

Air Force World

C-17 Fleet Hits Three Million Flight Hours

The C-17 fleet reached three million flight hours on May 5, according to an Air Force release. "It has become the airlifter of choice for our Air Force," said Col. Amanda Meyers, C-17 system program director.

Ceremonies were held at Robins AFB, Ga., and JB Charleston, S.C., to commemorate the event.

The Air Force owns 222 Globemaster IIIs, and eight partner nations have 44 of the strategic airlifters. The first

C-17 made its maiden flight on Sept. 15, 1991, and the first aircraft was delivered to USAF in June 1993.

X-37B Returns to Orbit

A United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral AFS, Fla., at 11:05 a.m. on May 20, carrying the X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle.

The launch marked the fourth time the unmanned space plane has deployed into low Earth orbit, with all missions



launched aboard Atlas V rockets. The current X-37B mission carries important new USAF experiments, such as the Hall thruster, used to improve similar units onboard Advanced Extremely High Frequency communication satellites.

The Air Force plans to continue using the spacecraft to test reusability concepts in space. The launch marked the 83rd successful launch of the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle, noted Space and Missile Systems Center Commander Lt. Gen. Samuel A. Greaves in a statement.

The AFSPC-5 mission included 10 CubeSats on the rocket's Centaur upper stage, a collaboration between SMC and the National Reconnaissance Office.

NATO Gets a Global Hawk

Northrop Grumman rolled out NATO's first RQ-4 Global Hawk Alliance Ground Surveillance aircraft during a ceremony at Palmdale, Calif., in early June, the company announced.



06.08.2015

Two B-52H Stratofortress pilots maneuver behind the lead aircraft to complete a simulated air strike during Saber Strike 15 in Europe. During the exercise, B-52s deployed from Minot AFB, N.D., to RAF Fairford, UK, to fly missions with European allies.

USAF photo by SrA. Malla Jenkins

“What you see here today is the result of one of the commitments made at the 2012 NATO Summit—to bring this advanced and critical persistent ISR capability to the Alliance to help ensure we can continue to address the range of challenges our member and other allied nations face,” said Erling Wang, chairman of the NATO AGS Management Agency.

Fifteen nations are contributing to the delivery of the NATO-owned and -operated program that will comprise five Global

Hawks, and all 28 NATO nations will participate in long-term support of the program, according to officials.

The remotely piloted aircraft will be based at Sigonella AB, Italy, and the Alliance is in the process of “establishing the necessary ground stations, command and control systems, and training and logistics support services” there, said Jim Edge, NATO AGS general manager.

By the Numbers



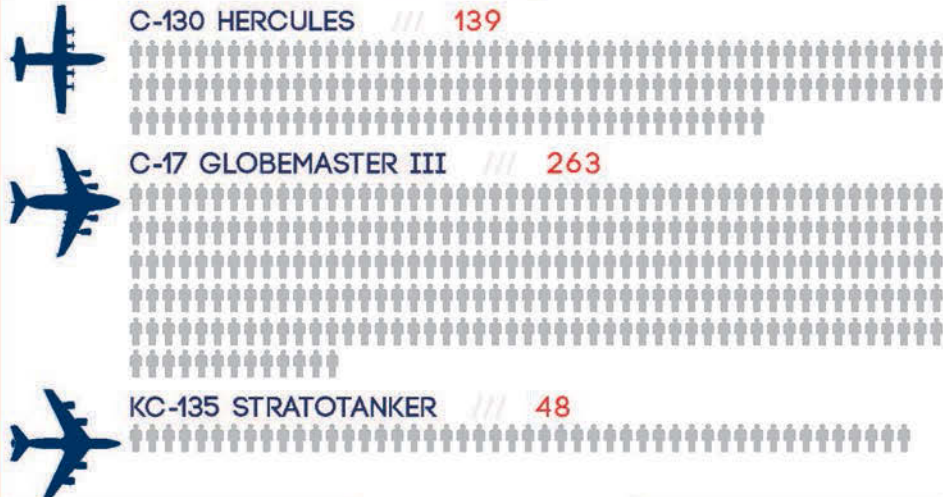
Current as of: May 8, 2017

A SUMMARY OF U.S. AIR FORCE AIRLIFT SUPPORT FOR JOINT OPERATIONS IN NEPAL

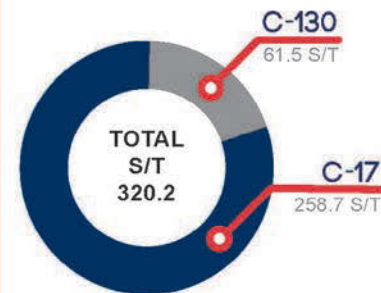
AIRLIFT MISSIONS FLOWN



RELIEF SUPPORT PASSENGERS DELIVERED



TONS OF CARGO DELIVERED



HOURS OF FLIGHT TIME



Source: Air National Guard

Lightning School Starts at Luke

The F-35 schoolhouse at Luke AFB, Ariz., began training its first formal class of student pilots in May, officials announced.

“The pilots going through the training right now are going to be staying here at Luke to be instructors,” said 56th Training Squadron operations director Lt. Col. Matt Hayden in a press release. “When they graduate they may very well turn around in a matter of days to instructing students in what they just learned.”

The four pilots—two A-10 and two F-16 pilots—are already rated instructor pilots and were competitively selected for the F-35 course that began May 4.

Luke’s 56th Fighter Wing commander, Brig. Gen. Scott L. Pleus, flew the first F-35A training sortie at the base back in March, ahead of the first training class. Luke will eventually host 144 US and allied strike fighters.

Osprey’s Pacific Post

Air Force Special Operations Command will station a squadron of 10 CV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft at Yokota AB, Japan, the Defense Department announced.

Yokota’s first three CV-22s will arrive in the second half of 2017; the remaining seven are scheduled to touch down by 2021.

This beddown aims to enhance US special operations forces’ capacity to quickly deploy for contingencies or disasters in Japan and across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as partner with Japan Self-Defense Forces.

The Pentagon notified Congress several weeks earlier of a proposed foreign military sale of 17 V-22Bs to Japan. It would make the country the Osprey’s first export customer.

CV-22s operate today at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Kirtland AFB, N.M., and RAF Mildenhall, UK. Mildenhall’s Osprey’s are expected to relocate to Germany when Mildenhall closes.

Buzzards Over Sweden

The Swedish government invited F-16s from Aviano AB, Italy, to take part in the multinational Arctic Challenge Exercise at Kallax Air Base, near the northern city of Luleå, this spring.

Twelve jets and approximately 150 pilots, maintainers, and support personnel from the 510th Fighter Squadron

William F. Andrews, 1958-2015



One of the most decorated airmen of the 1991 Gulf War, retired Col. William F. Andrews, died June 8 of brain cancer. He was 56.

Andrews received the Air Force Cross as a captain for heroism, following his being shot down on Feb. 28, 1991. While hanging in the straps of his parachute—and even after breaking a leg on landing and coming under fire from advancing Iraqi ground troops—Andrews continued communicating on his

handheld radio, warning two other aircraft to break away and launch flares in response to missiles he saw being fired at them. He was captured, beaten, and held prisoner for eight days, for which he received the POW Medal (See: “Call From the Desert,” February 2011).

Andrews earned two awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross with V for valor in previous Desert Storm actions: one for attacking a heavily defended Scud missile plant and another for providing close air support for a Special Forces team that was trapped under heavy fire. The team was safely extracted due to his action. In all incidents, Andrews was under continuous fire from missiles, anti-aircraft guns, and small arms. Andrews also received the Legion of Merit as a colonel, for managing large-scale rapid deployments of force for operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom, while commander of the 366th Wing Operations Group at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. Andrews served on the Joint Staff at the Pentagon from March 2002 to June 2004 and then taught at the National Defense University and Industrial College of the Armed Forces, both at Fort McNair, D.C., until his retirement in June 2010.

In 1998 he wrote the book *Airpower Against an Army*, chosen for the Chief of Staff’s senior officer reading list.

flew alongside NATO and Partnership for Peace nations’ air forces during the exercise, held May 25 to June 5, according to a release.

“The aim is to exercise and train units in the orchestration and conduct of complex air operations, in close relations to NATO partners,” exercise director Royal Norwegian Air Force Brig. Gen. Jan Ove Rygg said in a RNoAF news release.

Arctic Challenge is jointly hosted by Finland, Sweden, and NATO-member Norway, across the far north. It is one of the largest fighter exercises in Europe, including some 100 aircraft and 4,000 personnel from nine countries.

Sweden has upped cooperation with NATO and even floated the idea of joining the Alliance in light of increased Russian military threats to the region.

Delta Over NYC: US Air Force Thunderbirds fly their signature six-ship delta formation past One World Trade Center during a photo mission over New York City on May 22. With this flyby, the aerial demonstration team and a photo ship promoted Fleet Week in the city and the Bethpage Air Show at Jones Beach on Long Island.



USAF photo by SrA. Jason Couillard

USAF photo by SSgt. Ryan Crane



Tyndall’s Last, Feisty Phantom

The last QF-4 unmanned aerial target assigned to Tyndall AFB, Fla., was shot down May 27 by Florida Air National Guard and 53rd Weapons Evaluation Group F-15C pilots, USAF spokesman 1st Lt. Christopher Bowyer-Meeder told *Air Force Magazine*.

The target drone was hit by three missiles, a combination of AIM-120s and AIM-9s, during Operation Quick Draw “before it finally died,” said Bowyer-Meeder. “So, it went down fighting.”

The QF-4 fleet is being replaced by QF-16 full-scale aerial targets, modified from legacy F-16s. Eight are already operating with the 53rd WEG.

QF-4s will continue to fly from Holloman AFB, N.M., for “another one to two years before being completely retired,” according to a USAF release.

Vipers in the Lion’s Den

Six F-16s and crews from the 480th Fighter Squadron at Spangdahlem AB, Germany, deployed to Ben Guerir AB, Morocco, from May 15 to 22, to take part in joint and combined air training as part of Exercise African Lion.

Black Ice, Ice Baby: A security forces airman trains at Ramstein AB, Germany, safeguarding a hardened facility after first neutralizing an opposing force. Part of a *Battlefield Leaders Assaulter Course-Integrated Combat Essentials*, or *BLAC ICE*, the course teaches and integrates advanced tactics and shooting skills to use in case of a breach in base security. Security forces members from several countries take the course.

Combat Air Patrol Relief

Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter approved dropping the number of combat air patrols flown from 65 to 60 as part of an overarching effort to rebalance operational demands on remotely piloted aircraft crews.

Air Force leaders hope the “CAP reset” will alleviate the surge footing in the RPA community, according to a May 20 news release. Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James and Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Welsh III have repeatedly stated that the Air Force must find a way to balance risk in areas such as retention, training, manning, and combat capability in the RPA force.

USAF Active Duty RPA pilot production stands at 180 pilots a year, but demand stands at 300 pilots a year, Welsh noted. USAF plans to add 100 more pilot graduates to its pipeline a year, but this won’t be an easy task because there also is a shortage of RPA instructors. RPA training squadrons at Holloman AFB, N.M., are staffed at 63 percent, according to a recent Government Accountability Office report.

In addition to previously announced incentives, the service is working on more funding for its RPA schoolhouse capacity, increased reserve component augmentation days, and some contracted RPA recovery efforts.

—Marc V. Schanz

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The War on Terrorism

Casualties

As of June 18, a total of three Americans had died in Operation Freedom's Sentinel in Afghanistan, and seven Americans had died in Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria.

The total includes nine troops and one Department of Defense civilian. Of these deaths, two were killed in action with the enemy, while eight died in noncombat incidents.

There have been 25 troops wounded in action during OFS and one troop in OIR.

US Training Syrian Rebels

The US started training the first group of 90 moderate Syrian fighters, Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter announced on May 7.

The fighters, described as "highly vetted," should be ready to begin fighting ISIS extremists within a "few months," though Carter emphasized that they are not being trained to fight against Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces.

The Syrians will be trained and armed by US troops in a "secure location" and, if necessary, will be supported in battle by US forces, with airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, as well as air strikes, Carter said.

"Of course we would have some responsibility to protect those forces," he said at a Pentagon briefing.

"Their mission would be to fight [ISIS]. ... We do expect to support them in that regard. If they are contested by regime forces again, we would have some responsibility to help them," he said when questioned.

Asked how the US would keep the trained Syrians from attacking Assad, who was the target when the

civil war started two years ago, Carter said that would be influenced by where they were positioned and how they were trained. "They are not being asked by us, and it's not part of our program," for them to fight Assad's forces, he said.

—Otto Kreisher

Back, With a New Job

The Air Force reactivated the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing at an undisclosed Persian Gulf nation as part of the buildup of in-theater infrastructure to support Operation Inherent Resolve.

With more aircraft and missions operating from the base, US Air Forces Central Command redesignated the 332nd Air Expeditionary Group as a full-fledged AEW. Col. Michael G. Koscheski took over command of the unit during a May 19 ceremony at the new wing. Koscheski declared that the wing would be "expanding in terms of mission sets" in the near future.

The 332nd AEW eventually will incorporate a rescue group to support OIR taskings within the region and will add an air advisory group to assist Iraqi air force, army, and aviation assets to grow in capability.

The 332nd AEW stood up late last year in the Gulf region to support USAF deployments for OIR, including A-10s and other resources.

"We've come a long way, but there's much more to be done," said Maj. Gen. Peter E. Gersten, commander of the 9th Air and Space Expeditionary Task Force. The 332nd AEW inactivated previously in 2012, after supporting combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn.

The exercise is the largest Department of Defense training event in Africa, and it marks the first year the US Air Force is participating in the event. It is led by the US Marine Corps.

In addition to the airmen from Spangdahlem, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command airmen participated in the event, flying with Royal Moroccan Air Force F-16 pilots and participants from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Senegal, Tunisia, and the United Kingdom.

The exercise included RMAF F-16s in in-flight air refueling with US tanker aircraft and emergency landing barrier training.

Morocco is a close ally of the Gulf Cooperation Council nations and began fielding 24 new Block 52 F-16s in 2011.

Now, But a Spectre

Air Force Special Operations Command retired the final AC-130H Spectre gunship, serial No. 69-6569, at Cannon AFB, N.M., closing out 46 years of service. Hundreds of spectators gathered along the flight line to watch *Excalibur's* final flight, May 27.

"Over the last 12 years, the 16th [Special Operations Squadron] has flown over 6,500 combat sorties, 26,000 combat hours, and has been responsible for over 4,600 enemies killed in action, along with 5,200 enemy captures," said Capt. Aaron Magger, 16th SOS navigator, in a news release.

AFSOC plans to procure 37 AC-130Js—the first already in testing—to replace its legacy AC-130Hs, AC-130Us, and AC-130Ws. In addition to divesting its H-model fleet, the command is phasing out three of its U models in Fiscal 2015, leaving 26 legacy gunships until Ghost Rider comes online.

High Northern Watch

NORAD sent air defense fighters to remote forward operating locations in the far north and High Arctic for Exercise Amalgam Dart in May, Canadian defense officials announced.

"Amalgam Dart challenges our forces to deploy and operate in the most challenging environment our continent has to offer," NORAD regional commander Royal Canadian Air Force Maj. Gen. David Wheeler said in a press release.

"This year will have the unique component of pushing our personnel to perform their mission in the most northern limits of our area of responsibility," he said.

Three hundred Air Force and RCAF personnel and 15 jets deployed May 25 to June 1 to bases in Alaska and Canada to practice coordinating and responding to air threats.

F-15s deployed to FOL Yellowknife and RCAF F-18s to FOL Inuvik in Canada's northwest, while a mobile radar station was set up in the High Arctic, according to the release. In Alaska, F-22s staged from JB Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, and Air Force KC-135 and RCAF CC-150 tankers staged from Eielson AFB, Alaska.

First E-4B Rolls Through San Antonio

Boeing recently completed the first depot-level maintenance of an E-4B National Airborne Operations Center aircraft at its San Antonio facility, the company announced.

"Boeing's ability to return this aircraft to service, ahead of schedule, benefits the men and women who serve on them, as well as the citizens they protect," Air Force E-4B section chief Joseph Stupic said in a May 20 company news release.

Senior Staff Changes

NOMINATIONS: To be Major General: Michael D. Rothstein. **To be Brigadier General:** Christopher E. Craige.

CHANGES: Brig. Gen. Robert G. Armfield, from Dep. Cmdr., NATO, Spec. Ops. Component Command-Afghanistan, CENTCOM, Southwest Asia, to Dep. Dir., Strategy, Plans, & Policy, CENTCOM, MacDill AFB, Fla. ... Brig. Gen. (sel.) Paul E. Bauman, from Cmdr., 319th Air Base Wg., AMC, Grand Forks, N.D., to Dep. Dir. for Future Jt. Force Dev., Jt. Staff, Suffolk, Va. ... Brig. Gen. William T. Cooley, from Sr. Materiel Leader & Dir., GPS Directorate, SMC, AFSPC, Los Angeles AFB, Calif., to PEO, Prgms. & Integration, Office of the USD, Acq., Tech., & Log., Missile Defense Agency, Redstone Arsenal, Ala. ... Brig. Gen. (sel.) Christopher E. Craige, from Dir., AF General Officer Mgmt., DCS, Manpower, Personnel, & Svcs., USAF, Pentagon, to Cmdr., 438th AEW, ACC, ISR, SOUTHCOM, Southwest Asia ... Brig. Gen. Thomas W. Geary, from Dir., ISR, SOUTHCOM, Miami, to Dir., ISR Strategy, Plans, Doctrine, & Force Dev., DCS, ISR, USAF, Pentagon ... Maj. Gen. (sel.) David A. Harris, from Cmdr., 96th Test Wg., AFMC, Eglin AFB, Fla., to Cmdr., AF Test Center, AFMC, Edwards AFB, Calif. ... Maj. Gen. (sel.) James B. Hecker, from Dir., Plan, Prgms., & Rqmts., ACC, JB Langley-Eustis, Va., to Cmdr., 19th AF, AETC, JBSA-Randolph, Texas ... Lt. Gen. John W. Hesterman III, from Cmdr., AFCENT, ACC, Southwest Asia, to Asst. Vice C/S, Air Staff, Pentagon ... Brig. Gen. (sel.) Kevin A. Huyck, from Cmdr., 1st FW, ACC, JB Langley-Eustis, Va., to DCS, Ops., Allied Air Command, Allied Command Ops., NATO, Ramstein AB, Germany ... Maj.

Gen. James R. Marrs, from Dir., Intel., CYBERCOM, Fort Meade, Md., to Dir., Intel., Jt. Staff (Defense Intel. Agency), Pentagon ... Gen. Darren W. McDew, from Cmdr., AMC, Scott AFB, Ill., to Cmdr., TRANSCOM, Scott AFB, Ill. ... Maj. Gen. Jon A. Norman, from Vice Cmdr., PACAF, JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, to Dir., Global Power Prgms., Asst. SECAF for Acq., OSAF, Pentagon ... Maj. Gen. (sel.) Michael D. Rothstein, from Cmdr., 438th AEW, ACC, Southwest Asia, to Dep. Asst. Secy. for Plans, Prgms., & Ops., Political-Mil. Affairs, US Dept. of State, Washington, D.C. ... Gen. Paul J. Selva, from Cmdr., TRANSCOM, Scott AFB, Ill., to Vice Chairman, JCS, Jt. Staff, Pentagon ... Brig. Gen. (sel.) Brad M. Sullivan, from Spec. Asst. to the Cmdr., SOCOM, MacDill AFB, Fla., to Dir., Intel. & Info., NORAD, NORTHCOM, Peterson AFB, Colo.

COMMAND CHIEF CHANGE: CMSgt. David P. Klink, from Command Chief, 65th Air Base Wg., USAFE, Lajes Field, Portugal, to Supt., SECAF/C/S of the AF Exec. Action Group, USAF, Pentagon.

SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE CHANGES: David E. Lambert, to Chief Scientist, Munitions, Munitions Directorate, AFRL, AFMC, Eglin AFB, Fla. ... Jennifer L. Miller, to Dep. Asst. Secy., Instl., Office of the Asst. SECAF, Instl., Env., & Energy, USAF, Pentagon ... Suhithi M. Peiris, to Sr. Scientist, Enhanced Energy Effects, Munitions Directorate, AFRL, AFMC, Eglin AFB, Fla. ... Jeffrey T. Pennington, to Dir. of Staff, AFRC, Robins AFB, Ga. ... Greg Zacharias, to Chief Scientist of the AF, USAF, Pentagon.

Boeing overhauled both the Air Force's 747-based E-4B and VC-25 platforms in Wichita, Kan., from 1974 until the company closed its facility there last year.

The Air Force's four NAOC aircraft are cycled through refit every two years. Boeing also reworks Air Force's C-17s, KC-135s, and commercial aircraft on the San Antonio line.

SpaceX Cleared for Launch

The Air Force certified California-based Space Exploration Technologies Corp.'s (SpaceX) Falcon 9 rocket to compete for national security space launches on May 26, following an extended two-year certification review.

"This is a very important milestone for the Air Force and the Department of Defense," Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James said in a news release.

The move is expected to drive down the cost of expensive space launches while also improving "our military's resiliency," she said.

United Launch Alliance, a Lockheed Martin and Boeing consortium, has been the sole national security launch provider since it was formed in December 2006.

"The Air Force invested more than \$60 million and 150 people in the certification effort, which encompassed 125 certification criteria, including more than 2,800 discrete tasks, three certification flight demonstrations, verifying 160 payload interface requirements, 21 major subsystem reviews, and 700 audits in order to establish the technical baseline from which the Air Force will make future flight worthiness determinations for launch," stated the press release.

Elon Musk, SpaceX CEO and lead designer, said, "This is an important step toward bringing competition to national security space launch. We thank the Air Force for its confidence in us and look forward to serving it well."

—Amy McCullough

F-16 Micro-Upgrade

The Air Force will upgrade "20-plus" F-16s with an active electronically scanned array radar in response to a joint urgent operational need from US Northern Command, service acquisition executive William A. LaPlante said.

He told *Air Force Magazine* that the jets will likely be Air National Guard aircraft of the 113th Wing, stationed at JB Andrews, Md., and tasked with defending Washington, D.C.

"The JUON we're acting on is focused not on the whole homeland defense mission" but on a "more focused" subset of it, he said.

The upgrade won't be applied fleetwide "in the first tranche," LaPlante said, but he didn't say whether it would later be expanded.

Farewell, West Virginia Galaxy

The West Virginia Air National Guard's final C-5A Galaxy airlifter flew to the "Boneyard" May 20, completing the 167th Airlift Wing's conversion to the C-17 Globemaster III.

Lockheed Martin saluted the conclusion of a 52-year partnership with the wing, spanning the C-121 Super Constellation, C-130 Hercules, and finally the C-5, during a ceremony May 19 marking the transition to a Boeing aircraft.

The 167th AW is the last of three ANG units to transition to the C-17 as part of the Air Force's plan to retire its oldest Galaxy and convert the remainder to C-5M Super Galaxy standards. The unit has received seven of its eight C-17s, the last slated to arrive in July, according to the unit.

Flying Transformers

Air Force Research Laboratory and NASA researchers recently completed a six-month program of flight testing morphing wing technology on a Gulfstream III jet at Edwards AFB, Calif.

"The purpose of these tests was to see if flexible trailing-edge wing flaps could improve aerodynamic efficiency and reduce the noise generated during takeoffs and landings," said Fay Collier, a NASA project manager.

The FlexFoil technology exceeded expectations, paving the way for its incorporation by the military and commercial aviation industries, states the press release.



USAF photo by SrA Nicole Sikorski

“These flights cap 17 years of technology maturation,” said Pete Flick, AFRL’s program manager.

The tests took place under the Adaptive Compliant Trailing Edge program. The final flight test took place on April 22; the first of the 22 flights occurred on Nov. 6, 2014.

JASSM Like a CHAMP

The Air Force Research Lab is looking to take the next step in turning its CHAMP (Counterelectronics High-power

D-Day Commemoration: A C-130J Super Hercules from the 37th Airlift Squadron flies over Normandy, France, on June 3, marking the 71st anniversary of D-Day. On June 6 in 1944, more than 160,000 Allied troops landed along the French coastline. Despite heavy casualties—9,000 killed or wounded—the Allies gained a foothold on the continent. For this anniversary, nearly 400 military personnel from Europe and from D-Day historical units participated in a week of events in Normandy. The 37th AS is based at Ramstein AB, Germany.

Microwave Advanced Missile Project) into a fielded weapon, said AFRL chief Maj. Gen. Thomas J. Masiello.

A high-power microwave emitter mounted in an AGM-86B Conventional Air Launched Cruise Missile successfully fried all the electronics in a simulated command bunker in a 2012 test. AFRL is now aiming to miniaturize an HPM package that would “fit it into a JASSM-ER,” Masiello said.

The JASSM-ER was a natural choice because “it’s fielded and compatible with a whole host of platforms,” he said. The weapon is also more survivable than CALCM, and CHAMP could easily take the place of JASSM-ER’s kinetic warhead.

CHAMP was put together by Boeing, while JASSM-ER is built by Lockheed Martin.

My Dear Watson

The Pentagon is hiring Watson—IBM’s super computer that defeated all-time “Jeopardy!” champions Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter in a 2011 exhibition match—to help interpret the inscrutable 5000 series of procurement rules, Air Force acquisition chief William A. LaPlante revealed.

“We’re going to teach Watson” Federal Acquisition Regulations with the aim of “seeing how far [we] can go ... in automation of some acquisition practices, where you have almost artificial intelligence.”

He said that one experiment might be to feed a novel acquisition approach to Watson to see “if it’s legal. We’re going to teach it to be a lawyer.”

LaPlante said the experiment is only one of a number of innovative acquisition ideas in play, such as creating a “big challenge” prize of \$2 million for design of the most efficient next generation engine for remotely piloted aircraft. 🌟

Lightning by the Numbers

The Air Force mapped out its operational F-35 base deployment plans through 2021, outlined by Air Force F-35 integration director Maj. Gen. Jeffrey L. Harrigan.

First up is Hill AFB, Utah. It gets its first operational jets in September, leading to initial operational capability in August 2016. Hill gets all its jets by 2019.

Next will be Eielson AFB, Alaska—a “preferred” location—which may get deliveries from July 2019 through November 2020. Eielson would get two squadrons of F-35s.

Burlington, Vt., gets its F-35s from July 2020 through May 2021, and RAF Lakenheath, UK—the first US overseas base—would get its aircraft from June 2021 through September 2022.

Other bases yet to be identified will follow. The F-35A is already deployed at Eglin AFB, Fla., on tap for 26 aircraft for pilot training, and Luke AFB, Ariz., slated to eventually have 144 jets, shared among the various F-35A partner countries.

Small numbers will also be permanent residents at Nellis AFB, Nev., and Edwards AFB, Calif., for tactics and test work, respectively.

Harrigan said there will be 651 F-35s of all variants in service worldwide with seven countries by the end of 2020. Some 123 F-35s of all models had been delivered by the end of May.

—John A. Tirpak