

10 year Anniversary and Change of command at the Heavy Airlift Wing

28 JUN 2019 – PÁPA - - At a ceremony on the Strategic Airlift Capability premises at Pápa Air Base, Colonel James S. Sparrow assumed command of the Heavy Airlift Wing. He did so by accepting the Heavy Airlift Wing Flag from the hands of Brigadier General Michael Koscheski, Chairman of the Strategic Airlift Capability Steering Board. This ceremony and the following Air show marked the end of a two day event, in which the SAC program celebrated 10 years of operations.



*Colonel James Sparrow accepts the HAW flag from the hands of Brigadier General Michael Koscheski.
Photo: Hans Björkman / HAW*

Colonel Sparrow (U.S. Air Force) is the sixth commander of the Heavy Airlift Wing, the operational unit of the 12 nation cooperation, the Strategic Airlift capability, which in 2019 also celebrates 10 years of successful operations. Before assuming command of the Heavy Airlift Wing, Colonel Sparrow has been appointed as Vice Commander of the Wing since July 2017.

The Change of Command Ceremony was preceded by a 10th anniversary dinner on 26 June, where Personnel, Distinguished Visitors, Alumni, and invited guests celebrated Strategic Airlift Capability's 10 years of operations.

Addressing the invited guests and HAW Personnel, Colonel Sparrow said, "The Heavy Airlift Wing is the SAC Program's "Air Force"; it's operational arm to meet the airlift requirements of the SAC

Nations. Beyond that basic reason to exist, I want to remind the HAW members here today how special of an organization we truly are. There is no other multinational unit like ours in existence."

At the same time as Colonel Sparrow assumed command, Colonel Gohn-Hellum (Royal Norwegian Air Force), relinquished his command, and Colonel Peder Söderström (Swedish Air Force) assumed the position as Vice Commander of the Wing.

Colonel Gohn-Hellum addressed the Personnel of the Heavy Airlift Wing with the words, "Your teamwork and positive attitude to always learn, and to look for good solutions, have allowed the SAC Program to set a new standard on how nations can work together to share a military capability. I would claim that the SAC Program is the most successful example of Smart Defense in the world today."

Following the Change of Command Ceremony there was an Air Show, including a static display of aircrafts from different member nations. The Aerial display consisted of a SAC C-17 Demonstration flight, Hungarian Air Force Gripen fighter and MI-8 helicopter demonstration flights, and a SAC C-17 Air drop demonstration with Hungarian paratroopers.

About the Strategic Airlift Capability

Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC), established in 2008, is a multinational program that provides its 12 member nations with assured access to military airlift capability by owning and operating three Boeing C-17A Globemaster III long-range cargo aircraft.

SAC is based at the Hungarian Defense Forces (HDF) Pápa Air Base, Hungary.

The SAC Nations are the NATO members Hungary (program host nation), Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the United States and NATO Partnership for Peace nations Finland and Sweden. Each participating nation owns a share of the available flight hours of the SAC C-17As to serve the needs of their national defense, NATO, EU or UN commitments and humanitarian relief efforts.

SAC consists of the 12-nation Heavy Airlift Wing (HAW) and the NATO Airlift Management Programme Office (NAM PO). The HAW is the operational unit and the NAM PO, an integral part of the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA), is the acquisition and sustainment authority of the SAC C-17A weapon system.

NAM PO contracts with the U.S. Government, via Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Agreements with the USAF, for SAC C-17 Technical and integrated Product Support, Flight Crew Training and operational data services. The USAF in turn sub-contracts many of these services to Industry; notably Boeing and Pratt & Whitney.