

IN THE NEWS



Washed away

Fire engines from the 437th Civil Engineer Fire Protection Flight wash down the last Charleston-based C-141 prior to its final departure, July

Staff Sgt. Pamela Smith

20. The aircraft was headed to Altus AFB, Okla. This marks the end of the C-141 presence at Charleston AFB.

Ukraine

continued from page 1

"It took approximately 10 and one-half to 11 hours to get from Pope to the drop zone," said Capt. Stan Davis, 15 AS and primary Air Force planner. "We refueled in flight twice. The first time it was with two KC-10s from the 305th Air Mobility Wing (McGuire AFB, N.J.), and the second time with two KC-135s from the 100th Air Refueling Wing (RAF Mildenhall, England)."

Five Russian-made IL-76 aircraft dropped equipment and personnel on the same drop as the C-17s, said Lt. Col. Gregory Vitalis, 315 AW current operations officer. The IL-76s flew about 10 minutes ahead of the C-17s, and they made their drop first.

"The IL-76s look similar to our C-141s," said Vitalis. "They have the narrow body, high wings and tail, and four jet engines."

The exercise was running smoothly until a communication barrier with the Poland Air Traffic Control put Team Charleston in a holding pattern, said Roscoe.

"The lead aircraft had a Ukrainian lieutenant colonel as the navigator," said Roscoe. "He was helping with communications, but there was some kind of misunderstanding with a Polish controller. We stayed in a holding pattern for a few minutes, and then, thanks to air crew initiative and coordination with the Ukrainian controllers, we were able to press on into Ukrainian airspace."

The actual drop was made over the Sokol drop zone, which is approxi-

mately 10 miles from the Ukraine-Poland border. The name Sokol was given to the drop zone during an exercise-planning meeting in the Ukraine, said Roscoe.

"During a planning conference, a Ukrainian officer asked if anyone knew a good name for the drop zone. Army Maj. Brian Mennes asked him what the Ukrainian word for 'falcon' was because that's the mascot of 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, thus the name Sokol," said Roscoe.

Once over the drop zone, the C-17s dropped all the paratroopers with no problems.

"We delivered 100 percent of the airborne peacekeeping force without injuries," said Davis. "It was a huge

success."

After landing on the ground, the troops were to meet with Ukrainian troops to work together to meet a specific objective, said Roscoe.

"That's where our role in the mission was terminated," Roscoe said. "The Army was going to work with the Ukrainians for another 24 hours in the field. We went on and landed in L'viv, Ukraine to refuel."

"Most of the time when we refuel, we pay for the gas with a government gold card," said Vitalis. "We usually have a contract with the contractor or nation we're buying fuel from. This time things were a little bit different because we had to pay in cash. That's where our finance folks played an important role."



Staff Sgt. Jerry Morrison, 1CTCS

Ukrainian soldiers, shown here preparing to jump from a Charleston-based C-17, were among the troops participating in Peace Shield 2000.

The C-17s left L'viv after refueling and made a few stops before making it home safe and sound, said Davis.

"Our folks didn't have much opportunity to talk with the Ukrainians a whole lot due to the language barrier and noise of the aircraft," Roscoe said. "During the planning stages, I had the opportunity to interact with them. It was motivating for me to see how much importance they place on even the smallest details. I'm happy I had the chance to work with them."

Col. Rusty Findley, 437 AW commander, called the mission a success.

"I am proud of our operations and maintenance personnel for the excellent planning and execution that went into this high visibility-mission," said Findley. "These types of missions continue to show that Team Charleston remains the premier airlift wing on the face of the planet."

While no exercises like Peace Shield 2000 are planned for Charleston in the immediate future, Team Charleston remains ready and eager to show its capabilities, said Vitalis.

"We are certainly willing to advertise our capability to deliver troops and equipment direct to anywhere in the world," said Vitalis.

The Peace Shield 2000 exercise falls under the Partnership for Peace program, whose members include 16 NATO countries and 27 Central and Eastern European countries.

For more information about the Partnership for Peace program, go to their web site at www.eucom.mil/programs/pfp/index.