

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
OPENING STATEMENT FINAL
GENERAL JACQUELINE VAN OVOST, CDRUSTRANSCOM

Chairman Waltz, Chairman Kelly, Ranking Member Courtney, Vice Ranking Member Davis, distinguished members of the committees, good morning. It is my honor to join you today with my Senior Enlisted Leader, Fleet Master Chief Donald Myrick, to represent the men and women of United States Transportation Command as we defend the Nation, take care of our people, and succeed through teamwork. I am extremely proud of our team of logistics professionals who lead the Joint Deployment and Distribution Enterprise, continually exceed expectations, and ensure hope, deterrence, and victory are assured as we contribute to our nation's defense. From competition to crisis, the entire enterprise proudly delivers for our Nation, Allies, and partners. We know our success in the European theater and beyond would not be possible without the steadfast support of these committees, and the whole of Congress.

To maintain the unrivaled strategic advantage **to project and sustain the Joint Force over global distances**, through natural disasters, pandemics, conflicts – peace and war, while defending the homeland – we must preserve our logistical dominance.

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Our organic fleet, along with our commercial transportation partners, must continue to present credible deterrence and requires proactive efforts to recapitalize and modernize. My highest concerns lie in reductions in capacity and readiness in both sealift and air refueling.

We are a generation late in recapitalizing a ready sealift fleet to meet our national objectives. The average age of the 44 Roll-On/Roll-Off ships we use to surge from the Continental U.S. is 44 years old. In fact, 17 of the 44 ships are 50 years or older. TRANSCOM supports the Navy's strategy to acquire used sealift vessels from the commercial market and further requests to provide the Secretary of Defense discretionary authority to purchase foreign-built used ships under favorable market conditions without limitation on number. I greatly appreciate your support for stabilized funding towards our sealift recapitalization effort, and I am heartened by the current progress on the first five ships.

We have also taken steps to address the Department's shortfall in meeting wartime fuel delivery demands, and the vulnerable position of continued reliance on the use of foreign flag, foreign crewed, tanker vessels. We are working with MARAD to implement the Tanker Security Program, which will provide assured access to U.S. flag tankers and begin to reduce risk in sealift tanker capacity.

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In addition to the Tanker Security Program, we fully support the Maritime Security Program, Jones Act and cargo preference laws that all work to ensure we have the necessary US Flag capability and US Mariners during peacetime, and ready to move sensitive defense material during a national emergency.

In every domain, American workers are critical to Joint Force transportation and logistics. In particular, maritime stakeholders have been experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining mariners. We support MARAD and industry efforts to identify strategies that address the mariner shortage and ensure their readiness.

In the air, the air refueling fleet is the backbone of rapid global mobility and is our **most stressed capability**. TRANSCOM supports the Air Force's continued efforts towards focused modernization of the fleet, **uninterrupted** tanker recapitalization, and accelerated pursuit of the next generation air refueling system to ensure our capacity and readiness remains credible to cover simultaneous global requirements.

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Future operations will also require high degrees of battlespace awareness and leveraging data to align scarce mobility resources with the greatest strategic need. Integration into battle networks, resourcing cryptographic modernization, cyber security and ensuring resilient positioning, navigation, and timing are among my top priorities.

Just as we are engaged globally in supporting the DOD's operations, the **Global Household Goods Contract** is our flagship transformational effort and will bring accountability that does not exist in the current program of dispersed vendors. We owe it to our members and their families and ensure they have the best relocation experience we can provide.

I am honored to join Rear Admiral Ann Phillips, U.S. Navy retired, and thank her for her 30-plus years of service to our country and her commitment to our nation's security. I would like to thank you once again for your leadership and for the support you provide our workforce. I look forward to your questions.