Interview with Tom Murgatroyd

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Interviewer: Robert Devereux

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Devereux: Good morning. This is Robert Devereux. It's the 12th of May, 2011. We're in the home of Tom Murgatroyd, in Sherman, Illinois, and this interview is part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember* Oral History Project. Good morning, Tom.

Retired Colonel Tom Murgatroyd on May 12, 2011. The map in the background is pinned with all of his duty stations.

Murgatroyd: Good morning,

Devereux: I'm going to begin with a little bit of background. One of the reasons that we are doing this interview is in connection with the War on Terror, but you have a really great career that stretches over a long period of time, so we'll be able to talk about a lot of transitions. I think it's going to be very interesting. Let's start off with some background material. Could you tell me a little bit about your childhood, family, where you were born?

Murgatroyd: Well, I was born and raised in Jacksonville, Illinois. I was born in 1948. [I] went through grade school and high school there [in Jacksonville], went to high school at Routt High School in Jacksonville, and then transitioned to Illinois College in Jacksonville. [I] graduated from high school in '66, graduated from Illinois College in 1970.

Devereux: So all of your early life, really, was spent in Jacksonville.

Murgatroyd: Yes.

Devereux: And your parents, what were their jobs?

Murgatroyd: My parents were Bill and Ruth Murgatroyd; I was an only child. My dad was a postal clerk, there in Jacksonville, and my mom was a secretary for the local school district.

Devereux: And had they met during the war?

Murgatroyd: They met after the war.

Devereux: After World War II?

Murgatroyd: After World War II.

Devereux: And your mother, during the war?

Murgatroyd: My mother worked at the defense plant in Jacksonville. She was an inspector for different ordnance parts that were made in the defense plant, there in Jacksonville.

Devereux: And your father, during the war?

Murgatroyd: My dad was in the Army Air Corps and was a captain, ended his service in 1944 as a captain. He was a provost marshal at two different bases, one in Nebraska and one in Wendover Air Force Base out in Nevada

Devereux: You also have some uncles in the service, true?

Murgatroyd: My mother has a very large family. She had eleven brothers, and at one point, seven of them were in the service at one time during World War II. Four of them continued on and retired from the service; four of my uncles were retirees from the Air Force.

Devereux: So when you were in college, the Vietnam War was going on, correct?

Murgatroyd: The Vietnam War was on everybody's front lobe (both laugh). What we were going to do, whether or not we were going to stay in college, whether the Army would get us. The draft lottery happened my senior year, I believe. Everybody wondered what number they would get, and my number was sufficiently high that I knew that I was going to be quickly in the Army, as soon as I graduated.

Devereux: Were there a lot of people in Jacksonville coming and going from the military?

Murgatroyd: A good portion. I mean, there was a lot of people that we knew from high school that hadn't gone to college or had gone to college for a short time and dropped out, and they were immediately snapped up. So this is a big topic of conversation among…

Devereux: How about the community at large? How did they feel about the war?

Murgatroyd: Actually, I think they were probably ambivalent. Primarily the populace was very supportive of the war, anything that happened, the military, whatever the government needed to have done. But since Jacksonville was the home to two colleges, Illinois College and MacMurray College, we did have occasional anti-war protests, but not anything on the scale of what we'd seen in the papers.

Devereux: So, more just the opinions going back and forth?

Murgatroyd: Opinions, opinions, right.

Devereux: As you graduate from college… What was your major, again, in college?

Murgatroyd: I majored in English.

Devereux: And you have this low draft number (both laugh). Tell me a little bit about your decision to join the military.

Murgatroyd: During my senior year, my wife and I married. She was a teacher, and I had intended to become a teacher, high school teacher, in English. We weighed the options, whether or not I would just be drafted, or if I had to exert a little bit of control over my own future. I decided that, since I had a good bit of experience, talking with my relatives and everything, being in the Air Force, and the Air Force seemed to be a pretty calming type of military environment, compared to the Army, I decided that, rather than be drafted for two years and be told what I was going to do, that I would just enlist in the Air Force and take my own future in hand.

Devereux: What did your wife and family…

Murgatroyd: She was fine with it. She was fine with it. She knew that I would, at some point, be in the military, and I might as well being doing something that I was…

The Murgatroyd family in 2008. From left to right are daughter Sarah Phalen, Tom, wife Lora, and daughter Katie Hahn.

Devereux: (interrupts)
Better to be in control.Murgatroyd: … a little bit interested in.

Murgatroyd: … a little bit interested in.

Devereux: Where did you do your initial training?

Murgatroyd: Basic training for the Air Force is in San Antonio, at Lackland Air Force Base. I left basic training, went in in August of 1970; left basic training in October of 1970; went from there to my technical training for personnel, personnel career field, which was at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi; continued there until I graduated from that in January of 1971; picked up my first permanent duty station, which would be Laredo Air Force Base in Texas, pilot training base down there, right on the border; and went to Laredo and spent three years there.

Devereux: And then that base closed, correct?

Murgatroyd: That base closed in the fall of 1973, so I spent about two years, two and a half years, there.

Devereux: Then you went from there to...?

Murgatroyd: Webb Air Force Base in Big Spring, Texas, which is another pilot training base, which is also closed now.

Devereux: So, the mission in both places was pretty much the same.

Murgatroyd: Right, just pumping out pilots for the Vietnam War, and towards the end, the drawing down Vietnam War, so there was not a need for any new pilots.

Devereux: Is that part of the reason for the closure, is consolidation?

Murgatroyd: Oh, yeah, consolidation. The Air Force, I think, at one time, when I first came to Laredo, probably had ten undergraduate pilot training bases, scattered throughout the country. They drew them down quite rapidly in 1973. There was a huge amount of closures in ’73, one of which was Laredo. And then after I went to Webb… I think Webb might have closed then, probably within two years after I left there.

Devereux: You got to survive more than one drawdown during your career. (laughs)

Murgatroyd: Right, yes.

Devereux: What was it like during the drawdown, as far as personnel who were staying, versus personnel who were going? Were you attaining good people?

Murgatroyd: There wasn’t so much of a drawdown; it was a transferring people out to other bases. My understanding in 1973, they weren’t really drawing down the Air Force, as much as just shrinking their footprint, and so we transferred. Of course, the planes went, one of the first things; the pilots, all of the instructors. We got down to maybe thirty people on the base. Just every day there would be another building that was boarded up and closed and deeded over to the city.

Devereux: And tell me a little bit about what specifically you did within personnel.

Murgatroyd: I was in charge of… At different points, in personnel in the Air Force, you're a glorified clerk. At certain points, I in charge of officer performance evaluations and making sure they were filed and accomplished by the raters. Towards the end of my active duty career, I transferred into an area of personnel that's personal affairs. That's more of the casualty assistance to family members that live in the area, for airmen and other branches of the service, service members, that had been either lost, killed in action or POWs.

Devereux: You would help them get whatever…

Murgatroyd: Make sure that they were aware of the different benefits that they were entitled to and if they needed any assistance monetarily.

Devereux: This transitioned well into your post-military career, didn't it?

Murgatroyd: I didn't realize it at the time, but yeah, it did.

Devereux: First of all, when you left, you had a four-year initial enlistment. Is that right?

Murgatroyd: It was a four-year enlistment. Since they were looking for people who had spent a good time and were willing to leave early to get out of what I considered to be probably a career field that wasn't as necessary as some, they offered me an early discharge, and I left in April of 1974 from the Air Force, rather than that summer, came back to Illinois, where our family is from, and was lucky enough to get a job at the Veteran's Administration and continue with them for ten years.

Devereux: At what point did you enroll in the Air Guard?

Murgatroyd: Later that fall, in 1974, I was approached by a recruiter from the 183rd Tac Fighter group at the time, in Springfield, Illinois, asking if I'd be interested in becoming a traditional guardsman with the 183rd. I'm sure they get listings of people who are recently discharged. So I weighed the opportunities and what it meant, and I thought, This is probably not a bad thing, to serve with people at least that you get to know. They're not going to go somewhere, and at least you're not traveling around the country that much to go to military duties. And it was in Springfield, so I decided that I'd try it. I enlisted, reenlisted in the Air Force, but at this time in the Air Guard, in September of '74 and continued on there.

Devereux: So, it was actually just a short break in between active duty and Guard service.

Murgatroyd: Yeah, yeah, just a short enough time to grow my hair long and have to get a haircut again (Devereux laughs).

Devereux: Tell me a little bit about the 183rd.

Murgatroyd: The 183rd, at the time—it was called the 183rd Tac Fighter group; it is now called the 183rd Fighter Wing—at the time was a fighter organization in the

Air National Guard. It had F-4 airplanes, F-4 Phantoms. It was the first Air National Guard unit to get the F-4, to transition to the F-4.

Devereux: And that was the premier aircraft at the time.

Murgatroyd: At the time it was right up there with what the active duty was flying. The Air Guard generally got the hand-me-downs aircraft, but quickly, within two or three years, had made them into something better than what was flying on the Air Force side. But it was a TAC fighter group at the time, then the nomenclature changed to a wing. They had twenty-four airplanes and probably 1,100 to 1,200 people.

Devereux: And you would drill, do your weekends and training at the airport here in Springfield?

Murgatroyd: Exactly, at Capital Airport in Springfield.

Devereux: Tell me a little bit about the cohesion of the group.

Murgatroyd: Great organization, probably the most professional bunch of people I've ever worked with, because you know everybody, and everybody knows you. Generally speaking, everyone knows strengths and weaknesses and who you can depend on, and everybody has skills that are not necessarily called upon every day.

Devereux: Like a lot of cross-training, back and forth.

Murgatroyd: Exactly and cross-utilization.

Devereux: You said in our pre-interview that if you ever see a gray-haired man fixing an aircraft (Murgatroyd laughs), that's a National Guardsman.

Murgatroyd: That's right, generally speaking. Nowadays, the Air Guard is so intertwined with the Air Force and all the different operations, you really can't see the difference, if you walk out on the flight line. You'll see a guy crewing an airplane or flying an airplane; you don't know whether he's active or Guard. But generally, if you get up close enough, if you find somebody with some gray hairs, he's usually a guardsman.

Devereux: But, you know, the modern concept of jointness in the services, did it exist?

Murgatroyd: Back then, back in the '70s, '80s, the Air Force, while they might have publicly said that they couldn't get by without the Air Guard, I think privately they wished that the Air Guard wasn't there because they felt that they were a competing force for money.

But on the tactical side, on the air combat side, or as the Air Force calls it, the CAF, the fighter mission, they were slower to be brought into the mainstream of the Air Force than the mobility Air Forces, the cargo and tankers. Cargo and tanker Air Force, the MAF, the Mobility Air Force, has

had to depend on the Air Guard and the Air Force Reserve a lot longer than the CAF.

Devereux: One of the reasons for not bringing combat aircraft in is because of flight time in combat conditions, right?

Murgatroyd: They would say that, but in actuality, quite a few, probably the majority of our aviators, had Air Force experience and combat time. They had just elected to take their skills somewhere else, to a local community.

Devereux: (laughs) But it works out great, to their advantage, right, because nobody wants to utilize them anymore (laughs).

Murgatroyd: At the time, at the time, we had to fight to be part of different exercises and deployments and things.

Devereux: As far as resources, did the location in the state capital help you at all?

Murgatroyd: I think it did. I can't speak to the funding back then, but I know it didn't hurt to be right next to the capital and have some telephones close by to call congressmen and senators.

Devereux: And anytime anyone needs a photo op, there's somebody in uniform (laughs).

Murgatroyd: Well, we did have that. We did have different… Politicians would seem to be there quite often, to get rides in the backseat or get their picture taken, sure.

Devereux: You started off working in personnel in the Guard as well, correct?

Murgatroyd: From 1974, when I entered the Air Guard, until 1981, I was, as we call it, a traditional guardsman. I was enlisted. And when I did my duty, I worked in personnel there as well, at the 183rd, doing, everything that a personnel list would do, from filing reports to helping with effectiveness reports to maintaining, manning the files, very administrative drudgery. But the good thing was, there were so many other facets of the Guard, deployments and exercises and things, that we were allowed to deploy and become part of the mission a little bit more than the Air Force would ever let someone do. So I did that on the enlisted side from '74 to '81. Then I was offered the opportunity to be commissioned in the Guard. I was commissioned in 1981, in June of '81, continued as a traditional Guard member in '81 through the first part of '84.

Devereux: Tell me a little bit about the commissioning process, how that came about.

Murgatroyd: I was offered the chance… Most of the commissioning opportunities in a Guard wing come through retirements of other officers, because people stay for twenty, thirty years. It just so happened that one of the officers of the wing had retired. They maintained a list of people who were nominally qualified to become commissioned, and the person in charge of the commissioning process asked me if I'd be interested in this job. I said, yes, as long as it didn't take a long time away from my civilian career to get trained.

So I went off for six weeks of commissioning training at Knoxville, Tennessee, at McGhee Tyson International Guard Base. It was called the Academy of Military Science, which is the Air National Guard's equivalent of Officer Training School, six-week course. At the end of that, you graduate as an officer.

Devereux: During all this time you're still working for the VA (Veterans Administration) as a civilian?

Murgatroyd: During this time I took a leave of absence, just a leave, from my civilian employment, which was the Veterans Administration.

Devereux: So now you're an officer, also in the 183rd, correct?

Murgatroyd: Correct. I stayed in the 183rd, was just transferred from the enlisted corps to the officer corps, and then I took on a job in operations organization, the operations side of the house, in ground training and worked weekends and some active duty, two weeks here and there, for close to three years.

Devereux: Contrast for me a little bit. Do things change on the weekends, now that you're an officer as opposed to enlisted? (laughs)

Murgatroyd: As I told you earlier, the initial change was I got paid less, because I was an E-7 on the enlisted side and went to O-1, which is second lieutenant, on the officer side. The way the pay structure is, that's less pay, but eventually you make it up very quickly. But that was the first thing my wife pointed out to me when she looked at the check.

It changes quite a bit. Your span of control, your responsibilities, change a little bit, and more is expected of you. And you have a little bit of control over programs that you are in charge of.

Devereux: Did you notice a difference between officers who had served enlistments prior?

Murgatroyd: Not only then, but later on throughout my career. I think that most officers who've had the opportunity to be enlisted first seem to take advantage of their other NCOs [Non Commissioned Officers] before they make decisions. They take into account how it might affect other people.

Devereux: It also gives you kind of a broader appreciation for what you've got below you, doesn't it?

Murgatroyd: You do. You kind of wonder, What will this do to the people that I work with?

Devereux: You don't have to do everything yourself, either.

Murgatroyd: And I understand that exactly (both laugh). There are some skills that are not within me.

Devereux: Yeah, that's great. Tell me a little bit about your work in logistics, as a planning officer.

Murgatroyd: My first full-time job with the Air National Guard, there at the 183rd, I became the logistics plans officer, which in essence, the primary function of that role was to make sure that the mobility plan to get the wing—the aircraft, the equipment associated with the aircraft, the pilots, the support personnel—to get them out of Dodge in either a contingency or an exercise, wherever they were needed to go.

Devereux: And the aircraft themselves are just a small piece of the larger chunk.

Murgatroyd: Very small piece. That's what people see from the road. But there's a lot that goes into creating a flight.

Devereux: Parts, lots of parts, enough to rebuild the planes.

Murgatroyd: That's right, lots of parts.

Devereux: How do you think the readiness of your Guard unit compared to active duty units?

Murgatroyd: Within our response time—that's a term that the Air Force still uses—within what we were supposed to do and the timeframe we were allowed to do it, we were right up there at the top. Had we been on active duty, day in and day out, we would be at the same level as most Air Force bases. On our maintenance side of the house, the actual maintenance of the aircraft and keeping them operational ready, they would be much higher.

Devereux: Because you're not trading units out so often.

Murgatroyd: Not training people all the time, and the mechanics and crew chiefs that work on an aircraft stay with that aircraft for quite a bit of time, ten years sometimes. So they know everything about it.

Devereux: It's their baby (laughs).

Murgatroyd: They're not in and out every eighteen months, twenty-four months.

Devereux: We'll talk about this a little later, but that became an issue later on, September eleventh, when you had to mobilize really quickly, and the only thing to mobilize is the National Guard. So we'll get to that.

Eventually, though, you switched from the weekend warrior status to full-time service. Do you want to tell us a little bit about that?

Murgatroyd: That's when I became a logistics plans officer, when I took a full-time job with the 183rd. I'd been a traditional Guard officer and still continuing to work for the VA. An opportunity arose for a full-time position at the 183rd, and a friend of mine who worked there asked me if I wouldn't apply. I'd have a good time, and we would do well there.

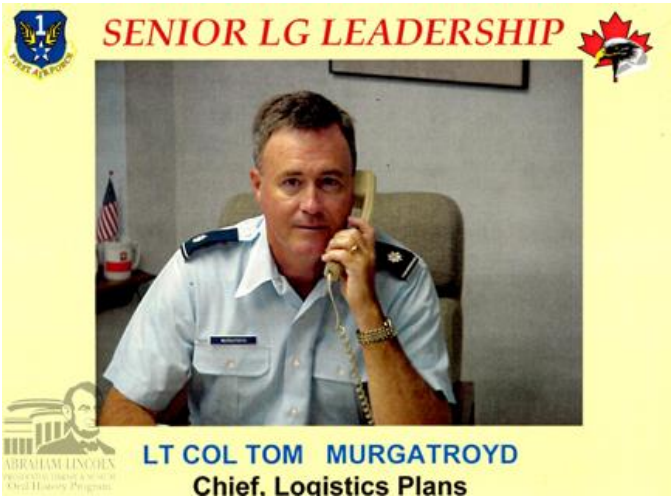
So I talked it over with my wife, and I thought that the best thing to do would be to apply for the job, with the caveat that I would not come in as a civil servant; I would come in as an AGR, which is Active Guard in Reserve,

basically active duty but never leaving one unit, basically tied to the 183rd. So I applied, was selected and then went off and trained as the log plans officer.

Devereux: Eventually this decision lands you at First Air Force.

Murgatroyd: Eventually it does. [In] a long, convoluted way, it turns out, I think, to my advantage that I had done some training and some background in logistics plans. And the only way I would have done that is if I had decided to go full-time.Devereux:

You enter the First Air Force organization as a lieutenant colonel?



Murgatroyd was a lieutenant colonel when he worked at the First Air Force in 1999.

Devereux: You enter the First Air Force organization as a lieutenant colonel?

Murgatroyd: Yes. From full-time at the 183rd, I spent from June of 1984 as a lieutenant, went all the way through the ranks to lieutenant colonel, and left the 183rd in July of 1998 to go back on extended active duty, with a tour at First Air Force in Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida.

During the time I had been at the 183rd full-time, I not only had jobs in logistics plans, but I'd moved over into the supply area; I'd become the chief of supply. I had a year in… I'm sorry, I didn't have a year there. I was deemed a communications officer, because I took the job as the chief of staff for the wing there. So, I ended as a lieutenant colonel, as the chief of staff for the 183rd.


Tom Murgatroyd, when he served as the chief of staff for the 183rd Fighter Wing in 1997.

Devereux: Tell me a little bit about the First Air Force, its mission and where it fits into the…

Murgatroyd: First Air Force is one of the numbered Air Forces that the Air Force has. The First Air Force is the only Air Force that is charged with the defense of the continental United States. It is commanded by an Air National Guard officer. It was given to, or turned over to, the Air Guard for a command in the mid-'90s.

Devereux: So, all the subordinate fighter squadrons are all National Guard?

Murgatroyd: The First Air Force has, under its control, three different… It's a numbered Air Force, and under it, it had—at the time that I was there—three air defense sectors. One was in New York; one was in Florida, and one was in McCord Air Force Base in Washington. Under those sectors, each sector had different fighter wings under them, Air National Guard fighter wings, all the way from Burlington, Vermont, all the way around the outside of the perimeter of the United States, all the way up to Portland, Oregon.

Devereux: But this isn't like a defense in depth, is it? This is the rim of the north.

Murgatroyd: It's the rim, and it was primarily designed to defend against the Russian Bear, the Russian horde, coming over the Arctic Circle and invading, flying over Canada and coming to the United States.

Devereux: This wasn't just theoretical, right? There were lots of intercepts where you'd fly right alongside the…

Murgatroyd: The operators commonly would fly up, alongside a Russian aircraft that was basically testing the waters, flying in close to United States airspace.

Devereux: In the reference you gave me to look at, I noticed a couple of times where they kind of got surprised, the defense, by things sneaking in through the Gulf that, wait a second, we didn't even know they were coming.

Murgatroyd: That's right, yeah.

Devereux: So that caused some rethinking about missions and deployments.

Murgatroyd: Yes. When I got there in 1998, there was quite a bit of rethinking on the role of the First Air Force in the air defense of the United States. Some of the operational planning thinking turned into looking south, looking towards Cuba, looking to some other threats that might have been, other than the Russians.

Devereux: But once the Cold War is over, we're talking about a whole new reinvention of mission, right?

Murgatroyd: Well, as the military goes, you have to reinvent yourself to continue to have a mission. At the time it was a big political battle, because the Air Force was looking for a way to save money and to cut jobs and missions, so that they could retain whatever dollars they had for themselves. And they didn't quite understand why they were anywhere close to supporting this Air Guard mission of defending the northern regions of the United States and the coasts against a threat that they didn't see happening anymore.

Devereux: And nothing real major had materialized since World War II, right?

Murgatroyd: No, no. Except for some incursions every now and then, that they would fly up alongside a Russian bomber and take pictures of it.

Devereux: So it was more the possibility that something could happen. But now, that possibility doesn't seem as…

Murgatroyd: Right.

Devereux: You talked to me in the pre-interview a lot about the fact that air defenses of the United States are looking out, not in.

Murgatroyd: The air defense of the United States, of which the Air Combat Command of the United States Air Force gives up to NORAD, North American Air Defense Command—now that's called NORTHCOM—they give the responsibility for the defense of the homeland. But the thinking of the time was, the problems will come from aircraft flying in, trying to breach our defenses and drop bombs. That was what we'd planned for.

Devereux: This is really more of a wall on the coast and north of North America, including Canada.

Murgatroyd: Virtual wall, including our Canadian friends. The Canadian Air Force was all part of the same plan.

Devereux: So, it's not a dome of protection over the U.S.

Murgatroyd: It's North America.

Devereux: Right. That brings me to another thing that's interesting about the First Air Force. You actually had Canadians working with you, correct?

Murgatroyd: The headquarters at First Air Force in Panama City, Florida, is a headquarters command, which is partially beholden to NORAD. NORAD is a bi-national command, commanded in tandem by United States Air Force and Canadian Air Force. So, by agreement, our staff was sprinkled with Canadian officers and NCOs.

Under me, I had a Canadian major who is just an excellent officer, knew his stuff. He'd worked with Army and Navy in the Canadian and NATO and knew a lot about jointness, a lot more than most of the people in our Air Force.

Devereux: Actually—you've mentioned this in the pre-interview as well—the Canadians were a lot better at this joint operation.

Murgatroyd: Initially they understood a little bit more quickly than we did, how to get a hold of capabilities on other than the Air Force side, because they'd had to for years and years.

Devereux: Let's talk about September eleventh. You've been at First Air Force for how long now?

Murgatroyd: I got there in July of 1998, so I'm there three years at least. During that time, we'd had an excellent time. It was a great time to be in Florida and be in a numbered Air Force and to have fun. The way the careers work in the Air Guard, in order to make rank at a certain time, you need to be looking for other opportunities that carry more responsibility.

I had applied for a job that was open at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, at Headquarters Air Mobility Command. I had been selected for the job—I was selected in the summer of 2001—and had planned to leave in September of 2001, to go to Scott Air Force Base and PCS, away from Tyndall and go to Scott.

Devereux: So you're at your last week, basically (laughs), on the job at Tyndall, and there's a drill going on.

Murgatroyd: First Air Force and Continental NORAD Region, which was the portion of NORAD that First Air Force had charge of, Continental NORAD Region, occasionally would run exercises. About once every two months was a big exercise. It was a command post exercise. It just so happened that the early part of September, we had a planned exercise and did an exercise in the command post there that involved coordinating with all of our fighter wings, fighter wings that reported through the three different sectors in the United States, and also with some Canadian Air Force fighter wings that were reported to NORAD through the Canadian NORAD Region, at the time called CANR.

We were doing exercises twenty-four hours a day, command post exercises, doing proposed and potential and target scenarios, moving aircraft to meet those scenarios that the planners would come up with. On the logistics side, we had people in our logistics cell that were in charge of the transportation side of the operation, to make sure that, if the operators decided that they needed to move aircraft from point A to point B to forward deploy to a different base, to make sure that the transportation stream and the supply chain was in line to get them there and move operations.

Devereux: This is significant because typically you wouldn't have a whole lot of aircraft ready to go up, with any kind of armament, inside the continental U.S., right?

Murgatroyd: Well, at the time, in the late '90s and 2000, 2001, the Air National Guard had ten alert sites; the Air Force had those ten alert sites. That's what the Air Force… That's what the country had to defend it, if you will. There were, armed and ready, two aircraft at each of those alert sites.

Devereux: But there was an ongoing debate in Congress at the time whether that was too much.

Murgatroyd: It was something that the Air National Guard, for sure, and a lot of politicians within the United States that were supportive of the Air National Guard, were fighting all the time, to make sure at least that they continued to provide that.

Devereux: Did you hear anything about the four-cornered defense?

Murgatroyd: I don't remember that.

Devereux: That was a congressional idea to have four, one on each corner of the continental U.S. (laughs)

Murgatroyd: It's interesting that you say that, because we noticed, down in our little logistics world, that although we had ten, at one point it looked very clear that what we wanted to try to do, or somebody was trying to do, to get to an end state of having F-15s, which are F-15 Eagles—a better air superiority aircraft than the F-16, but still, the F-16 is very capable, but the F-15 has two engines—you could see that the F-15 was at Cape Cod, Otis Air National Guard Base; it was in Florida, in Jacksonville; and it was in Portland, on the northwest corner.

The only thing that was lacking was, our only base on the southwest was Fresno; Fresno had F-16s. So there was a move afoot at the time to try to eventually transition F-15s to the Fresno base, and there would be four F-15s on the corners.

Devereux: Then if you do do a reduction, it's pretty easy to decide where those reductions are going to take place. That's very interesting. For these drills that you would do, how would the scenario be determined? What kind of scenarios were you drilling for?

Murgatroyd: They had a Plans and Exercises branch that just came up with different scenarios, that they would be tested by Russian aircraft, or they would be tested by a hijacked aircraft that would be trying to sneak in under radar, and what were we going to do?

Devereux: So, coming inbound to the United States, not hijacked within the United States.

Murgatroyd: Coming inbound, yes.

Devereux: What about other terrorist attacks? Was that an issue at all?

Murgatroyd: I remember we did have a scenario at one time. It wasn't this exercise, I don't think, but I know that we talked about different scenarios of very small watercraft, boats, trying to get in across the Keys to Florida, from our friends in Cuba.

Devereux: This concept of hijacked aircraft was not even on the radar scope.

Murgatroyd: Never thought about it.

Devereux: Not even on the radar scope. So, the morning of September eleventh…

Murgatroyd: Well, the weekend before, it was the exercise. Towards the end of an exercise, as people are starting to draw down, everybody there on the floor knew that I was getting ready to leave—people did transfer out and PCS or finish their

tours and leave—but that was my time to leave. It was getting close to the time that I would wanting to be pack up my goods.

I think it was Sunday, my last shift, the exercise planner just came in and handed me a kill card, which was exercise-speak for, "You're finished with the exercise. You don't have to come back tomorrow. You're done; go home and do what you have to do." As it turned out, the morning of September eleventh was the morning that the movers, the packers, from the local moving company, were in my house, packing up my dishes, looking around about how they needed to cushion things for the pickup.

I remember standing in front of the TV, watching the *Today Show*, and seeing the second aircraft go into the tower, and realized—because they had already had one, but my wife had mentioned, "Well, yeah, there's already been an aircraft incident someplace in New York, but they think it was somebody that was just, you know, lost." They weren't even sure it was an airliner, I think, at the time—But when I was standing there watching the second one, I realized, this is not good; it's not the norm. I said, "That phone's going to ring here pretty quick because they're going to want everybody that they can find."

Sure enough, the phone rang, and I was asked to come right back in, which I did. All leaves are canceled, and all hands-on deck. Let's figure out what we're doing here, because this is not an exercise anymore.

Devereux: And was it a chaotic day?

Murgatroyd: It was extremely chaotic. It was a long day. [I] reported back to the command post and exercise was terminated. We went into real-world mode, trying to figure out what was happening, and what is our best action?

Devereux: Did that message communicate well to the units outside, "Hey, this is real now"?

Murgatroyd: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. It was quickly communicated to the other units. And I can say, as far as my span of control and the logistics, we had people calling from all the different wings, calling through the sectors, wanting to know what they needed to do, where they needed to be, how they can help other areas. But everyone was running in place, not knowing what to do and where to direct their efforts.

Devereux: Were there any plans on the shelf that you could pull off, or were you just winging things?

Murgatroyd: At the time, we were winging things, because we had plans on the shelf to move—like I said, once again, within transportation and supply and aircraft maintenance—that I saw. We had plans to move wherever we were told to move because we had been exercising that, from point A to point B within the United States, to backfill different, other bases. But not knowing where it

would be needed, we didn't want to pre-deploy something to an area that wasn't necessarily the key.

Devereux: But when your people were looking at the radar screen, there were a lot of blips there that nobody knew what they were.

Murgatroyd: That's right. The operators, the people in the sectors, who actually were the first ones to see the blips, if you will, they were the ones that responded and [were] treading water the fastest, trying to figure out what was a bogey, what wasn't; what was a bad guy.

Initially, I think, as it later on turned out, I think if you'd taken an air picture, looking down on the United States of 9:00 or 10:00 that morning in the United States, you almost couldn't see the outline of the United States because of all the blips, because of all the aircraft that were currently in the air. If you then look at an air picture of the United States that evening, after everything had been shut down, there was maybe two blips, and those were military aircraft.

Devereux: But even in your training exercise, there are certain pieces of the airspace that are reserved for military training, right?

Murgatroyd: Right.

Devereux: And now the battle has moved outside of that, to all this commercial airspace that wouldn't have even been part of the drill.

Murgatroyd: That's right, yeah.

Devereux: Because commercial aviation didn't stop, just because of your drill.

Murgatroyd: Not for our drill. No, they don't even know we're having an exercise.

Devereux: But now they're all part of the drill (laughs), that it's not a drill anymore.

Murgatroyd: That's right.

Devereux: That's really interesting. You give a lot of credit to the colonel commanding the northern sector.

Murgatroyd: Northeast Air Defense Sector, NEADS, as we referred to them, at Rome, New York, the old Griffiths Air Force Base, the commander there was Colonel Bob Marr. Just because of a fluke of geography, the first incidents happened in his territory. He was the first person to realize, I need to get aircraft in the air, quickly, and for real, rather than an exercise. So he took a lot of responsibility and executed it very quickly. He was a great guy, and everybody slapped him on the back later for at least having the wherewithal to realize, I better get something in the air.

Devereux: And this is a big issue right from the beginning, right, rules of engagement, what do you do? Do you shoot down a civilian airliner full of…?

Murgatroyd: Many of the aircraft, first in the air there that day, weren't armed. They went up; they might have had one active missile, but what are you going to do if you're unarmed? And if you are armed, what are my responsibilities? What are my rules when it comes to my own people on an aircraft?

Devereux: Did it take a long time to figure that out?

Murgatroyd: Later on that day, notification and an authority for shoot down was given to the First Air Force commander, to General Arnold.

Devereux: Still, who wants to be on the end of that trigger?

Murgatroyd: That's right.

Devereux: Oh, my goodness. So there's this chaos of getting everything on the ground. When do you finally get to go home?

Murgatroyd: I think I probably went home, probably 11:00 that evening. We started shifting for real, calling people back in out of leave that hadn't been there for the exercise. Everybody had to come back. And then we went into pretty much twenty-four-hour Groundhog Day [the same day, over and over] mode.

I shifted about twelve hours a day with my other lieutenant colonel counterpart and tried to help as we could with the scenarios that our aviation friends decided that they needed to do to defend the United States and transfer assets around—real assets, real munitions now, rather than paper assets—to get them to where we thought they needed to be.

Devereux: You don't have munitions necessarily pre-positioned at the point of need; they've got to come from other places.

Murgatroyd: Not always. At an Air National Guard fighter base, for example, in Springfield or someplace in the United States, if it's not on an active base—and most of the Air Guard bases are not on active bases—it's a problem to have real munitions there because of the area that you need clear around them. So in a lot of cases, those munitions are pre-positioned in another place. So you have to get them to the Air Guard base, so that they can be uploaded on the Air Guard airplanes.

Devereux: You've got to move bullets to load the guns.

Murgatroyd: Right.

Devereux: What about relationship with the civilian authorities, like the FAA? Was there a lot of contact going back and forth on September eleventh?

Murgatroyd: The operators are; it wasn't on the logistics side. But yeah, there's quite a bit. And I've been told—although I wasn't at different Air National Guard bases that day, or for the next week—but I've been told that the local [air traffic] controllers, the local aircraft, the local airport authorities at XYZ airport that housed Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve units, did everything. Just

whatever you need, you've got it, because there wasn't going to be a whole lot of civilian activity anyway. So, whatever you need, you guys just go do it; we'll help you out.

By the same token, the Air Guard units—Air Force Reserve, too, but mostly Air National Guard units—that were not formally under first Air Force, they were not our wings, if you will, for defense of the United States. They were, in a lot of cases, operationally tagged to go somewhere else if their number was called. But they still had capability for aircraft, for air defense. They were putting airplanes in the air all the time, saying, "Whatever you need, we've got it up in the air." People from Wisconsin were calling, people from Colorado checking in, saying, "We've got aircraft; just tell us where you need to be."

Devereux: So, there were a lot of subordinate commanders just making ad hoc decisions, trying to get things up in the air.

Murgatroyd: Yeah, initially. Get stuff in the air and say, "Hey, what do you need me to do?"

Devereux: So, you've just been in the frying pan, and now you're going to transfer to (laughs) the hot seat, just in time to spin up for offensive operations outside the United States.

Murgatroyd: Right. When I was finally able, about five or six days later, six days later, lucky enough to have the movers come back on and finish packing my house, because they had to come back onto an Air Force base that had now been shut down…

Devereux: Right. Getting a civilian truck onto an Air Force base with no clearances (laughs).

Murgatroyd: …trying to figure out whether it's a terrorist or not, because at the time everything was a terrorist. I was lucky enough to live next door on base to the commander of the security forces for Tyndall Air Force Base, and he was a good friend. So he and I met my moving van at the front gate at Tyndall and escorted them personally across base a couple miles, to my house. We watched as it was loaded, and then we escorted it back off base, so that no one could say they weren't there with any authority.

Devereux: Those guys might have been the only unauthorized civilians on Tyndall (laughs).

Murgatroyd: Could have been, unless they were supplying food to the commissary. Then we left Tyndall because I was supposed to report to Air Mobility Command Headquarters at Scott—I was actually supposed to report, I think, the fourteenth—but delayed that and got to Scott on the seventeenth or eighteenth and checked in and then went to work the very next day. And two people I didn't know… They knew I was coming, and I had talked with them on the phone, but this was a different organization completely. It's Air Mobility. Air

Mobility consists of cargo aircraft and tanker aircraft and the people that support it, rather than fighter aircraft, which was First Air Force, and a totally different mission and a different mindset, if you will. But it's active duty now.

I remember my first brush with my active duty boss, the general, General Pete Hennessey, an active duty guy who was in charge of logistics for Air Mobility Command. I showed up the next morning and walked into his office and told him, "Sir, here I am, and I'm ready to go." The first things out of his mouth were not, "Welcome, Tom," or "How was your trip?" or anything; it's, "Get to work and catch up." (both laugh) That was it.

Trying to, a) learn my duties, and then to try to coordinate what the active duty air mobility command needed with twenty-two Air Guard bases that I was unfamiliar with because they were cargo bases, to coordinate with them on what they could do for the Air Force on cargo and tanker missions. So, the change was supporting fighter aircraft flying combat air patrols over the United States and defending the United States, to supporting tanker aircraft who are also in the air all the time, but supplying gas to those fighters who are defending the United States. So there's two different caps.

Devereux: Right. We're in a period of active operations in Afghanistan, less than a month after 9/11. Were there a lot of assets from Air Mobility Command involved in that?

Murgatroyd: Yeah, the first ones on the ground are Air Mobility Command assets because you've got to have cargo there to bring whatever the fighters are going to need or whatever the Army or the Marines need. The Air Mobility Command, huge; I don't even know the numbers—I used to know these because we used to have to spout them out quite a bit—I don't know how many sorties; I don't know how many tons… Millions of tons of cargo moved in such a short period of time, over there to support the buildup.

Devereux: When you had a briefing, you were getting questions like, "What do you got for me? What can we send? What's ready to go?"

Murgatroyd: Pretty much. As I said, the Air Mobility Command, part of the United States Air Force, had for years depended and worked very closely with the Air National Guard side of the flying house, of tankers and cargo, because they had realized a long time ago that the Air Force, on the active side, didn't have enough air frames to move and to tank as many aircraft as they would have to do, even in the war that we were fighting, that we were preparing for that wasn't going to happen. So, they had, over the years, developed a relationship with the Air National Guard cargo and tanker community that was a lot more easygoing, a lot more collegial. They worked with them all the time because they had to. So, it was an easy transition to step up to a war footing.

Devereux: It wasn't like Air Mobility Command was sitting on its thumbs at this time; it'd been conducting no-fly zones in north and southern Iraq for a decade, and that was no small piece.

Murgatroyd: Exactly. They had stepped it up. They just had to step it up a little bit more and go to some exponential portion. But it wasn't from a standing start.

Devereux: Maybe just to wind things down a little bit, tell me how your career finished itself out (both laugh).

Murgatroyd: As I said, I've been so fortunate to work with so many good people. Having had the opportunity to be so many years on the fighter side, supporting fighter operations in the Air Guard, and then to turn around and to, if you will, learn a different language on the cargo side, it was probably most rewarding to be able to… A lot guys, a lot of folks that stay with one aircraft or one type of aircraft only know that community; they know the fighters. If you're an F-16 maintenance officer or pilot, you just know those guys. If you're a KC-135 guy, you probably just know your tanker community.

But I had been able to move back and forth, and I felt very fortunate to be able to do that, and was able, during the time I was at Scott Air Force Base as the Air National Guard advisor, through a lot of support by the Air National Guard headquarters, out in DC, I was able to serve on different committees and different working groups and help nationally, I think, a little bit, to better position the Air Guard for the future.

I was able to be the acting director of logistics for the Air Guard. Then later on, I was acting director of aircraft maintenance for the entire Air Guard. I was able to understand a little bit more the entire flying community and the support for it, rather than just one small proportion of it.

Devereux: In your den there's a picture of an aircraft with some penguins. Do you want to tell me about that? (both laugh)

Murgatroyd: Once again, just what a fortunate moment to be able to make these relationships with the Air Guard wings under me. One of the wings in the Air Mobility side of the house in the Air Guard is the 109th Airlift Wing out of Schenectady, New York. Their role is polar airlift. They're the only military unit that flies ski-equipped aircraft. They support Greenland and the Arctic mission, but their biggest role is supporting Antarctica, McMurdo [Military Base] and the entire continent of Antarctica.

An LC-130 sits on the ice in Antarctica in 2003.

As a result of working with them on myriads of maintenance issues, I was asked by their leadership, would I like to deploy with them and be an aircraft maintenance officer on the ice in Antarctica. I said, "Sure." (both laugh) [I] said, "Heck yes. When do I leave?" Because everyone's goal, if

you're in the military, is to not be behind a desk. You do it if you have to, but if you're given the opportunity to not be there and actually go out and do what you're trained to do and to get in the field… I said, "Sure." So I deployed. I was lucky enough to deploy with the 109th guys to Antarctica, three different years, three different seasons. I went in the fall of '03, which down there is summer, October of '03. I went again in '05, 2005, and my last deployment was in 2006.

Devereux: No matter what else goes on, on your gravestone, I think you should put, "And I went to Antarctica," (both laughs) because how many people can say that?

Tom Murgatroyd, on the coast of Antarctica in 2005.

Murgatroyd: Not very many. There's a small number. It's getting to be more and more because it's easier to get there. People are going there on tours, but not necessarily where we were, because we transitioned in from Christchurch, New Zealand. Most of the tours

But it's kind of neat to say that you've been to the pole three different times. And I love it down there. It is something that, if everybody would have an opportunity to go, you should never pass up. It's a very harsh but beautiful, beautiful continent.

Devereux: I'm going to ask you just a few more questions about the War on Terror. What I'm interested in here is, there are a few themes that we're kind of thinking about as we talk to different interviewees kind of across the spectrum of experience. These are more like feeling questions about policies and stuff like that, so feel free to answer these how you internalized these things, okay?

Murgatroyd: All right. Can we stop for a minute?

Devereux: Yeah, no problem.

(pause in recording)

Devereux: All right. Do you think that the role of religion in the War on Terror has been downplayed at all in the United States?

Murgatroyd: I see the news just like anyone else does, that occasionally someone will try to make a point about it being a war about religion. I don't think that you and I and the normal Joe on the street thinks it is or cares that it is.

Devereux: Did you ever feel like you were fighting a religious war…

Murgatroyd: No.

Devereux: …or a religious warrior of any kind?

Murgatroyd: No, not at all.

Devereux: Not at all. And how about OPTEMPO?[1] Did you feel like you had what you needed all the time?

Murgatroyd: Yes, I really do. I think we were able to optimize everything that we had and to finally prove that, not only did we have what we needed, but we could actually use more and more modernization to all of our equipment. I think no military person, no logistician, no flyer will ever have exactly what he wants or as much as he thinks he needs. But I think the American public more than anything is convinced or—how shall I say?—they're appeased by the fact that our military knows what it's doing and has been able to use what the public has given them.

Devereux: I think this is a particularly relevant lesson the last couple of weeks, that even a small thing, like taking out one guy, this is a huge endeavor, over time with lots of people and lots of pieces.[2]

Murgatroyd: Sure. Oh, yeah, right. You and I both, will have no idea. How long has this been going on? There are probably so many little threads to this that we'll never know. How big has this operation been that's been operating parallel to whatever we've been doing, Iraq, Afghanistan, global war on everywhere? This has been chugging along the whole way. This is the other operation; we really needed to get this done. Forget about the rest of the stuff; this needs to happen.

Devereux: Did that generate some good feelings for you, to see that finished?

Murgatroyd: Oh, yeah, sure.

Devereux: How about the justification for the [Iraq] war? Do you feel like the conflicts we were involved in have been justified?

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1 OPTEMPO, operational tempo, is the pace of an operation or operations. It includes all of the activities the unit is conducting and can be a single activity or a series of operations. (https://www.acronymslist.com/search2.php)

2 In a dramatic late-night broadcast on May 2, 2011, President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. military and CIA operatives located and killed Osama bin Laden, the al Qaeda leader, in a nighttime raid on a compound in Pakistan where he had been hiding. (https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/obama-announces-death-of-osama-bin-laden-video)

Murgatroyd: Well, first of all, not that I can, but I hate the term "Global War on Terror," GWOT. Terror is a tactic. Terror is not a country (both laugh). Terror is not a people. Terror is not a thought. Terror is a tactic. We should call it the global war on extremists we don't like or extremists that don't like us, in any case. I think as far as the intelligence was there, we probably did what was needed. I'm not convinced now—you know, hindsight nine years later is always great—I'm not convinced now that we ever should have gone to war or declared a war in Iraq. That's not the United States that I grew up in, that we actually take offensive action against a sovereign state.

Devereux: In your mind, then, there's a difference between justification for war in Iraq as opposed to Afghanistan or against the terrorists specifically?

Murgatroyd: Yes, I believe so. Based on what I've seen or read, I think there was, there always has been, a pretty good justification for being in Afghanistan, just because of where our enemies, the bad guys, the guys who used terror as a tactic, they operate out of there. I don't know that we've ever had definitive evidence that they were ever in Iraq. There was just a thug in Iraq [Saddam Hussein] that we didn't like, and we didn't take him out when we had the opportunity, back in the '90s. So, 2003, here's a good opportunity to get rid of him.

Devereux: For the Air Force especially, that wasn't a two-part mission; that was one continuous mission from the Gulf War until…

Murgatroyd: Yeah, right, and it still is. It's still just one continuing global reach operation to make sure that the entire chain of blankets, you know, bullets and beans are supported. Where the bullets are being expended is not up to a logistician; it's just getting them there.

Devereux: It's very popular in the media now to make comparisons between what we're doing now and Vietnam. You uniquely have some experience in both arenas. What do you think about those comparisons?

Murgatroyd: I was a Vietnam-era veteran. I make sure people understand that. I didn't serve in Vietnam; I served during Vietnam. I think that we jump to conclusions as a country a lot quicker than we need to. Although some of the tactics are different than were in Vietnam, it bothers me that we seem to think—Americans, generally and our elected leaders, specifically—seem to think that we are the world's policemen. We aren't. We shouldn't be. We somehow have grown into that role, I think, and we assumed it, but in this day and age, in this economic structure, in this world economy, I don't know that anyone has elected us to be in charge of the world.

Devereux: Is that kind of a mission sustainable in the long term?

Murgatroyd: I don't think it is. I don't think it is militarily.

Devereux: You've seen firsthand… You know what it does to military families. Do you think that it erodes over time?

Murgatroyd: Sure it does, most definitely. In Vietnam, the typical guy would go overseas for thirteen months; that would be the tour. He would transition in by himself or with two or three guys. He would associate with a unit. He would serve his year, the thirteen months. He would transition out in the dead of night, by himself or with a couple other. They'd come back.

The people back home, really, except if they were his neighbor or knew him, they wouldn't know that he was gone. They would know that a war was going overseas, but they didn't feel it as they do now, because now we have had to rely, as a country, on the Guard and Reserve, on our Reserve components, so much to prosecute these wars overseas.

We're deploying them properly, I think. We are deploying units rather than onesies and twosies. You know, Jimmy and Susie are not going by themselves; they're going with their unit. Whether it's an Army unit or an Air Force unit or an Air National Guard unit or whatever, they're going, and they're coming back together, and they're serving together.

The problem is they are going so often because the active component—the active Air Force, the active Army—has not properly sustained themselves. If we need to be the world's policemen, if we need to be in all these countries that most of us can't pronounce, then we need to fund active duty organizations to do that.

Devereux: Just making sure that I understand you correctly, you're saying that the active duty still has the war fighting mission and is keeping that capability…

Murgatroyd: I believe it does.

Devereux: …and passing the policing piece off to the Reserves.

Murgatroyd: I think in a lot of ways they do. And Reserves and Guardsmen, the leaders of the Guard, don't want to be the first person to raise their hand and say, "We can't do it anymore." The first person who says, "We can't do it" doesn't get funded. He doesn't get equipment. He's kicked around in the washroom, "You can't say that." We can always do anything; we volunteer for everything. Everyone wants to step forward, lean forward. I used to say, "If you're leaning so far forward all the time, one of these days you're going to fall on your face."

Devereux: So the National Guard has always had a role, at the state level, to kind of be the labor force whenever there's an emergency.

Murgatroyd: Still will.

Devereux: Maybe that's just enlarged itself to a global concept now.

Murgatroyd: It has. The Guard has a dual mission. It is a state organization, beholden to the governor for state emergencies. For example, right now, and whenever this is airing, we'll probably… If it's the spring, whenever, it'll happen again (both laugh). There's a flood every spring in the Mississippi, Missouri, Illinois

Rivers, and the governor will use Guardsmen to help with that. That's part of our role.

But on the national side, on the U.S. side, we report through different chains of command, Army or Air, whatever, to the Department of Defense and to the president. I think at some point, we need to realize that the defense of the United States, the defense of the actual homeland, is the Air Guard and the Army Guard's role. And forward deploying to do an active duty guy's job all the time, because the active duty has not asked to have more active duty guys, is not our role. That's my personal opinion.

Devereux: So there's an imbalance then in the force structure.

Murgatroyd: It is.

Devereux: I really want to thank you for contributing to this project and also, of course, your contributions to the defense of our country. It's been a privilege to talk to you. Like I said, I'm really amazed at the breadth of your career and the different things you got to do. It's a great, great, great example.

Murgatroyd: I don't know who said it, but "Part of life is showing up," [Woody Allen] And I just showed up for a lot of years (both laugh).

Devereux: Well, I appreciate it, Tom. Thank you very much.

Murgatroyd: Thank you.

(end of transcript)