

Did you know?

U.S. military personnel serve at approximately 232 installations throughout the U.S. and 86 abroad.
(Source: MRIN.com)

Airlift DISPATCH

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Charleston AFB, SC

Charleston facts

Each year, more than 216 senior airmen attend Charleston AFB's Airman Leadership School, on their way to becoming non-commissioned officers.
(Source 437 MSS)

Manpower to increase for C-17 SOLL II, EAF

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437 AW Public Affairs

Charleston will get about 35 additional manpower authorizations for the Expeditionary Air Force and future C-17 Special Operations Low Level II mission as part of a force structure announcement March 9 that will affect all Air Mobility Command bases.

Although Charleston transferred the C-141 SOLL II mission to McGuire AFB in April 1999, the special high priority missions will eventually return to the base when the C-141s retire and the C-17 takes over. The secretive missions are flown at a moment's notice in response to the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The announcement addresses the Fiscal 2001 amended president's budget force structure, realignment and management actions required to achieve efficiencies, modernize, or make organizational changes.

According to the announcement, the 437th Airlift Wing will receive 23 military authorizations for the SOLL II mission and 19 military positions for the EAF concept. The wing will lose six military authorizations due to decreased aerial port workload.

Other support actions will result in a decrease of one military position. Altogether, the wing will gain 35 military positions.

"We are preparing to conduct the JCS-directed alerts with the C-17 as part of the SOLL II mission, which we had with the venerable C-141s for almost 15 years," said Maj. Steve Groenheim, commander of the Special Operations Division, 437th Operations Group. He added the goal is to get the mission back in place by April 2002. There are currently nine people working in the selectively manned division. The C-17 proved it's worth for the SOLL II mission when Follow-on Test and Evaluation was completed in October 1998. The 16th Airlift Squadron will pull its last J-alert this month at McGuire.

"We could use any C-17 for the mission, but we're finding that some communications modifi-

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Thurmond visits Charleston AFB

Team Charleston welcomes the oldest and longest serving member of the U.S. Senate, Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., who is visiting the base for about 45 minutes today at around 2 p.m.

Thurmond, accompanied by his chief of staff Duke Short and Lt. Col. John Ellsworth from the Pentagon's legislative liaison office, will receive a mission briefing followed by a short tour of the Hundley Park housing area and the supply warehouse.

Thurmond is visiting the low country to attend a parade in his honor at The Citadel on Friday shortly after 3:15 p.m. He will also attend a dinner function later that evening in his honor.

Thurmond, born in Aiken, has served in the U.S. Senate since 1954.



Senior Airman Corey Clements

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael Ryan and his wife Jane arrive to a red carpet welcome.

CSAF discusses AF issues, success

By Lt. Col. Ed Memi
437th AW Public Affairs

Charleston's strategic importance, retaining our people, the C-17, Allied Force and the need for base closures to free up money for modernization were some of the items that Gen. Michael E. Ryan shared with area reporters and base personnel during a visit March 10.

Ryan met separately with enlisted members, officers, senior leadership and the news media to discuss a number of issues for his first official visit since assuming the Air Force chief of staff position in October 1997.

"This base is strategically important to us. If you just look around the world today and see how heavily tasked we are. It makes you realize that our ability to react around the world is very much dependent on this base and the capabilities on this base," Ryan said. "If you look around the world, you'll find a C-17 from Charleston. The airplane itself has a great capability."

He called the C-17 a true workhorse and said that he hoped our allies would someday purchase the aircraft because we take part in so many joint operations.

Although many at Charleston feel the C-17 is by far the best airlifter in the world, the Air Force plans to keep buying C-130J models too. "We need to buy J's to replace our oldest C-130s. We had not planned on buying them for several more years, but when you look at the economics of it, if we don't

buy them now, they shut down the line and to reopen the line will cost a lot more."

On retention, the Chief of Staff feels the situation is getting better. "We are 1,200 pilots short right now and we think that the new bonuses that are out there will have an impact on reducing that shortage sooner than we thought." He said early returns show some promise and may be able to cut the shortage in half in the next few years, making the problem more manageable.

The chief of staff is more concerned with retention across the board, not in just the rated areas. "With this booming economy, and our skilled, productive, drug-free, disciplined people with initiative, who are well-educated and know how to work as a team -- they are what industries are looking for! In one that's a compliment and in another it's a challenge for us."

The Air Force needs to keep about 55 percent of the first term airmen and currently averages about 50 percent on retention, he said. "We've seen a bit of turnaround in retention and I think that has to do with our changes in pay, allowances, how we restructured and going back to the old retirement system. It also has something to do with making life a little more predictable for our folks...the Air Expeditionary Force concept."

The Air Force is a retention force today and the family is key. "If the members and their families think that this is fulfilling, then they'll stay with

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