President Clinton Presents 1998 Baldrige Award to Boeing Airlift and Tanker Programs

President Clinton presented the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award to Boeing Airlift and Tanker Programs today in ceremonies honoring the 1998 Baldrige Award winners.

Dr. David Spong, vice president and general manager of Boeing Airlift and Tanker Programs, accepted the award. The Boeing unit, based in Southern California, builds the C-17 Globemaster III for the U.S. Air Force and is also responsible for aerial-tanker aircraft and other U.S. Air Force/U.S. Navy airlift programs.

In presenting the award, President Clinton said, "The vision of the Baldrige award is to show that there are world-class companies that should be honored and emulated. We have the lowest unemployment rate since 1957 when Boeing introduced the 707," he said, adding, "the changes in business are what have brought America back."

After receiving the award, Dr. Spong said, "Receiving this award tells us at Airlift and Tankers that our long journey to improve quality is bearing fruit. Working to the Baldrige criteria has enabled the Airlift and Tanker team to transform the C-17 into a program with exceptional performance in terms of quality, cost and schedule. Our challenge now - and it is one we are already at work on - is to sustain the momentum for continuous improvement as we continue to implement lean manufacturing techniques. I am confident we will meet that challenge."

Congress established the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award in 1987 to enhance U.S. competitiveness by promoting quality awareness, recognizing quality achievements of U.S. companies and publicizing successful performance strategies.

The U.S. Department of Commerce administers the program. Commerce Secretary William Daley notified the three winners - Boeing, Solar Turbines, Inc. of San Diego, and Texas Nameplate Co. Inc. of Dallas - of their awards last November.

Thirty-two randomly selected Airlift and Tanker employees accompanied Dr. Spong and his quality management team to Washington, D.C., for the award ceremonies.

Boeing Airlift and Tanker Programs employs more than 8,000 people in Long Beach, Calif., and has another 1,000 in locations around the country such as Macon, Ga.; San Antonio; Altus Air Force Base, Okla.; and Charleston Air Force Base, S.C.

The Air Force has contracted for 120 C-17s through the year 2004. To date, 46 have been delivered. The C-17 is capable of carrying 170,000 pounds of cargo over intercontinental distances, yet can land on austere airfields as short as 3,000 feet. It operates with a three-person crew.

Other Airlift and Tanker programs and services include the KC-10 Air Force refueling aircraft, the C-32A executive transport, the C-40A U.S. Navy Fleet Essential Airlift, and maintenance support for C-17s and KC-10s.

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