



EDITORIAL

THE 101st AIRBORNE CRASH: WHY MORE AIRLIFT IS NEEDED

The crash of the chartered DC-8 in Gander, Newfoundland, in late December with 248 soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) was a tragedy that shook most in the military. In the Guard, that loss touched us with the death of SGT John Millett, son of COL Lewis Millett (ret.), one of the six National Guard Medal of Honor recipients we honored last fall in Washington, D.C., and Louisville, Kentucky. John was a former Tennessee Guardsman.

This crash has been followed by questions from concerned civilians to the effect of "why, in heaven's name, with all the airlift capability in the Air Force, do we fly soldiers overseas on chartered airlines no one has ever heard of?" It's a good question, with a good enough answer from the Military Airlift Command (MAC) and from Pentagon leaders.

Having asked the question, moreover, it gives us the opportunity to say why more airlift is needed at the same time as we explain why chartered aircraft—given certain conditions—are still a good buy for the Defense dollar for the transportation of personnel.

What the tragic crash of the Arrow Air DC-8 demonstrates, among other things, is that the public believes the Air Force has an enormous fleet of airliners, when it actually does not. Further, although money is being spent on airlift procurement, and although research and development of the proposed C-17 is on track, the fact remains that a large number of aircraft have not been bought in the past 10-20 years. Quite the contrary, which is the reason why outfits like Arrow Air can do so much military business.

Because of the constraint on procurement dollars both in the past and currently, the Air Force decided to concentrate on airlift of equipment. That was the heart of the debate in 1981 and 1982 between procurement of additional C-5 "Galaxies" or procurement of Boeing 747s. The C-5B won, and it is in production. It won on its merits because it can carry a very

large payload, and it can accommodate "outsize" cargo, which is cargo that won't fit through an ordinary aircraft door: a tank or large truck, or fully assembled helicopter.

Aircraft like the Boeing 747 have their uses. Most people who have traveled on one think it is a wonderful way to traverse long distances comfortably. The same can be said of the DC-10. However, both were designed as people-movers. They are not well designed to accommodate equipment.

Given the dollars available, the Air Force opted to contract for movement of people, and move the equipment on the MAC-owned aircraft. When deploying to overseas exercises like REFORGER or to BRIGHT STAR in the Middle East last summer, a mix of C-141/C-5A and chartered DC-8s and DC-10s was utilized. The equipment went on the Air Force aircraft. The people went by charter. Indeed, some Army Guardsmen went to BRIGHT STAR on Arrow Air. Other companies also were used.

This is a good policy. It makes optimum use of the aircraft for their designed purpose. It is cheaper because it is less expensive to transport 350 troops on one DC-10 than it is to transport 350 troops on three C-141s. It would be possible for MAC to own a fleet of DC-10s or Boeing 747s. The critics of the present policy haven't said where they plan to find the money to do that, however.

Whether or not people-mover aircraft are bought for MAC, the fact remains that Air Force airlift of all types remains seriously short. Anyone who works regularly with the Time Phased Force Deployment Listing (TPFDL), the schedule for deployment in national emergency, knows that combat operations and support of those operations are seriously constrained by the lack of airlift. All too often, a Guard unit's arrival-in-theater date is determined mostly by the constraints of the TPFDL and not by any shortfall in training.

The Airlift Task Force of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) supports the Air Force's decision to concentrate on bringing the C-17 into production on schedule in about five years. Forty-eight of those C-17s are to go to the Air Guard directly from production at McDonnell Douglas simultaneously with their issue to the active Air Force. The NGAUS also supports continued procurement of the C-130H. The oldest C-130s—the A model—are nearly 30 years old and need to be replaced. However, the basic C-130 aircraft remains a good shorter-range, intratheater, relatively slow-moving cargo-hauler for the tactical, short-runway mission. A C-130 isn't of much use going overseas, of course.

What is most on the minds of the military passengers these days, however, is maintenance, not whether the present policy between MAC aircraft or charters should be changed. These passengers know that MAC maintenance standards are high; MAC planes rarely crash.

All of us will be more comfortable when MAC technicians are inspecting the maintenance of the charter firms who are contracting with the Army and Air Force. And when MAC maintenance standards are being enforced on the charter outfits.

Maintenance policy is based on a statistical formulation that shows that equipment failures begin to escalate at certain points. The prudent perform a major maintenance procedure at that point or before. The unregulated marketplace—and that is what the airline business is today for all practical purposes—might have the temptation to push the statistical norms. That saves money.

MAC doesn't save money that way, and when its philosophy of maintenance is enforced, continued use of charters will be supported.

National Guard

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COVER:

Citizen * Soldier * Patriot. This being the 350th Anniversary of the National Guard there is no better time than now to honor citizen soldiers. A member of the Guard family, Lt Col Rod Marker, 191st Fighter Interceptor Group, Michigan Air Guard, introduces his son to his favorite set of wings. Photo by Dan Doherty. Cover Design, Johnson Design Group.

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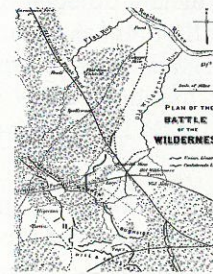
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The Wilderness, a small patch of thick bramble bush and forest only 60 miles from Washington, D.C., was the site of one of the most costly battles of the War between the States, which only resulted in a stalemate due to the terrain.



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Only 30 miles outside of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base is a small farm that is the home to two of our nation's reserve component airmen. The Rod and Ann Maker family believes in defending the nation as part of their way of life.



Retaining the Future 27

What makes one unit a high performance unit with great retention as opposed to any other Army Guard unit? The best ways to evaluate your unit are spelled out by a National Guard organizational effectiveness officer. Read and measure your unit's standings.



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For the past seven years, the headquarters for Indiana's 38th Infantry Division has been hosting a full weekend command post exercise to staff officers on a division's combat maneuverability and logistical requirements.



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