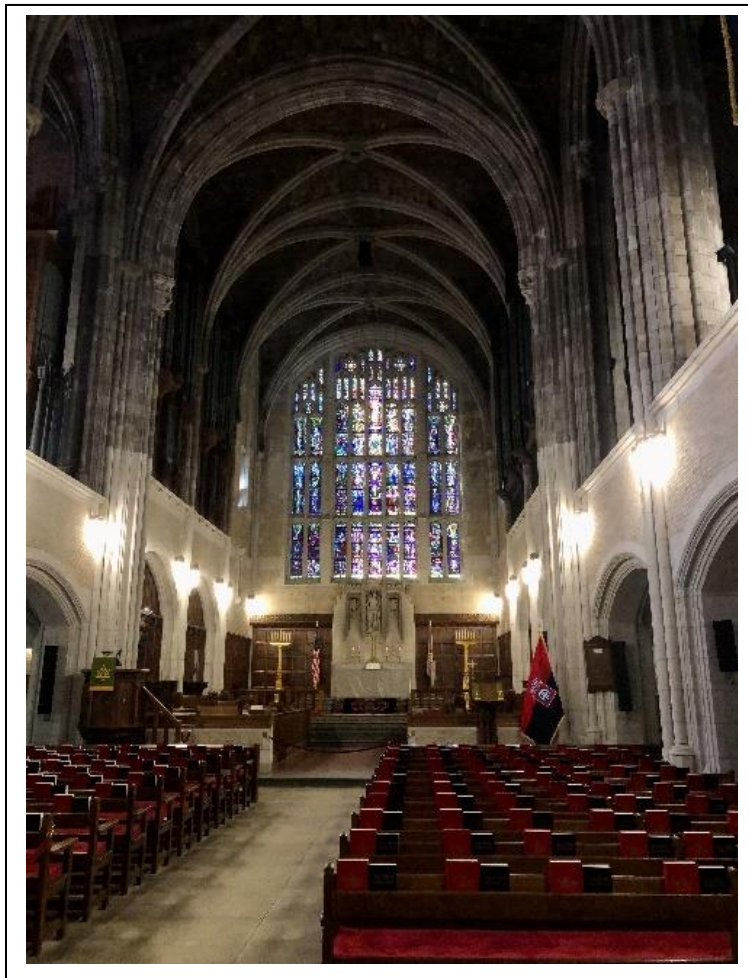
Following this briefing and tour, we boarded the bus and returned to our hotel in Newark where we had a nice group dinner together in the hotel restaurant.

Tuesday, September 10: U.S. Military Academy

History and Tradition Tour

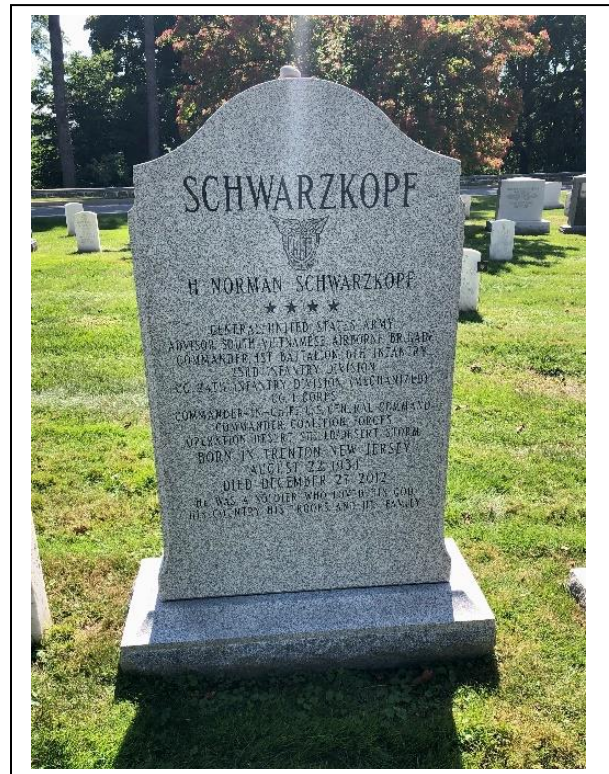
We started our activities on Day Two with a very long bus ride to West Point due to heavy freeway traffic. Once we arrived at the Visitors Center, we had a short time to view the displays and information regarding past and present cadet life there. We then met our tour guide and jumped back on the bus for the two-hour tour of the academy grounds and many historical sites. This tour provided us the opportunity to see nearly all of the Academy grounds and historical sites, with many chances to walk around and see things up close.

Our first stop was to the Cadet Chapel where we stopped to look over the historic Cadet Barracks and Dining Hall that house and feeds all 4,000+ cadets. We then went into the Chapel that hosts the Protestant services while seven other denominations have their services in other locations.



There is a lot of history within these walls of stone and stained glass religious scenes and figures, all donated by past classes. Our guide pointed out numerous historical points of interest that highlighted the West Point traditions embedded in the Chapel. From there, we continued around the Academy and stopped at the West Point Cemetery and Old Cadet Chapel, built in 1837. This Chapel was the very first cadet chapel and although scheduled for demolition at one time, it has been preserved and is still in use today. It also houses the plaque of graduate Benedict Arnold but without his name displayed reflecting his status as a traitor during the Revolutionary War.

It was an outstanding opportunity to learn about the lives and contributions of some of the US Military's and West Point's most notable figures laid to rest on this hallowed ground, to include General George Custer and General Norman Schwarzkopf.



Our superb guide wove the most important and interesting stories about West Point and the United States Military Academy into every minute of our two hours. He shared incredible details, key points, and major changes with West Point, going back to the Revolutionary War and its first year of operation in 1778 up to the present role of the United States Military Academy as the premier training facility for leaders who mold the future of our country. Our tour and historical journey covered historical figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ulysses S. Grant, and Dwight Eisenhower to help bring the story of West Point and our nation to life.

Our tour made stops at Trophy Point, Battle Monument, the Plain, and the Parade Field, all significant historical points of interest at West Point. The Cadet Barracks from the field above the Hudson River is shown below.



The small but mighty DOCA group at Trophy Point overlooking the Hudson River in the background.



We concluded our tour at the historical Thayer Hotel on the Academy grounds and enjoyed a nice lunch with Colonel Sean Morrow, Director of the Combating Terrorism Center and Mr. Matthew Hintz, our Public Affairs Community Engagement guide.

Academy Life Presentation and Athletic Heritage Tour

Following lunch, U.S. Army Colonel Sean Morrow, Director of West Point's Combating Terrorism Center, took us over to the Kimsey Athletic Facility that overlooks Blaik Field at Michie Stadium (shown below). Col Morrow was kind enough to brief us on the current operations at the Academy and its focus on building leaders of character through a regimen of military, academic, athletic, and character/ethics training. He provided an excellent overview of cadet life and challenges, and also answered numerous questions thoughtfully and candidly. After nearly 90 minutes, he concluded with a few words on what the Combating Terrorism Center does. The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point educates, advises, and conducts research to equip present and future leaders with the intellectual tools necessary to understand the challenges of terrorism and counterterrorism. They teach cadets, conduct research, and advise governmental entities.



As an institution, the Center staff embraces the unique responsibility to prepare cadets and other counterterrorism practitioners to think critically about the challenges they will face during war and peace. They are committed to producing objective, rigorous, and policy-relevant research that applies theory to practice, informs strategic counterterrorism thinking, and moves the boundaries of academic knowledge. Lastly, they leverage their expertise and unique position at West Point to contribute to discrete advisory efforts for federal, state, and local government, and to build bridges between counterterrorism stakeholders across the defense department.

This concluded the visit to West Point, and after a quick stop to look at the West Point Museum, we headed back to the hotel for our final evening at the Newark Marriott Hotel. It was a great group and we had two special days together.