

Charleston AFB milestone

C-141 undergoes final isochronal inspection

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437 AW Public Affairs

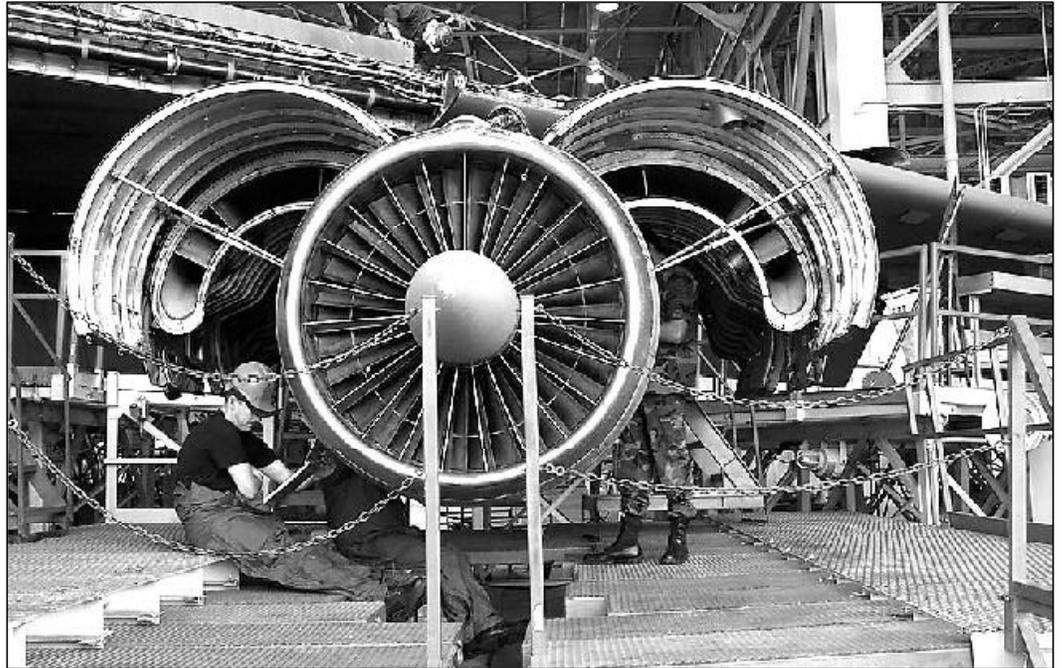
May 21 will be a sad day for members of the 437th /315th Maintenance Squadrons, as it marks the last time that a C-141, tail number 40649, will undergo the annual isochronal inspection.

The 1964-era aircraft entered Bldg. 532 on the weekend of May 6-7 and about 35 maintainers have poured over every major system of the aircraft during these extensive inspections. The 11-day phased inspection process, at one time, was accomplished in 6-7 days. But with the loss of so many people, as well as the general wear and tear of the aircraft over time, the inspections now take much longer.

The inspection requires maintainers to look at everything from the wheels and tires, hydraulic systems, and flight controls to non-destructive testing of the sheet metal on the aircraft. The section requires people with very specialized experience in spotting and fixing problems on the aircraft.

"It is a lot more in-depth inspection than with most other aircraft. We pull a lot more panels than on the C-17," said Master Sgt. Ron Phillips, NCOIC of Isochronal Inspection section, who has about nine years of experience on the C-141. He added some of the shop members will transfer within the flight to perform home station checks, a similar inspection procedure on the C-17, but others have orders to go elsewhere.

Senior Airman Kevin Cloyd, a wing area chief in the section, will transfer to McChord Air Force Base, Wash., in



photos by Lt. Col. Ed Memi

Senior Airman Kenneth Tompkins (left), a propulsion craftsman, inspects an engine component, while Senior Airman Kevin Cloyd (above), an aircraft maintenance craftsman, inspects a wing leading edge.

July to continue working on the C-141 because he enjoys it so much. "There's nothing I don't like about it. There is so much to do, it's old and has lots of grease and dirt and it needs lots of tender loving care," he said. Cloyd, on his first assignment, has worked on the C-141 for five years, but has never actually flown on one.

"The C-17 is more of a computer plane, and the C-141 is a much more mechanical plane. For me, it is like choosing between a 1966 Ford or a brand new 2000 Mustang...I like the old planes much better. It's easier to work on, but harder to maintain—it's a mechanic's plane. The older it gets, the more it needs."

With about 40,000 hours, this C-141 will eventually be sent to a reserve base, where it will live out its remaining years. According to Phillips, the planes will not see as much flying at the reserve base and will fly about 5,000 more hours before needing to be retired.

"We consistently get high marks for the quality of our repairs on the aircraft when it comes through the isochronal inspection. We've not had any major write-ups and the 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron is getting a good quality product from us. We hardly ever have to send an aircraft back to the depot because we can't fix something," said Phillips. Besides decreasing manpower, "our Airman 1st Class Brad Coleman performs a repair on an engine pylon.

big challenge now is it's getting increasingly difficult to receive parts."

Jack Ruff, a civilian in the 437th Maintenance Squadron and an Air Reserve Technician at the base since 1981, has seen a lot of C-141 isochronal inspections in his time here.

"The inspections are much more intense than they were in 1981 to 1983," he said. "In those days, we were running two planes a week through the isochronal inspections, but we had a lot more manpower. At its heyday, we could complete a plane in three days."

Ruff reflected that as the planes

have aged, more problems have had to be fixed on the aircraft. Ruff is headed for the C-17 HSC section but said, "I'm going to miss it. It's always been a challenge to find something wrong on the plane. I look forward to going to the C-17 and learning something new."

Ruff concluded that the C-141 has been a fairly accessible aircraft and one that has been much easier to repair than the C-5, once stationed at CAFB. "We do a lot of repairs on the C-141 that others can't do on the C-17. There is just not much stuff we don't fix on a C-141."



Dana McGhee, an electro-environmental technician, repairs a rudder wire harness.