

135th AIRLIFT SQUADRON



LINEAGE

135th Air Resupply Squadron extended federal recognition, 10 Sep 1955
Redesignated 135th Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium), 10 Oct 1958
Redesignated 135th Air Commando Squadron, 1 Jul 1963
Redesignated 135th Special Operations Squadron, 8 Aug 1968
Redesignated 135th Tactical Air Support Squadron, 14 Jun 1971
Redesignated 135th Tactical Airlift Squadron, 1 Apr 1977
Redesignated 135th Airlift Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

STATIONS

Harbor Field, Baltimore, MD
Martin Airport, Baltimore, MD

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

C-46D
SA-16A, 1956
SA-16B
U-10B, 1963
U-6A, 1965
U-10D, 1967
O-2A, 1967
C-7A, 1976
C-7B
C-130B, 1980
C-130E, 1990
C-130J, 1999
C-27

Support Aircraft**ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS**

HU-16/SA-16
51037
517157
51015
15296
51035
51-028
51-7151
51-5286
51-7212

C-130J
97-1351

C-27 XX7016

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES**UNIT COLORS****COMMANDERS**

LTC Victor Kilfcowski, 1955
LTC Wilford Davis, 1956
LTC Richard Lynch, 1958
LTC Warren Schutte, 1962
LTC Roy Bands, 1966
LTC Robert Cardwell, 1971
LTC Spencer Wilkinson, 1976

LTC Vernon Sevier, 1977
LTC David Beasley, 1987
LTC David Arnett, 1989
LTC Ronald James, 1992
LTC Brian Burke, 1994
LTC John C. Inglis, 1996
LTC Warren Thomas, 1998
LTC Carl Nagel III
Lt. Col. April Vogel
LTC Kristin Brawley

HONORS

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

Ultramarine blue and golden yellow are the Air Force colors and symbolize that the unit is a part of the Air Force. The escutcheon portrays the coat of arms of the State of Maryland and signifies the home location of the unit. The crossed jousting lances reflect the military preparedness of the squadron and allude the Maryland state sport. Background: Designed by Lt Col Ronald James and approved for the 135th Tactical Airlift Squadron on 3 October 1990. Redesignated for the 135th Airlift Squadron in 1992. The motto, "Baltimore's Best" was suggested by Master Sgt. Lee Cherry and arose from the unit having been recognized by the Baltimore Is Best Committee on 18 Feb 1987. This insignia superseded one approved by the Air Force for the squadron in October 1960.

The 135th Troop Carrier Squadron insignia was designed by Fred Vieck of Baltimore in Oct. 1960 based on a concept of Lt. Mark Dunker's. A triangular shaped blue, gold, white and red insignia. the emblem is symbolic of the Squadron and its mission. It bears the Air Force colors to indicate that the squadron is part of the Air Force. The background is half light blue and half dark blue to represent the unit's day/night mission, the four-pointed compass indicates the unit's worldwide capability, and the aircraft symbolizes that organization is always ready to fly.

The 135th Airlift Squadron insignia was designed by Lt Col. Ron James in the early 1990s. The ultramarine blue and golden yellow symbolize that the unit is a part of the Air Force. The shield bears the Crossland and Calvert colors of the state flag and symbolically represents the units role as defender of the State of Maryland. The lances, which are taken from Maryland's official state sport, Jousting, also symbolically link the unit to Maryland. The motto 'Baltimore's Best' was suggested by MSgt Lee Cherry, and arose from a contest held by the City of Baltimore, wherein the unit was selected as the city's 'Best Flying Organization '

The Crab Patch was designed by Capt. David Falter. The popular insignia has long served as the unofficial alternate unit emblem. The patch features the shape of a C-130E gripped in the claws of a red crab and incorporates the Calved and Crossland colors from the state flag to either side of the central design.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Maintains combat-ready aircrew and aircraft to mobilize, deploy and provide intratheater airlift in support of U.S. interests worldwide. Supports theater commanders' requirements for combat delivery capability through tactical airland/airdrop operations and humanitarian aeromedical evacuations. Officers: 27 Enlisted: 46

Airlift Squadron is divided into A, B, and C Flights, each of which is commanded by a field grade officer and encompasses six full C-130 crews. For ease of training and administration the pilot, navigator, flight engineer, and loadmaster crew positions are maintained and operated as separate sections on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the squadron includes an organic Life Support Section and Flight Management Office. The Life Support Section maintains aircraft emergency life support equipment and chemical warfare equipment. It also provides aircrew survival training and refresher training in the use of aircraft emergency equipment. The Flight Management Office monitors, collects, updates and audits data on aircrew resources, flying hours, aircrew training and individual flight records. The Host Operations System Management Office is responsible for the overall operation of the Air Force Operations Resource Management System, the automated database used to track individual flying hours and other flight related data, prepares aeronautical orders and monitors flying incentive pay. Administrative support is provided by the unit orderly room.

The 135th was based at Harbor Field in Baltimore sharing facilities with the 104th while the new facilities at Martin were being constructed. The 135th ARG was equipped with SA-16 and C-46s. Their mission was to provide air support to regular and reserve Special Operations Force units. The group started with four C-46s and gradually transitioned to mostly SA-16s.

The organization of the 135th differed from the organization of the 104th. The 104th essentially stood alone as a squadron with attached support units. Many years later, the 175th Tactical Fighter Group was formed to provide the 104th with a Headquarters element. The 135th was set up from the start as a standalone Group with assigned subordinate squadrons. The Group operated completely independently of any other organization only reporting to the Guard Bureau. The 104th and the 135th operated independently of each other, except for the coordination of the state headquarters element formed later in the decade. The unit consisted of the 135th Air Resupply Squadron (ARS), commanded by Maj. Victor Kilkowski and the 135th Airborne Materiel Assembly Squadron (AMAS), commanded by Lt. Col. John Rose. The 135th AMAS was the forerunner of today's Aerial Port.

The 135th had little trouble recruiting volunteers for its flying operation. There was an oversupply of pilots at that particular time and it was a welcome situation for these pilots to be able to choose the type of flying they would perform for the remainder of their careers. Some of the 104th pilots were "dyed in the wool" fighter types who would never be caught dead in a multi-engine, multi-person airplane. They were able to remain in the 104th. Others had flown fighters for many years and had decided that their career would be more interesting and longer if

they transitioned to a crewed aircraft. The 135th mission was risky and demanding and they enjoyed performing it in with a group of trained professionals.

In August 1956, the 135th traveled to Savannah, Ga. for their first summer encampment. This was a familiar spot for the former 104th unit members and required a minimum of planning due to the unit's knowledge of the local area. All three of the new Air Resupply Squadrons on the east coast were also at Savannah for their first camps. They integrated the support functions for efficiency but the ops, maintenance, and intelligence shops operated separately. The 135th underwent its second annual federal inspection by the Air Force, and the group was rated satisfactory.

In July 1957, the 135th attended camp at Stewart AFB in Smyrna, Tenn., with 378 officers and airmen, four SA-16s and five C-46s. During this encampment, the support units (except maintenance) were integrated with the regulars on base.

Following the death of 135th Group Commander Sam Souders, in a 1956 Albatross accident, Maj. Victor Kilkowski was named Group Commander and Maj. Wilford "Wimpy" Davis was selected as 135th Squadron Commander.

Sam Souders, the first commander of the 135th, was only able to see the initial development of his unit as he and two other crew members were killed in the crash of their Albatross into the Chesapeake Bay during a water landing attempt. Landing on water under hazy skies and calm water conditions is an extremely hazardous operation and the height above the water is very difficult to judge. This appeared to be the cause of this accident in which the aircraft hit the water at too high a rate of descent. The impact on the water caused the nose gear doors to open and the resulting forces split the aircraft open. Maj. Souders, Capt. Paul Shelton and Amn. Louis Florey were killed as the plane sank into the waters of the bay. TSgt. Merrick Stecker and Amn. Robert Szczechowiak, were able to escape the sinking plane through the rear of the fuselage, but despite heroic efforts were unable to pull the front crew out of the craft before it disappeared under the surface of the Chesapeake Bay.

The 135th was reorganized on October 10, 1958. The 135th ARG was split into two squadrons: the 135th Troop Carrier Squadron and the 135th Air Base Squadron. Maj. Lynch, as the senior commander, assumed the Squadron Commander Position of the 135th TCS, and Lt. Col. Rose remained Commander of the 135th ABS. The Group structure was abolished for the time being. This reorganization created a degree of chaos as many positions were rearranged. At the time there were 67 officers and 429 airmen assigned, but luckily, the unit was still growing so the loss of this headquarters element did not result in a net headcount reduction.

The unit traveled to Otis AFB, Mass. in 1958 with 441 officers and airmen and ten SA-16s. Although a few sections were integrated, the unit was essentially on its own. The training site was well equipped, a water training area was available, and except for a hurricane alert the last two days, the weather was favorable. The unit felt it had "come of age" at this encampment.

From the start the 135th worked closely with Special Operations Forces. The Green Berets loved

the Albatross and the Guard crews that flew them. It was much more exciting for them to jump out of the smaller Albatrosses or to be inserted by water landing than to jump from the larger transports.

The 135th crews usually consisted of 5-6 members. The pilot and copilot were assisted by a navigator, a flight mechanic, and a radio operator. While this was quite different from the single seat flying that many of the pilots were used to in the 104th, they now enjoyed the camaraderie that a crew of Individuals working together in an uncertain environment created.

While the unit's name was "Air Resupply," the Cold War had created a requirement for the more clandestine mission of "Air Commando" that rose from the need to insert Special Ops Forces into enemy territory under enemy radar coverage. The Central Intelligence Agency contacted the Maryland Air Guard and the other Air Resupply Squadrons to gear up for this more sensitive and dangerous mission. The unit then began an intense training program to prepare itself for the demanding tasking. While still maintaining the mundane name of Air Resupply, the unit really became an Air Commando unit years before it actually picked up the more exciting sounding moniker.

In keeping with the classified tasking the flyers were told to expect, the 135th began training for flying long distances at low altitude over long stretches of open water. To practice for the insertion of Special Force troops into potential hot spots at a specific time, the 135th undertook a training program that involved long flights to a predetermined Time on Target for clandestine operations. In December 1958, Maj. Bob Wilson, one of the more colorful 135th pilots, led the first Air National Guard over-water navigational flight to a destination outside the continental United States. Maj. Wilson and his crew flew their Albatross from Harbor Field to San Juan, Puerto Rico. His co-pilot was Capt. Bill Greenert, Lt. Paul Schuncke was the navigator, Sgt. Jim Wolfe was the Radio Operator, and the Crew Chief was Sgt. Walt Buranen.

Several reorganizations took place over this decade but the basic mission of Air Commando and Special Operations stayed the same. In 1958, the former 135th Group had been deactivated with the 135th Troop Carrier Squadron and the 135th Air Base Squadron operating as standalone units. The group headquarters was incorporated into the squadron headquarters element, and Lt. Col. Dick Lynch moved from his Group Commander position to the new Troop Carrier Squadron Commander position. These changes reflected an effort by higher headquarters to align the unit's structure with those of similar units in the Air Force.

By the end of 1958, many members of the 135th were concerned about the future at Harbor Field, as the lease for the location was to run out in 1960 reverting the airfield to the Dundalk Marine Terminal. There were no facilities for the unit at Martin State and little money available to build more. As has been the recurring theme through the years of the Maryland Air National Guard, the lack of space and runways again threatened the very existence of one of its units.

In January 1959, two additional 135th SA-16 crews completed over-water navigational training flights to Ramey Air Force Base, Puerto Rico. These training flights were authorized by the Guard Bureau as a larger program to practice operations to several places outside the states including Puerto Rico, the Panama Canal Zone, Alaska, and Newfoundland. These two SA-16s

took four days and 27 flying hours to accomplish the trip from Harbor Field to San Juan via Miami. A third overwater flight occurred in March. A fourth flight left in April but took considerably longer due to an oil leak on the leg out of Puerto Rico. The flight had to divert into Mayaguana Island, where Al Cramer and his crew stayed for five days, until a maintenance team arrived to repair the aircraft.

The extended low level, overwater flight outside the CONUS was anything but usual. The typical mission took about four days and 27 air hours but on April 4 1959, the flight ended up taking us nine days. The crew consisted of Al Cramer, Bob Wilson, myself, Bill Griffin, Lloyd Kaufman and Al Mucciarone. Leaving Harbor Field, the flight down to Florida and then out to Puerto Rico was uneventful and the simulated night resupply drop was perfect. After RONing at Ramey, we took off for the long flight home. Several hours out and in heavy thunderstorm activity we developed an oil leak (shades of the Bermuda Triangle). The SA-16 was under-powered with two engines but the only option with one engine was to descend and land. Bill Griffin was madly going through the charts to find a strip on one of the islands in the area and I was praying that we would break out of the clouds to make a visual landing. Landing on the water in heavy seas was not a very appealing option. As we penetrated the murk, directly in front of us was an airstrip that looked to us like a 3 mile stretch of Interstate Highway (of course we had no Interstate Highways in '59). The charts showed a down range site for Cape Canaveral on Mayaguana (Bat Dung) Island but none of us had ever seen such a long runway. We landed without incident and were met by a jeepload of locals consisting of 5 RCA employees who ran the down range electronic equipment and 5 Pan Am airline employees who maintained the runway. Why the long runway? During WWII, the large Navy patrol bombers were heavily laden with fuel and in the hot climate of the Bahamas, they needed the miles of concrete to take off. It took four days for the U.S. Coast Guard to get out to us and one day to fix the engine, meanwhile we were treated to skiing and swimming and gourmet meals from the retired Waldorf Astoria chef who now worked on the island. We also had a current movie every night. Back home, we really took some flak for our Bahamas vacation and great suntans.

On April 15, 1959, the 135th suffered its second air tragedy with the fatal crash of one of its SA-16s into Colgate Creek. The loss of Wilford Davis, Jim Gonsch, Mike Strenich, Bob McKelvy, Tom Teran, and Bob Roguski was felt by all members of the Maryland Air Guard. They were making a nighttime takeoff followed by a left turn as they climbed out of Harbor Field. The aircraft nosed over and crashed. The cause of the accident was never determined. Davis had more flying time than any other member of the Maryland Air National Guard; he and Gonsch are both buried at the National Cemetery at Catonsville.

In July 1959, the 135th again camped at Otis with 471 officers and airmen. During this camp the 135th began flying its long range low level missions. Taking off from Otis, the crews would fly out over the Atlantic to Nova Scotia then re-enter the Maine coast at low altitudes (below 500 feet) to stay under the coastal radars and make simulated resupply drops on isolated special operation sites. These 8-10 hour flights were conducted at night often in adverse weather conditions. Most of the unit's flying was done during the first week. The field was closed during most of the second week when an approaching hurricane dropped seven inches of rain in four days. Despite this, 310 hours were flown with no incidents. The last two days of this camp were spent "hurricanevacating" the aircraft to Baer field in Fort Wayne, Ind., until the weather improved for

the return to Harbor Field.

Nine SA-16 aircrews from the 135th flew to Ft. Bragg, N.C. in October 1959 to work with the 77th Special Forces Group in Exercise SWAMP RAT. Paratroopers and cargo from the 77th Special Forces were loaded on the SA-16s and dropped into small zones near the swamps at Ft. Stewart, Ga. The 77th lived in the field during this exercise and relied on the 135th's aerial resupply for food and necessities.

In December 1959, General Reckord announced that the 135th would make its new home at Martin Airport the next year. This was a bittersweet announcement as the 135th enjoyed their location at Harbor Field. The accommodations were adequate and the camaraderie superb, but the writing was on the wall as the airport was in its final years. The future at Martin State was unknown for the 135th. While the 104th had the premier location and facilities, the 135th was to move to the other side of the runway into older, more spartan quarters.

The 135th group structure at this time included the 135th Operations Squadron, 135th Materiel Squadron, the 135th Combat Support Squadron, and the 135th USAF Dispensary. The name of the 135th group and the operations squadron changed several times during the decade.

They remained in the Air Commando mission the entire time, flying unusual — and sometimes clandestine — missions. Long low level overwater missions taxed the crews to the maximum. The decade saw the first flights out of the country by the Marylanders, and despite numerous pesky reorganizations, most 135th members remember the sixties as a time of fun flying and high unit camaraderie.

"To top it all off," he added, "the Albatross was an amphibian, specifically suited for inserting or extracting people stealthily by water from hostile environments. The type of aircraft we flew was a giveaway for the special kinds of operations we would perform."

Training for water landings with the Albatross was extremely hazardous. To make matters worse, doctrine required pilots to land their SA-16s on water at night, with no landing lights.

"Night water maneuvers were done at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station," retired Col. Don Utermahlen recalled. "The Navy operations office there provided a crash boat, and the friendly advice... that landing on water in the dark was a really bad idea."

After several 135th pilots became night-qualified, the squadron participated in a large European military exercise where the crews demonstrated their ability to deliver and extract troops from lakes at night. "The German Special Forces personnel who were there thought it couldn't be done," said Utermahlen.

In April 1960, the 135th was physically relocated to Martin State Airport, at 601 Wilson Point Road. Although now sharing the same base with its sister unit, the 135th was positioned on the opposite side of the runway (across the field from its present location).

Bright Star/Pine Cone During the 1960 summer camp at Savannah, the 135th participated in

Exercise BRIGHT STAR/PINE CONE III at Ft. Bragg, N.C., for part of Tactical Air Command's war games. The 135th airdropped Army paratroops behind enemy lines and followed up later with airdrops of food and supplies. They received a letter of appreciation from Brig. Gen. Don Strait, the exercise commander, for their efforts.

During the 1961 summer camp at Savannah, the 135th supported Exercise SWIFT STRIKE along with 10,000 other players. This was the largest peacetime military maneuvers since the Carolina Maneuvers in 1941 (in which the Maryland Air Guard had also participated) and involved Air Guard personnel from 23 states. Army, Air Force, and Reserve units also participated in the exercise in the Carolinas.

In January 1962, the 135th Group element was reactivated as the Troop Carrier Group and Lynch again assumed the Group Commander position. Maj. Warren Schutte was named 135th Troop Carrier Squadron Commander and Lt. Col. John Rose remained commander of the 135th Air Base Squadron. In May, the 135th Tactical Hospital was federally recognized with two officers and two airmen assigned. TSgt. Al Sklar, Sr., was named NCOIC.

In February 1962, Lt. Col. Lynch, Maj. Roy Bands, and SSgt. George Warfield flew one of the 135th's HU-16s for ten days at the Navy's underwater swimming school in Key West, Fla. The crew worked with the Navy SEALs conducting parachute jumps from the aircraft into the ocean. The jumpers were equipped with full scuba underwater breathing gear located beneath their parachute backpacks and reserve chutes. The parachutists were Army Airborne, Army Special Forces, Navy Seal Teams, and the Marine Pathfinders.

At the request of the National Guard Bureau in 1962, the 135th provided ground school and transitional training in the HU-16 for six pilots and three flight mechanics from the Argentine Navy which was about to be equipped with the Albatross for submarine patrol. At the time, only Air National Guard units were still flying the HU-16.

Another reorganization of the 135th was undertaken in February 1963. The new Group structure consisted of the 135th Troop Carrier Group (Medium) Headquarters, the 135th Troop Carrier Squadron, the 135th Materiel Squadron, 135th Combat Support Squadron, and the 135th USAF Dispensary. This was mostly a paper shuffle and there was no change in mission or location. When most people think of the Cold War, their minds conjure up images of the Berlin Wall and foreign spies in trench coats. Few would include members of the Air Guard in this shadowy mix. But the origins of the 135th are inextricably linked to special operations, a force originally known as "Air Commandos."

In 1963, ANG special ops units were redesignated as Air Commando Squadrons, following the revival of an active duty Air Force air commando squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. in keeping with the Kennedy administration's emphasis on unconventional warfare.

During the encampment of 1963 in Savannah, four HU-16 aircrews deployed to a secret air base in North Carolina to again take part in Exercise SWIFT STRIKE. The aircrews flew 80 sorties during the mock war.

The 135th also worked closely with the CIA for many years. The Albatross and the U-10 were ideal for inserting operatives into remote locations. Most of the CIA contacts were made through Ft. Holabird in Baltimore, which housed the Army's Intelligence training operation. To acquaint the unit commanders with CIA procedures, unit members Dick Lynch, Warren Schulte and Roy Bands attended the two-week CIA school at Camp Perry, Va. When the crews flew with CIA operatives, they had to wear tape over their nametags and the tail numbers were blacked out on the aircraft. This was so their passengers would not be able to identify them if captured. One common mission was to pick up agents in training, fly a zigzag course to make sure they didn't know where they were headed, then have them parachute out over Western Maryland. The agents had to make their way to Patuxent with only the resources they carried with them. The 135th pilots would go down to pick these guys up and take them back home sometimes six weeks after they had been dropped off from the planes.

July 1963 saw another change in designation for the 135th. The unit was re-named the 135th Air Commando Group, finally acknowledging their true mission. They had been flying Air Commando missions for years and now were fully recognized in this role. The flying squadron was re-designated as the 135th Air Commando Squadron. At the same time the unit received six U-10As to complement their six HU-16s.

In the air, this special kind of warfare called for relatively simple aircraft, capable of flying low and slow, able to penetrate below enemy coastal radars, manned by crews capable of pinpoint accuracy in navigation and timing, at night as well as during the day. It was this kind of special air warfare which the 135th Air Commando Group performed. It trained under the guidance and supervision of the Special Air Warfare Center, located at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., a crack team of unconventional warfare experts that provided training to anti-communist forces worldwide.

Typical 135th missions involved low level runs, using a zigzag course to confuse enemy radar, arriving at a preplanned drop zone for supply drops or landings on temporarily lit runways to pick up special forces. Missions were sometimes 1,000 miles, taking over six hours to fly with an average drop time error of about 10 seconds. This was critical because too early or late and the special forces would not be in position to light the runway or pick up the supplies. Split second timing was critical.

The 1964 Camp was spent at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss. During the two weeks at Gulfport, the HU-16s supplied equipment and food to "guerillas" who were participating in a mock "war" which took place over most of Mississippi and Alabama, and parts of Georgia and Florida. During the middle weekend, two aircraft flew to northern Alabama, where they worked with the Alabama Army Guard's Special Forces in an exercise where the airplanes recovered "guerilla" forces from the waters of Lake Martin. Many of the 135th's senior staff officers visited Hurlburt for a firsthand look at the Air Commando Center, and a visit with Brig. Gen. Gilbert Pritchard, center commander, and his staff. Many of the Air Commandos, in turn, visited Gulfport during the encampment. Members of the 135th, more than 500 strong, were airlifted to and from Gulfport by C-97 from the Georgia Air National Guard.

In July 1965, Lt. Col. Dick Lynch of the 135th and an HU-16 crew consisting of pilots Roy Bands and Tom Ward, navigators Pete Karnoski and Dave Siegel, and flight mechanic Vernon Kahl and radio operator Jim Wolfe flew a route that was to be used for a September deployment of four HU-16s. After departing Martin Airport, Lynch and crew flew to McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. and then on to Goose Bay, Labrador. They continued on to Iceland followed by Mildenhall Air Base, England. The trip finally ended at Rhein-Main, Frankfurt, Germany. The return flight was by way of Moron de la Frontera Air Base, Seville, Spain; Lajes Air Base in the Azores; Newfoundland; and then finally on to McGuire again and then Martin Airport. The trip took 14 days and 67 air hours.

The annual summer camp for the 135th in 1966 was at Howard Air Force Base in the Panama Canal Zone. This camp was a preview of many future trips to Howard for the VOLANT OAK/CORONET OAK operations that took place in the ensuing decades. One of the most memorable ventures for 135th crewmembers was their time at Jungle Survival School, where they spent several days learning jungle survival techniques.

From July to September 1967, the 135th ACS converted from U-6A to U-10D. The unit then had 88 officers and 523 enlisted troops. It had flown 25,000 accident free hours since 1959; in July 1968, the 135th reached the impressive mark of 30,000 safe flying hours.

Following the 135th's successful deployment of a single HU-16 to Germany in July, the 135th deployed four HU-16s and 150 support personnel in Sept. 1965 to Sembach Air Base in Germany by way of McGuire, Goose Bay, Labrador, Keflavik, Iceland and Preswick, Scotland. This deployment almost ended in tragedy. The weather was much worse than forecast on the flight from Goose Bay to Keflavik with severe icing and strong headwinds. The only navigational aid was an ADF on the tip of Greenland and it turned out to be inoperative. The flight of four Albatrosses ended up with groundspeeds as low as 90 knots and had to fly at very low altitudes to stay below the icing. They landed in Keflavik with only 20 minutes of fuel on board which is less than the tolerance of the fuel gauges. That leg is talked about to this day. The purpose of the Sembach deployment was to conduct joint training with the Army's 7th Special Forces for nighttime water infiltration and exfiltration of personnel on the Chiemsee Lake located southeast of Munich near Mad King Ludwig's Castle. The 7th had never done any night activity from the water. The HU-16s departed Martin Airport and flew the same route as the July flight except that an additional stop was made in Preswick, Scotland. After the ten-day exercise, the return flight also stopped in Madrid, Spain. The deployment lasted 19 days.

In April 1968, the C-54 previously assigned to the 175th was reassigned to the 135th SOS for administrative and logistical support purposes such as transporting supplies, cargo, and personnel. The same year, Brig. Gen. Victor Kilkowski and Col. Dick Lynch delivered one of the 135th's last U-6As to the California Air National Guard.

On August 8, 1968, the 135th Air Commando Group and the 135th Air Commando Squadron were re-designated as the 135th Special Operations Group and the 135th Special Operations

Squadron. The 135th Special Operations Group is equipped and organized to train personnel and operate its forces in unconventional warfare and psychological operations. The group will, within its resources, participate in civic action projects and understand the principals of counterinsurgency. Aircrew and associates are capable of teaching Special Operations techniques to paramilitary forces of friendly peoples. These techniques are of necessity, those of avoiding detection, escape and surviving methods, and the use of bare resources to accomplish the objective.

The 1968 summer camp was held at Otis Air Force Base, Mass., where the unit participated in GUARD STRIKE II exercises that included paratrooper and bundle drops under simulated combat conditions.

A unique capability of the 135th Special Operations Group is that of water operations. This Group utilizes water areas for landing zones, both day and night, thus offering the customer another environment for more flexibility of his forces.

Operations began to look very similar to those of the active duty. The flying units undertook more demanding deployments, while support units began participating in "real world" deployments of their own.

The 135th changed missions twice: from Special Operations to Tactical Air Support and then again to Tactical Airlift.

In the summer of 1970. 150 officers and airmen deployed to Marana Air Park in Arizona. The missions consisted mainly of low level navigation through the desert and mountains. The unit had to maintain proficiency in low level insertion tactics in all types of terrain and lighting conditions. There were certainly a few eyes raised at the amphibious aircraft flying around the desert on this deployment.

While the main contingent was at Marana, another smaller group of 135th members under the command of Maj. Bertram Sealy was training at the 9,300 foot altitude airport in Leadville, Colo in U-105 to support the Alabama Army National Guard's Special Forces unit during their annual mountain exercise field training. Additionally, another small group of crew members flew down to Homestead in Florida to work with the Alabama Special Forces doing night pickup and insertion practice.

We flew the U-10s over the students during the 1971 anti-war protests. Ted Warfield had recorded various informational statements and we would broad cast the statements from the loudspeakers installed in our planes for special warfare purposes.

In June 1971, the 135th changed from Special Ops to Tactical Air Support, from insertion of troops and equipment to the control of fighter aircraft attacking enemy targets. The group was reorganized and renamed the 135th Tactical Air Support Group with the following assigned units: 135th Tactical Air Support Squadron (TASS), 135th Direct Air Support. U-10s to California

Dick Lynch and I flew the last two U-10s out to the Hayward Guard in California. It was a great flight. It took five days and we never got above 500 feet all the way across the country. Of course, there was a lot more uncontrolled airspace back then. We stopped and visited Ron James who was going through pilot training in Texas. The wind was blowing so hard that we had to radio in and get permission to land on a taxiway as the crosswinds were too high to land on the runway. The U-10s were equipped with loud speakers for use in psychological warfare over enemy territory. In actual operations the only time these loud speakers were used was during the student demonstrations at the University of Maryland in 1972 when General Warfield's instructions were relayed to the demonstrators from the U-10 flown by 135th Guardsmen.

The change in mission, of course, necessitated a change in aircraft. The U.S. Air Force's top-line Forward Air Control aircraft at that time was the O-2. The conversion from the HU-16s and U-10s to the new O-2 took place from May to August 1971. The transition to the fairly simple Skymaster was not difficult but the mission of controlling highly complex air strikes and acting as a traffic cop to numerous aircraft under quickly changing conditions was very challenging. Still, the pilots accomplished this transition without difficulty. During the summer of 1971, the 135th conducted its summer camp at Martin State Airport for the first time since its formation in 1955.

While this transition to the O-2 was not difficult for the pilots, it was harder for the remainder of the aircrews. There was of course no need for navigators, flight mechanics or airborne radio operators. and these people were forced to transition into ground positions. Most flight mechanics became crew chiefs and many personnel transferred into the newly formed DASC.

From the mission of Tactical Air Support, the unit began a transition into another highly demanding mission: Tactical Airlift. The 135th Tactical Air Support Group was reorganized as the 135th Tactical Airlift Group under the Military Airlift Command. Subordinate units included the 135th Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS)

This change in mission required another change in aircraft as the unit began a conversion to the C-7A. The 170th Tactical Airlift Group, McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., was transitioning into another aircraft and sent sixteen C-7s to the 135th. The C-7 was used in Vietnam by the U.S. Army for the insertion of troops and supplies into unimproved areas.

This conversion involved a major personnel change for the members of the 135th. For the last five years, the unit had been flying the O-2A, usually with only one crewmember in the aircraft. The C-7 was a three-person aircraft. These were exciting times for many of the men who had been grounded with the introduction of the O-2s, as the position of flight mechanic was reinstated. Others were less excited as they would be on the road again after several years of home based duty.

This mission meant the deactivation of the Tactical Air Support units who had supported the FACs. The Direct Air Support Center Squadron was deactivated and the ROMAD position was eliminated. There were mixed reactions to the loss of the jeeps. While they were surely sorry to see them go, most of ROMADs ended back in the air with the new mission.

The mission statement at the time of conversion read: To provide, upon short notice, combat-ready aircrews and equipment to transport military cargo and personnel to distant locations within the continental United States or throughout the free world. Upon mobilization into Federal service, all Air Guard airlift units would become a part of the Military Airlift Command (MAC) and would supplement the current military airlift capabilities of the United States Air Force. In their state missions, Air Guard airlift units provide a valuable capability to shuttle disaster assistance equipment and personnel to remote or heavily damaged areas within their State. They also have the capability of conducting "air drop operations" of personnel and material into areas where normal landings might be prohibited.

The 135th participated in Exercise EXOTIC DANCER VI in the Spring of 1973, out of Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C. The Maryland airborne FACs directed close air support fighters, helicopter escort fighters. and high-speed reconnaissance aircraft along with Army ground forces.

The 135th returned to Savannah in July 1974. The highlight of this summer camp was a single coordinated exercise for 21 different outfits from seven states and approximately 1,100 personnel to assemble and function as a team.

In 1975, the 135th's emphasis on summer camps began to change. Camps that year were conducted at Travis and Martin State Airport in two segments in July and later in September. The new focus was on training as an ongoing process

The eighties brought dramatic change to the missions and operational tempo of the Maryland Air National Guard. Drastic budget cuts in the latter part of the decade brought new meaning to the words "Total Force." The active Air Force simply began to run out of the assets required to cover the demand for hot spot coverage around the world. The traditional summer camp, which had already essentially disappeared, became a distant memory. Every day of active duty was needed to cover operational demands around the world. The unit still deployed to old haunts but only to prepare for or complete scheduled Operational Readiness Inspections.

1976 Split summer camp: Travis Field/Home Station - last formal camp

On October 1, 1980, the 135th officially converted from 16 C-7A to eight C-130B. The unit received its last new "Herc" in January 1981. Around the same time, the 135th moved across the field into their new facilities, finally uniting both units of the Maryland Air Guard in one location.

The second deployment to Hahn Air Base was of particular significance because it was the first A-10 deployment in the Air Force that used the island hopping concept. The trip was accomplished without aerial refueling. Refueling stops were made at Goose Bay, Labrador and Keflavik, Iceland. Named CORONET SABRE, 50 officers. 200 airmen. 12 A-10As from the 175th and two C-130B with crews from the 135th deployed for 15 days in June of 1985. During this deployment, the 175th participated in Exercises CENTRAL ENTERPRISE and AMPLE GAIN which immersed the participating units into the NATO command and control. Pilots worked closely with NATO ground FACs from several different countries. The lessons learned

about the different accents and terminology were invaluable. Maj. Gen. John Conaway, Director ANG, visited the unit on this deployment.

The first CRAB CLAW took place during the August 1981 drill weekend. The following units took part in the exercise: the 175th TFG, 135th TAG; 75th Rangers, United States Army; 182nd Tactical Air Support Group, Illinois Air National Guard; and 150th Aviation Battalion, Maryland Army National Guard. The exercise began with the 135th's C-130Bs airlifting supplies and personnel to Aberdeen Proving Ground, which was set up as a loading and refueling base for the 175th's A-10s. The 150th Aviation Battalion brought the Rangers into position. The Maryland Army National Guard helicopters used laser beams to spot targets on Bloodsworth Island. The Illinois Air National Guard's OA-37s acted as FACs. Lasers were used throughout the exercise to pinpoint targets for 30mm cannon fire and bomb releases.

Yearly CRAB CLAW exercises were held for several years after 1981. The exercise went by the wayside as one of the first casualties of the increased ops tempo of the late eighties and nineties. It had been described as the best exercise of its kind on the East Coast. A huge crab feast and debriefing was held at the end of each event.

In the summer of 1981 the 135th began overseas flights to Lajes Air Force Base in the Azores via McGuire Air Force Base, N.J. This flight took about eight hours in the C-130. The flights began as training and airlift missions — the first truly global assignment for the 135th.

In January 1982, the 135th deployed to Howard Air Force Base, Panama for its first VOLANT OAK rotation. While deployed, the unit flew support missions throughout Central and South America, primarily supporting American embassies in the region. VOLANT OAK (and its later incarnations, PHOENIX OAK and CORONET OAK) would become a deployment staple throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Many of the missions were far from routine. In November 1982, 135th crews participated in two search and rescue missions on the Pacific Ocean side of the Panama Canal and an aeromedical evacuation of five Navy personnel from Trinidad to Panama. An August 1984 Armed Forces Magazine article described a typical mission: A few days after arriving in Panama, a Hercules was readied for a long haul 'up-country' for the proverbial milk run throughout Central America. A 3-hour flight from Howard brought aircraft No. 711 under the command of Maj. B.T. Burke to Belize, a steamy niche of land once known as British Honduras. The approach to Belize International flew over breathtaking azure coral reefs and then forests before landing. Royal Air Force ground units offloaded and onloaded cargo with surprising alacrity, given the torrid weather. In the meantime, RAF Harriers were practicing touch and go landings; the only other visible traffic during the hour-long layover consisted of a lumbering Honduran DC-6 in cargo configuration. British forces have maintained a strong but discreet presence at Belize since the country's independence in 1981. Soon after takeoff, sights were set for Guatemala. Here, as in many Central American capitals, the landing approach is tricky owing to mountains and low clouds. 711's landing at la Aurora Airport having been made, cargo offload was handled expeditiously, before crew transfer and overnight rest in the mile-high Guatemalan capital. The following morning the Maryland ANG aircraft pressed on to Tegucigalpa, Honduras. The

Honduran interlude was briefer than expected — the local station manager advised the crew commander that because of the imminent, unscheduled arrival of two C-130s involved in ongoing manoeuvres, the small parking area would have to be cleared at once. Tegucigalpa airport was buzzing with military transports ferrying paratroops to local drop zones. Later at the brief stopover at San Jose, Costa Rica, the Maryland Air Guard shared the tarmac with a Canadian Air Forces C-130.

1984, the 135th deployed 45 members and two aircraft to the DISTANT HAMMER exercises held in Zaragoza, Spain. The year before, the 135th flew missions into and around Spain with a guest journalist from the News American on board. Michael Powell covered the crew's activities in his daily column.

In November 1984, four C-130Bs and 123 members of the 135th TAG participated in KINGS JOUST, a joint exercise at Travis Field Air National Guard Training Site, Savannah, Ga. The four-day event was designed to test aircrew and support team ability to airlift men and equipment into a hostile environment and airdrop cargo on time and on target. A second exercise in the KINGS JOUST series was held in January 1985 at Gulfport, Miss., involving 112 personnel from the 135th. Additionally, four A-10As from the 175th participated, providing close air support for the exercise.

Approximately 130 members of the 135th TAS, Mobile Aerial Port Flight, Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Weapons Systems Security Flight, Combat Support Squadron and the Fire Protection Section of the Civil Engineering Flight participated in SENTRY COWBOY III held at Gulfport, Miss. in March 1985. Sentry Cowboy was a composite force air/land exercise made up of over 2,000 members from 22 military units involving Air Guard, Air Reserve, active duty Air Force, Army Guard, Army Reserve, active duty Army (Ranger and Airborne), and Navy SEAL personnel. The 135th, acting as co-host for the second week, played an active role in planning, coordinating, and commanding the exercise.

Col. Chris Inglis recalled a VOLANT OAK mission in the summer of 1987, "We flew non-stop from Howard Air Force Base to Manaus, Brazil — a trip over the Amazon rain forest that stretched out longer than most of the over ocean flying we'd done up to that point. Later flights to Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro took us over territory that was breathtakingly beautiful and inaccessible by roads from any quarter. Later in the trip, we landed at La Paz, Bolivia, some 14,000 feet up in the Andes, where one of our crewmembers literally fainted from a lack of oxygen during a preflight inspection. Our flight into Managua was carefully monitored by Nicaraguan security forces since the U.S was still an avowed 'enemy' of this communist-run state though the rough-hewn air terminal was full of vendors hawking handicrafts, cigars, gems, and Nicaraguan rum. A side trip to Santa Maria, Columbia rounded out a great trip. All were impressed with the ruggedness and beauty of South America and happy for the opportunity to gain some good flying experience."

1989 was a banner year for the 135th. In September, the Group deployed to Ft. Campbell, Kentucky for what would be its last ORI until 1995. Also that year, the 135th turned in its C-130Bs for C-130Es. The "new" airplanes, which had been manufactured in 1963 and 1964, featured additional external fuel tanks for increased range, but the drag created by the tanks

slowed the aircraft considerably. This along with the lack of the full-authority aileron control of the Bs made for more sedate flying; crewmembers who flew on both remember the B as the "hot rod" C-130.

In January 1989, more than 240 civil engineers and base services personnel from the 135th Tactical Airlift Group and the 175th Tactical Fighter Group flew to Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., for extensive training in land navigation, mechanical and structural operations. explosive device reconnaissance, camouflage and survival operations. Called PRIME BEEF and PRIME RIBS. the exercises provided opportunities for operating in a near-wartime capacity. Maryland airmen used heavy equipment to construct temporary living facilities, including latrines, showers, laundry and a kitchen.

A VOLANT PARTNER exercise in April 1989 took nearly 50 airmen and three aircraft to Zaragoza, Spain, for a joint- service. multi-nation operation, while airmen from the 135th Mobile Aerial Port Flight deployed to Ramstein Air Base. Germany, to support operational missions there.

When Hurricane Hugo blasted the Caribbean in mid-September 1989. the 135th TAG, previously scheduled to fly support missions in the region, diverted from its normal training schedule and flew continuous relief missions into the afflicted areas of St. Croix, St. Thomas, Antigua and Puerto Rico. The 135th flew 34 relief missions, ferrying more than 40,000 tons of medical and construction supplies, a water tanker and bottled water plus relief personnel into the area over 205 passengers and 79.8 tons of relief supplies in all. They also flew 30 stranded American citizens from St. Croix into BWI airport.

When the Loma Prieta earthquake demolished the city of Santa Cruz, the San Francisco Bay Bridge, and the Cypress Overpass near Oakland on October 17, 1989. the 135th mounted humanitarian relief to earthquake-stricken areas of San Francisco, transporting a variety of household goods donated by St. Clare's Catholic Church in Essex. Their pastor accompanied the flight as a free-lance journalist to report the events to the local community.

The 1980s closed for the 135th with a series of humanitarian missions that foreshadowed missions throughout the 1990s. In September 1988 Hurricane Gilbert swept through several Caribbean nations leaving a path of devastation behind. Hardest hit was Jamaica. where hundreds of thousands were left homeless. Col. Vernon Sevier and his crew flew relief missions to Kingston with much needed supplies for the needy Jamaicans.

Throughout the decade, the Guard and Reserves supported a wide variety of tactical airlift needs for the U.S. Southern Command by rotating six Hercules operating out of Howard Air Force Base. Panama for two week periods. The rotation covered 365 days a year with each unit across the C-130 fleet providing a few aircraft two to three times a year. While in Panama, the aircraft operated under the local control of the 1300th Military Airlift Squadron based at Howard. The missions flown during VOLANT OAK provided airlift of people and cargo throughout Central and South America, often between embassies. Other missions involved paratropping troops on local training missions, providing Search and Rescue service to the country, providing disaster relief, and evacuation of U.S. nationals in times of crisis. The VOLANT OAK mission not only provided valuable experience in operating on foreign terrain, but also served as a demonstration

of the Guard's ability to perform active missions as required. VOLANT OAK was a perfect example of the maturing Total Force concept with the reserve components carrying out real world missions on a rotating basis, relieving the active duty forces from maintaining a permanent force in the area. The crews gained valuable experience at a great cost advantage over active throes. The 135th TAG first participated in VOLANT OAK in January 1982 with three aircraft and four crews. The unit flew this mission many times over the next 17 years.

The nineties began with an acceleration of the trend for high operations tempo and a high level of real world operational deployments. The Gulf War with Iraq put a tremendous demand on the Air Force and put the Maryland Air National Guard on a war footing. The fighter unit was told to expect an imminent call-up. The 135th Tactical Airlift Group deployed almost a hundred unit members during Oct. 1990 to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany and prepared for an expected call-up to support the extensive DESERT SHIELD operation. DESERT SHIELD turned into DESERT STORM on Jan. 16, 1991.

In October 1990, 100 135th members and three C-130Es answered the call for Operation VOLANT PINE to Rhein-Main Air Base, Frankfurt, Germany, where they flew missions in support of the buildup in Europe, the Mediterranean, and Turkey.

DESERT SHIELD turned into DESERT STORM on January 16, 1991 and the unit was advised to prepare for an imminent call-up. While the expected unit activation was precluded by the unexpectedly short duration of the war, the Gulf War presaged a decade of ever-increasing operational deployment.

In August 1991, the 135th participated in the Air National Guard's first joint, combined forces exercise in Paraguay. Known as FUERZAS UNIDAS '91 ("United Forces '91"), the exercise was comprised of U.S. Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and the Paraguay Army and Air Force. During the exercise, the 135th airdropped 637 Paraguay armed forces, airlifted 260 tons of cargo and airlifted an Alabama ANG civil engineering unit from Birmingham. 135th civil engineers constructed sanitation facilities and remodeled classrooms for public schools in Concepcion, Paraguay.

In May 1992, the 135th AG participated in a large joint international exercise called VOLANT PARTNER S2. Contributions included three C-130E Hercules transports and 103 officers and airmen who joined with the crews of seven other Guard and active duty aircraft. From Belgium, they flew missions to England, Poland and Germany participating in a mass airdrop with 10 aircraft and 600 paratroopers of the German Army's Berlin Brigade.

From August to October 1991, the 135th deployed 160 officers and airmen for support missions throughout Central and South America. VOLANT OAK rotations were very popular with unit members and the almost annual deployments were to become one of the few constants for the 135th throughout the 1990s.

In September 1992, the 135th began a 15-day rotational deployment. Three Hercules transports and four aircrews transported cargo and personnel to destinations that included: Islas Del Cisne and Soto Cano Air Base, Honduras; Quito and Lago Agrio, Ecuador; Bogota, San Jose and

Leticia, Colombia. The 135th deployed to Howard twice in 1993. Five C-130E Hercules and 115 officers and airmen provided airlift resupply to embassies and U.S. military facilities in Central and South America.

From September through December 1992, the 135th TAG deployed two aircraft and aircrews to Mombasa, Kenya in support of UN-led relief mission. Operation PROVIDE RELIEF, joining their active duty and reserve counterparts in the largest operation since the Berlin Airlift. Even before the highly publicized deployment of ground troops to Somalia in December 1992, 135th crews had been delivering food and supplies for three months. Missions involved airlifting supplies to many villages virtually inaccessible by overland road systems. Often, dry riverbeds and flat desert stretches typically cut off by roving Somali warlords were used for landing zones. Before protective cover from U.S. and allied forces was established later in the mission, the airlifters also had to deal with ground fire from hostile forces in-country, taking several hits in the process.

During the 1992 VOLANT PARTNER exercise, the 135th formed a relationship with British RAF crews that blossomed into a decade-long series of joint exercises and exchange visits between the U.S. and the Britain. In 1993, units from RAF Lyneham, England and the 135th AG sponsored the first of a series of annual exercises aimed at enhancing the interoperability of American and British C-130s known as CROSS SKE ("SKE" refers to the C-130 Station Keeping Equipment). That year, the 135th hosted two C-130E Hercules and three aircrews from Britain for ten days of tactical exercises. 175th A-10s supported the exercise by performing escort duties for the low-level packages.

In 1992, the 135th Airlift Group continued its support of numerous hurricane relief operations. Seven C-130s and forty airmen flew to Florida in the wake of Hurricane Andrew. The unit flew 39 missions and delivered 97 tons of relief supplies. This was followed by similar relief efforts throughout the decade, including 27 tons of cargo to Central American victims of Hurricane Mitch.

In 1993, the 135th TAG provided re-supply and passenger airlift for air operations between Thule and Sondstrom in Greenland. Runway construction at Thule prevented use of the larger C-141. The operation was called RESUPPLY THULE and took place in the summer months when it was daylight around the clock. The flying lasted 5 1/2 hours a day. Along with normal supplies and cargo, the unit was called upon to ferry the Princess of Denmark and her entourage on two separate missions. Maryland's Hercs were used for two weeks. Twenty-seven sorties were flown, transporting 237 passengers and 100 tons of cargo.

From August 1993 through June 1994, the 135th deployed 5 C-130E's, 64 officers and airmen to Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany to deliver relief supplies to Bosnians in Operation PROVIDE PROMISE. The Guardsmen were assigned to the 38th Airlift Squadron (Provisional), better known as "Delta Squadron." The 135th racked up 210 hours flying relief missions over war ravaged Bosnia, including hazardous night airdrops over the Bosnian countryside and landings in the besieged city of Sarajevo.

In 1994, the 135th Airlift Group participated in a Joint Airborne/Air Transportability Training (JAATT) exercise in Bolivia. The unit supplied one C-130 aircraft and ten aircrew members. Flying 45 hours, 21 personnel and six tons of cargo, crews airdropped 23 paratroopers.

In August, the unit returned to South America with 26 personnel and one C-130 to work with the Venezuelan Air Force. The Group conducted joint operations with the Venezuelan Army from El Liberador in north central Venezuela. Some great low-level packages were put together with the local flyers and a phenomenal exchange of ideas on tactics and low level flying was one of the deployment's bonuses. An airdrop of troops of the Venezuelan 81st Air Cavalry Regiment was one of the principal events of the 11-day exercise. The Venezuelans appeared to really enjoy the joint operation and invited the 135th AG back to repeat the exercise in the future.

Members of the 135th AG assisted in a U.S. State Department and DoD sponsored anti-poaching program. DOD identified the 135th AG as a potential repository for 0-2A expertise since the unit flew the Skymaster from 1970 to 1977. Several maintenance troops with experience in the 0-2 deployed to Africa from December 1993 to February 1994 to assist in the program. Among them were CMSgt. Doug Harrell, and MSgt. Mike Kelly who were sent to Nimibia. SMSgt. George Gove who was sent to Botswana; and MSgt. Cannon who was sent to Mali. With other DoD personnel, these troops helped the four nations in an anti-poaching campaign using the 0-2A. They were familiar with the maintenance and handling of the 0-2s and impaled these skills to the wildlife conservation agents of the African nations.

In April 1994, 175th and 135th guardsmen were deployed to Pope Air Force Base in a joint exercise to train numerous Air Guard C-130 units to respond to a massive airlift of cargo. Four A-10A and 12 C-130E participated in the deployment

In July 1994, the Group participated in the now-renamed CORONET OAK operation at Howard, with two C-130 aircraft, three aircrews and 50 support personnel. The deployment provided the opportunity for 135th aircrews to train under austere conditions while flying into diverse topographical areas in both Central and South America.

In 1994 NATO introduced an initiative aimed at increasing confidence and cooperative efforts to reinforce security in post Cold War Europe. Called the Partnership for Peace, the program created ties between NATO and one-time adversaries of the former Soviet Union. One aspect of this program involved a series of exercises hosted in the Baltic republics.

In September 1994, 135th members were alerted to report and fly missions to Haiti. Crews had time for a minimal briefing before jumping in the Hercules and heading south. The operation, called UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, was intended to restore legally elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in Haiti. Although the initial plan was for a full-scale airborne invasion of the country, the Haitian military junta capitulated at the last moment and American forces were able to land in a permissive, albeit tense, environment. Crewmembers were told to plan to be gone for seven days out the operation went very smoothly and they were home in five days. Only a minimal amount of time was spent on the ground in Haiti to minimize the risk to crews and aircraft. The 135th provided four C-130E aircraft and aircrews. flew 55 flying hours, and carried 120 personnel.

From September through December 1994, the 135th AG participated in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT II. Two C-130Es, nine aircrews plus a maintenance and operations package were rotated every fifteen days in theater. Flying consisted of theater humanitarian airlift operations for relief of the Kurds during the closure for repairs of the Incirlik Air Base runway. Normally supplied by C-141s, Incirlik's shortened runway mandated that C-130s be used for the duration of the construction. The Air Guard picked the mission up for three months and used a "rainbow" concept of three Guard units working together to cover the whole time period. The other units that worked with Maryland were the 133rd and the 146th Airlift Wings and the 167th and the 143rd Airlift Groups.

Exercise BIG DROP II kicked off in May 1995 and included three aircraft and aircrews from the 135th. A total of 73 C-130 and C-141 aircraft from the regular Air Force, the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard participated in the airdrop. The first of 400 tons of equipment was dropped on one of three drop zones at Ft. Bragg at 1201 a.m. Saturday, May 6th. The massive night "invasion" included 2,500 paratroopers from the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division and aircraft from 11 Air Guard units, five active duty and seven Reserve units. The exercise was conceived from the lessons learned during the airdrop into Haiti for Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. Based on this experience, the Army and Air Force agreed that more joint operations of this scope were needed. "The reason we're doing this is to perfect our joint operation in real-world scenarios," said Lt. Col. Dan Watkins, Vice Commander of the 135th AG and deputy commander for the exercise. "Historically, that's the way the Army is going to fight. And it's going to take a large formation of aircraft to transport them." The 135th AG aircraft provided the lead element for the air flotilla using radar guidance from the Adverse Weather Aerial Delivery System (AWADS) for the midnight operation.

On December 5, 1995 the 135th returned to Savannah under the watchful eyes of a 9th Air Force inspection team for a formal ORI. For the first time, an Air Guard unit was coupled and tested with an Air Force Reserve unit, the 910th Airlift Wing of Youngstown, Ohio. This first ORI under the new ACC had many new and different requirements. For starters, the ORI tested units possessing dissimilar aircraft—the 135th AG had C-130Es while the Reserves flew C-130Hs. The different models and missions necessitated different operational parameter evaluations. In addition, this ORI was different in that ACC directed the location and tasking for the ORI (Air Mobility Command allowed the unit to select.) ACC also would not reveal what missions would be flown until the last minute to more accurately reflect a realistic combat fragmentation order and tasking. There were two reasons for this new scenario: joint testing is less expensive than separate testing and in a mobilized situation, units would be working together to meet common wartime objectives. The 135th achieved an overall "Excellent" rating by 9th Air Force. Col. Dave Beasley, 135th Commander, commented on the gratifying results. "The fine men and women of the 135th really came together as a team for the exercise and the inspection. The results speak for themselves but I will say the wonderful team effort, the dedicated individual efforts and the sustained performance of our people won this 'war' for us. It took several pages in the report to name the outstanding individual performers and teams that carried us to Our victory"

In 1995 the 135th TAG took on MAGIC CARPET, an ongoing mission supporting the U.S. Justice Department Immigration and Naturalization Service. In this operation, the 135th flew shuttle missions, assisting in the deportation of more than 300 convicted alien drug offenders from the U.S. to Latin America.

PURPLE STAR, the renamed follow-on exercise to BIG DROP II was held in May 1996 at Ft. Bragg, N.C. This exercise involved numerous airlift units including Royal Air Force flyers. Ninety-five C-130s and 38 C-141s airdropped 6,000 paratroopers into the drop zone at Ft. Bragg; it was the largest airdrop of troops and equipment since the Second World War. The 135th contributed two C-130s and crews. Participating RAF squadrons included the 24th, 30th and 70th Squadrons.

With the drawdown of U.S. forces in Europe, operations at Rhein-Main were significantly curtailed and Bosnian support operations shifted to Ramstein Air Base. In the late spring of 1996, the 135th deployed five crews and 69 personnel to Ramstein to participate in Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia. The Marylanders participated in the airlift of badly needed supplies in Bosnia to support the Joint Forces enforcing an uneasy peace. The Maryland crews rotated over a 90-day period and were part of a multi-guard unit effort. 135th AG personnel actually flew Rhode Island C-130s as Maryland aircraft were not equipped with the required defensive systems. Most missions were flown to Tuzla Air Base in northern Bosnia, where engines were kept running and ground times short to minimize exposure to hostile fire. Many days the crews flew 16-hour "double shuttles" between Germany and Bosnia. The crews handled the demanding mission with customary 135th professionalism. Sixty-two combat missions were flown for over 180 flying hours. Three hundred tons of cargo and 520 passengers were delivered by Maryland crews.

After a short visit by RAF C-130's to Baltimore in June 1996, CROSS-SKE '96 kicked off in August when four A-10s and three C-130s departed Martin State Airport and flew to RAF Lyneham near Bath, England. Hosted by RAF Squadrons 47 and LXX, this was the first joint deployment by both of the Wing's A-10 and C-130 aircraft. The exercise proved extremely valuable both in building camaraderie between the two nations and in improving joint tactics in low level SKE procedures. During this deployment, renowned aviation artist Gil Cohen accompanied the 135th performing research for a painting commissioned by the U.S. Air Force's Historical Aviation Art Series. The resulting painting entitled "On the Deck Over Scotland" featured Lt. Col. Chris Inglis and crew during a low-level tactical flight over the Scottish coast and hangs in the Pentagon halls today.

Late in 1996, the 135th AG received informal word that it would upgrade to the latest version of the Hercules, the C-130J. This was confirmed two years later, and the unit began preparing to be the Air Force's first airlift unit to receive the new plane. While the capabilities of the new aircraft were impressive and the assignment was taken as a sign that the 135th would continue as a viable unit for many years to come, the new aircraft, with its reduced maintenance and aircrew packages, also foreshadowed a significant reduction in unit ranks. The unit thus began preparing for an extended period of considerable dislocation. The conversion would include numerous significant challenges associated with transitioning to a radically new aircraft. As of this writing,

the unit is just beginning its conversion to the C-130J.

The first of the BALTIC CHALLENGE exercises was conducted in Latvia in 1996. The exercise involved 800 personnel from the three Baltic nations and the U.S. The success of 1996 carried over into BALTIC CHALLENGE '97. Hosted by the former Soviet republic of Estonia. BALTIC CHALLENGE '97 saw the first participation of the 135th.

In July 1997, the 135th deployed two aircraft and crews to Tallinn, Estonia as part of an eight-nation 2,800 member military force. The crews flew over 100 hours and delivered 430 passengers, 20 tons of cargo and airdropped 425 paratroopers. The Baltic governments were so impressed with the 135th's performance that they specifically requested the unit return for BALTIC CHALLENGE '98.

Maryland hosted CROSS SKE '97 in August 1997 and CROSS SKE '98 was again hosted by the RAF at Lyneham in October 1998. Both exercises were well attended and returned significant personal and professional benefits to all participants. The last CROSS SKE of the 1990s was hosted by the 135th AG from April 25 through May 8, 1999. Involving three aircraft and six crews from RAF Lyneham, the exercise involved numerous tactical scenarios with C-130s and A-10s. A truly fitting capstone to a nearly ten year partnership. CROSS-SKE '99 will likely be the last of the series until the 135th AG completes its conversion to C-130Js.

In 1997, the 135th AG served as the lead unit for a three-month deployment of an eight C-130 force. The 135th had two aircraft stationed in the area for the entire 90 days. one at Prince Sultan Air Base, Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia; and one at Seeb Airport in Muscat, Oman. While in theater, the Guardsmen were assigned to the U.S. Central Command's 4410th Airlift Squadron (Provisional). The Maryland crews transported troops, supplies, and equipment throughout the region. Eight 135th AG crews flew 172 hours during the deployment, delivering 471 passengers and 324 tons of cargo to locations throughout the Persian Gulf. Unit members earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor Device during this rotation.

In July 1998, the 135th participated in the largest and most important exercise ever conducted in any of the Baltic countries, bringing significant "firsts" and unique contributions to the exercise. The exercise included joint paratrooper training and acrobatic and freestyle jumping from 135th AG C130Es. Deployment project officer Lt. Col. Warren Thomas worked beside Lithuanian Air Force Maj. Marcinkus as the co-planners for the joint operations. Maryland provided two C-130s, two crews and 15 support personnel, flying 148 hours and delivering 485 passengers and 70 tons of cargo. Four-hundred-sixty paratroopers were airdropped during the exercise. Five thousand military personnel, representing eleven nations, took part in the BALTIC CHALLENGE '98. Participating nations included Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, and the U.S. to include the Maryland and Kentucky Air National Guard and the Maryland, Michigan and Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

In September 1998, the 135th AS flew to Dhaka, Bangladesh in support of Exercise COPE SOUTH. Chartered by the U.S. State Department as a goodwill tour and demonstration of U.S. tactical airlift capability, the mission was quickly changed to one of humanitarian relief for flood-ravaged Bangladesh. Two 135th AG C-130Es and 42 personnel participated in

humanitarian airlift missions of medical supplies and food to outlying regions of Bangladesh. Nearly 200 flying hours delivered 46 tons of cargo and transported 141 passengers.

The transfer of the Panama Canal to the government of Panama and closing of Howard Air Force Base in 1999 saw the last of a long string of CORONET OAK operations. The last 135th rotation took place in December 1998. Operations supporting this theater moved to the newly established C-130F ANG operation in Puerto Rico.

While the 135th's first C-130J was formally accepted at a May 1, 1999 dedication ceremony, the conversion has been hampered by all of the technical and doctrinal growing pains one would expect of a dramatically new weapons system. As of January 2000, the 135th AG had accepted four C-130Js and the unit's C-130Es were gradually being transferred to other units.

Much of the work needed to bring the C-130J into active service is being pioneered by the 135th AG. Designed for significantly improved performance and using state-of-the-art systems, the C-130J is cutting-edge technology but still requires additional testing, certification, and fine-tuning before reaching its full potential.

Exercise BLUE CRANE typifies the growing list of short-notice, far-flung deployments, taken on by the 135th in the late 1990s. A USAFE-directed multinational exercise in Johannesburg, South Africa. BLUE CRANE involved multiple Air Forces in combined force tactical operations and humanitarian support. One 135th AG C-130, two crews and 12 support personnel participated in the May 1999 exercise, logging over 50 hours, hauling 312 passengers and over 10 tons of cargo.

The 135th Airlift Group had a very successful year in 2009, flying a full range of airlift missions in support of the Global War on Terror and other taskings, even as it prepared to transition to a new airframe as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure commission's decision to reassign its C-130J aircraft to other units.

In 2009, the Maryland C-130 fleet was downsized from eight aircraft to six. At the same time, the unit began preparing for its follow-on mission, that of flying the C-27J, which are expected to begin arriving in the 2011-2012 timeframe. One officer and one enlisted member were selected to begin writing and reviewing C-27J aircraft publications at Air Mobility Command. Three more 135th members were activated by Air National Guard to support acquisition and deployment of the new C-27J. But even as they were preparing to transition to the new aircraft, the 135th maintained a full flying schedule, as is evident in the 873 sorties they flew, encompassing a total of 2196.5 flying hours for the year. During these missions, they transported 2,240 passengers and 227.7 tons of cargo with a mission-capable rate of 77.1 percent in their worldwide missions. This year's flying brought the group's total accident-free flying hours to 182,276.8.

Maryland Air National Guard marked its 90th year of operation in 2011. The year saw big changes for the unit with the transition from C-130J to the C-27J that will allow the unit to continue airlift transport capabilities around the world. The unit saw the completion of the \$7.9 million 12 bay fire station, now centrally located on base to handle any aircraft emergencies.

Joint HQ office provided support to more than 200 full-time members that were mobilized in 2011.

The Maryland National Guard christened its first C-27J the "Pride of Baltimore II" during an arrival ceremony at the Warfield Air National Guard Base in Baltimore. Lt. Gen. Bud Wyatt, ANG director; Maj. Gen. James Adkins, adjutant general for the Maryland Guard; and Brig. Gen. Allyson Soloman, the Maryland ANG's assistant adjutant general for air; all attended the Aug. 10 event. Maryland's 135th Airlift Group is slated to receive four aircraft after it lost its C-130J mission in BRAC 2005. The remaining Super Hercs will leave the base by month's end, according to a release. "It is a cultural change for us. It is like going from a Cadillac to a Maserati," said Soloman. "We will see how the aircrews handle a sports car."

Maryland Air National Guard is answering the call once again to lead the way on new aircraft. Maj. Gen. James A. Adkins, the adjutant general for the Maryland National Guard along with Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director Air National Guard, and Col. Thomas Hans, 135th Airlift Group commander, broke a bottle of Champagne to christen the "Pride of Baltimore II," the 175th Wing's first C-27J Spartan during an arrival ceremony on Aug. 13, 2011. In describing the new airlifter, General Wyatt said, "It has a niche that the C-27J fits all its own. For the Air National Guard, it's a great airplane. It fits the domestic niche where larger airplanes would be inefficient." The general related how adding the new aircraft is similar to how larger airlines operate. He compared it to how civilian companies use different size airplanes to meet the needs of their missions to maximize efficiencies with a smaller airplane. "It's an airplane that is really inexpensive and costs less to operate." General Wyatt remarked that Maryland had already established themselves as a premiere C-130 unit in the Air National Guard. "I expect you will take this airplane and apply it like the other platforms flown before." "It's a new chapter in the 135th," said Senior Airman J. B. Jennings, a loadmaster. "I think it is an honor to get this airplane. It's going to serve its purpose well. It is a new aircraft serving a new mission. Here in Maryland our domestic mission (covers a wide ranging geography) - we have the Eastern Shore, the mountains. Whether we need to get supplies in or evacuate people this airplane gets into pretty much any runway in the state." The Maryland Air National Guard lost their C-130Js due to the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure process.

The Airlift Group seamlessly and effectively deployed 110 personnel, four C-130J, flew eight missions plus six position/disposition legs, totaling 87.5 hours; delivered 255 passengers and 24 tons of cargo in support of Operation Coronet Oak and flew many other taskings before reassignment of its remaining four C-130J. Throughout the year, one by one, the unit gained four C-27J. With the arrival of the new C-27J came the need to train aircrews and maintenance personnel on the new airframe in preparation for the upcoming deployments in FY 2012. While continuing the C-130J mission, the unit also conducted simultaneous C-27J conversion training and once again became the Air National Guard lead in the acquisition and fielding of the Air Force's newest tactical airlifter. During 2011, 22 pilots and 24 loadmasters were trained and qualified in the C-27J at home station. Members of the 135th Airlift Group cultivated the entire core C-27J operating instructions. They also developed and implemented the C-27J short course and emergency procedures simulator syllabus for the Air National Guard. The unit flew 380 C-130J sorties accounting for 840.4 flying hours and 140 C-27J sorties culminating in 342 flying hours for the year.

Maryland Air Guard Airlift Group Inactivated The Maryland Air National Guard's 175th Wing in Baltimore inactivated its 135th Airlift Group as part of the changes following the wing's loss of the C-27J flying mission. The inactivation ceremony took place on Sept. 27 at the wing's home at Warfield ANG Base. Some of the group's airmen will remain with the wing to be part of the wing's newly forming network warfare squadron, said wing officials. Other members of the now-defunct group have relocated to different bases to continue their careers in other airlift squadrons, they said. The wing was one of the first Air Guard units to transition to the C-27J, but lost the airplanes after the Air Force decided to divest the C-27 fleet as a cost-saving move. 2013





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Sources

Unit history. Maryland National Guard, A history of Maryland's Military Forces, 1634-1991.