

GENERAL WALTER KROSS

15 JULY 1996 TO 3 AUGUST 1998

Air Force General Walter Kross was the first Commander in Chief, USTRANSCOM, to have served previously in the command: he was Director, Operations and Logistics during the Persian Gulf War. Shortly after assuming command, he told the USTRANSCOM staff he felt like someone who had worked in the family business, gone away to serve in the armed forces, and “I then came back to run the family business, but everything had changed.”

General Kross pursued three objectives to ensure the continued success of USTRANSCOM: maintain readiness; continually improve the processes of the Defense Transportation System; and modernize the force.

Twice the command deployed US forces to the Persian Gulf in response to Iraq’s intransigence over allowing United Nations’ inspections of sites potentially containing weapons of mass destruction. The command also successfully supported peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and disaster relief efforts following Hurricane Paka in Guam, flooding in North Dakota, snowstorms in New England, and forest fires in Indonesia. And, for the first time, USTRANSCOM partnered with United States Pacific Command and United States Forces Korea on a major logistics exercise, Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration.

In 1996, General Kross helped win congressional approval of the Maritime Security Program designed to maintain a viable US maritime industry for future contingencies. He also backed the Voluntary Intermodal Sealift Agreement, the United States’ primary sealift mobilization program, which the Secretary of Defense approved in 1997.

Concerned about an increase in terrorism worldwide, General Kross established a separate force protection staff agency and initiated security improvements for USTRANSCOM facilities and assets. Believing that “we are an information organization first and foremost,” he also emphasized protecting defense transportation information systems from cyber attack.

To improve processes, General Kross had the command benchmark with industry, established command metrics, set up a process to manage costs, and created the Business Center as the focal point for customer service. He initiated the Customer Day program with other government agencies that used the Defense Transportation System to identify their concerns. He also continued deployment of the Global Transportation Network, USTRANSCOM’s primary information system for in-transit visibility, to customers so they could track the movement of their cargo.



Regarding modernization, General Kross supported the C-17 procurement program and advocated acquiring additional aircraft to fill a void in airlift for special operations caused by the retirement of the C-141. He also favored upgrading the C-5 fleet. The first 5 of 19 Large Medium Speed Roll-On/Roll-Off (RO/RO) ships for the surge and prepositioning fleets were delivered. The program for acquiring RO/ROs for the Ready Reserve Force remained on track. During his tenure, the 60,000-pound Tunner and 25,000-pound Halvorsen aircraft loaders also received full funding.

When General Kross retired on 3 August 1998, his assessment of the command was “We have credibility. We are trusted. I am leaving TRANSCOM confident that the partnership [with the components, commercial industry, the Services, other combatant commands, and the Department of Defense leadership] is stronger than it’s ever been.”

