

# No margin for error

New IDS organization provides single-point-of-contact support for U.S. Air Force's National Command Authority air travel needs



By Jarrod Bartlett

**W**hen your customer flies the most recognizable airplane on the planet, and holds one of the most powerful offices in the world, customer satisfaction takes on a new level of importance.

Each time a member of the United States government takes off or lands on an extensively modified Boeing VIP aircraft, Boeing's Global Transport & Executive Systems team has to get it right—and with a worldwide audience watching, according to Leanne Caret, general manager of GTES.

"There is no willingness to accept anything less than perfect in this customer's eyes. And when things don't go the way the customer likes, it elevates to the highest levels within our government," Caret said.

The GTES business, headquartered in Wichita, Kan., has approximately 1,000 employees located at nine sites around the world, including the Puget Sound region and Oklahoma City. GTES is responsible for providing service to Boeing's most visible customers—the U.S. Air Force's 89th Airlift Wing, Special Air Missions Group, at Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

The GTES team provides maintenance, modifications, upgrades and support for the Boeing fleet of aircraft that supports the National Command Authority mission—the C-32A, C-40A, C-40B, C-40C, E-6, E-4B and other head-of-state aircraft, military versions of the B-757, Next-Generation 737, B-707 and 747-200, respectively. These aircraft carry the nation's senior leadership on critical

missions. And in today's global environment these aircraft are not just about mobility—they must reliably connect and protect the nation's leaders as they carry out the business of the United States.

"Say, for instance, a high-ranking government official or military commander, using an aircraft in the National Command Authority fleet, loses an airborne phone call on a holiday weekend or is delayed for an airplane issue," Caret said. "We don't hear about it two weeks later; we hear about it that holiday weekend."

Until last July, Integrated Defense Systems served the same customer with two different organizations, Derivative Airplane Programs in Seattle and the Special Air Mission business in Wichita. These businesses each were successful in their area of expertise: for DAP, managing within the commercial business model; for SAM, the traditional military world. However, while the Department of Defense and the nation's leaders viewed them as a single fleet of aircraft, Boeing treated them as individual programs. Disconnects and lack of understanding of the interdependency of the entire fleet hampered the success of the programs and frustrated the customers, Caret said.

"We needed to treat these assets as a single fleet, so it wasn't the C-32 versus the E-4B versus C-40," Caret said. "We needed to look at the fleet and understand the impact [of our decisions] on the customer."

To help address this challenge, the presidents of Integrated Defense Systems' Boeing Military Aircraft and Global Services &

## “[Air Mobility Command] appreciates the efforts by Boeing to be more responsive to customer and mission demands.”

— Gen. Arthur Lichte, Air Force commander,  
Air Mobility Command

Brian Hellings, who leads strategy and growth for GTES, said the new organization is increasing aircraft availability for the customer, thereby improving key mission capable rates. Moreover, the One Boeing approach also positions the company to capture new business opportunities, he said. “Doubling our GTES business in five years is realistic if we do the things we need to do,” he added.

Indeed, the new organization gives GTES the opportunity to grow outside its current military focus to new business and customers, including head-of-state aircraft and modification work for Boeing’s commercial customers through a partnership with Commercial Airplanes’ Commercial Aviation Services. “Whether it’s doing work for Commercial Airplanes or Boeing Capital Corp. internally or servicing our customer set externally, there’s power in bringing these two organizations together,” Helling said.

Brian Cassidy, who is helping manage the transition to a single GTES organization, says the team is making a smooth change-over to a single customer-facing organization and operating as One Boeing. But as with any merger, there are challenges.

“With nine different locations ... we have to learn how to operate in a virtual environment. Moreover, we had very different cultures. Now we’re going to end up with a new culture that’s driven and created by managers and employees,” Cassidy said.

One of the biggest tests for the new organization will be combining the strengths of each organization to win new business. GTES has built a best-of-industry team including L-3 Communications and Greenpoint Technologies to compete for new programs. One advantage: Boeing currently has a large, security-cleared workforce to support presidential aircraft.

According to Caret, the timing of the integration of the two businesses couldn’t be better for this One Boeing team. “We have the opportunity to combine the strength of our commercial and defense businesses, focus on integrating some of the most complicated technology in the world under strict security standards and an overarching quality requirement, and create a legacy for the next 50 years.” ■

[jarrod.s.bartlett@boeing.com](mailto:jarrod.s.bartlett@boeing.com)

**PHOTOS: (FAR LEFT)** Then U.S. President-elect Barack Obama boards a C-32A on Jan. 4, 2009, for his official flight to Washington, D.C. The C-32A is a heavily modified Boeing 757 used for the National Command Authority mission, which connects, protects and transports government and military leaders. The C-32A is maintained, modified and upgraded by Boeing’s Global Transport & Executive Systems business in Wichita, Kan. **GETTY IMAGES (LEFT)** Employees in Wichita, Kan., perform modifications on a C-40A for the U.S. Navy. The C-40A provides safe and reliable transportation for the Navy’s critical worldwide fleet logistics support mission. **BOB FERGUSON/BOEING**



Support organizations—Chris Chadwick and Dennis Muilenburg, respectively—decided to bring the capabilities of both organizations into one business. Now merged into a single entity, Global Transport & Executive Systems is a subdivision of the Maintenance, Modifications & Upgrades organization of GS&S. Today, GTES is leveraging the expertise of both organizations in close partnership with Commercial Airplanes to support the customer in a “One Boeing” approach.

Gen. Arthur Lichte, commander of the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command, based at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., said Boeing’s move to a single business entity is making a difference and has improved communications and customer service.

“By providing a single point of contact into Boeing for all of our 89th Airlift Wing Boeing aircraft, Boeing’s recent reorganization has improved two-way communication, simplified collaborative problem solving and enhanced mission effectiveness,” he said. “From presidential airlift to support of our nation’s top military and civilian leaders, the 89th has a demanding mission that has no margin for failure. AMC appreciates the efforts by Boeing to be more responsive to customer and mission demands.”

Examples of benefits for both the customer and Boeing include leveraging new interior and communication systems across the larger fleet, and integrating multiple design and modification efforts to increase fleet availability. One C-32 activity now is being accomplished in a single visit instead of five, saving the customer 38 days of downtime for the aircraft, Caret said.