



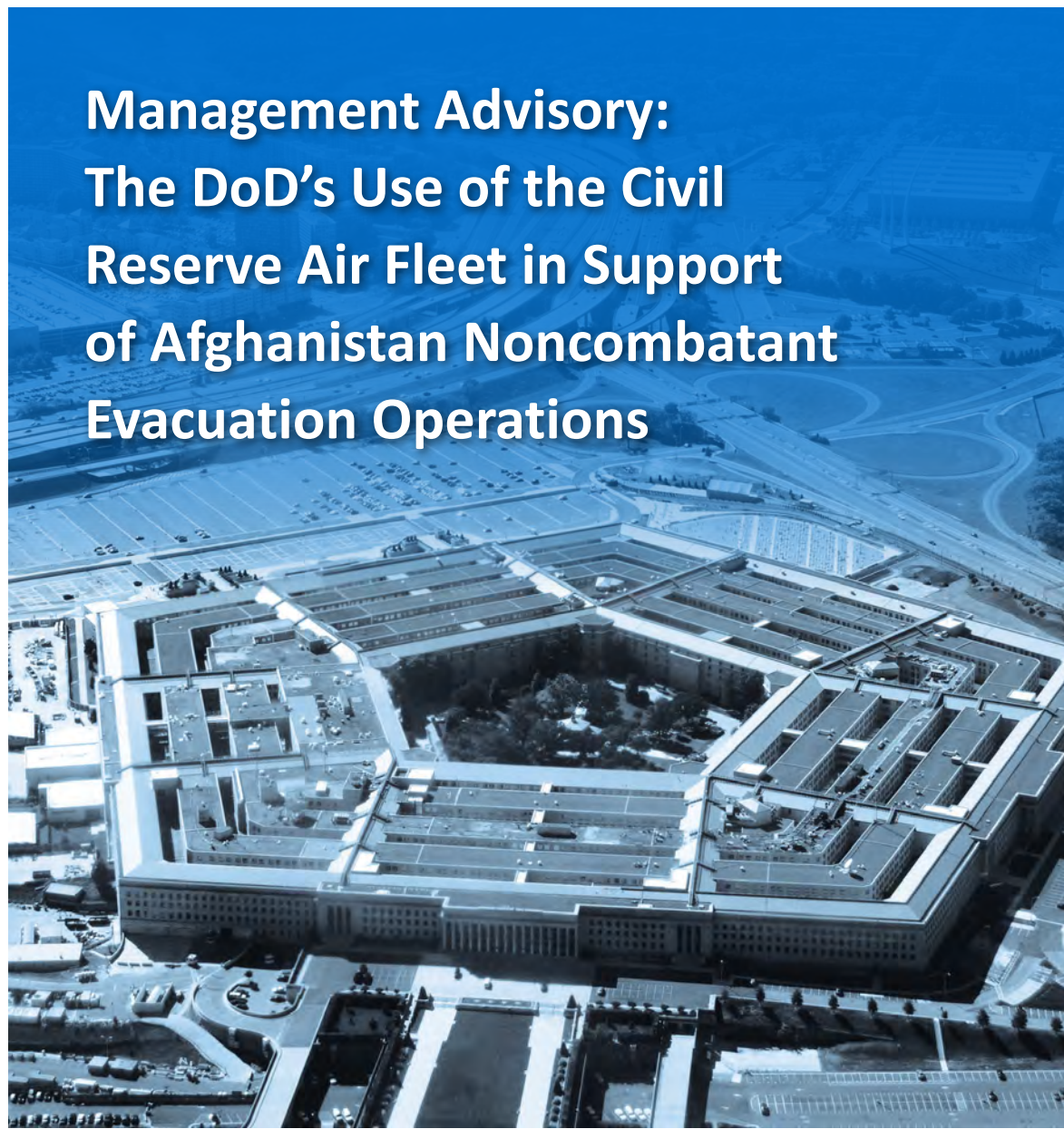
# INSPECTOR GENERAL

*U.S. Department of Defense*

JUNE 28, 2022



## Management Advisory: The DoD's Use of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet in Support of Afghanistan Noncombatant Evacuation Operations



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**INSPECTOR GENERAL  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE  
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June 28, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY  
COMMANDER, U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND  
COMMANDER, AIR MOBILITY COMMAND

SUBJECT: The DoD's Use of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet in Support of Afghanistan  
Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (DODIG-2022-109)

We are providing this management advisory for information and use. This advisory provides DoD officials the results of our evaluation concerning the activation and use of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) to support noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) of Afghan refugees under Operation Allies Refuge. U.S. Transportation Command leaders and other key agency officials proactively sought volunteers from commercial air carriers in the initial phases of the Afghanistan NEO, informed and updated air carrier officials, activated the required number of aircraft within time standards, and followed required procedures and operations during CRAF activation and deactivation.

This advisory contains no recommendations for action. However, we identify two best practices and we highlight two areas for potential improvement in future NEOs. We conducted this evaluation from November 2021 through May 2022 in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Inspections and Evaluations," published in January 2012 by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED] Program Director, Combatant Commands, Evaluation Component, DoD OIG, at [REDACTED].

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Maurice L. Foster", is positioned above the printed name.

Maurice L. Foster  
Acting Assistant Inspector General for  
Evaluations Programs, Combatant Commands,  
and Overseas Contingency Operations



## Objective

The objective of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) staff planned and used the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) in support of noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) in Afghanistan in accordance with public law and DoD and Service policies.

## Executive Summary

We determined that USTRANSCOM officials planned and used the CRAF in support of the Afghanistan NEO of Afghan refugees under Operation Allies Refuge (OAR) in accordance with DoD and Service policies and public law. USTRANSCOM and Air Mobility Command (AMC) documents showed that CRAF activation and deactivation procedures met the requirements in USTRANSCOM and AMC instructions. AMC staff conducted training and readiness exercises with CRAF air carriers in accordance with public law and DoD, USTRANSCOM, and AMC policies and procedures. USTRANSCOM and AMC officials stated, and air carrier officials confirmed, that USTRANSCOM and AMC officials communicated and coordinated with commercial air carriers before, during, and after the Afghanistan NEO, in accordance with USTRANSCOM and AMC instructions. AMC and the 618th Air Operations Center (Tanker Airlift Control Center) (618th AOC) conducted flight management for the CRAF during the Afghanistan NEO in accordance with AMC instructions.

The DoD successfully used the CRAF in support of the Afghanistan NEO. Under USTRANSCOM authority, military aircraft were able to transport thousands of evacuees from Afghanistan, and commercial air carriers (as part of the CRAF activation) successfully transported the evacuees to follow-on destinations. This report includes USTRANSCOM, AMC, and CRAF commercial air carrier efforts and best practices used to plan and execute the Afghanistan NEO and recommends some potential areas for interagency coordination during future NEOs.

## Background

On July 14, 2021, the President announced OAR, with the Department of State (DOS) leading a Task Force that included the DoD and the Department of Homeland Security. According to the President, the purpose of OAR was to support relocation flights for individuals and their families who helped the U.S. Government and were applying for Special Immigrant Visas. USTRANSCOM was a major provider of these relocation flights. From August 13 through August 30, 2021, under USTRANSCOM authorization, the U.S. Air Force's AMC flew almost 83,000 evacuees from Afghanistan to intermediate staging bases (ISBs) in Europe and the Middle East.<sup>1</sup> Beginning on August 16, 2021, USTRANSCOM requested that civilian air carriers provide volunteer commercial aircraft and aircrews to help transport

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<sup>1</sup> An intermediate staging base is a tailorable, temporary location used for staging forces, sustainment, and/or extraction into and out of an operational area.

Afghan evacuees from ISBs to follow-on destinations in the United States. USTRANSCOM estimated that the volunteer commercial carriers transported over 29,000 evacuees from ISBs to the United States from August 16, 2021, through the completion of the NEO in late September 2021. However, due to the increasing and unpredictable number of evacuees, on August 22, 2021, the Secretary of Defense approved the USTRANSCOM Commander's activation of the CRAF to support the DOS's evacuation of U.S. citizens and personnel, Special Immigrant Visa applicants, and other at-risk individuals from Afghanistan. According to USTRANSCOM records, between August 24 and September 10, 2021, the CRAF transported over 25,000 additional evacuees from ISBs to the United States.

### ***CRAF Origin, Purpose, and Organization***

The CRAF is a cooperative, voluntary program in which the U.S. commercial airline industry augments the DoD's airlift capacity during a national defense-related crisis. Participating commercial air carriers volunteer their aircraft to the CRAF program through a contractual agreement with USTRANSCOM, which is located at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. In return for their participation in the CRAF program, the commercial air carriers receive competition preference for peacetime DoD passenger and cargo contracts.

The DoD and the Department of Commerce established a joint agreement on December 15, 1951—after the Berlin Airlift—to develop the CRAF because the DoD realized the potential need for supplemental airlift to support national defense emergencies. In 1962, the President issued Executive Order 10999, giving the Secretary of Commerce responsibility for developing plans for a national emergency preparedness program, which includes the CRAF.<sup>2</sup> The transportation portion of the emergency preparedness program was transferred to the Department of Transportation upon its establishment in 1967. The Department of Transportation manages civil air carriers' participation in the CRAF program, while USTRANSCOM manages activation of the reserve fleet for the DoD. The USTRANSCOM Commander, with approval of the Secretary of Defense, is responsible for activating the CRAF during a crisis, if there is a need for additional aircraft.<sup>3</sup> AMC, a major Air Force command and the air component of USTRANSCOM, manages and executes CRAF operations and provides airlift for USTRANSCOM.

The CRAF consists of two segments, international and national. The national segment satisfies domestic requirements. The international segment consists of long-range and short-range sections. The long-range section consists of passenger and cargo aircraft capable of transoceanic operations, augmenting AMC's long-range, inter-theater aircraft fleets during periods of increased airlift. The short-range section consists of medium-sized

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<sup>2</sup> Executive Order 10999, "Assigning Emergency Preparedness Functions to the Secretary of Commerce," February 16, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> AMC Instruction 24-9, "Civil Airlift Programs," June 11, 2015, defines CRAF activation as "the formal act of notifying CRAF carriers that a CRAF stage, segment, section, and/or element, or any portions thereof, are activated and operational."

passenger and cargo aircraft that support near offshore and select intra-theater airlift. AMC Instruction 10-402 assigns CRAF aircraft to one of three stages.<sup>4</sup> Stage requirements can change depending on the National Security Strategy.

- Stage I activation supports substantially expanded peacetime military requirements and comprises long-range assets only.
- Stage II activation supports a defense airlift emergency and the projected needs of a major theater war.
- Stage III supports a declared, national defense-oriented emergency or war.

An August 22, 2021 DoD news release stated that the DoD activated the CRAF three times since its creation in 1951.<sup>5</sup> The first activation occurred in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm (August 1990 to May 1991). The second activation occurred in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (February to June 2003). Activation during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm included long-range international passenger and cargo services up to Stage II, while the activation during Operation Iraqi Freedom included only long-range international passenger services up to Stage I. The CRAF was activated for the third time from August 22, 2021, to September 13, 2021, in support of the Afghanistan NEO. A Mobility Representative (MOBREP) stated that use of CRAF for a NEO was unexpected, since previously, CRAF passengers consisted entirely of U.S. forces, not foreign nationals, who were transported to and from theater.<sup>6</sup>

According to the USTRANSCOM Directorate of Acquisition, 26 commercial air carriers were CRAF members at the time of the Afghan NEO CRAF activation. An AMC official said that USTRANSCOM activated 6 of its 26 CRAF commercial air carriers, contributing a total of 18 commercial aircraft, for the Afghanistan NEO: American Airlines (3 aircraft); Atlas Air (3 aircraft); Delta Air Lines (3 aircraft); Hawaiian Airlines (2 aircraft); Omni Air International (3 aircraft); and United Airlines (4 aircraft). AMC released Hawaiian Airlines from activation because the air carrier did not have operations set up in the U.S. European Command area of responsibility. Another seven CRAF commercial air carriers volunteered aircraft to AMC's Afghanistan NEO effort, and all seven carriers flew missions for the CRAF activated aircraft. The seven commercial air carriers were Alaska Airlines, Allegiant Air, Eastern Airlines, National Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Sun Country Airlines, and Swift Air.

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<sup>4</sup> AMC Instruction 10-402, "Civil Reserve Air Fleet," November 17, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> "Department Of Defense Activates Civil Reserve Air Fleet to Assist With Afghanistan Efforts."

<sup>6</sup> AMC Instruction 10-402 defines MOBREP as qualified airline representatives who are designated and provided by CRAF carriers to furnish technical advice and information designed to provide maximum coordination, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of the CRAF.



## ***USTRANSCOM's Organization and Management of the CRAF***

USTRANSCOM is a DoD functional combatant command responsible for providing air, land, and sea transportation to meet national security needs.<sup>7</sup> Historically, the command has provided strategic mobility in support of several major contingency operations, from Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm to Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

USTRANSCOM is composed of three transportation component commands, one each from the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, and the U.S. Air Force. AMC, USTRANSCOM's U.S. Air Force component, provides airlift and aerial refueling services for all U.S. Armed Forces and rapid transportation services in response to humanitarian crises and natural disasters. AMC is the single manager for all DoD air transport needs, including the CRAF. USTRANSCOM directs AMC to manage and execute commercial air carrier program policy to ensure safe, quality, and reliable airlift services to meet DoD peacetime and contingency requirements.

AMC manages the CRAF activation and deactivation processes. When emergency airlift requirements exceed the capability of military and volunteer commercial aircraft, the USTRANSCOM Commander, after receiving approval from the Secretary of Defense, activates the CRAF. Once the USTRANSCOM Commander activates the CRAF, the command, control, and operational employment of commercial air carriers is under the purview of the 618th AOC Commander. During CRAF execution, the 618th AOC schedules and tracks all CRAF aircraft supporting AMC missions. When the DoD no longer requires CRAF activation, the USTRANSCOM Commander, after receiving approval from the Secretary of Defense, deactivates the CRAF.

The 618th AOC is an AMC unit that manages, supports, and oversees commercial air carriers' daily operations in the DoD airlift system. The 618th AOC support for daily operations includes scheduling commercial contract missions, publishing the schedules in AMC's command and control system (Global Decision Support System [GDSS]), tracking the commercial contract missions, and analyzing cargo and passenger movement for AMC missions.<sup>8</sup>

## ***Noncombatant Evacuation Operations***

Joint Publication 3-68 defines a NEO as "an operation whereby noncombatant evacuees are evacuated from a threatened area abroad, which includes areas facing actual or potential danger from natural or manmade disaster, civil unrest, imminent or actual terrorist activities, hostilities, and similar circumstances."<sup>9</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-68, the DoD conducts

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<sup>7</sup> Functional combatant commands operate world-wide across geographic boundaries and provide unique capabilities to geographic combatant commands and the armed services.

<sup>8</sup> The GDSS is a command and control system that provides AMC with mission planning, scheduling, and tracking of all mobility airlift and air refueling missions.

<sup>9</sup> Joint Publication 3-68, "Noncombatant Evacuation Operations," November 18, 2015 (Validated November 14, 2017).



NEOs when directed by the DOS. According to DoD Directive 3025.14, the DoD prepares and implements plans for the protection, evacuation, and repatriation of DoD noncombatants in threatened areas abroad; integrates these plans into DOS plans for evacuating non-DoD noncombatants from foreign countries; and assists the Secretary of State in carrying out those responsibilities where militarily feasible.<sup>10</sup> The Directive states that, when formally requested by the Secretary of State, DoD actions in the NEO will be consistent with the directions of the U.S. Embassy Chief of Mission or DOS principal officer.

### ***Public Law, USTRANSCOM, and AMC Criteria for the Activation and Use of the CRAF***

Public law and USTRANSCOM and AMC instructions govern the CRAF program. According to section 9517, title 10, United States Code (10 U.S.C. § 9517), the CRAF program is an important component of the military airlift system in support of U.S. defense and foreign policies.<sup>11</sup> The United States maintains the readiness and interoperability of CRAF carriers by providing appropriate levels of peacetime airlift augmentation to maintain networks and infrastructure, exercise the system, and interface effectively within the military airlift system. Additionally, 10 U.S.C. § 2640 requires air carriers in the CRAF program to undergo technical safety inspections and capability evaluations before they can fly charter missions for moving U.S. military personnel.<sup>12</sup> AMC conducts these on-site capability surveys on each air carrier in the CRAF program, every 2 years.

The FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act states:

the USTRANSCOM Commander, in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretaries of the military departments, and the Commanders of the Combatant Commands, shall conduct a study of the end-to-end, full-spectrum mobility requirements to fulfill the national defense strategy required by section 113(g) of title 10, United States Code, for 2018.<sup>13</sup>

An official from the USTRANSCOM, Directorate of Strategy, Capabilities, Policy, and Logistics, stated that the Mobility Capability Requirements Study updates the requirement for the total number of CRAF aircraft every 2 years, after accounting for all USTRANSCOM mobility requirements and capabilities. USTRANSCOM published its most recent study in 2021.

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<sup>10</sup> DoD Directive 3025.14, "Evacuation of U.S. Citizens and Designated Aliens from Threatened Areas Abroad," February 26, 2013 (Incorporating Change 1) November 30, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> "Level of Readiness of Civil Service Air Fleet Carriers."

<sup>12</sup> "Charter Air Transportation of Members of the Armed Forces."

<sup>13</sup> Public Law 116-92, "National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 2020," Section 1712, December 20, 2019.

USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9 provides the policies and procedures for management of commercial airlift, the CRAF program, and related contracts, agreements, and programs.<sup>14</sup> USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9 directs AMC to manage and execute the CRAF. AMC Instruction 10-402 establishes policies and procedures for the CRAF and provides guidance to U.S. Air Force organizations involved with civil air carriers participating in the CRAF.

Joint Publication 3-68 provides doctrine to plan and conduct joint noncombatant evacuation and repatriation operations. The publication sets forth joint doctrine to govern the activities and performance of the Armed Forces of the United States in joint operations, and it provides considerations for military interaction with governmental and nongovernmental agencies, multinational forces, and other inter-organizational partners.

## **USTRANSCOM Planned and Used the CRAF in Support of the Afghanistan NEO in Accordance With DoD and Service Policies and Public Law**

USTRANSCOM's CRAF operations during the Afghanistan NEO conformed to laws and regulations governing DoD responsibilities for using commercial aircraft to support DoD mobility requirements during emergencies and contingencies. USTRANSCOM and AMC procedures met CRAF activation requirements, in accordance with USTRANSCOM and AMC instructions. AMC met the public law and DoD requirements for training and conducting readiness exercises with commercial air carriers. USTRANSCOM, AMC, and 618th AOC officials communicated regularly with CRAF air carriers throughout the Afghanistan NEO to ensure a common understanding of timelines and procedures with the commercial air carriers. Finally, AMC and the 618th AOC conducted flight management for CRAF during the Afghanistan NEO, despite challenges external to the DoD caused by mission delays, itinerary changes, and lack of passenger information.

### ***USTRANSCOM's CRAF Activation Procedures Met Requirements***

CRAF activation procedures met the requirements in USTRANSCOM and AMC instructions. Specifically, prior to activation, USTRANSCOM increased communications with air carriers and requested that the carriers provide more volunteer flights. Additionally, USTRANSCOM activated, managed, and deactivated the CRAF in accordance with established criteria.

### ***USTRANSCOM Solicited Increased Volunteerism Before CRAF Activation***

Prior to activating the CRAF, in accordance with USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9, USTRANSCOM officials proactively sought additional volunteer aircraft and aircrews from commercial air carriers in the initial phases of the Afghanistan NEO. Commercial air carriers

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<sup>14</sup> USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9, "Civil Airlift Programs," January 15, 2016.

responded to USTRANSCOM's requests for increased volunteers and prepared for CRAF activation.<sup>15</sup> For example, a CRAF commercial air carrier MOBREP stated that during the early portion of the NEO, his airline volunteered to fly 25 missions—7 missions to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and 18 missions to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. The MOBREP stated that commercial air carriers that had experience with USTRANSCOM charter, volunteer, or CRAF missions experienced a smooth transition to this CRAF activation. A 618th AOC senior official stated that commercial air carriers without such experiences had a more difficult transition to CRAF activation requirements.

### ***USTRANSCOM Communicated With Commercial Air Carriers Prior to CRAF Activation***

USTRANSCOM and AMC officials informed and updated air carrier officials before CRAF activation. USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9 states that the CRAF program helps ensure that the DoD has reliable lines of communication and a common understanding of procedures with participating air carriers. On August 18, 2021, the USTRANSCOM Deputy Commander requested additional volunteer aircraft from several air carrier officials. On August 20, he notified air carrier officials that, because the number of volunteer commercial aircraft was insufficient for the significant movement requirements of the Afghanistan NEO, the USTRANSCOM Commander and the Secretary of Defense were discussing activating the CRAF to ensure support for the outflow of evacuees from Afghanistan. Also on August 20, the Chief of AMC Commercial Airlift Division (AMC/A3B) sent a pre-activation message to 11 air carriers approved for CRAF international operations. Although there is no USTRANSCOM policy establishing a response time for a pre-activation message, the AMC CRAF Branch Chief documented that all 11 carriers responded in less than 18 hours. On August 22, the Deputy Commander provided advance notice to the officials that the Secretary of Defense had approved Stage I activation and that formal notification of the activation was imminent.

According to AMC officials and air carrier MOBREPs, AMC also communicated with, and regularly updated, its MOBREP counterparts prior to CRAF activation. AMC Instruction 24-9 tasks the AMC Directorate of Operations to interface directly with commercial air carriers on applicable commercial air programs and operational issues. AMC Operations Directorate personnel stated that the urgency of the OAR mission and lack of information involving the situation in Afghanistan and Kabul were factors in whether to activate the CRAF. Operations Directorate personnel also said that AMC was not given many valuable passenger data inputs for planning, such as the quantity of evacuees, where the evacuees needed to go, or how quickly. During the volunteer phase, the number of passengers requiring evacuation was

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<sup>15</sup> A 618th AOC Deputy Branch Chief stated that during the Afghan NEO, prior to CRAF activation, the 618th executed multiple lines of effort, including: coordinating volunteer commercial missions, preparing for a potential CRAF activation, attempting to track DOS-contracted and foreign-donated aircraft, and tracking organic military aircraft participating in the NEO. He stated that at times these efforts were uncoordinated and conflicted with each other. The official also stated that the number of passengers quickly surpassed the available aircraft voluntarily provided by the air carriers.

still unknown, and therefore it was difficult to determine if there was enough passenger capacity available. Additionally, an official from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Irregular Warfare and Counter Terrorism stated that security in Kabul became unpredictable, triggering the need for evacuation of noncombatants and subsequent CRAF activation.

### ***USTRANSCOM Activated the Required Number of Aircraft Within Activation Time Standards***

USTRANSCOM met the activation time standards for all CRAF aircraft selected to support the Afghanistan NEO. According to AMC Instruction 10-402, commercial air carrier response time for a Stage I CRAF activation, which includes aircraft call-up and mission assignment, is 24 hours. The AMC/A3B released the official activation message of Stage I, effective August 22, 2021. Of the 26 commercial air carriers that were CRAF participants, USTRANSCOM activated 6 commercial air carriers that contributed 18 commercial aircraft for the Afghanistan NEO. The AMC CRAF Branch Chief stated that, less than an hour after the CRAF activation communication, all 6 activated carriers responded that they could support the mission. An air carrier MOBREP stated that CRAF carriers that volunteered aircraft before CRAF activation experienced an easier transition to the Stage I activation.

AMC Instruction 10-402 states that, to minimize cost to the Government and disruption of each carrier's civil schedules and service, AMC will activate those aircraft actually needed. The AMC Deputy Commander stated that USTRANSCOM officials decided on Stage I Activation of 18 aircraft to minimize the burden of CRAF activation on commercial air carrier services and on U.S. air travel.

### ***AMC and the 618th AOC Followed Required Procedures and Operations During CRAF Activation and Deactivation***

AMC and 618th AOC procedures and operations during CRAF activation complied with DoD and Service instructions. According to AMC Instruction 10-402, AMC's DoD Commercial Airlift Division CRAF Branch and other key staff from USTRANSCOM and AMC man the AMC CRAF cell at all times during CRAF activation. The AMC CRAF Branch Chief stated that the AMC CRAF Cell began 24/7 remote operations once CRAF activation began. Additionally, AMC Instruction 10-402 states that, once activated, the command, control, and operational employment of CRAF air carriers is under the purview of the 618th AOC Commander. The 618th AOC Commercial Management Division Deputy Chief stated that, upon activation, the 618th AOC transitioned to 24/7 operations. He stated that the 618th AOC controlled the CRAF activation and execution during the Afghanistan NEO and coordinated and communicated movement requirements and requests with USTRANSCOM, AMC, and the CRAF commercial air carriers.



According to USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9, upon approval from the Secretary of Defense, the USTRANSCOM Commander may deactivate the CRAF. USTRANSCOM followed this process and deactivated the CRAF on September 13, 2021. According to MOBREP after action reports, the CRAF deactivation process was timely and effective and allowed commercial air carriers enough time to raise any questions and concerns. A 618th AOC official agreed, and stated that, after deactivation, the 618th AOC continued to evacuate Afghan refugees with volunteer air carriers and aircrews.

### ***AMC Conducted Training and Readiness Exercises With Air Carriers***

AMC complied with DoD and Federal guidelines for training and conducting readiness exercises with commercial air carriers. According to AMC Instruction 24-9 and AMC/A3B Instruction 24-002, AMC is responsible for training, equipping, and evaluating commercial air carrier operations to ensure their readiness in the event of CRAF activation. AMC interviews and MOBREP records showed that AMC conducted training for all MOBREPs at least once a year, and the AMC CRAF office conducted on-site visits and activation readiness exercises with each CRAF air carrier once every 2 years.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, AMC proactively sought an outside study of the effects of a potential reduction in commercial air augmentation on CRAF readiness and capability. AMC contracted subject matter experts from the Council for Logistics Research to assist in developing and completing the study. Phase 1 of the study, completed in 2012, reviewed CRAF structure and contracting methods that would result in the most efficient use of the CRAF, given the fiscal constraints during that time. In 2014, the Council for Logistics Research completed Phase 2 of the study, which focused on changes necessary to the CRAF program to ensure it remained ready and viable to augment the organic airlift capability when needed. The study recommended that appropriate USTRANSCOM, AMC, and 618th AOC personnel conduct tabletop activation exercises with carriers during their regularly scheduled CRAF Carrier Readiness Visits.

The AMC/A3B incorporated air carrier readiness exercises into its biennial site visits with participating CRAF commercial air carriers, in accordance with DoD Instruction 4500.53. These site visits are designed to determine if the commercial air carriers are meeting CRAF program requirements. Commercial air carrier MOBREPs confirmed that AMC/A3B conducts these biannual site visits.

The AMC/A3B also conducted annual MOBREP training seminars in accordance with AMC Instruction 24-9. Chapter 14 of AMC Instruction 10-402 states that the CRAF Exercise Program ensures USTRANSCOM and AMC staff readiness to competently activate and deactivate the CRAF. According to an AMC official, the annual MOBREP training seminar is an informational and training opportunity for MOBREPs from the CRAF commercial

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<sup>16</sup> In 2014, the Council for Logistics Research Report, CRAF Study, Phase 2, validated that USTRANSCOM observed that AMC conducted site visits to carriers every 2 years as required. AMC records of annual MOBREP seminars provided to our team date back to 2017.

air carriers, as well as representatives from USTRANSCOM, AMC, the 618th AOC, and U.S. Government agencies, such as the Federal Aviation Administration. The annual MOBREP training seminar also provides information on CRAF issues related to readiness for activation, industry issues related to the CRAF, considerations for changes to the CRAF program, and security issues related to commercial aircraft operating for the DoD. Attendees have the opportunity to seek resolutions to current problems and discuss possible future issues and difficulties related to the CRAF program. Commercial air carrier MOBREPs confirmed that they received invitations for the annual MOBREP training seminars that usually take place in September or October of each year. Between 60 and 80 MOBREPs attend the annual training seminars. The last MOBREP training seminar was held virtually on October 6, 2021, with participating CRAF carrier representatives.

During our evaluation, MOBREPs stated that they would like to have NEO added as a topic during AMC's regularly-scheduled training. The USTRANSCOM OAR after action review stated that during the September 2021 MOBREP training seminar/activation summit, MOBREPs raised concerns associated with the Afghanistan NEO and training. A MOBREP stated that integrating and communicating information from non-DoD agencies involved in NEOs should be an AMC MOBREP training focus. A second MOBREP stated that adding NEO information to the MOBREP training would help MOBREPs know what to expect and how to work with non-DoD agencies during a NEO.

### ***USTRANSCOM and AMC Communicated and Coordinated With Air Carriers During the Afghanistan NEO***

USTRANSCOM, AMC, and the 618th AOC communicated and coordinated with commercial air carrier MOBREPs during the Afghanistan NEO. USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9 states that the CRAF program helps ensure that the DoD has quantifiable, accessible, and reliable airlift capability, and reliable lines of communication and a common understanding of timelines and procedures with the commercial air carriers. In addition, AMC Instruction 24-9 states that MOBREPs serve as the primary point of contact with whom the CRAF Program Management Office (AMC/A3B) maintains communication during peacetime and CRAF activation. Before CRAF activation, USTRANSCOM e-mailed CRAF activation warnings and updates to the CRAF commercial air carriers. USTRANSCOM also requested that commercial airlines volunteer aircraft to assist with the Afghanistan NEO before the CRAF was activated on August 22, 2021.

The USTRANSCOM Deputy Commander stated that throughout the Afghanistan NEO, he communicated daily with commercial air carrier officials by phone and e-mail in an attempt to secure increased volunteer commercial aircraft. He said he informed commercial air carrier officials of a potential CRAF activation should his efforts to find sufficient volunteers

prove unsuccessful. The USTRANSCOM Deputy Commander also held CRAF activation summits with the commercial air carriers twice a week to improve situational awareness of CRAF activation activities surrounding the Afghanistan NEO.

The AMC Deputy Commander stated that throughout the Afghanistan NEO, AMC leadership regularly communicated with commercial air carrier leaders supporting the CRAF, providing information concerning on-ground situations and current operations. The AMC Deputy Commander said that the discussions served to provide commercial air carrier executives with a better understanding of the risks to their crews and aircraft. The 618th AOC Deputy Commander stated that USTRANSCOM had a good working relationship with CRAF commercial air carriers throughout the operation and that USTRANSCOM officials were responsive to commercial air carrier questions. In addition, according to the USTRANSCOM OAR after action report, the USTRANSCOM Directorate of Acquisition and the 618th AOC coordinated and communicated missions to each commercial air carrier and deconflicted schedules to resolve the capacity problems at each ISB where there were “maximum aircraft on the ground.” According to commercial air carriers, the capacity problems were due to a variety of causes, including:

- multiple command and control entities and the lack of coordinating authority across multiple Government agencies,
- lack of definition of the overall NEO requirement,
- multiple delays caused by uncoordinated and slow manifesting and vetting, and
- lack of security.

CRAF commercial air carrier MOBREPs told us they appreciated the level of communication with USTRANSCOM and AMC staff during the Afghanistan NEO. A report on CRAF activation lessons learned produced by one CRAF commercial air carrier stated that communications with USTRANSCOM and AMC before and during CRAF activation were excellent, with frequent verbal and e-mail notices and meetings where commercial air carriers could present their concerns. During an interview, a MOBREP from another commercial air carrier characterized communication between USTRANSCOM and AMC staff and the commercial air carrier personnel as “good” and “effective,” and also stated that USTRANSCOM and AMC staff never gave the carrier personnel the sense that there were communications gaps with other Federal agencies during the Afghanistan NEO.

During subject interviews, a commercial air carrier MOBREP provided additional evidence of communication and coordination with USTRANSCOM and AMC staff. The MOBREP stated that AMC officials held joint conferences every other day with commercial air carriers during the Afghanistan NEO and that USTRANSCOM’s continuous availability gave air carrier officials who were not familiar with NEOs a chance to work with experienced U.S. Air Force personnel. The air carrier records confirmed the statement in its after action review document.

## ***AMC and 618th AOC Conducted Flight Management for CRAF During OAR***

USTRANSCOM developed the means to effectively respond to challenges external to the DoD. Challenges included mission delays, schedule changes, and lack of information on passenger numbers and destinations. According to AMC Instruction 24-9, the 618th AOC has a responsibility to provide mission schedules and 24/7 guidance for cargo and passenger operations to AMC aerial ports worldwide for commercial contract missions and to publish these missions in the GDSS. AMC fielded GDSS in 2005 to provide unit-level and force-level mission planning, scheduling, and tracking of all mobility airlift and air refueling missions. This system allows AMC to more effectively fulfill its global mobility mission by integrating GDSS with existing command and control tools into one fully integrated AMC command and control system.

USTRANSCOM developed the means to expedite CRAF management, as lack of data sharing capabilities among participating Government agencies affected timely CRAF execution. According to AMC Instruction 24-9, AMC may include the National Guard and Reserve Components to support transportation using commercial air assets when needed. The 618th AOC created a CRAF Operations Cell to track CRAF aircraft and staffed the cell with augmentees, including activated members of the 183rd Air Mobility Operations Squadron, Illinois Air National Guard, based in Springfield, Illinois, and other Air Mobility Operations units. The officer in charge stated that during the Afghanistan NEO, CRAF Cell personnel manually input new and revised schedules for commercial flights in the GDSS to more accurately track flights.

The CRAF Cell officer stated that her cell's GDSS manual inputs included commercial carrier names, departure times, projected arrival times, passenger counts, delays, diversions, late arrivals, and departure and destination locations. She stated that the OAR process was atypical because, during routine operations, flight controllers input data into the GDSS before the flight. During the Afghanistan NEO, additions and updates to flight information were much more frequent. CRAF Cell personnel developed procedures to add or update commercial flight information from the DOS and other non-DoD sources. The CRAF Cell augmentees in the 618th AOC tracked CRAF aircraft, DOS-contracted aircraft, and aircraft gifted from other countries and input their data into the GDSS. AMC officials confirmed that 183rd Air Mobility Operations Squadron augmentees in the CRAF Cell communicated with the DOS regularly to receive and input DOS-contracted flight information into the GDSS so the 618th AOC could track them as part of the larger NEO effort.

USTRANSCOM officials noted that during the initial execution of the Afghanistan NEO, the 618th AOC did not have visibility on DOS-contracted flights out of Afghanistan. As a result, DOS-contracted flights were flying to, and attempting to land at, ISBs without prior ISB controller knowledge. A senior USTRANSCOM official stated that these flights increased the



strain on ISB ground personnel who were already struggling to keep up with a heavy volume of passengers. However, this official stated that information of DOS-contracted flights to the 618th AOC improved once USTRANSCOM embedded liaisons in the DOS. He said that during the final week of the Afghanistan NEO, AMC maintained 100-percent accountability of all U.S. Government air missions.

DoD Instruction 4500.57 states that the USTRANSCOM Commander serves as the DoD liaison with agencies in customs and border clearance matters. According to USTRANSCOM's after action review of OAR, USTRANSCOM and AMC placed liaisons at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's National Targeting Center in August 2021 to provide visibility of aircraft from seven ISBs to Washington-Dulles and Philadelphia International Airports. The after action review stated that this visibility helped the non-DoD agencies maximize CRAF aircraft use for the movement of Afghan passengers by allowing ISBs to sequence passengers based on aircraft arrival times. USTRANSCOM officials stated that embedding DoD liaison officers in external agencies should continue, as liaison officers were key to solving conflicts regarding NEO requirements versus capabilities.

The Joint Staff relied on USTRANSCOM's flight and passenger data to help oversee the Afghanistan NEO. According to a Joint Staff Air Mobility Branch official, during the Afghanistan NEO, maintaining up-to-date numbers of flights, flight destinations, timelines and schedules, and the number of passengers on each flight was crucial for Joint Staff oversight of CRAF. The official stated that the Joint Staff designated USTRANSCOM as the primary data source for passenger and flight data 2 to 3 days into the Afghanistan NEO because staff members considered USTRANSCOM's data to be the most accurate data available.

## **CRAF Best Practices During the Afghanistan NEO**

We identified best practices that enabled USTRANSCOM and external agencies to support the Afghanistan NEO. These best practices included USTRANSCOM's use of alternate tracking systems, augmentee personnel, and external agency liaisons to improve USTRANSCOM passenger tracking and communications as the Afghanistan NEO progressed.

### ***Development of Alternatives for Passenger Tracking***

USTRANSCOM developed alternate systems for tracking flights and passengers during the Afghanistan NEO CRAF activation. AMC Instruction 10-402 states that the 618th AOC is responsible for scheduling and tracking CRAF aircraft supporting AMC missions. Additionally, the Defense Travel Regulation states that DoD policy requires official travel providers and transportation officers to make passenger reservations on AMC flights by accessing the Global Air Transportation Execution System (GATES).

According to a DoD press release on the Afghanistan NEO, the DoD activated the CRAF to augment its support to the DOS in the evacuation of U.S. citizens and personnel, Special Immigrant Visa applicants, and other at-risk individuals from Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> According to a senior official within the USTRANSCOM Strategic Plans, Policy, and Logistics Directorate, because the Afghanistan NEO was not a DoD-led operation, the DoD did not have a standard system for tracking passengers. The official stated that, had the evacuation been a routine DoD operation or a CRAF deployment of U.S. forces, the DoD would have used GATES at overseas air bases for situational awareness on inbound and outbound aircraft information that was already input in the passenger database. A Transportation Specialist within the directorate stated that GATES is not appropriate for inputting detailed passenger information for large numbers of passengers during crisis situations, particularly if the information is missing or incomplete.

Joint Publication 3-68 identifies the NEO Tracking System (NTS) as the preferred method for tracking noncombatant evacuees. The NTS is an automated data processing package designed to assist with maintaining visibility and accountability of noncombatant evacuees as they proceed through the evacuation process. According to a Strategic Plans, Policy, and Logistics Directorate Transportation Specialist, the NTS is a DOS system that is maintained and operated by DoD Service personnel. However, he stated that during the Afghanistan NEO, the NTS had no connectivity to GATES through the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Transportation Security Administration passenger tracking systems for evacuees. In addition, he stated that even if NTS connectivity had existed, DoD personnel had little information on the evacuees and lacked time to input the information they had into the system.

The lack of a usable passenger tracking system for the Afghanistan NEO forced DoD personnel to adjust by creating other procedures. For example, the USTRANSCOM Transportation Specialist stated that as a temporary fix, military personnel at the airport hand wrote some passenger manifests, and then e-mailed the passenger information to the ISBs for manual input into GATES by ISB personnel.

A USTRANSCOM Operations Support Division official noted another alternate tracking procedure, stating that his division developed its own Microsoft Excel ledger system at USTRANSCOM that tracked both passengers in transit and passenger capacity levels at each ISB. Statements by the USTRANSCOM Operations Support Division and Logistics Directorate mentioned that, due to time constraints and the high volume of passengers, there was a lack of automated data systems to help plan and track NEO passenger movement, including both GATES and the NTS.

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<sup>17</sup> "Department of Defense Activates Civil Reserve Air Fleet to Assist With Afghanistan Efforts," August 22, 2021.

## ***Execution of the NEO in a Degraded Communications Environment***

USTRANSCOM successfully accomplished the CRAF portion of the Afghanistan NEO in a degraded communications environment. The USTRANSCOM Operations Support Division quickly developed new processes to accomplish the NEO mission. Additionally, according to a USTRANSCOM OAR after action review, USTRANSCOM and AMC embedded liaisons at the U.S. Customs and Border Protection National Targeting Center to increase interagency visibility and maximize CRAF aircraft use for evacuee movement. The CRAF interagency cell entered passenger information into the GDSS for Customs and Border Protection personnel at Washington-Dulles and Philadelphia International Airports, expediting the reception of passengers. As another example, 618th AOC augmentees from the Air National Guard received communications from the DOS on DOS commercial flights supporting the Afghanistan NEO. The augmentee cell then manually input the DOS flight data into GDSS for DoD situational awareness.

## **Areas for Future Consideration**

This evaluation focused exclusively on the DoD's efforts to execute the CRAF portion of the Afghanistan NEO; however, during the course of our evaluation, officials from the DoD and commercial air carriers repeatedly identified interagency coordination of passenger information and flight schedules as an area for potential improvement in future NEOs. Specifically, the following two points, which are responsibilities of the multi-agency NEO participants, affected the DoD's use of the CRAF during the Afghanistan NEO.

1. Vetting and manifesting NEO passengers for commercial air flights.
2. Organizing airlift support not initially tracked in the DoD's flight management systems used for the Afghanistan NEO.

## **Scope and Methodology**

We conducted this evaluation from November 2021 through May 2022 in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation," published in January 2012 by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that objectives are met and that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained was sufficient, competent, and relevant to lead a reasonable person to sustain our evaluation findings.

We identified and reviewed policies, directives, and orders related to USTRANSCOM's and AMC's roles and responsibilities for CRAF activation and deactivation, air carrier training and readiness exercises, use of military and volunteer commercial aircraft in lieu of the CRAF, and communication and coordination with CRAF air carriers before, during, and after activation.

Additionally, we reviewed NEO criteria, including the proactive collection and sharing of flight and passenger information with the DoD, the CRAF air carriers, and multiple agencies involved in the NEO, including the Departments of State and Homeland Security. Specifically, we reviewed the following criteria:

- 10 USC § 9517, “Level of readiness of Civil Reserve Air Fleet carriers”
- 10 USC § 2640, “Charter air transportation of members of the armed forces”
- DoD Instruction 4500.57, “Transportation and Traffic Management,” Change 3 Effective: September 23, 2019
- DoD Directive 3025.14, “Evacuation of U.S. Citizens and Designated Aliens from Threatened Areas Abroad,” (Incorporating Change 1) November 30, 2017
- Joint Publication 3-68, “Noncombatant Evacuation Operations,” validated November 14, 2017
- USTRANSCOM Instruction 24-9, “Civil Airlift Programs,” January 15, 2016
- AMC Instruction 24-9, “Civil Airlift Programs,” June 11, 2015
- AMC Instruction 10-402, “Civil Reserve Air Fleet,” November 17, 2011

We obtained USTRANSCOM and AMC documentation pertaining to the Afghanistan NEO, including records of AMC’s military flights that airlifted evacuees from Afghanistan to ISB locations outside the United States and the logs of the CRAF missions from the ISBs to the United States. We obtained records from AMC and air carriers verifying compliance with activation and deactivation response times. We also obtained and reviewed documentation showing AMC preparation and readiness for the CRAF mission, including schedules and results of AMC readiness visits, exercises, and seminars with the CRAF air carrier personnel. We documented air carrier contract requirements related to the CRAF and obtained transcripts of correspondence between USTRANSCOM, AMC, and air carrier senior leaders updating Afghanistan NEO information, requesting volunteer aircraft, and preparing to activate the CRAF.

We conducted CRAF- and NEO-focused interviews with officials from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Irregular Warfare and Counterterrorism and with a CRAF subject matter expert from Joint Staff Logistics, Air Mobility Branch. We also conducted interviews with USTRANSCOM, AMC, and 618th AOC senior leaders, including deputy commanders, directorate heads and their staffs, and CRAF branch chiefs at all three organizations. We focused these interviews on USTRANSCOM, AMC, and air carrier responsibilities and standards for CRAF readiness, activation, and operations. Finally, we obtained testimonial evidence on challenges and best practices regarding the activation, use, and deactivation of the CRAF during the Afghanistan NEO.



# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AMC</b>	Air Mobility Command
<b>AOC</b>	Air Operations Center
<b>CRAF</b>	Civil Reserve Air Fleet
<b>DOS</b>	Department of State
<b>GATES</b>	Global Air Transportation Execution System
<b>GDSS</b>	Global Decision Support System
<b>ISB</b>	Intermediate Staging Base
<b>MOBREP</b>	Mobility Representative
<b>NEO</b>	Noncombatant Evacuation Operations
<b>NTS</b>	NEO Tracking System
<b>OAR</b>	Operation Allies Refuge
<b>USTRANSCOM</b>	U.S. Transportation Command



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