

GENERAL HANSFORD T. JOHNSON

21 SEPTEMBER 1989 TO 25 AUGUST 1992

Establishment of USTRANSCOM in 1987 was a signal event in the history of defense transportation, but compromises had been made to bring it into existence. The Services retained their single manager charters for air, land, and sea transportation, and USTRANSCOM's responsibilities were largely restricted to wartime. These shortcomings would be rectified during Air Force General Hansford T. Johnson's assignment as USTRANSCOM commander.

The Persian Gulf War stands out as the defining event of General Johnson's tenure. USTRANSCOM and its Service components moved over 500,000 people, 3.7 million tons of dry cargo, and 6.1 million tons of petroleum products to Southwest Asia over eight months. To meet the challenge, General Johnson had to activate part of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet, the program through which commercial airlines augment military airlift in time of war, for the first time since its inception in 1951.

The young command performed well. However, there were problems with deployment procedures and systems, the readiness of transportation assets, and in-transit visibility. These deficiencies led the Secretary of Defense, Richard B. Cheney, to issue a memo on 14 February 1992 making the USTRANSCOM commander in chief the Department of Defense's single manager for transportation in peace and war. He also received combatant command in peace and war of the transportation component commands and all Department of Defense transportation assets that were not Service-unique or assigned to the theaters and control over the revolving business fund for transportation. General Johnson acknowledged that "I'm not sure if I had been able to lay it out I would have been able to do so as articulately as the Secretary of Defense did. He went far beyond what I could have reasonably asked for."

Besides the Gulf War, USTRANSCOM supported military operations to remove President Manuel Noriega from Panama. The command also provided humanitarian aid to Kurdish refugees in Northern Iraq and Southern Turkey, typhoon victims in Bangladesh, needy localities in the former Soviet republics following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the residents of besieged Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the population of war-torn Somalia, as well as natural disaster victims at home.

General Johnson continued to develop the Global Transportation Network and put his imprint on the Mobility Requirements Study, a blueprint for future strategic transportation force structure. He also introduced Total Quality Management principles into the command. To manage reserve augmentation to USTRANSCOM, he established the Joint Transportation Reserve Unit, the first such organization in the Department of Defense.



In 1992, Military Airlift Command, which General Johnson also commanded, was inactivated and replaced by the Air Mobility Command, which integrated airlift and air refueling into one organization. This change was part of the largest Air Force reorganization since 1947 and added air refueling to USTRANSCOM's mission.

General Johnson retired in 1992, observing that he had been "blessed to come here at a momentous time in our nation's and our world's history" and "blessed to have outstanding people that were able to do the task assigned."

