



Air Combat Command NEWS SERVICE

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Keck: Bombers 'writing airpower history'

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OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (ACCNS) -- The commander of the Air Force's bomber fleet visited this location supporting Operation Enduring Freedom Dec. 20-22 to assess the bombers' performance and the people behind their success.

Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Keck, 8th Air Force commander at Barksdale AFB, La., oversees the warfighting capability and the operational readiness of the nation's B-52, B-1, and B-2 bombers.

Keck toured the flightline, operations and maintenance centers, munitions depot, and "Tent City," and meet the people who make up the wing. He also met with the location's Naval Support Facility command staff, the wing's host here, as well as the crew of the USS Russell destroyer which recently rescued a B-1 crew from the Indian Ocean after their aircraft experienced problems and they were forced to eject.

"I've seen a lot of great, energetic people here that have used their minds and energy to do innovative things," Keck said. "You need to be extremely proud of the job you've done since you've been here."

"But it is not over," the general said. "We are only on mile one of this 26-mile marathon against terrorism. There's no telling when we'll pick up the next network of al Qaeda. But they are out there, and they already know about your capability and what you've done in this first phase. As they adjust, we are going to have to adjust also."

Operations from this location have been kind of an airpower laboratory, said the general. The wing has been trying new things that have never before been tested from a B-1 or B-52.

"The (28th Aerospace Expeditionary Wing here) is writing a new chapter in airpower history," said Keck. "You've taken it home to the Taliban and al Qaeda, and believe me, you have made a difference."



1st Lt. Mark Audigier briefs Lt. Gen. Thomas Keck, the 8th Air Force commander, on projects at a tent in Camp Justice, the living area of Air Force members deployed at an operating location in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Rebecca Luquin)

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“There are people all over the world talking about doing something about the war on terrorism but you are the ones who are actually doing it, and they know it,” said Keck. “You’ve done an incredible job here, so you need to be proud.”

When Keck heard that a weapons loading team loaded up an aircraft on the ramp in 37 minutes he remarked, “That’s what you call proficiency.” It normally takes about 4 hours for a team to load an aircraft.

“But do (your jobs) carefully and deliberately,” the general said. “If there’s something you see that you don’t like, call ‘Time out’ because in this conflict there’s nothing worth risking people or equipment for. We need your judgment; we need your calls to make sure we’re doing this smartly and safely.”

Everybody deployed here will one day look back at this assignment as one of the shiniest spots in their career, the general said.

“You’re doing good work for your careers whether you volunteered or not,” he said. “The experience you’ve picked up here, the teamwork and the network you’ve set up here is going to stay with you for the rest of your lives.”

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