

## 774 EXPEDITIONARY AIRLIFT SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

774 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 19 May 1943  
Activated, 1 Aug 1943  
Inactivated, 25 Sep 1945  
Redesignated 774 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 1 Dec 1952  
Activated, 16 Jan 1953  
Redesignated 774 Tactical Airlift Squadron  
Inactivated  
Redesignated 774 Expeditionary Airlift Squadron

#### STATIONS

Geiger Field, WA, 1 Aug 1943  
Rapid City AAB, SD, Aug 1943  
MacDill Field, FL, 4 Nov 1943  
Lakeland AAFld, FL, 2 Jan 1944-2 Feb 1944  
Celone Airfield, Italy, 18 Mar 1944-25 Sep 1945  
Memphis Mun Aprt, TN, 16 Jan 1953  
Ardmore AFB, OK, 10 Aug 1953  
Sewart AFB, TN, 15 Dec 1958  
Langley AFB, VA, 1 Jul 1963-23 Nov 1965  
Clark AB, Philippines, 15 Jul 1968-15 Sep 1972

Dyess AFB, TX, 1 Aug 1973

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

463 Bombardment Group, 1 Aug 1943-25 Sep 1945

463 Troop Carrier Group, 16 Jan 1953

463 Troop Carrier Wing, 25 Sep 1957

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-17, 1943-1945

C-119, 1953-1957

C-130, 1956

### **COMMANDERS**

Lt Col Elmer H. Cryer

Lt Col Roland R. Jehl

### **HONORS**

#### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

Air Offensive, Europe

Rome-Arno

Normandy

Northern France

Southern France

North Apennines

Rhineland

Central Europe

Po Valley

Air Combat, EAME Theater

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

Ploesti, Rumania, 18 May 1944

Germany, 24 Mar 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

15 Dec 1960-1 Apr 1961

### **EMBLEM**



774 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy)

774 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium emblem: Quarterly sable and argent in the first quarter three aircraft silhouettes one and two of the second; in the second and third quarters a silhouette of a four-leaf clover vert; in the fourth quarter in bend two open parachutes one dropping a soldier and the other materiel of the second. (Approved, 14 Sep 1953)



774 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium



774 Tactical Airlift Squadron

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

Combat in MTO and ETO, 30 Mar 1944-26 Apr 1945. Transported men and materiel in support of the crises in Lebanon, Jul 1958; Taiwan, Aug 1958; Berlin, Sep 1961; Cuba, Oct- Nov 1962.

Thirteen AAFB airmen escaped injury or death in a crash, Thursday, March 3, 1955, of C-119G (51-7995A) at Hagerstown Municipal Airport, Maryland. The 774th TCS aircraft touched down short of the runway, bounced, and the right landing gear collapsed as it settled to the runway. The aircraft skidded to within 40 feet of several parked C-119s. The crew exited without injuries. Although all switches were off, the right engine continued to run and backfire at various rpms, sending pieces of the propeller through the aircraft as it chopped the runway. In a few minutes, the aircraft caught fire in the cabin and cargo area and was totally destroyed. The plane was carrying three extra crews to receive new aircraft from the Fairchild Aircraft Corporation at Hagerstown.

19 March 1954 A USAF Fairchild C-119F-FA Flying Boxcar, 51-7993, of the 774th Troop Carrier Squadron, Ardmore Air Force Base, Oklahoma, en route from Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, to Mitchel Air Force Base, Long Island, New York, crashes into a rain-swept cornfield 19 miles S of Annapolis, Maryland, killing all 18 on board. It had departed Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, D.C., after refueling at 2212 hrs. A watch found in the wreckage had stopped at 2229 hrs. A spokesman at Bolling said that there were twelve passengers and six crewmen aboard. There were 11 Air Force personnel, five U.S. Navy, and one Marine on board. Witnesses reported that the aircraft was on fire before the crash and appeared to have exploded. The plane grazed the edge of a wooded area just off Maryland Route 2 before it impacted. Twisted wreckage and bodies were strewn over a ten-acre area. A heavy rain aided firemen in

preventing the fire from getting out of hand. A detachment of sailors and Marines from the U. S. Naval Academy at Annapolis stood guard over the area as a group of investigators from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, examined the wreckage for clues to the cause of the tragedy.

The 774th Troop Carrier Sq. carried the usual procedure of adopting a unit insignia a step further some years ago and had a flag made bearing their "Green Weasel" and have flown it wherever duty has taken them throughout the world. Their fraternal allegiance for the organizational colors has produced some unusual, more often hilarious, results.

A chronology of events in which flying the flag played the dominant role compiled by a 774th Squadron member reflects the following:

October 1959: This flag successfully hoisted over Ft Campbell, Ky., in the evening after the American flag had been lowered. It was recovered after an encounter with Army military police and "necessary" correspondence with the post commander.

Year 1960: Various small "brush fire" skirmishes with Air Force and Army troops at far flung posts and fields. Natives of Greece expressed some displeasure at flying of the flag from the 5th floor of the Acropole Palace Hotel in Athens. Flag was successfully smuggled out of the country later in the year.

January 1961: Squadron deployed to base in Southeast Asia with flag proudly flying from hatch of lead aircraft while taxiing. A dark moment occurred when it blew off the flagstaff and was run over by succeeding 16 aircraft

April 1961: Flag was carried on exercise deployment to Clark AB, R.P., where "fighter" types demonstrated disrespect for the "Green Weasel" by jumping up and down on it with their shoes on. Fraternal discussion resulted and flag's honor was upheld.

May 1961: Carried flag on visit to Wake Island. After nine days FAA forces capitulated to its "charm" and bestowed generous privileges on squadron members. Action will long be remembered.

Year 1962: France. Final report on casualties of persons showing disrespect for flag not yet available; still being received. Terrorism of troops there ended with unit's departure.

Year 1966: At Mactan. Members are trying to find out what happened to their flag. Peace. They haven't found it yet.

The idea for the Four Horsemen, the world's only four-engine-per-aircraft flight demonstration team sprang from some pilots looking to fill time. The C-130A Hercules first entered US Air Force operational service at Ardmore AFB, Oklahoma, in December 1956. "In early 1957, four of

us were at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, for a week to drop Army paratroopers,” recalls Jim Akin, one of the Horsemen. “One of the scheduled drops was cancelled because of high winds. So, we said, ‘Let’s go fly formation.’ We needed to log formation time and flight hours.” The four pilots—Akin, Gil Sanders, Jim Fairbanks, and Gene Chaney—were all Air Force captains, aircraft commanders, and qualified instructor pilots.

Assigned to the 774th Troop Carrier Squadron, the first operational C-130A unit, each of them had logged roughly fifty flight hours in the brand-new Hercules. They started in loose formation in the airspace over Kentucky and Tennessee but gradually brought their aircraft closer and closer together. “We discovered we really liked flying formation,” recalls Akin. The foursome made a couple of low passes in close formation over Fort Campbell before landing. A second cancelled paratroop drop later that week led to a second formation flight. The idea for a C-130 demonstration team had been planted.

It would take more than a year to come to fruition. The Horsemen Mount Up Returning home to Ardmore, Chaney and Akin, along with several other pilots, would practice formation maneuvers on training missions or when they were deployed. “A group of us liked to fly formation, and we would go out and try maneuvers to see if they worked and we could do them safely,” notes Bill Hatfield, one of the copilots on the first flight, and who would eventually become the team’s regular slot pilot. At that time, Tactical Air Command, the forerunner of today’s Air Combat Command, operated the Air Force’s fighters—and the C-130 fleet. In early 1958, the nascent team seized an opportunity for its first demonstration.

The parent unit of the 774th TCS, the 463rd Troop Carrier Wing, was tasked to put up all thirty-six of its assigned C-130s for a mass flyby at a ceremony at Ardmore. Most of TAC leadership would be in attendance. “We asked our wing commander if we could do something special at the end of the flyby,” Akin recalls. “As we flew past, the four of us broke out, came back in a diamond formation, scorched over the field at about 300 knots at low altitude, and closed with a bomb-burst maneuver,” said Akin.

“The crowd was expecting the Hercules to come lumbering by. But we wanted to show them what the aircraft could really do.” For that show, the team called themselves the Thunderweasels, combining the name of TAC’s premier fighter demonstration team, the Thunderbirds, with the nickname of the 774th TCS, the Green Weasels. Although the Thunderweasels name raised more than a few official eyebrows, the demonstration had been a huge hit. A Full Show Sparked by their performance at Ardmore, enthusiasm began to build. Eventually, the pilots began seriously working up what evolved into a twenty three minute show—and coming up with a new name. “We thought long and hard about it and finally settled on the Four Horsemen after the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. There were four of us,” notes Akin. “The name fit.”

By late 1958, the team was ready for its first official show, which came at Sewart AFB, Tennessee, the team’s new home. Ardmore AFB was closing, and the 774th had been reassigned to the base near Nashville. The permanent Horsemen—Akin, Hatfield, Chaney, and Capt. David Moore—flew with a rotating cast of squadron copilots who were all aircraft commanders and instructor or standardization/evaluation pilots. For demos, the pilots also flew with a flight engineer and a scanner, normally an aircraft mechanic. “The enlisted crew members would just about get into fist fights trying to fly with us,” remembers copilot Bill Mills. “Their pride in what we were doing was top to bottom.”

To start the demonstration, the pilots, wearing scarves and a distinctive shoulder patch featuring the silhouette of a horse head with the Roman numeral IV in its neck, taxied out and lined up on the runway in a diamond formation. Normally, Moore, whom Mills described as “a very smooth pilot,” flew lead. Akin flew right wing, which the Horsemen called the number two position. Hatfield flew the slot, or number four position. Chaney, the team leader who had been the ferry pilot when the first operational C-130 was delivered from the then-Lockheed Georgia Company facility in Marietta, Georgia, flew the left wing, or number three position. “The left wing was the hardest position to fly,” said Hatfield. “The pilot had to look across the flight deck and out the right window the whole show to stay in position.”

The Four Horsemen would take off nearly simultaneously in about 1,500 feet. The slot aircraft, which was getting extra lift from the leader’s propwash, actually got airborne first, followed by the other three aircraft. Quickly retracting the landing gear, the four pilots would be in tight formation at 1,500 feet altitude over the end of the runway, climbing at 4,000 feet per minute. Next, the team made a left banking turn, repositioned, and flew in a close line astern, slightly stacked trail formation down the show line. That arrow formation was followed by the arrowhead formation, where lead and number two remained in trail formation, while the number three aircraft moved to the left wing of number two, and the slot moved off two’s right wing. After repositioning, the group made a flyby in the diamond formation.

The four pilots then transitioned to an echelon right formation to turn. Coming back toward the crowd at approximately 200 feet above the runway in the diamond, the team performed the bomb burst—what they called the Horsemen Burst—with the lead pilot pulling up and making a forty-five degree left climbing turn, while the right wing pulled up and made a ninety-degree right climbing turn. Left wing pulled up and turned ninety degrees to the left, while the slot climbed and made a forty-five degree turn to the right. After completing their turns, the pilots leveled off and returned to the original heading.

The team rejoined in the diamond, and then went to an extended trail formation. With sufficient spacing between the C-130s, the four pilots simultaneously broke to the left for landing. The Horsemen then touched down on alternate sides of the runway. The Horsemen Burst was performed approximately 200 feet above the runway, starting from the diamond formation. The Famous Horsemen Crowds everywhere were astonished. “The C-130A had a wingspan of 132 feet and weighed more than 100,000 pounds. But it could move,” notes John Dale, a Horsemen copilot. “It was very responsive, even flying past thirty degrees of bank. We were able to do the maneuvers because of that aircraft. It was the closest thing to a fighter I ever flew.”

But the wow factor was something the team had to work at. “We had to schedule two- to four-hour flights a couple of times a month to train for the maneuvers,” notes Akin. “We were working in Four Horsemen practice between operational missions and deployments. Anytime the four of us were somewhere, though, we flew a show. We didn’t have dedicated aircraft, so we flew whatever C-130 was available. We performed from Bangor to Bangkok.” Hatfield adds, “We didn’t fly standard formations, so we had to practice. Our show required a lot of concentration.” The two wingmen flew with barely ten feet of horizontal separation between their wingtips and the horizontal tail of the lead and at the same altitude. Hatfield, in the slot position, flew seven to ten feet behind and slightly above the lead.

“I had to fly on the lead and react to him. We weren’t that far apart. But we never had a

close call, and we never even scratched an aircraft.” As the team’s notoriety spread, airshow requests started coming in, including a surprisingly large number of requests from Strategic Air Command bomber bases. At that time, a fairly intense rivalry existed between the Air Force major commands that flew bombers and fighters. Many SAC base commanders simply preferred to see four engine “heavies” flying a demonstration versus single-engine fighters. The C-130 did make for a different kind of airshow.

At one demo, lead had to shut down an engine. The Horsemen continued on as if nothing had happened. By late 1959, sales of the C-130, both in the US and internationally, were starting to pick up. Lockheed capitalized on the popularity of the Four Horsemen by producing promotional items as sales tools. Today, a Lockheed postcard showing the Horsemen in formation occasionally turns up on online auction sites and usually sells for about \$30. Lockheed also made a documentary called Hercules And The Four Horsemen. Thousands of feet of footage were shot of the team flying their demonstration over the Grand Canyon and near Williams AFB outside Phoenix, Arizona.

The result was a movie the Horsemen really disliked. The movie producers used actors, including one with a harsh voice, to spout ridiculous dialog, rather than use the crisp, precise radio calls the Horsemen actually made. That was irritating, but what was particularly galling to the team was that most of the footage was shot at an altitude of 10,000 feet so the aircraft would appear against the clouds. “We flew at 500 to 1,000 feet during our shows,” notes Akin. “We never flew for shows as high as we did for that movie.” Despite its faults, the fifteen minute film is the only official visual record of the Four Horsemen in action. The pinnacle of Horsemen history came when the team appeared on the 18 January 1960 cover of Aviation Week and Space Technology magazine, regarded as the world’s leading aviation publication. Ironically, shortly after that, the team was disbanded.

A number of factors led to the demise of the Horsemen. Some issues were political: For instance, when Chaney was asked if he would like to fly a dedicated C-130 as a support aircraft for the Thunderbirds, he said no. Separately, Congress, following Senator William Proxmire’s lead, refused to allocate money for additional flying hours to practice because the team was seen as frivolous. Other factors were operational: The Horsemen were all overdue to rotate to other assignments. “The C-130 was heavily tasked for operations at that point,” recalls Akin. “Even though preliminary plans had been made for the team to have five permanently assigned C-130s, the aircraft was just too valuable to dedicate to a demonstration team. Those plans were quickly killed.” The main reason for the end of the Horsemen, though, was the advent of the C-130B. By spring 1960, the Hercules squadrons at Sewart were rapidly converting to the B-model.

“The B-model Hercules had a number of features that made it better for long missions,” notes Hatfield. “It had different engines and propellers, and much lower hydraulic pressure on the controls. It was not as responsive as the C-130A and just not as good for formation flying. We tried to use the B-model for the Four Horsemen, but it simply didn’t fly like the A-model.” Once the Four Horsemen rode no more, the aircrew members went their separate ways. Chaney and Moore have both passed away.

Akin, who flew B-24s and P-38s during World War II before reentering the Air Force, retired after a twenty-eight year service career. Hatfield, who first served as an enlisted cryptographer, spent most of his twenty-eight year career in C-130s. He was also part of the initial cadre of Air



Force pilots to fly the C-141 Starlifter. Among the Horsemen copilots, Mills, who had been an enlisted radio operator in the Berlin Airlift, went on to serve as the commander of the first C-130 squadron equipped with the All-Weather Aerial Delivery System during his thirty-six year Air Force career. John Dale was in charge of DC-130 drone director operations during Operation Linebacker in Vietnam. He also commanded a U-2 squadron and was later director of reconnaissance at 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force headquarters during his thirty-two year career. From the first practice to the last show, the Four Horsemen flew fifteen official airshows and additional demos when the four pilots were deployed. But the effect the team had was lasting. "What we did was prove to the rest of the Air Force, and, more importantly, to the Army, what the C-130 was capable of doing. That was shown during the Vietnam War," notes Akin. "And the C-130 is still showing that capability today." 2010



Co-pilot Doug Vogelsang (right) checks flight procedures with Major Kinel as the flyers prepare to leave on the one and a half hour Mactan to Clark AB courier flight.



Navigator John Nitchse checks the Form \*F\* to learn the nature of the cargo and the number of

passengers aboard the C-130 courier flight.



Flight Engineer (Loadmaster) Art Doyle gets his C-130 cargo area ready for the goods and passengers that will be loaded aboard the courier aircraft for the flight back to Mactan.

We're going up to Tay Ninh for emergency airlift of wounded," Maj. Desmond Eynouf commented, "would you like to join us?" That was the beginning of 13% hours of a flying experience that taught me the realities of the Vietnam war. "We'll be leaving about 4 p.m.," Major Eynouf added, "but we should head out to the plane about 2:30 or so." Explaining the tactical airlift mission of the 463d Troop Carrier Wing was really what I wanted to do... I was anxious to be included in this particular mission. "Tay Ninh is about 47 miles northwest of Saigon," 2d Lt. John Hamilton, navigator, commented.

"We're supposed to pick up some litter and ambulatory patients," flight engineer SSgt. Charlie Woods added. "How long will we be flying," I asked apprehensively. "Well, our normal crew days is 12 hours," co-pilot 1st Lt. Pete Wadsworth explained, "but these C-130 shuttle runs often go more than 12 hours." "Well," I cheerfully added, "I like to fly, so that's no problem." "I'll take you out there now," Loadmaster A2C John Wagner offered, "if you're ready to go." I was ready... and eager to see the 774th Troop Carrier Squadron flight crew in action. No cargo was loaded at Tan Son Nhut by A1C Wes Burnett. Major Eynouf backed the big C-130 onto the

ramp, then taxied down the runway... got take-off clearance... and headed for Tay Ninh. Enroute Lieutenant Hamilton gave navigational instructions and added.

"Sir, there was some firing yesterday in the area, let's call Paris and get clearance to Tay Ninh." "Okay, John," Major Eynouf answered, "and watch our altitude, two of our birds were hit by small arms fire yesterday." A quick radio check was made and the report returned that Tay Ninh was clear at this time. About 15 minutes after take-off Major Eynouf flew the C-130 into Tay Ninh on a tactical landing, maneuvering the airlifter over the Viet Cong infested area like a fighter aircraft... set it down gently on the improved runway... reversed the props... and taxied to a stop in front of the desolate Tay Ninh base operations. Battle weary soldiers stood around, waiting for the helicopters that whirled around the area to pick them up for another round of action. While waiting for the wounded men to be brought from the field hospital. Major Eynouf and his crew glanced at the barren Tay Ninh facilities... then turned to the pre-flight duties.

Airman Wagner spent the entire trip in-flight hooking up the special litter racks and arranging the seats for the patients. Now he rushed to the task of making final preparations before the ambulances arrived. An exhausted looking young PFC walked up to 1st Lt. Earle Monroe, co-pilot on training with Major Eynouf. "I just found out this morning that my R & R starts today... is it possible I could bum a ride with you to Bien Hoa?" His eyes showed the weariness of battle, the emptiness of his lonely duty, the absence of youth that showed his age. The crew all looked at the young soldier sympathetically... then they began offering suggestions as to the best way to get to Bien Hoa.

"We're going to Vung Tau from here," Lieutenant Wadsworth explained, "and from there to Nha Trang and Qui Nhon I don't think we'll be able to do you any good... we won't be back to Tan Son Nhut until two or three in the morning." "You might try to catch a ride to Tan Son Nhut with a later shuttle," Sergeant Woods added, "then check with the helicopter people, they make runs to Bien Hoa..." Even though the C-130 crew was trying its best to help the battle worn young man... it seemed there was nothing they could do for him... and PFC Dennis Condon, 11th Armed Cavalry, slung his M-16 over his shoulder, thanked the crew, and wearily stumbled back to the base ops building.

Soon the patients arrived in the ambulances... and were gingerly transferred to the waiting C-130... Major Eynouf watched the men enter the aircraft... then along with the rest of the crew, climbed back into his position, ready to resume the mission. After taking off, being careful to avoid any possible sniper fire, Major Eynouf pulled the aircraft to a safe altitude and headed for Vung Tau, on the coast of South Vietnam southeast of Saigon, where a modern hospital awaited the patients. "You'll probably be back," an Army medic yelled just before leaving, "we still have more wounded near Tay iNnh mountain." C-130 crews operating out of Det. 5, 315th Air Division's C-130 Operations, answer the call for supply or personnel deliveries as requested. "While at Tan Son Nhut," Major Eynouf explained, "we come under operational control of the 834th Air Division and are assigned to Detachment 5, 315th Air Division. When at our regular duty stations, in our case Mactan AB, R.P., we're under the 463d Troop Carrier Wing."

The C-130 rumbled along from Vung Tau to Nha Trang... where the cargo might be different... but the mission the same... provide United States Army and Air Forces in the Republic of Vietnam the fastest supply delivery possible... to keep the fight for freedom going. When I commented at the beginning of the flight that I like flying... I meant it... but when we returned to Tan Son Nhut at 3:30 am. the next day... I was completely exhausted. "Burnett."

Lieutenant Wadsworth joked on the way back to the government leased hotel in Saigon, “we flying jocks have decided to get together and do a story about how you ground pounders flake out when the going gets rough ... we saw you sleeping on the way back from Qui Nhon.” That’s right, I did some sleeping... how the flight crews manage to carry on the 12 hour missions day in and day out is a marvel to me... but it’s a good thing they can do it.

It begins like any airlift mission in the Air Force. It might be classified as strictly routine, a ‘breeze’, or to use the most common term, a ‘milk run’. Mission # 155, flown by the 463d Troop Carrier Wing’s 774th Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS), is more than a ‘milk run’, according to Lt. Col. Robert Regan, 774th TCS “Green Weasels” commander. “This mission supports the United States Air Force at Mactan on a day to day basis,” Colonel Regan explains. A typical 774th TCS courier flight begins inside the big C-130 airlifter on the Mactan flight line where maintenance men preflight the aircraft while crew members receive initial flight briefing for the trip to Clark Air Base. Maj. Jerry Kinel, 774th TCS aircraft commander, briefs his crew prior to takeoff as the airmen make preparations for the flight.

On this particular flight, Maj. Walter Kaczarel, the chief of 463d TCW Standardization and Evaluation, flies with the courier to evaluate Major Kinel during the hour and one-half trip. In addition to the supplies transported, the courier flight is also used by the 463d as a training flight to check pilots and navigators in flying procedures. Other Mactan squadrons fly the courier. Co-pilot Doug Vogelsang, Navigator John Nitsche, SSgt. Arthur Doyle, flight engineer, and A3C Robert Frost, load master, check the C-130 and load cargo and passengers aboard. At 7th Aerial Port, the passengers assemble for the trip to the aircraft. The passenger’s minds are filled with mixed emotions.

Some are returning home to the states, others are going on emergency leave back to sick relatives and still others are enroute to Vietnam, Japan, or perhaps just up to Clark AB for one or two day’s business. After a quick cup of coffee at the 774th TCS briefing room, the crew is driven to the aircraft where charts and flight gear are placed on board. Airman Frost buckles down the cargo for the trip while the remainder of the crew leaves the aircraft for a weather briefing at the base weather station and to check the ‘notams’ boards at the base operations building for a quick rundown on weather and conditions on the flight path to Clark AB. Since Mission # 155 is a training flight, Major Kaczarel constantly watches Major Kinel to see that he is performing flight procedures properly.

By 7 a m. the passengers board and the first of the four T-56 engines wind up the four-bladed prop to takeoff speed. The noise is nearly unbearable in the cargo compartment and for the 30 passengers it is evident the ‘milk run’ is no luxury flight. After a brief taxiing out to takeoff position the courier C-130 thunders down the Mactan runway and is airborne. “It’s a pretty routine flight. Navigator John Nitsche comments. “Often, however, the airways around Clark can get a bit crowded, so I’m always watching for other aircraft Flight Engineer Art Doyle is out of his seat preparing coffee. “I’m also the cook... how about a cup,” he says to an interested passenger who has dimed up on to the flight deck.

After making two passes at Clark AB, to check Major Kinel’s proficiency in landing approaches, the six C-130 wheels touch Clark’s 12,000 foot runway, the four props reverse and the ‘Hercules’ is stopped in a short distance as these assault airlifter pilots keep current on quick landing tactics. At Detachment 9, 315th Air Division, at Clark AB, Lt. Col. Robert Huffman,

detachment commander, informs Major Kinel that 429 pounds of mail will be sent back on the return trip to Mactan. Newspapers, food, base exchange items, and even milk is ready to go on for the flight at the Military Airlift Command (MAC) terminal. "The courier is one of the most heavily utilized airlifts with- in the 315th Air Division," Colonel Huffman comments. "More than 90 per cent of the available space is used to keep Mactan supplied with the essentials needed to run an air base." For Major Kinel and his crew, the pause at Clark AB offers a chance to eat breakfast, visit the Clark Base Exchange or just look around.

"It's relaxing to be able to stop here for a few hours and get a look at the base... one with conditions resembling those in the states...," Lieutenant Nitsche notes, as the taxi for the return to Detachment 9 slows to a stop. Mission # 155 appears lost among a vast array of F-4C 'Phantom' fighters, B-57 bombers, RB-47 weather ships and C-141 transports, but there is plenty of activity at the C-130 courier. A bright yellow fuel truck pours fuel into the 'Hercules' as pallets of cargo roll on board and are locked in place by sweating Loadmaster Frost. The pallets contain mail, newspapers, food for both the dining halls and Mactan snack bar, and parts for aircraft... all the things needed to sustain an air base...," Airman Frost explains. Soon the crew transport truck rolls up and Major Kind and crew jump out and climb into the 'Hercules'. Passengers arrive from the MAC terminal.

For them the trip is again filled with mixed emotions. Returning from TDY or perhaps beginning a 13-month Mactan tour. As the crew 'revs' the engines, Load- master Frost briefs the new load of passengers. "Is there anybody here newly assigned to Mactan?," he yells. An A3C type raises his hand in an unsure way. "Okay, we'll notify your outfit that you're coming," Airman Frost shouts, as he jots down details to give to Navigator John Nitsche. Airborne again, the C-130 cuts through the sky enroute to Mactan. Major Kaczarel congratulates Major Kinel on his good flight job during the check ride.

One and a-half hours later, Mission # 155 arrives at Mactan again. Scores of vehicles meet the aircraft as 'old timers' and newcomers get their bags and locate transportation to their units. For Major Kinel and crew the 14 hour day is ending. Their job is done. The # 155 mission will go again with a new crew and aircraft the next day. "It's the lifeline for Mactan," Major Kinel notes. "In that regard, I wonder if I got any mail?"

C-130 Aircrew Helps Close Down FOB Salerno Six airmen assigned to the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, plus their C-130, recently helped close down Forward Operating Base Salerno in eastern Afghanistan by flying out the last US military personnel from there, according to a Bagram release. "This mission was unique," said SSgt. Matt Pockette, C-130 loadmaster with the unit. "We had to deal with people walking up to the aircraft at the last minute to get on with extra baggage and cargo," he said in the Oct. 29 release. Overall, the C-130 lifted out 250 passengers, two all-terrain vehicles, and 2,500 pounds of baggage in support of closing down Salerno. "It feels good when you see how happy everyone is to get out of there," said SrA. Bradley Price, another C-130 loadmaster. Salerno had the nickname "Rocket City" for the number of rocket attacks it endured. 2013

A C-130H aircrew from the Georgia Air National Guard deployed with the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron stationed at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, performed a high-altitude airdrop mission on Aug. 26 to deliver eight bundles of food, water, clothes, and blankets to a remote

village in the northern part of the country. "These airdrop missions are challenging, and we enjoy that challenge," said Lt. Col. Tommy Atkinson, the C-130 aircraft commander. He added, "What may be lost on some people is how complicated these missions really are, because we've been doing them flawlessly for so long." The 774th EAS has been dropping an average of five to eight tons of supplies and equipment per mission. Such airdrops are vital to support coalition activities in otherwise difficult-to-access remote areas of the country.

**Air Guardsmen Deliver Forklift via Airdrop:** North Carolina Air National Guardsmen operating with the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, completed the first airdrop of their deployment last week by delivering a 12,000-pound forklift to an Army remote forward operating base in the country with one of their C-130s. "The reason we dropped the forklift is due to the fact of the prevalence of [improvised explosive devices] in the area and on the roads," said Maj. Jon Locklear, aircraft commander for the Nov. 23 mission. He added, "Being able to airdrop makes a big difference. It's something we really look forward to." Locklear said the Hercules aircrews train for airdrops "day-in, day-out back home," which for these Air Guardsmen is the 145th Airlift Wing in Charlotte. He credited the riggers, loadmasters, mission planners, and other airmen who made this mission a success. 2011

Almost two dozen C-130J aircraft and a full complement of air crew and maintenance personnel from the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing and the Rhode Island Air National Guard's 143rd Airlift Wing have arrived at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. They replaced C-130H Guard units from Alaska and New York and filled the ranks of the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron. "Our mission is airlift and airdrop to all the forward operating bases within country," said Lt. Col. Bill Willson, the 774th EAS commander and a C-130J pilot from the 146th Airlift Wing.

"The primary way the forward operating bases get supplies is by airlift or airdrop. We are their lifeline of sustainment." The Guard units previously assigned to that mission consistently performed at a high level, Willson said, but the newly arrived Airmen are ready to tackle the challenge and set the bar even higher since the C-130J is the most advanced model. In its first month alone, the 774<sup>th</sup> EAS flew more than 900 sorties with a 99.9 percent sortie effectiveness rate, completing approximately 40 airdrops and delivering more than 3,100 tons of cargo.

The C-130J incorporates state-of-the-art technology to reduce manpower requirements as well as operating and support costs. The aircraft's improved engines enable the J-model plane to climb faster and higher, fly farther at a higher cruise speed, and take off and land in a shorter distance. It also has 15 extra feet in the fuselage, increasing useable space in the cargo compartment. "These airplanes are considerably more capable than the H-model," Willson said.

"It's the equivalent of adding an additional engine and two pallet positions. It can carry approximately 40 percent more load, giving us a much higher fully mission capable rate. We can actually do the same job with 10 [J-models] that it takes 15 [H-models] to do." One of the more significant aircraft improvements is the ability to more accurately airdrop from high altitudes, which makes missions safer for the air crews, Willson said.

The C-130J is equipped with a sonde — a device attached to a parachute that takes wind readings every 500 feet and transmits the information back to the aircraft. The plane's computers then determine the optimal release point, which is accurate to within one meter.



The automated systems make the job smoother for 774th EAS loadmasters like Master Sgt. Jessica Barry of Rhode Island.

“The J makes my job much easier,” she said. “We have a computer that controls our load plan. We also have electric locks as opposed to ratchet locks. It’s a very efficient ‘push button’ system.” As a loadmaster, Barry is responsible for configuring and overseeing the loading of people and cargo on the aircraft. However, even though the J-model makes the job easier, there are unique challenges in Afghanistan.

Ordinarily the cargo and airdrop bundles are planned well in advance, and a computer determines how the items should be loaded onto the aircraft. “In this deployed environment, we get a lot of last-minute requests to add cargo,” Barry said. “So we have to manually figure out how to accommodate the additional weight. “We don’t mind though,” she said. “It’s very rewarding knowing we’re getting the troops on the ground what they need.” While the 774th EAS is composed of National Guard Airmen from different units and varying walks of life, they have deployed together since 2004 and consider themselves one big family. The continuity that comes with working with the same people for so long is something the loadmasters tout as a reason they operate like a well-oiled machine.

“There is a great chemistry here,” Barry said. “These guys are great to work with.” Master Sgt. Jason Sturtevant, a C-130J maintainer and crew chief from Rhode Island, echoed Barry’s sentiment. “We maintainers mesh very well,” he said. “They are very easy to work with. I noticed as soon as we got here, everybody just wanted to work together.” Maintainers service the aircraft and perform preflight, postflight and through-flight inspections. “We do everything from servicing hydraulic fluid to liquid oxygen,” Sturtevant said. “Basically, we look at the entire aircraft and its systems.”

The 20-year veteran said he finds the job highly rewarding. “I love watching these planes fly, knowing I’m helping the guys on the ground,” he said. “I feel like I’m directly contributing to the fight. I also take pride in keeping my air crews safe.” Willson also noted the sense of pride and dedication among the Airmen of his unit. “We all recognize the importance of coming here to do this mission.” Willson said.

“We have a tremendous sense of patriotism. Most of these people have very well-paying jobs on the outside, yet they still come here. They do this because they want to. The love of wearing the uniform and doing the job outweighs everything else.

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (AFNS) A C-130J Super Hercules comes to a screeching halt on a runway less than half the length of those typically used at stateside airfields. The cargo bay door is opened onto a pitch black airstrip – a shock for those used to seeing bright lights guiding pilots down the ramp. The airfield is near Farah, a remote location in western Afghanistan. For C-130J pilots belonging to the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron out of Bagram Airfield this is exactly the atypical situation they train for.

“The crews always love the challenge – getting the Herk dirty, that’s what we live for,” said Lt. Col. Sarah Santoro, the 774th EAS commander. Afghanistan has been called the “Herk’s Playground.” The high pressure altitude; extreme temperature disparity; and harsh, mountainous terrain, make for a challenging environment that often pushes aircraft to maximum performance.

“Taking off out of (Farah) we were about 130,000 pounds, which is max performing on that

strip (for that mission's performance conditions)," said Capt. Nick Bonner, the 774th EAS C-130J aircraft commander. "That is something you rarely do in peacetime operations – where you actually max out an LZ. "That's the challenge – taking the aircraft to its limit, your limit and getting the mission done."

In order to prepare for missions like Farah, the current rotation of C-130J pilots and loadmasters began training months out from their deployment. They held realistic training exercises in Alaska as well as Green Flag-Little Rock in Arkansas to prepare for the diverse mission set Afghanistan offers with significant terrain, adverse weather, and diverse types of cargo movements.

"There's training that we do at home and then talk to the people that have the experience, who have been to places like this, getting ideas and techniques," Bonner said. "Then we put all that together so that when we face issues, we'll actually be prepared for it." The "J" model of the C-130 currently being used in Afghanistan has upgrades making it even more suited to the setting here.

The versatility offered by the C-130J allows it to be used in a variety of tactical airlift missions throughout the Afghan theater – including everything from aeromedical evacuations to missions like the one to Farah – providing airlift for Operation Resolute Support's train, advise and assist mission. "The complex operating environment of Afghanistan, with the very rugged terrain that you see around here, the (C-130)J is very well-suited for that," Santoro said. "We have extra power, we have extra pallet positions and we can get into those remote landing strips that we need to get into. Having more power means we can go farther, faster, higher ... to get the job done here in Afghanistan."

In addition to the support they provide to Operations Resolute Support and Freedom's Sentinel, the 774th EAS goes wherever U.S. Central Command needs them. "There was a dirt landing zone that we had to go into recently, that literally the only platform that could get the mission done was the C-130J," Santoro said.

The cargo bay can be reconfigured to suit a variety of mission sets to move outsized and non-standard cargo, as well as large numbers of personnel or paratroopers. It can be converted to an airborne hospital. Cargo and personnel can be delivered to an airstrip or airdropped according to the situation. "That's something that's unique to the C-130 – we are rapidly reconfigurable to take anything you need moved. You let us know and we can get it there -- anywhere, anytime," Santoro said. Stepping out of the aircraft onto the dark airstrip of Farah, one can barely make out the silhouette of towering mountains on either side. Emerging from the darkness are vehicles and special operations personnel prepared to move on to their next mission.

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan (AFNS) -- Months of planning and weeks of preparing culminates to an airdrop lasting a few seconds. While the time and effort that goes into planning a combat airdrop may seem long for something that lasts less than a minute, for the ground troops, the equipment they received will have a lasting impact. The 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron conducted their first combat airdrop in more than two years, resulting in the successful delivery of 11,000 pounds of equipment to coalition forces.

The need for airdrops decreased in 2014 and 2015, and eventually stopped altogether. Even though the need may have decreased, it has remained a viable option. "The purpose of an



airdrop is to meet a user's intent in a way that is tactically flexible for both parties," said Maj. Rick Winfield, the 774th EAS chief of tactics and a C-130J Super Hercules pilot. "The requestor gets what they need and we are able to meet the ground forces intent and protect the aircraft."

When planning on how to deliver cargo, the type of environment is a key factor in the final decision. Most forward operating bases in Afghanistan are on an airfield or located close to one, and delivering equipment by helicopter or C-130 is a common method. However, some areas are more dangerous than others, and an airdrop may be safer for the aircraft and aircrew. "With the threat that is in country, it makes it tougher for helicopters to deliver supplies, so this is an important capability we can offer," Winfield said. An airdrop enables the aircrew to quickly deliver cargo and get out. To land an aircraft, offload and takeoff is a timely process, exposing the aircraft and aircrew to greater risks in a hostile environment. "The beauty of an airdrop is that we are vulnerable for only a short amount of time," said Capt. David Ince, a 774th EAS C-130J pilot. While there are plenty of positive aspects to an airdrop, there are still some risks involved. When conducting an airdrop, the plane is still susceptible to attacks since it needs to get low to the ground and slow down. But, every mission has some sort of risk involved—something the aircrew knows all too well and constantly trains for.

"We train all the time for this back home, so we can do it operationally in places like this," Ince said. "Airdrop is a staple in the C-130 world and we were incredibly lucky to be the crew to fly the first operational airdrop mission in almost (three) years." The Airmen currently assigned to the 774th EAS are deployed out of Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. The C-130J crews at Dyess AFB fly multiple times a week, conducting an airdrop every flight.

"Airdrops are a combat capability we are trained to provide to combatant commanders," Winfield said. "We are always ready to do this and wouldn't be here if we couldn't." Since the squadron went years without conducting an airdrop in Afghanistan, it seemed like a forgotten tool. Regardless of the years between combat airdrops, the airlift Airmen were more than proficient in accomplishing it. They train like they fight at home, so they can use their training in the fight. "Airdrop is one of the ways to meet the needs of the supported force while minimizing the exposure of the aircraft and crew to unnecessary risk," Winfield said. "In the end, it is all about getting them the things they need to accomplish their mission." 2017

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