

Testimony of

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Before the

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology  
United States House of Representatives

“The U.S. Antarctic Program: Achieving Fiscal and Logistical  
Efficiency While Supporting Sound Science.”

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Chairman Hall, Ranking Member Johnson and Members of the Committee, it is my honor to be with you today to testify on the Blue Ribbon Panel's Report, "More and Better Science in Antarctica through Increased Logistical Effectiveness." I was privileged to join our Chairman, Norm Augustine, and the other Blue Ribbon Panel members to look at how we might improve logistics in support of the National Science Foundation and our Science Community. I'm also delighted to be joined today by Norm Augustine, and Dr Subra Suresh, two folks I deeply admire.

As the former Commander of the USAF Air Mobility Command and later as the Commander of the United States Transportation Command, I was directly involved in supporting the National Science Foundation and the Antarctica Mission. As you can well imagine, the movement of people, equipment, and supplies to Antarctica is one of our most demanding missions. It requires special crews and special capabilities, and is truly a no mistake environment. We take tremendous pride in the mission.

Having had visited the McMurdo area and the South Pole as a military commander and then later as a Blue Ribbon Panel Member, I need to say first how impressed I am with the NSF, the Science community, and the people who support this mission day in and day out. They handle unique challenges every day to make this work safely, and they do an incredible job. That said, there are always opportunities to improve, and hopefully the Blue Ribbon Panel's effort can offer some strategic opportunities to take an already excellent operation to an even higher level.

I also want to thank this committee for your support of the mission...it has made and will continue to make a huge difference in improving science, enhancing safety, optimizing logistics operations and reducing cost.

My thoughts and suggestions are captured in the report, but I would like to highlight a couple of points.

First of all is the importance of McMurdo. Currently there is no other location on the Antarctic which offers the advantages of the McMurdo area...deep water port with relatively easy access in the summer months using an icebreaker (56 years of successful deliveries); a wheeled capable airfield capable of handling large aircraft within 20 miles; well developed infrastructure including storage for 11.5M gallons of fuel; ideal location to support NASA's satellite links and long duration balloon program and

NOAA's and DOD's polar space programs; access to the 175,000 square mile ice shelf which allows more efficient traverse operations to much of Antarctica. With recommended increase in the C-17 operations and more multimodal operations, McMurdo's criticality as the principal resupply center for the NSF will even grow. For all these reasons, The Blue Ribbon Panel strongly recommends McMurdo to continue to be the major support base for the NSF Antarctic program...and it needs to be right sized and modernized.

Second, is the importance of using an enterprise transportation approach in the Antarctic region. Given the challenges of providing logistics support to this austere area, optimizing transportation assets is essential. With new technology, capabilities, and concepts of operations there are excellent opportunities to significantly improve air, land, and sea transportation options. However the most dramatic improvements will be realized through the use of a true enterprise approach...taking best advantage of all transportation modes by using multimodal operations across the entire resupply and retrograde operation. An enterprise approach allows you to use each of the modes and combinations of modes to best advantage. From optimized sealift, to more land traverses, to increased C-17 operations, to enhanced LC-130 ski and airdrop support to forward field locations, there are lots of opportunities. This will require much improved connectivity, better and more flexible cost accounting, and, most importantly, command and control which can direct multimodal operations rapidly and effectively. Given today's advances in transportation support, none of these prerequisites are overly difficult to put in place, and the benefits far outweigh the cost. The resulting operation will offer increased options to Science and also dramatically reduce cost.

The final area is the importance of a capital budget and multiyear funding for long term logistics infrastructure support. In the report, we go through how important this would be to improving logistics support and reducing costs, but given the timelines and constraints we have in the Antarctic, this becomes an even more critical overarching issue. I would ask for the committee's support in looking at ways we might do this.

Again, Chairman Hall and members of the Committee, I am honored to be here today. I was privileged to be a part of the Blue Ribbon Panel and I think Norm Augustine did a superb job in leading the effort. I look forward to your questions.

