



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

437th AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
102 East Hill Blvd., Rm. 223, Charleston AFB, S.C. 29404-5154
Phone: (843) 963-5608, 5588 or 5589 Fax (843) 963-5604

PAO email: edmund.memi@charleston.af.mil
After duty hours, call the base operator or
command post (963-2531) & ask for a PA rep

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NEWEST C-17 NAMED SPIRIT OF CONNECTICUT

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – On an unseasonably warm and sunny day in East Granby, Connecticut, P-75, the latest production model of the C-17 Globemaster III, was officially named the Spirit of Connecticut during a dedication ceremony.

Eleven members from Charleston AFB, including Col. Karl Young, 437th Airlift Wing vice commander, and Chief Master Sgt. Harvey Hampton, 437 AW command chief master sergeant, were on hand for the Oct. 12 ceremony held at the Connecticut Air National Guard Base at Bradley International Airport.

In his comments, Gen. Charles “Tony” Robertson Jr., commander in chief of U.S. Transportation Command and Air Mobility Command commander, said the great men and women of Pratt and Whitney, the Connecticut-based company that builds the aircraft’s engines, and the people of the Constitution State have ultimately made the C-17 possible. Robertson said transferring the country’s anger about recent terrorists events into international accountability depends a great deal on the success of the C-17, and the Spirit of Connecticut has already shown what it can do.

“In the very short time that she’s (Spirit of Connecticut) been a member of my command, 160 total flying hours, the Spirit of Connecticut has already proved herself worthy,” said Robertson. “If you want another note for your scrapbook, her very first operational mission, very first mission, was to transport disaster relief equipment in support of the rescue effort

in New York City. She's been busy ever since, moving troops and equipment to far away places to oppose those who would challenge our way of life."

Louis Chenevert, Pratt and Whitney president, spoke after Robertson and thanked the men and women of the Air Force for the special recognition.

"We are proud to be honored," said Chenevert. "This is a representation of the passion and commitment of the people of Pratt and Whitney and the people of Connecticut. I'm glad to see Gen. Robertson feels we're successful in our mission. We are happy to build as many engines as are needed to carry on the commitment, and we will continue our legacy in Connecticut of building quality engines."

Brig. Gen. I.J. Zembrzuski, commanding general of the Connecticut Army National Guard, a representative from Senator Joseph Lieberman's Office, a representative from Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's Office and Retired Gen. Lloyd "Fig" Newton, former Air Education and Training Command commander, also spoke at the ceremony. The tone of all the speeches was one of thanks to the members of the military. After the guest speakers were finished, approximately 100 people, including local media members, gathered around the C-17.

Chenevert, Jennifer Dollberg, Pratt and Whitney engineer, and Mike Stone, local chapter president of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers pulled a cord, unveiling the name above the door of the aircraft. A cheering crowd quickly lined up at the door to get a closer look inside the aircraft.

The crew of the Spirit of Connecticut mingled with the ceremony guests, answering questions and telling stories about their experiences with the plane. Long time Pratt and Whitney workers seemed the most excited about getting an up close look at the aircraft.

"The men and women of Pratt and Whitney have been building engines for the U.S. Air Force for a long, long time," said Gary Minor, Pratt and Whitney vice president of public

affairs. “Then we ship them off, and they’re put on airplanes, and they go fly. We’re very proud of that, but to actually see the airplane come in to our state and to see the whole thing flying just means an awful lot to the folks at Pratt and Whitney. The people here, just like the people who fly these planes for the Air Force, have a lot of pride in what they do. To see the whole airplane here, especially with the Spirit of Connecticut on it, just means a whole lot our folks.”

Several thousand workers may have a hand in each F-117 engine from production start to finish, according to Minor. He said the Pratt and Whitney workers feel a sense of ownership in each engine they produce.

“This one airplane says it’s the Spirit of Connecticut,” said Minor. “We’d like to think that every C-17 with four Pratt and Whitney engines on it has got a little bit of the Spirit of Connecticut flying with it all the time, along with the spirit of our people who put their hearts and souls into this work.”

Pratt and Whitney employees watch the news and stay focused on current events, according to Minor. They know their engines are flying missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and seeing the planes on the news strengthens their dedication to produce the best product they can.

“Right now there are an awful lot of men and women in the Air Force who are depending on our engines,” said Minor. “You can see the work you’re doing is really important, so during this type of time, maybe we take a little extra pride in what we do, and maybe a little extra care to realize what it is that we’re involved in. You guys really do have to depend on those four engines, and we know they better be the best we can make them.”

While working to get the aircraft ready for flight after the ceremony, the Spirit of Connecticut’s dedicated crew chief, Staff Sgt. John Carter, 437th Aircraft Generation Squadron, said he was proud to have his name on the aircraft.

“I take pride in this airplane by taking care of it the best I can,” said Scott. “I make sure it’s up and running, and I try to keep it looking a little better than the rest of them out there. I’m happy to represent the state of Connecticut and the people who work here at Pratt and Whitney through this aircraft.”

Robertson’s remarks about the proven capabilities of the Spirit of Connecticut were solidified as the crew prepared the aircraft for departure. The plane was scheduled to fly directly back to CAFB, but was diverted to McGuire AFB, N.J., and Langley AFB, Va., to pick up cargo. Two large fire trucks and two pallets were loaded on the C-17 before it returned home at midnight.

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NOTE TO THE EDITOR: *Digital images of the ceremony are available. Please call 963-5582/5589.*