

era comes to an end



Tech. Sgt. Cary Humphries, 1 CTCS

C-141s line the airfield at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.



Tech. Sgt. Cary Humphries, 1CTCS

An already retired Charleston C-141 is covered with an acrylic latex coating to protect it from the environment.

Gone but not forgotten: C-141s leave a legacy

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 Aw Public Affairs

You could see sadness in the eyes of the aircrew and maintainers as they signed over one of the last Charleston-based C-141s to the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. The last aircraft was transferred to Altus AFB, Okla., Thursday.

For maintainers and aircrew members, the Monday flight to AMARC, to turn over 67-0020, gave them a chance to reminisce about the C-141 that has allowed the Air Force to accomplish its

global mobility mission. The same jet was the centerpiece of attention during the 16th Airlift Squadron deactivation and closing ceremonies July 15.

The aircraft had comments scrawled on it from maintainers and aircrews fondly remembering the C-141 presence at Charleston. Comments such as apologies for the hard landings, remembering lost crewmembers, applauding the aircraft for its durability or the numbers of hours people spent on-board.

Tech. Sgt. Tony Joyner, an aircraft mechanic in the 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron,

brought the documents and records to transfer the aircraft to AMARC. He's spent his 13-year career repairing C-141s on Charleston's flightline and will soon train on the C-17.

"It's been a good airplane and a real work horse. I hate to see it go, but like anything, it's out with the old and in with the new," he said.

With the arrival of 67-0020, AMARC now has a fleet of 103 C-141s, most without engines, which have been transferred to other bases. The C-141 parts are often taken off the aircraft to keep the remaining aircraft flying. The center is not keeping the aircraft in a flyaway condition and has parked row after row of C-141s on the hard clay-like soil for future use until a final decision is made on what to do with the growing numbers of aircraft.

Senior Airman Darwyn Lowry, a crew chief, who's headed to Dyess AFB, Texas, to work on C-130s, has worked on C-141s for seven years. "It was my first plane and I am going to miss them," he said. "The C-141 took me around the world with about 1,500 hours as a flying crew chief."

He believes the C-141 enjoyed such high maintenance reliability rates because of the experience of the maintainers here and the fact that the C-141 is just very reliable.

For Senior Master Sgt. Gale Rickert, wing standardization and evaluation flight engineer, the flight to AMARC marked her last flight on a C-141 after 23 years as she prepares to retire in October.

Rickert said that the C-141 is a very forgiving aircraft when people have made mistakes.

She said her most memorable experience was flying WWII women ferry pilots as part of an all-female aircrew in a C-141. Rickert has 7,222 hours in the C-141.

Lt. Col. Dave "Frenchy" Peaire, a long-time C-141 pilot for 17 years, will transition to the C-17 along with several experienced pilots from the former 16 AS. He said he was pleased with the great work done by Lt. Col. J.J. Wendling to ensure morale remained high in the squadron.

"It is always sad when you close a squadron. There are a lot of emotions that come into play," he said. "I closed the 15th Airlift Squadron at Norton AFB in Calif., and look forward to joining the 15th again with the C-17. My experience in the C-141 taught me about strategic airlift and I'm glad for the opportunity to go to a newer, more updated aircraft like the C-17."

Peaire flew 67-0020 around the world from May 19-27 when the 16 AS was supporting the president in his travels.

Lt. Col. Jim Kirby, 16 AS standardization and evaluation pilot who will retire in the upcoming months, flew the C-141 along with three other long-time aircrew members and Charleston residents.

"I was at Charleston when we lost some of our aircrew members to accidents, and that sticks in mind as we fly this plane to the 'boneyard,'" he said.



Lt. Col. Ed Memi

Senior Master Sgt. Gale Rickert calculates some numbers during her last flight as a C-141 flight engineer as members of the 16 AS deliver the aircraft to the "boneyard."