

Maintainers

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evacuations when hurricanes threatened the coast and when the C-141 was called upon for action during the crisis in Panama.

"I had seen all the problems stirring in Panama on CNN. That night, I was called to check out a problem on an aircraft parked on the George row of the flight line," Waddell said. "I knew that the radios had been real quiet for some reason and the parking ramp was full but I still did not suspect anything was going on or about to happen out of the ordinary. As I completed the system check-out of aircraft I started out the front crew door when I noticed an armored personnel carrier on board. It had something written on it in chalk so I walked back in the cargo compartment to read what it said. Across the front end of the vehicle was written 'Feliz Navidad HO HO HO Noriega.'"

It was then that he realized the significance of their actions.

"I picked up some guys from the shop and we road back out just as aircrews began to arrive. We watched 31 aircraft start up and taxi out with wings drooping from the max fuel load and take off without a hitch. It still amazes me what was done that night to pull off the invasion of Panama," Waddell said.



Senior Airman Jason Smith

Staff Sgt. Tim Bernal, 16th Airlift Squadron flight engineer, performs a pre-flight systems check in a C-141 cockpit.

Some recall the success of Desert Storm, where the Charleston maintainers set new records in their ability to surge.

"Our C-141 operations had been honed to peak efficiency during the Desert Storm era, as attested by our 99 percent launch reliability rate for 240 consecutive missions," said Chief Mas-



courtesy photo

The original fleet of C-141s were not painted, with the exception of the nose.

ter Sgt. Jerry Merritt, 315 AGS. "Many of our avionics hot jobs were actually worked during taxi to the end of the runway. When we were complete, the crew would let us out and take off."

For some, such as Chief Master Sgt. Joseph S. Hattayer, superintendent of the Aircraft Maintenance Management in the 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron, seeing the C-141s leave will have special meaning for him. He has spent 25 of his 30 years in the service associated with the C-141 Starlifter.

"When I entered the Air Force, the C-141A was heavily involved supporting the war in Vietnam," Hattayer said. "Stationed at Yokota AB, Japan, I vividly remember the one and one-half hour turnarounds that we had on C-141's headed back to the states packed full of wounded patients, or even sadder, full of aluminum caskets. No one ever complained about the permanent 12-hour shifts."

"Later in my career, I remember the C-141 's-t-r-e-t-c-h' (which added 23 feet to the length, 10 ft forward of the wings and 13 feet aft) and inflight refueling modifications that were made," Hattayer continued. "The Starlifter was then dubbed the C-141B. The flight crews told us that since the stretch, the aircraft appeared to twist in flight...they could stand at the flight deck door, looking aft, and watch the centerline lighting move in flight."

"You name it, from the war in Vietnam to the war in the Persian Gulf...the C-141 has been there, done that! It has served as the backbone airlifter for this country for more years than I can count, and served well," Hattayer said. "I know that there will be tears in my eyes as I witness the last C-141 depart. I will never forget the C-141 and its proud heritage. I hope that you do not either."

C-141 aircrew members killed during duty

Paul Burroughs
 Billy Canter
 Carl Church
 John Dasenbrook
 Robert Down
 Darnell Gardner
 Allan Gist
 Joseph Gorin
 Stephen Grapperhaus
 Michael Hodge
 Wayne Huggins, Jr.
 James Kightlinger
 Thomas Kuechman
 Dale Lake
 Elmer McNeilly
 Robert Meeks
 C.T. Moorefield, Jr.
 Monty G.W. Nicholson
 Refugio Rivera
 James Simpson
 Jack Sweatman III
 James Tant
 Daniel Vanarsdall
 Allan Wilson
 Paul Yonkie

(Answers were given by members of the 16th Airlift Squadron)



Master Sgt. Gordon MacDougall
Loadmaster

"I'm going to miss the best aircraft that God ever invented. I will always remember hanging out the troop doors with 135 knot winds trying to tear my helmet off. I'll really miss flying and working in the blacked out environment of special operations."



Lt. Col. Jim Kirby
Chief Stan/Eval

"I'll miss the variety of missions. My first mission as a qualified pilot was to return deceased American citizens from the Jonestown, Guyana tragedy. Over the last 22 years of flying the Starlifter, one thing I realized early was the importance of this aircraft; not only during contingencies, but relief and humanitarian missions around the world."



Lt. Col. Jay Reynolds
Operations officer

"It's been very good to me for 17 years. I will miss the camaraderie of a large aircrew and traveling to wonderful, exotic places."

Saturday's events

16th Airlift Squadron Inactivation Ceremony, 9 a.m., at the Nosedock (Bldg. 519)

C-141 static display and C-17 static display, 10-1 p.m.