



General Lauds Education Group's Focus on Military Children

By Rudi Williams
American Forces Press Service

ATLANTA, July 1, 2005 – The general nominated to be the next Air Force chief of staff praised the work of the Military Child Education Coalition here June 29 during the group's annual conference.

Gen. T. Michael Moseley, currently the Air Force vice chief of staff, said MCEC not only is in the forefront of leveling the playing field for military children worldwide, but also plays a major role in the global war against terrorism.

"You're so important for everything we stand for in the military, everything we hold dear and everything that provides a foundation for our families that allows us to go off and defend this great republic," said Moseley, keynote speaker for MCEC's June 29 dinner and general session. "When we look at the papers and TV, we see terrorists and insurgents attacking freedom-loving men and women around the world, trying to take away things that we cherish and hold dear."

He said extremists are trying to prevent people, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq, from enjoying freedom from tyranny, freedom of choice and freedom of thought.

"Those are important concepts," Moseley said. "Today at home and abroad, the brave men and women of your armed forces -- soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and Merchant Marines -- are out there tonight working to protect our country's future and our children's future."

But they're not doing it alone, he noted. "When fighter pilots go to war, they always go with a wingman," the general said. "Your wingman protects you, watches out for you, no matter how heavy the surface-to-air missile fire, or how bad the weather. The wingman is there."

Moseley said the MCEC functions as the wingman in the interest of military families, and especially the children. "Thank you for being the military's great wingman in this endeavor of taking care of our families and our children and ensuring that they have opportunities and advantages that they would not have had without you," Moseley said. "Together, we can secure a future for our children and our grandchildren, because that's what's at stake here.

"You're doing most outstanding work to make sure military children are given the best education and best environment we can provide," he said.

The challenges of making multiple moves, changing schools, making new friends and enduring extended deployments of one or both parents are tough for military children, he noted. "In working these challenges every day, you do us a great service, and you do our families a great service," Moseley told the MCEC staff.

"What you do is so vital to allow our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen to focus on winning this global war on terrorism. We need them to stay focused. We're facing a resourceful, adaptive and ruthless enemy."

The general noted that President Harry S. Truman declared victory over Japan in August 1945. "The American involvement in World War II lasted 1,347 days. It's been 1,361 days since Gen. Tommy Franks began Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan on Oct. 7, 2001. So we've been conducting operations in Afghanistan two weeks longer than World War II."

He asked the audience to imagine what Americans were thinking about in June 2001 and what they thought the summer and the fall would be like that year. "I can bet you that it didn't include an attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon," Moseley noted. "And I can bet you it didn't include the notion of a hard fight in Afghanistan that lasted longer than World War II to be followed by an equally hard fight in Iraq and with both of these ongoing even now."

"So two weeks longer than World War II, your military has been engaged in this global war on terrorism," he said. "Make no mistake, this fight is as violent and as risky as everything we've seen historically in World War II, Korea or Southeast Asia."

He said the names of the battlefields have changed, but the threat to the American way of life is just as urgent. "And the threats to your military members is just as real," Moseley noted. "The stress on the families and the children is equally real. Your military today is an incredible, unbelievable, interdependent joint team fighting this global fight against the global threat."

Moseley pointed out that troops on the battlefields are more than just warfighters -- they're wives, husbands, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers and parents, and their children face some unique educational challenges.

"When a mom or dad deploys for three months, six months or a year, who is taking care of those children?" Moseley asked. "Hopefully there is a spouse -- except, about 7 percent of our military families are single-parent households. About 57,000 military members have a spouse who is also in the military. So the pressures are additive."

"Fortunately, they and we have you," he continued. "And fortunately, you're magnificent in what you do and in your understanding of what this is all about and what it means to all of us."

He noted that military members today are the most educated, most creative, most innovative, most lethal the world has ever seen.

"We owe the spirit, commitment, expertise and that energy to you," he said. "I'm truly humbled by what your dedication and hard work and skills have done for military members in schools across the country. You've helped our children take advantage of an educational system that's second to none. But it bears watching, because any kid out there that's disadvantaged, lonely or is missing a parent has to be touched and has to be taken care of."

Moseley called on the MCEC to continue its work. "We need you to watch over a process that explains sometimes different grading systems, different class schedules, different curriculums, reconciling the

differences in children's old and new schools," Moseley said. This includes "helping teachers to understand military children's issues and encouraging coaches and clubs to welcome new military students, even though they might be moving in at mid semesters."

He said, most importantly, MCEC must continue to assist in teaching military children to become strong, independent and intelligent young adults.

MCEC makes children feel that they belong, have a sense of community, and someone to talk to, the general said. "They're able to more easily make new friends and also to say goodbye to old ones," he added.

Moseley said military children face many challenges, but he's optimistic that with MCEC as their wingman, and leading the way, everything is going to work out OK.

"So America, with your help, we'll move through this global war on terrorism and our children will be taken care of better and they will grow and mature to be great adults just like you and they will be part of a society that's the best in the world," he said.

"We live where principals, teachers and counselors teach students how to think, how to be worthy citizens, how to interact and how to relate," Moseley noted. "And our military tonight is out there in harm's way making sure you and these schools are safe. With that partnership, our children are learning how to make tomorrow a better place."