

The Role of Joint Air Power – JAPCC Conference 2007

General William T. Hobbins' Opening Remarks

General Ramms, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I wish you a very warm welcome to the Joint Air Power Competence Centre Conference for 2007? I would like to thank you for taking the time to come to our conference, and thank you in advance for your contribution.

Air power has proven itself absolutely essential in modern warfare. From its emergence in the First World War and maturation in the second, air power has been a major contributor to the Joint Battle and is essential to winning in today's coalition battle space. The aim of this conference is to explore the many aspects of how that joint integration of air and space power in traditional warfare is best translated into a decisive edge in expeditionary security and stability operations. NATO is in the center of just such an operation in Afghanistan during a time when these types of "mid-spectrum" asymmetrical conflicts do not appear to be lessening in number.

That is why the JAPCC is actively involved with joint coalition agencies throughout NATO and its partner nations to better integrate air and space power and thereby provide better support to security and stability operations, such as in Afghanistan. We look forward to incorporating outcomes of this conference into that already fruitful dialogue.

I am delighted and grateful that our conference will begin with General Egon Ramms, Commander Joint Forces Command Brunssum, who will provide words on the strategic context of the ISAF role in Afghanistan and insight into the role air and space power currently contribute there, along with a glimpse at the way forward. As the NATO Commander responsible for that operation, and also as my NATO Commander in my role as his Air Component Commander, I look forward to his presentation.

The keynote speaker will be followed by four panels examining, in turn, the comprehensive approach to security and stability operations; a look at the role of C4ISR in those operations; then a look at the how we can achieve effects through kinetic and non-kinetic means; and finally, the last panel will examine the role air power can play in reconstruction and development operations. Through these panels, I hope that we will all be able to share our knowledge, views and aspirations in a frank and open discussion. I count on the willingness of everyone in attendance to speak up and articulate our views and to ask questions. Therefore, throughout the conference, I ask every one of you to observe the Chatham House Rule of non-attribution.

The JAPCC will be publishing a paper on »The Role of Air and Space Power in Security and Stability Operations«, based in large part on the views emerging from this conference. Your active participation in the panel discussions will be your opportunity to influence that paper.

Before I hand over the controls to our moderator, I would like to add one other thought that I ask you to keep in the back of your minds over the next day and a half.

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While our focus here is on “mid-spectrum” asymmetrical warfare, keep in mind that our discussions on the joint integration of air and space power for security and stability operations must be applicable for future conflicts that are further toward the “major conflict” end of the spectrum. It is reasonable to see security and stability operations being NATO’s primary engagements over the next few years, but make no mistake, there are potential threats to NATO looming just over the horizon that demand we maintain our vigilance at all levels of conflict.

My final remark before we begin is this: I have told you about the JAPCC’s aim for this conference, but everyone here, whether you are an academic, wearing a uniform, or one of our partners from industry, you will have come here with your own ideas about what you hope to gain from this conference. Make sure you get what you need. We are all here to help each other in our different capacities, skills and expertise.

Finally, it is my pleasure to introduce our conference moderator, Air Marshal (Retired), Philip O. Sturley, who has kindly agreed to give up his own time and assist us once again. Philip had a distinguished career in the Royal Air Force, including that of assistant chief of the air staff and culminating with his final appointment as Chief of Staff at the NATO Air Component HQ Ramstein. So, given his previous leadership roles with us it should be easy keeping this distinguished audience in line

I thank you for your time this morning and now I am interested in taking your questions.