



NEWS RELEASE

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C-130 AIRLIFTER USED IN CONGO RESCUE MISSION COMING TO MUSEUM OF AVIATION

Warner Robins, GA -- A 47-year old C-130E transport that has flown hundreds of combat and humanitarian missions around the world is coming to the Museum of Aviation at Robins Air Force Base to be retired. The aircraft, #63-7868, is expected to make its last flight to Robins on Tuesday to arrive around 11:00 a.m.

The flight has a rather personal connection to Warner Robins – the navigator on the crew flying it in will be Major John Fay who graduated from Houston County High School. Major Fay is a C-130 instructor at Little Rock Air Force Base, the largest C-130 training base in the country. The major comes from a true blue military family. His father, John Sr., was a KC-135 pilot in the Air Force, his mother is a former Air Force nurse, his younger brother is flying C-17 Globemaster aircraft at McGuire AFB, NJ and his older sister serves at a Navy hospital. The Fays live in Boniare, GA and father Fay is planning to meet his son when the aircraft arrives. It will be the first time he has seen his son navigate an aircraft into Robins AFB and the first time he has seen him in over a year. John was a Junior ROTC cadet at Houston County High and an ROTC graduate from Valdosta State.

The C-130 coming in was manufactured by Lockheed Aircraft in Marietta, Georgia in April 1964. Its first assignment was to an airlift unit at Pope AFB, NC. Seven months after it got to North Carolina the brand new aircraft and several other C-130s were called into action to rescue civilians who had been taken hostage by Simba rebels in the Congo city of Stanleyville. Dubbed Operation Red Dragon, U.S. crews first flew to Belgium to pick up Belgian paratroopers, then on to Spain and Ascension Island and finally to a remote airfield in Africa called Kamina, the staging base for the rescue operation. Early on the morning on November 23, the C-130s flew over Sábanas airport in Stanleyville and dropped over 300 paratroopers who overpowered the rebels at the Victoria Hotel and freed the hostages. In the C-130 flights that followed more than 2,000 civilians were taken out of Stanleyville to a safe haven at Leopoldville.

The aircraft coming to the Museum was one of the first C-130s to fly out a load of 100 civilians. During its departure it was fired upon by rebels who managed to put a hole

in the left wing fuel tank. The commander of that aircraft was Captain Mac Secord, who now lives in Atlanta, GA. He managed to take off and fly 800 miles to their base but had to shut down one engine during flight. He and the other C-130 crewmembers involved in Operation Red Dragon received the U.S. Air Force MacKay Trophy in 1964 for the most meritorious flight of the year. All of the crewmembers were decorated with the Air Medal, and Captain Secord received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

From 1971 to 1973, #7868 was one of five C-130Es used by Air America for operations in Laos. For the next 16 years it flew missions out of Clark Air Base in the Philippines. It was then assigned to the Rhode Island Air National Guard, and finally to airlift units at Pope AFB, NC and Little Rock AFB, AR.

The aircraft will eventually will be towed down Highway 247 to be displayed next the C-141 airlifter on the Museum grounds.

The Hercules E-models have been replaced with newer versions of the venerable airlifter, first the H-model introduced in 1974 and the J-model which entered the inventory in 1999. The C-130J brings substantial performance improvements over all previous models, and has allowed the introduction of the C-130J-30, a stretch version with a 15-foot fuselage extension. The U.S. Air Force has selected the C-130J-30 to replace retiring C-130E's.



***Survivors of the Victoria Hotel Square massacre in Stanleyville, Congo in 1964
board C-130 #63-7868 just minutes before gunfire damaged the left wing fuel tank
on takeoff.***