



Gen. Jacqueline Van Ovost
Commander, U.S. Transportation Command
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AS DELIVERED

Good morning! It is an absolute pleasure to join you all here today on this beautiful campus. I've spent a lot of time in Europe and Poland has always enchanted me with its incredible architecture and beautiful landscapes, but the citizens of this great nation have always left the greatest impression. So, thank you all for attending and thanks to your historic University for hosting.

Shortly before I was born, my parents immigrated to America from the Netherlands. So, as a young girl growing up in Florida, I never imagined my career would provide me so many possibilities or carry me to so many amazing places, but I'm sure glad it did.

The path that led me before you today involved many challenges. From an early age, I dreamed of flying airplanes – fast airplanes. But back then, US military policies prevented women from flying combat or fighter aircraft. This is something I had to overcome. To do so, I focused on my schooling and the things that led to my attending the United States Air Force Academy. As a lifelong learner, I was particularly drawn to the subjects of math and science. In these disciplines I found the tools that would allow me to navigate around cultural restrictions and make my dream a reality.

In all my assignments, I focused on being the best that I could be in whatever position I was placed. As I progressed, I realized that when people recognize you're consistently performing at your best – more opportunities become available to you, if you have the courage to accept. In these experiences I retained a few lessons that built my resiliency when facing life's challenges.

First, no matter who you are, I want you to realize that “only you can tell you no.”

- While I was cadet at the Air Force Academy, I discovered that with an engineering degree and more flight experience I could become a test pilot. So, I studied aeronautical engineering and loved it.
- After graduation, as a pilot, I worked to become the best aviator I could be, volunteered for every opportunity presented, and became a test pilot...as a result, I flew just about every aircraft in the Air Force's inventory, fighters included.
- When you match your passion to your talent...you won't work.... Love of STEM and aviation open the doors for me – dedication and hard work allowed me to walk through.
- Only you can limit yourself, anything, or anyone else is merely a hindrance. Don't give up.

Second, I cannot overstate the importance of mentorship in helping me maintain my personal and professional resiliency over the years. Multiple times I was directly confronted by those who weren't used to women in male-dominated roles. Whether it was my time as a civilian flight instructor in the early 80's, or negative attitudes from people in my chain of command, my response and recovery remained steadfast.



I strived to be the best and made deliberate efforts to help others whenever I could. Looking back, I am confident that my most consistent tool for combating adversity was my personal determination – But I didn't overcome hardships on my own – *no one does*.

Throughout my life, I benefited from the guidance of dedicated mentors and the unfailing support of my family. And I've come to find that the three most important people that are on this journey with me are those that came before me, those that walk beside me, and those that are behind me.

I look up to those who went before me - both personal and public role models who led by example, faced adversity, and didn't give up. Those that had the courage and perseverance to break down barriers and shift our culture for the better. Their actions created opportunities not previously available to me.

But my successes are not only because of those before me who showed me that anything is possible, but also because of those beside me who supported me through it all—my peer mentors – who share similar experiences. Relationships with them is two-fold. On one hand, we're able to share information, skills, and techniques, but on the other, we help each other to overcome challenges, and to make things better for those that come next.

Finally, there are those behind me. Individuals driven to succeed in various educational and career fields who continuously motivate me to keep going. Believe it or not, you are or will be all of these three people in some way.

In and out of the military, I've had the privilege to elevate others on their journeys and I am humbled by the responsibility and grateful for the opportunity to share my story – especially talented individuals at international Universities. Engaging in a dialogue with you today is a perfect example of the significant cooperation that exists between our nations – and in my current role I get to see the incredible impacts we create together every day.

In my professional capacity, I am a part of the United States' Military's largest Transportation organization. We move people and goods to the point of need globally. If you see the US military on the news anywhere in the world providing humanitarian aid, disaster response, participating in exercises, or conducting operations – TRANSCOM's military members and commercial partners provided the unrivaled air, sea, and surface transportation capabilities that brought them there.

TRANSCOM's rapid world-wide mobility ensures that we can be anywhere – especially to aid our allies. Today, the combined efforts of the US, Poland, and NATO demonstrate our resolve in the face of Russia's authoritarian aggression by delivering the aid Ukraine needs to defend their nation.

With the support of our NATO Allies, and especially enabled by Polish airports and the transportation infrastructure, we have delivered nearly 195 million pounds of security assistance equipment. This includes approximately 3 thousand air defense missiles and systems, and over 70-million rounds of ammunition, all delivered by military and commercial aircraft and vessels



from around the world. We couldn't do it without the faithful assistance provided by the people of Poland.

On top of that, the people of Poland have graciously offered sanctuary for millions of those displaced by the circumstances of Russia's decision to invade Ukraine. The willingness to sacrifice to help those in need clearly demonstrates the honorable character of the Polish people.

Unfortunately, the increased prevalence of authoritarian aggression poses great risk to human rights, national sovereignty, and the basic rule of international law. Russia is a clear example of nations testing the very principles of democracy that the US, Poland, and NATO seek to protect. Those countries who seek to erode the bonds between NATO members, and the collective benefits of similar organizations, represent a strategic threat to all involved.

The People's Republic of China in particular seems determined to drive global competition through unfair practices. Their efforts include increasing countries' technological dependence on Beijing's capabilities and industry. They aggressively acquire intellectual property by any means at their disposal, which allows them to pursue advancements in space, quantum processing, and artificial intelligence.

These activities cost both our countries millions of jobs, while empowering the PRC to impose its foreign policy on other nations and advance the aims of its autocratic, surveillance state. At the individual level, they want to export their form of social control with an aim at reducing the civil liberties we all hold dear. Unquestionably, our countries welcome fair competition with every nation. But we must also ensure the sovereignty of national borders by taking steps to mitigate authoritarian influence that could negatively impact the future of European and American security.

The US Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, believes that the actions we take today will determine whether our children and grandchildren inherit an open world of rules and rights-or whether they face emboldened autocrats who seek to dominate by force and fear.

I firmly believe that those pursuing education in the STEM fields represent a critical component in insulating our nations against the allures and capabilities of authoritarian regimes. This requires a foundation built on innovation most frequently found in those places that cherish the value of freedom of thought and action.

Your personal development at these prestigious university represent the future – a future filled with technologies, techniques, and ideas not yet envisioned. I look to the talented individuals in this room to advance the disciplines of science, math engineering, to help grow a more digitally literate workforce that will defend against emerging threats – especially in cyberspace. And given this institution's record of producing business executives, scientists, engineers, and even astronauts, I have little doubt that you will continue to expand the boundaries of yourselves and those around you.



If you wish to grow, never allow yourself to stop learning, it is a journey with no destination. As you navigate this path, the only one capable of limiting your distance is you, and remember you are not traveling alone. Look to those before you, lean on those beside you, and inspire those behind you. Your success, and the success of your nation will closely follow. This in turn will influence and benefit other countries seeking to preserve the hard-won liberties so precious in our cultures.

From one grateful ally and friend, I want to thank you and your great nation for your stalwart support. TRANSCOM could not execute our mission without Poland and NATO - without fail we will continue to stand with the forces of freedom. Thank you all again for the opportunity to speak with you here today and I welcome any questions you may have.