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8th Air Force Change of Command
LIEUTENANT GENERAL JAMES M. KOWALSKI
3 June 2011

General Fraser, Admiral Haney, General Alston, _____,
distinguished guests, commanders, command chiefs, civic leaders, ladies
and gentlemen, and the men and women of Air Force Global Strike
Command -- Good morning.

Thanks to everyone for taking the time to be here. Your presence
reflects the outstanding leadership of General Floyd Carpenter, the
caring energy of Melissa Carpenter, and your own commitment to 8th
Air Force and its role in projecting power for our nation.

It was 19 years ago this week that the Air Force stood down Strategic
Air Command and established Air Combat Command, and less than two
years ago that Air Force Global Strike Command was activated to
assume the lineage of Strategic Air Command and the mission of Air
Force long range strike and nuclear deterrence. One constant through
those 19 years has been the Mighty Eighth Air Force.

Mighty Eighth has a storied past. This command traces its lineage
back to January 1942. The first 8th Air Force commanders --Ira Eaker,



Tooev Spaatz, Jimmy Doolittle-- created the greatest air armada in history. It was a command able to send more than 2,000 bombers and 1,000 fighters on a single mission against enemy targets in Europe, thereby earning the nickname “Mighty Eighth.” It was “Mighty Eighth” that precisely executed America’s daylight strategic bombing campaign against the Nazi-occupied Europe before moving to Okinawa to train bomber groups for combat against Japan. Those victories came at a heavy price—almost 4200 bombers were lost, and 26,000 airmen gave their lives to secure peace.

Mighty Eighth came out of world war two with a legacy of both combat excellence and legendary leadership. Over the next 60 years those legacies would be secured by leaders like Lieutenant General Samuel Anderson who deployed forces for combat in Korea, and commanders like Generals Archie Old; Walter Sweeney; Edgar Harris; and Robert Herres who would lead the command through the Cold War.

Combat again came to Mighty Eighth in 1991 under General “Buck” Shuler with Operation DESERT STORM; followed in 1996 by Operation DESERT STRIKE under the leadership of General Phil Ford. In 1999, under the command of Lieutenant General Ronald Marcotte, the B-2



saw its combat debut in Operation ALLIED FORCE as Mighty Eighth bombers executed a 78-day campaign in the Balkans. In 2001, guided by General Thomas Keck, Mighty Eighth delivered overwhelming firepower in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, striking at the heart of Al Qaeda. In Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, under the leadership of General Bruce Carlson, B-52s and B-2s struck over a hundred targets in under 5 minutes, eventually ending Saddam Hussein's reign of terror. More recently, the Mighty Eighth led by General Carpenter, oversaw B-2s and B-52s through continuous bomber presence deployments to the Pacific, and in combat in Operation ODYSSEY DAWN, where three B-2s virtually eliminated the Libyan Air Force.

Floyd came to 8 AF as the Vice Commander in November 2007 to provide the leadership, experience and focus needed to re-invigorate the nuclear enterprise in Eighth Air Force, and he assumed command in June 2009. He was immediately challenged with transitioning 8th AF into a leaner and more focused HQ, while also orchestrating a move into a new HQ building and sustaining day-to-day oversight of one leg of our nuclear triad. He had to do this while also serving as the commander of Strategic Command Task Force 204 and as the Joint Forces Component



Commander for Global Strike. His leadership proved central to the successful stand-up of the first new Major Command in the Air Force in 27 years, and the seamless transition of B-2 and B-52 forces from Air Combat Command to Air Force Global Strike Command.

Floyd, thank you for your leadership, your sacrifice, and your dedication to this mission and to our Air Force. You have met the high bar of the Mighty Eighth legacy—combat excellence and legendary leadership.

To Melissa, thank you for your unflagging support of Floyd and your heartfelt commitment to our Air Force. Julie and I wish you both all of the success and happiness you deserve after serving our nation with distinction for 34 years. Thank you for everything you've done for us and for this command.

Although we are sad to say good-bye to the Carpenters, there is no pause in the operations of Mighty Eighth. It is my pleasure to introduce your next Eighth Air Force commander, Brigadier General “Seve” Wilson and his wife Nancy. General Wilson is the “right” man for this job “right” now: He has over 4500 flying hours; almost 700 hours in combat. He has commanded a squadron, a group, 2 wings, and most recently led Joint Integration on the Air Staff. He understands



how to bring airpower to bear so joint forces succeed, and he knows the bomber business.

I'm confident Seve and Nancy will continue the proud legacy of leadership of this great organization and successfully take Eighth Air Force to the next level. Command is always a privilege. Command in time of war is a distinct honor. I cannot think of anyone more qualified for this honor, more able to lead our airmen, than General Wilson.