

McGuire Means

The 305th Air Mobility Wing's thousands of airmen keep the airlifters and tankers in constant motion.

Photography by Rick Linares



Mobility



A trio of Vermont Air National Guard F-16s tanks up from a KC-10A of the 305th Air Mobility Wing, McGuire AFB, N.J., over northern New York state.

McGuire AFB, N.J., has become a key waypoint in the ceaseless flow of people, machines, and materiel headed to combat operations in the Mideast. McGuire's 305th Air Mobility Wing is instrumental in sustainment of the war effort, as well as in the day-to-day support of US military activities worldwide. [1] The boom operator on a KC-10 has a commanding view of the receiving aircraft and vicinity, as in this "10 on 10" operation in which a KC-10 refuels another KC-10. [2] The 305th tailflash features a small white P-38 Lightning, a tribute to base namesake Maj. Thomas McGuire Jr., who grew up in New Jersey and flew the P-38. McGuire was the second highest-scoring US ace in World War II, awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously after he was killed during a 1945 combat mission. [3] Capt. Pete Braxton of the 305th positions his KC-10 beneath another KC-10 for refueling. Such transfers can be used to share fuel and tank up more aircraft at once.



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[4] Second Lt. Casey Eden inspects pallets ready for loading at McGuire's air terminal. She is the flight commander for the facility, and is assigned to the 305th Aerial Port Squadron.



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[1] The boom on the business end of a KC-10 can transfer fuel at a rate of up to 1,100 gallons per minute. The boom operator sits upright in the fuselage below the tail and “flies” the boom into position. In the KC-135, boom operators lie prone to operate the boom. [2] “Boomers” must be familiar with the receptacle idiosyncra-

sies of many different aircraft. This A-10’s receptacle is immediately forward of the windscreen. On other aircraft, the boom may connect behind, above, or to the side of the cockpit. [3] A C-17’s engine, with KC-10s and a C-17 in the background. McGuire has 13 C-17s and 32 KC-10s to extend the Air Force’s reach worldwide.

[4] Inspecting a C-17’s cockpit are (l-r) SSgt. Jason Pratek and SrA. Matt Dezino of the 305th Maintenance Squadron. [5] A C-17 of the 6th Airlift Squadron gets airborne. Its four Pratt & Whitney F117 engines each can generate up to 40,440 pounds of thrust.



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[1] TSgt. Chrissie Valenza and SrA. Simon Hunt check the radar and other avionics in a C-17's nose. Both are with the 305th Maintenance Squadron. **[2]** Trapezoidal markings on USAF aircraft assist boomers in locating and plugging into refueling receptacles. This one is on a KC-10.

[3] A C-17 makes the approach to the boom. Each type approaches differently, given the complex flow of air around the two aircraft. **[4]** TSgt. Kit Carson pulls up floor rollers from a C-17. With the rollers, pallets roll on and off easily. Rollers removed, the C-17 can better handle up

to 102 paratroops. **[5]** A KC-10 touches down after a mission. In service since 1981, the KC-10 was meant to bridge between Eisenhower-era tankers and the future KC-X, procurement of which has been delayed several times.



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[1] The view from an F-16 of the Vermont Air Guard's 158th Fighter Wing as it moves in to gas up from a KC-10. During refueling, formation flight skills are crucial; the boom is mere inches from the top of the canopy. **[2]** Pratek and Dezino work the test gear in the back of a buttoned-up C-17. **[3]** Each of the 305th AMW's KC-10

squadrons has 16 aircraft. This KC-10's boom is stowed in the upright position. Belly markings and lights help receiver aircraft line up properly. **[4]** A KC-10 lands as a C-17 awaits its turn on the runway. **[5]** The preflight check of a KC-10 is wrapped up. The wing boasts 7,000 officers, enlisted, and civilian personnel.



[1] Total Force: The 514th Air Mobility Wing, a Reserve unit, shares billing on the nose of this KC-10. The Reserve unit is co-located at McGuire and uses the same aircraft as the active unit. **[2]** A C-17 cruises above upper New York state. With a length of 174 feet and a wingspan of

169 feet, the C-17 can carry a pallet load comparable to that of the KC-10, but can get in and out of short and unimproved runways. **[3]** A KC-135 Stratotanker of the 108th Air Refueling Wing, an Air Guard unit also located at McGuire. **[4]** A 305th AMW KC-10 touches down at McGuire.

In seconds, the three engines will be switched to reverse thrust to slow the aircraft down. The engines can provide up to 52,500 pounds of thrust. **[5]** Two KC-10s taxi to takeoff.



[1] A1C Natalie Collins of the 305th Aerial Port Squadron checks a manifest prior to a load being put onto an aircraft. The unit provides both cargo and passenger services to the 305th AMW. [2] An A-10 of the 23rd Wing, Moody AFB, Ga., hooks up with a KC-135 of the New Jersey Air Guard. Along with Charleston AFB, S.C., McGuire is one of the two main East Coast "jumping off" bases across the Atlantic for resupply of Europe and US Central Command. [3] This special building at McGuire can swallow a whole KC-10 for washing by spray racks.



[4] The capacious C-17 cargo bay, 88 feet long, 18 feet wide, and 12 feet high, can carry 170,900 pounds of cargo. It's carried everything from helicopters to an elephant, and is able to land in just a few hundred feet—a capability unique to USAF. ■