



**Global Reach  
Provider**

**Maj. Gen.**

**Mark S. Solo**

**Commander  
618th Tanker Airlift  
Control Center**

**WHO'S WHO'S**  
**WHO'S**  
2009

**AIR MOBILITY COMMAND**



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▼ **AIR MOBILITY**

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# Global Provider

# Q&A

Providing Global Reach 24/7, Anywhere

## Major General Mark S. Solo Commander 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center

Major General Mark S. Solo is the commander, 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center, Scott Air Force Base, Ill. The 618th TACC is responsible for planning, scheduling and directing a fleet of nearly 1,300 aircraft in support of combat delivery and strategic airlift, air refueling and aeromedical operations around the world.

Solo was commissioned in 1978 after being named a distinguished graduate in the ROTC program at Michigan State University. He served in a number of operational positions. While serving as a C-141B chief pilot in the 8th Military Airlift Squadron, Solo commanded 26 combat support sorties during Operation Desert Storm. During operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, Solo directed the Joint Logistics Operation Center at the Pentagon. From the National Military Command Center, he coordinated all deployment orders to meet combatant commander requirements for the Global War on Terrorism. Prior to his current assignment, he was deputy director, Air, Space and Information Operations, Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB.

As a mobility pilot and leader, Solo's experience includes: commander, 22nd Airlift Squadron, Travis AFB, Calif.; deputy chief, Political-Military Affairs Division (J-5), U.S. Central Command, MacDill AFB, Fla.; deputy commander, 436th Operations Group, Dover AFB, Del.; commander, 436th Operations Group, Dover AFB, Del.; chief, Mobility Division, Logistics Directorate, the Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.; chief, Joint Logistics Operations Center, the Joint Staff, Washington, D.C.; commander, 97th Air Mobility Wing, Altus AFB, Okla.; chief, Office of Military Cooperation-Kuwait, Kuwait City, Kuwait; deputy director, Air, Space and Information Operations, Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB, Ill.; and commander, 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center, Scott AFB, Ill.

The general is a command pilot with more than 4,900 flying hours in the C-141, C-5, KC-135 and C-17, and has also served in multiple joint assignments.

His awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Legion of Merit with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Meritorious Service Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal, the Aerial Achievement Medal, and the Army Commendation Medal.

Solo was interviewed by MLF Editor Jeff McKaughan.

**Q: General, thanks for taking the time to speak with me today. To get started, could you please explain the 618th TACC's role?**



**A:** Thank you for the opportunity to talk with you today about our mission, Jeff. I'd like to say right up front that the 618th TACC is an AOC at war, and job number-one for us day-in and day-out is to ensure our troops overseas get the supplies, equipment and support they need, when and where they need it.

We accomplish that by planning, allocating and executing global airlift, air refueling and aeromedical evacuation operations as the air arm of U.S. Transportation Command, on behalf of Air Mobility Command and Eighteenth Air Force.

On any given day, Air Mobility Command plans approximately 900 point-to-point flights, called sorties. This broad scope encompasses all of the missions in AMC, all the way from airlift or air refueler training to airlifting equipment for Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. Of those 900 sorties, the 618th TACC plans the operational airlift, air refueling and aeromedical evacuation missions, which are the missions that are moving personnel and equipment in support of a U.S. transportation need worldwide. We go anywhere, anytime, and we're flexible enough to fly on short notice or set up recurring missions, over a long period of time.

In fact, so far in 2009, TACC-controlled missions have moved more than 1.4 million passengers and 550,000 tons of cargo, which is the equivalent of moving the entire population of

Washington, D.C., 2 1/2 times, and six Washington Monuments, worldwide. And it's important to note that we're not just meeting Air Force requirements with our missions. Every day, we're flying missions in direct support of each of our sister services, as well as providing support to our coalition partners.

When it comes down to it, there's no other organization in the world that has the same scope of air mobility reach and responsibility as the U.S. Air Force and the 618th TACC.

**Q: How does a user's requirement become a mission for the 618th TACC?**

**A:** First, a user—in most cases a combatant commander—identifies a requirement, such as the need for MRAPs in theater. That user will submit their requirement to the U.S. Transportation Command, next door to us at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. USTRANSCOM will validate the mission, assign it a priority level according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff priority listing, and determine whether that requirement will move by air, land, sea or a combination of the three. If it's by air, the 618th TACC gets the call to plan the mission, provide an aircraft, and exercise command-and-control over the mission from our 24/7 operations floor.

Once USTRANSCOM validates the requirement and if it's moving by air, it comes over to one of three planning directorates in the TACC, depending on the type of mission. We have a variety of airlift, air refueling and aeromedical evacuation mission types, ranging from exercise support and humanitarian operations to refueling fighter jets, providing VIP airlift and of course support to contingency operations such as OIF and OEF.

Once the mission is planned, it moves on to our Mobility Management Directorate, where the planned mission gets tasked out to an AMC base or available Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve volunteer. At that point, each tasked unit then assigns one of its aircraft and aircrews to fly the mission.

Finally, the mission moves to our Command and Control Directorate where we obtain diplomatic clearances—more than 25,000 per month—that allow AMC crews to land or overfly other nations. We also create the flight plans the crews will use and then flight-follow the missions from the ops floor. We track maintenance issues and source parts and personnel to fix broken aircraft, and through the Theater Direct Delivery Division, we exercise operational control over all C-17s that are forward-positioned in the U.S. Central Command AOR for missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, Pakistan and other areas.

All of those operations on the floor are overseen by an experienced colonel, called the 'senior controller' from our Director of Operations Directorate, or XOZ. He or she is the 618th TACC's lead for keeping the mission moving, and if there's a major issue within the mobility system, either the senior makes the decision, or he or she makes the call to the higher headquarters agency that will make the decision.

Bottom line: If it's an inter-theater airlift, air refueling or aeromedical evacuation mission flying worldwide, the 618th TACC is responsible for planning, tasking, and command-and-control.

**Q: Another big piece of your operations has been to aeromedically evacuate wounded troops, and in some cases civilians, out of Iraq**

**and Afghanistan and on to higher levels of care. How does that process work inside of the 618th TACC walls?**

**A:** Aeromedical evacuation is one of our core capabilities in the air mobility world, and our AE cell in the 618th TACC accomplishes missions every day that are worthy of headline news stories.

In Vietnam it took about 45 days for casualties to return home. During Desert Storm, it took 10 days to move wounded patients to the United States, and the survivability rate was 75 percent. The combination of high-tech medicine, robust en route care, and rapid medical evacuation has resulted in a system that has produced the lowest lethality rate in recorded conflict. Today, wounded warriors who reach the AE system have a remarkable 95 percent survival rate, and are returned all the way back to the United States in three days or less.

A great example is a mission that happened in late July this year, involving three Air Force aircraft along with three aircrews, aeromedical evacuation teams, and agencies from around the world to save a coalition partner. A British soldier had sustained multiple gunshot wounds and had his blood supply replaced more than 10 times at a military hospital in Afghanistan. As the patient's respiratory condition worsened, doctors determined the patient had to be moved to upgraded care in Germany. Officials at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center and Joint Patient Movement Requirements Center in Southwest Asia, and the Global Patient Movement Requirements Center and 618th TACC at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., immediately started working to find the aircraft, aircrews and specialized medical teams to airlift the soldier to further care. The patient was airborne within hours of receiving the call for support at the 618th TACC. He landed safely at Ramstein AB on July 26 and was flown by helicopter to further medical care. A few weeks later he flew back home to the U.K., where he's recovering today.

There are a couple of things I like to highlight about this capability. First, ask yourself what other government and its military can, or will, go to such great extent to save a life? I can't think of any other air force in the world that can do what we do—but that's what sets us apart, and helps make us the most capable air force in the world. Second, our AE teams are absolutely amazing at what they do, and we don't just provide this care for U.S. troops. We make the same commitment for our coalition partners, government civilians and local-national civilians, which is another reason the U.S. aeromedical evac capability remains unrivaled today.

**Q: How important are developments with the KC-X at your AOC?**

**A:** The KC-X is the Air Force's number-one acquisition priority, and it's extremely important to our operations in the 618th TACC, and across AMC, to field it and get it into the operational fleet. Tankers perform critical air refueling and also aeromedical evacuation missions required by our joint combatant commanders. Because of its enabling capabilities, our global force posture simply cannot operate without a reliable tanker force.

The priorities for today's and tomorrow's tanker fleets are to provide the war fighting commanders the support they need. In respect to our current fleet, we must accomplish modifications and retrofits to ensure the aircraft are mission ready and



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sustainable, to include meeting airspace access requirements. Our future tanker must provide the refueling capabilities of today's fleet with more flexibility, such as the ability to refuel any receiver on any mission and still be able to carry out other mission areas such as aeromedical evacuation, cargo or passenger lift.

We owe it to our troops overseas to provide the most capable force that we have—and those troops rely on the fighters providing cover overhead, and those fighters rely on a predictable, capable air refueling fleet.

**Q: What kind of changes have you seen in global airlift, air refueling and aeromedical operations since taking command of the 618th TACC?**

**A:** AMC and the 618th TACC have been operating at a high ops tempo since 9/11, so today it's a pace we're used to and have maintained for some time. In fact, TACC-controlled missions moved over 5,000 passengers, nearly 2,000 tons of cargo and offloaded more than 843,000 pounds of fuel per day over the past year. When you look at that in everyday terms, that means we've moved enough people to fill the new Cowboys stadium more than 18 times, enough cargo to move eight aircraft carriers and offloaded enough fuel to fill 70 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Since taking command, I've been around for a number of significant operations and events—one of the more memorable being the shift of operations from Iraq to Afghanistan. While overall ground operations are increasing in Afghanistan, they're slowing in Iraq, resulting in a shift for airlift and air refueling assets rather than an overall increase. We are, however, not only moving cargo and passengers from the United States, but also moving intra-theater requirements from Iraq, to include MRAPs.

As we move more forces into country our need to resupply them by air increases due to the poor infrastructure, distances and threat from IEDs. This has led to a rise in the amount of airdrop missions being performed, which also directly impacts us at the 618th TACC because our Theater Direct Delivery C-17s fly airdrop missions daily in Afghanistan.

**Q: Are there ever any cases where the amount of requirements you receive outnumbers the amount of airplanes and crews available, and if so, how do you decide who gets their gear first?**

**A:** The organization that allocates aircraft and aircrew to fly AMC's operational missions is the 618th Tanker Airlift Control Center's Mobility Management Directorate, and they work to meet as many requirements as possible with the assets available.

There are a number of factors to consider when looking at our aircraft and aircrew usage. First, not all AMC aircraft are always available for operational missions. On any given day, a certain number of aircraft and aircrews are needed at home station in



From left, an F/A-18F Super Hornet aircraft assigned to the "Black Aces" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 41 flies beside an Air Force KC-10 Extender aircraft as it refuels one of two F/A-18C Hornet aircraft assigned to VFA-97 during a flight over Afghanistan. [Photo courtesy of DoD]

order to remain current on training requirements or for maintenance purposes. Additionally, a certain number of aircraft are always undergoing depot-level and routine maintenance. After those training and maintenance assets are removed from the equation, the remaining aircraft and aircrews are used on AMC's operational missions.

Another factor to consider is the sheer volume of requirements for airlift and air refueling. As you can imagine, we receive a constant flow of requests for airlift and air refueling capabilities in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. We have a significant number of requirements for other operations all over the world. On almost a daily basis, the number of requirements we have actually outnumber the assets we have available.

When this happens, the Mobility Management Directorate fulfills requirements in a rank-order basis, determined by the U.S. Transportation Command using guidance from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. If a requirement does not get filled by an AMC asset, there are still a number of ways it can be met. In some cases, a simple delay is the solution. In other cases, that requirement may be filled by one of AMC's commercial airlift partners, or U.S. Transportation Command may find a multimodal solution, moving by a combination of land, sea or air, in order to meet the requirement.

**Q: What keeps someone who oversees our military's inter-theater airlift up at night?**

**A:** The thought that our men and women overseas won't get the things they need, when they need it.

The KC-135 is a terrific aircraft, and it has served us well, but the fleet is nearly a half-century old. Some tankers may be nearly 80 years old before they are replaced, which is equivalent to the Douglass C-1, which refueled the Question Mark in the 1920s, refueling an F-22 today.

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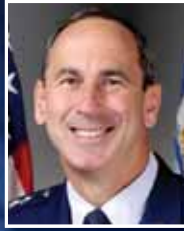


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# AIR MOBILITY COMMAND



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Director  
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Brig. Gen. Kenneth Merchant  
Director, Logistics (A4)



Maj. Gen. Susan Desjardins  
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& Programs (A5/8)



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Director  
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Col. Theresa C. Carter  
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# 2009

# Program performance

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# Military Logistics Forum

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**Maj. Gen. Mark  
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618th Tanker Airlift  
Control Center



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618th Tanker Airlift  
Control Center



**Brig. Gen. Barbara  
J. Faulkenberry**  
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15th Expeditionary  
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*is priority one!*<sup>TM</sup>

**NORTHROP GRUMMAN**

My number-one fear is that some event will cause us to have to ground the KC-135 fleet, and then the warfighter in Afghanistan or humanitarian event in some other location won't get the support they need. Going back to my previous reference to troops in contact, if we don't field a new tanker soon, we may not be able to refuel fighters that are providing cover to troops overseas, and that means putting lives at risk. Peeling that back a little bit, a reduced refueling capability means we can't move cargo and troops, as far, as fast and as effectively as we normally do.

**Q: Switching gears a little bit: we've talked about the support within the Department of Defense, but do you ever receive requirements to move equipment for other government agencies or in support of needs from other nations?**

**A:** Absolutely. We continually offer humanitarian support at home and abroad when called upon, and in fact, having that American flag on an Air Force aircraft offering humanitarian support can be just as powerful an action as supporting troops in contact or airdropping cargo onto a mountainside in the AOR.

Just last month the 618th TACC planned, allocated and executed 16 sorties to move cargo and relief workers into American Samoa after the tsunami struck the region. The total impact was nearly 60 workers and over 125 tons of cargo moved to support the effort, and we also provided air refueling for one of the C-17s that made a direct trip from the U.S. to Pago Pago, American Samoa.

In May, a TACC-tasks mission delivered 30,000 H1N1 influenza prevention kits to the governments of Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua to prevent the spread of the virus. In January, two AMC C-17s moved 75 tons of heavy equipment, including water tankers, fuel tank trucks, forklifts and other oversized cargo, from Kigali, Rwanda, to support peacekeeping operations in Darfur.

We've also answered the call at home, including during Hurricanes Ike and Gustav last year, when the 618th TACC coordinated hundreds of aircraft sorties resulting in movement of more than 9,000 evacuees, nearly 600 medical patients, and 1,379 tons of equipment to support relief efforts in the Gulf Coast region.

Our operations other than direct war fighting can have just as important an impact as delivering rations, ammunition and equipment downrange. That's what makes AMC so unique—we can offer a clenched fist of combat action when needed, and also offer an open hand of support around the world when that help is needed too.

**Q: What does the future hold for the 618th TACC?**

**A:** We're always looking forward at world events and thinking 'what if' we need to respond, and we're always working to find new ways to optimize air mobility capabilities. One thing that's not going to change is the 618th TACC's dedication and responsiveness to the needs of our forces and coalition partners around the world.

A large part of the evolution of air mobility is the Mobility Capability and Requirements study, which is a study that



A KC-10 Extender from the 908th Expeditionary Aerial Refueling Squadron flies over Afghanistan. Using either an advanced aerial refueling boom, or a hose and drogue centerline refueling system, the KC-10 can refuel a wide variety of U.S. and allied military aircraft within the same mission. [Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force]

re-establishes the baseline of what AMC has and will have, planned current/future requirements and gaps where AMC needs to put dollars, people and resources. Every three to four years the Secretary of Defense directs this study enterprise-wide to include air, sea, pre-positioned stocks afloat, ashore rail cars, etc., to ensure mobility requirements can continue to be met in the future. As a big player in the mobility system, the 618th TACC clearly stands to adjust to any findings by that study, which is scheduled for completion later this year.

**Q: Any final thoughts?**

**A:** Thank you for the opportunity to discuss how we deploy, redeploy and sustain U.S. operations around the world. It's been a true pleasure to serve, and I'm lucky to wake up every day and work with an amazing team that is responsible for moving 5,000 people and 2,000 tons of cargo every 24 hours. If there is a need for airlift, air refueling or aeromedical evacuation anywhere in the world, whether the requirement is planned a long time in advance or given on short notice, the 618th TACC is here to make it happen. ★

For more information, contact *MLF* Editor Jeff McKaughan at [jeffm@kmmidiagroup.com](mailto:jeffm@kmmidiagroup.com) or search our online archives for related stories at [www.MLF-kmi.com](http://www.MLF-kmi.com).

# Programs for the Mobility AMC

Air Mobility Command manages a wide range of projects funded under research, development, test and evaluation funding, as well as under acquisition lines. Below is a slim representation of awards, solicitation and sources sought by AMC to better serve the warfighter.

## **PATIENT LOADING SYSTEMS**

AMC's Specialized Contracting Branch intends to acquire 42 patient loading systems, to include a first article test unit with incremental delivery of follow-on production units to multiple delivery site locations. The patient loading systems are to interface between the ground and both medical transportation high deck aircraft and CRAF aircraft.

## **NETWORK-CENTRIC EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

AMC is conducting market research to determine qualified, experienced, and interested potential sources for a network-centric emergency notification system (NCENS) for emergency notification, recall and personnel accountability.

The NCENS system must: be mission-tested; be COTS; adhere to industry open standards; support enterprise-wide implementations; be network-centric, leveraging existing IP network services; and utilize an enterprise-wide architecture from a centralized site, with the capability of delivering reliable and secure emergency notifications to all customer personnel.

The planned implementation will support up to 47,000 military and civilian personnel at AMC's 12 bases, and must support future implementation for up to 16,000 additional AMC personnel at geographically separated locations globally.

## **COMPUTERIZED FLIGHT PLANNING SOFTWARE**

The AMC Contracting Flight anticipates issuance of a sole source solicitation for computerized Flight Planning software and services, as well as Charting Products and Services to ensure complete, current and accurate Flight Planning and Execution support to 932nd Airlift Wing aircrews, at Scott Air Force Base, Ill. The resultant contract will be with (1) one year option period.

## **GULFSTREAM PILOT TRAINING**

The AMC Contracting Flight anticipates issuance of a solicitation on a full and open competitive basis for the Gulfstream III (C-20B), Gulfstream IV (C-20H), and Gulfstream V/550 (C37A/B) pilot and flight engineer training. This requirement is for initial and refresher academic and simulator training, and various other types of pilot/flight engineer training. The resultant contract will be a firm fixed price requirements contract with the base year commencing on or about April 1, 2010, and four one-year option periods.

## **MOBILITY SYSTEMS ENTERPRISE SERVICES**

For technical and administrative support to the Architecture & Data Integration Section (HQ AMC/A6IE) and its FFRDC partner, MITRE, AMC intends to issue a single award to one contractor for mobility systems enterprise services.

The specific types of services being considered are C2 and ITV enterprise-level architecture support, and C2 and ITV enterprise-level business and technical support. There are three major service areas that may be acquired: integrated enterprise requirements analysis and architecture development support, integrated enterprise engineering support, and enterprise support tool maintenance and modernization.

## **STS-1400 PERIMETER SURVEILLANCE RADARS**

AMC's Specialized Contracting Branch intends to award a firm fixed priced purchase order to one contractor for all components for perimeter surveillance radar. According to the contracting office, the radar selected is the STS-1400 high resolution radar made by ICx Technologies.

This radar can track targets within five meters to 1,400 meters, detect personnel (walking/standing) out to 1,400 meters, detect crawlers out to 500 meters, and detect vehicles out to 1,400 meters. It also has a minimum beam elevation control of 2.5 degrees for up and 10 degrees for down, radiated power that must be safe for human exposure, a false alarm rate of less than two per 24 hours, and all weather capability to detect targets within 1,400 meters of the radar.

## **UNMANNED CARGO AIRCRAFT**

Headquarters, AMC Future Concepts, hosted an Unmanned Cargo Aircraft Day in mid-November at Scott AFB, Ill. To look at concepts/ideas for an unmanned cargo aircraft.

Information gained from this event will be the basis for 2011 advanced technology demonstration funding. HQ AMC is interested in exploring capability concepts for air delivery of cargo directly to the point-of-need using an unmanned aircraft. Conceptual attributes would include the capability to deliver critical supplies (ammunition, water, food, etc) in support of distributed operations, possibly during direct engagement.

Conceptually, the UAV should autonomously deliver 500-3,000 pounds of cargo to a strategic combat radius of 500 nautical miles, at airspeeds of 250 knots or greater, with a VTOL/STOL capability of 300 feet. Other attributes could include an air launched glide capability, powered capability, ship-based/recoverable capability, unprepared surface landing capability, skid landing, floatation capability, reusable and inexpensive. ★

For more information, contact *MLF* Editor Jeff McKaughan at [jeffm@kmmidiagroup.com](mailto:jeffm@kmmidiagroup.com) or search our online archives for related stories at [www.MLF-kmi.com](http://www.MLF-kmi.com).



# *Getting Business Done*

*SMALL BUSINESS CONTRACTING WITH THE AIR MOBILITY COMMAND.*

*By KELLY FODEL*

*MLF CORRESPONDENT*

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Air Mobility Command's mission is to provide global air mobility ... right effects, right place, right time. The command also plays a crucial role in providing humanitarian support at home and around the world. AMC airmen—active duty, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and civilians—provide airlift and aerial refueling for all of America's armed forces. Many special duty and operational support aircraft, and stateside aeromedical evacuation missions are also assigned to AMC.

As the air component of the U.S. Transportation Command, AMC serves many customers, and as the single manager for air mobility, AMC's customers have only one number to call for Global Reach.

AMC's mobility aircraft include the C-5, KC-10, C-17, C-130 and KC-135. Operational support aircraft include the VC-25 (Air Force One), C-9, C-20, C-21, C-32, C-37, C-40, and UH-1. AMC's mission encompasses nearly 136,000 active-duty and Air Reserve Component military and civilian personnel.

Thanks to the size and scope of AMC's mission, there exists a good opportunity for small businesses to contract with AMC. *MLF* interviewed Edwin Beussink, director of small business for AMC, to learn about those opportunities and the best ways for businesses to cash in on them.

Beussink oversees 14 small business specialists working at 12 bases that comprise AMC's air mobility wings, airlift wings and groups across the United States. Those specialists are looking out for the interests of small businesses in the individual base contracting offices. Most of the small business specialists are part-time employees, while those at McGuire AFB and MacDill AFB are full-time. Beussink supervises the specialists from a functional standpoint, acting as a coach of sorts, but the specialists officially report to the wing leadership on their bases. "I do policy and procedure and work a lot of issues that the contracting offices have, with changes to rules and regulations or things like that. I do a lot of advocating for small businesses on the inside, with other program managers and contracting officers and technical folks. Then I also handle outreach to the small businesses," Beussink said.

Beussink said the specialists operate independently on a day-to-day basis. However, he is available when they have questions or need guidance. He also provides oversight to ensure that small businesses are provided due diligence in the contracting process.

"We do not have a quota, but we do have goals that we work toward meeting, AMC-wide," Beussink said. "About 68 percent of our business is done by small businesses, so they are a big player at the Air Mobility Command. One thing we are really proud of is that 10 percent of our business is done by service-disabled veterans. We aggressively seek those service-disabled veteran small businesses, because being part of DoD, these guys get injured or hurt. When they start up their business, we feel obligated to give them a good shot. We get the highest percentage rate of any of the major commands in the Air Force, so we are doing very well in that area." Individual bases also have goals that they strive to meet in contracting with small businesses. In addition to supporting service-disabled veterans, the specialists also focus on contracting with other businesses that need extra assistance. These include the Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Institutions Program, Historically Underutilized Business Zone Program, Indian Incentive Program [includes Alaskans and Hawaiians], Small Disadvantaged Businesses, Veteran-Owned Small Business Program, and Women-Owned Small Business Program.

What a small business first needs to do is talk to someone at a procurement technical assistance center (PTAC). The PTAC will help the business and provide advice and support about the contracting process. Beussink said a company needs to find out who buys what, where. If AMC falls on that list, they should contact a small business specialist at an AMC base. Many of the AMC opportunities are advertised on Fed Biz Opps, so the prospective contractor should keep a close eye on that website for updates.

Some contracts are a little more difficult to track. "If you're doing construction, it's straightforward and listed on Fed Biz Opps. Others are not as easy. If you are buying something that is bought with a credit card, you have to locate the individual user on the base. If you are selling something IT related, it could be bought by a whole different group of people, like the Standard Systems Group in Alabama. So the individual has to do a lot of work, but the PTACs can help you there."

In terms of the kind of work that small companies might find with the AMC, Beussink said it varies. "The big area... we do a lot of base services, like mowing grass, snow cleanup, roofing contracts, building renovations. We do not do major construction... that is done by the Corps of Engineers. We do some information technology. In one of our bases we support Central Ops Command. We also do more of the intelligence and operational support at MacDill."

Beussink often travels to large conferences and events to network with prospective contractors, "like the National Service Disabled Veterans Conference in Las Vegas every year. About 2,000 businesses show up, so I go to stuff like that. Or I go to Chicago for a matchmaking session, where we match businesses with the requirements that we have. I have come up with stuff like that," he said. The specialists are also actively involved in vendor outreach. They hold vendor days on base, and coordinate with local PTAC offices.

Beussink offers this advice to a prospective contractor: first, contact the PTAC for advice. This eliminates wasted time and effort for everyone. Beyond that, do a little research on Fed Biz Opps and search for the product or service you are selling. See who is buying that product, and who the correct point of contact is to begin the contracting process. If you can get through some of the preliminary red tape, you are well on your way to scoring a contract. Once you get a contract, find out who else buys your product elsewhere. Ask your current customer if they know anyone else who is buying your product and how you might contact them. This networking could lead to a large expansion of business. "You get a lot more information by simply asking some questions," Beussink said.

Also, make sure you make technology work to your advantage. "The thing we are using more than ever is the internet and websites to get information out there," Beussink said. The internet websites utilized by the AMC provide good information about upcoming conferences, network opportunities, and contracting opportunities that exist. Checking out opportunities online at the Air Force small business website can assist in locating a small business specialist, and you can even search for current contracts up for bid.

Beussink said he and his specialists find the job challenging at times, but the reward is worth every bit of effort. "It is very rewarding. I am not just writing a delivery order or punching a contract call together. These people that win these contracts... it really means a lot to them as small businesses to get contracts to work for the government and get a paycheck. It is really rewarding," Beussink said. "And when I can find a contractor that really does a great job for the government folks and provides a great product or capability for us, that is really fantastic." ★

For more information, contact *MLF* Editor Jeff McKaughan at [jeffm@kmmidiagroup.com](mailto:jeffm@kmmidiagroup.com) or search our online archives for related stories at [www.MLF-kmi.com](http://www.MLF-kmi.com).



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