



Heavy

lifting

Flying humanitarian missions or ferrying supplies to warfighters, C-17s are on the go

By Eric Fetters-Walp and photos by Bob Ferguson



Interspersed between commercial jetliners taking off from the same runways, hulking Air Force–gray Boeing C-17 Globemaster III airlifters regularly take to the sky with a satisfying roar over North Charleston, S.C.

Fifty-six C-17s are assigned to Joint Base Charleston, where 145 employees with Boeing’s Global Services & Support, part of Defense, Space & Security, help make these critical airlifters ready for missions around the world.

Daily, C-17s from the 437th Airlift Wing at Charleston head to Afghanistan with newly built armored vehicles and supplies for warfighters. When needed, the C-17s also help with humanitarian missions. In the weeks after Haiti’s devastating earthquake in January, dozens of C-17s filled with relief supplies flew out of Charleston. The 437th Airlift Wing, which was the first operational C-17 wing in the U.S. Air Force, also is the primary cargo mover for the Denton Amendment program, which flies humanitarian aid on available missions to a dozen nations.

Since 1993, Global Services & Support

PHOTOS: (Left) A C-17 is directed into place on the ramp at Joint Base Charleston (S.C.), which is home to 56 of the Boeing-built airlifters. **(Insets, from left)** Staff Sgt. Nick Ivy (left) and Staff Sgt. Jason Head, 437th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chiefs, inspect the brakes on a C-17; Ed Acevedo, Boeing product support technician lead, removes a panel on one of the C-17’s four Pratt & Whitney F117-PW-100 turbofan engines; Sgt. Nick Ivy (left) and Robert Baldwin, Boeing field service technician, inspect a C-17 air-conditioning “pack.”

has won contracts to support the Air Force's fleet of Boeing-built C-17s at bases worldwide under the C-17 Globemaster III Sustainment Partnership program. In Charleston, more than 100 Integrated Logistics employees work side by side with the U.S. Air Force to maintain the aircraft. A Boeing-run engine shop at the Charleston base is in charge of routing nonworking C-17 engines between the Air Force and a repair contractor, as well as providing spare engines at a moment's notice.

Another 40 Training Systems & Services employees at the base teach Air Force C-17 crews. Charleston is one of four U.S. bases with C-17 Weapon Systems Trainer simulators.

"It's an honor to be here at Joint Base Charleston, personally interacting with our customer daily," said John Cook, director of Boeing Field Services at the Charleston base. "I know that I have an opportunity every day to exceed customer expectations and support their mission success, so that we can be here supporting this great airlifter for years to come."

Assembled at Boeing's Long Beach, Calif., site, the C-17 is best known for its huge cargo hold, which is large enough to accommodate two large buses or three helicopters, according to the 437th Air Wing. It has an 85-ton (77-metric-ton) payload, and can transport one of the U.S. Army's main battle tanks, the M-1. The C-17 also can carry more than 100 paratroopers while handling a full load of cargo.

With in-flight refueling capability, its nonstop reach is global. ■

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PHOTOS: (Right) C-17s assigned to Joint Base Charleston (S.C.) are in high demand, constantly returning from or leaving on missions around the world. **(Insets, from left)** Senior Airman Arbera Lindsey, 315th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron jet engine mechanic, opens an engine inspection panel; loading a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle onto a C-17; Master Sgt. Ronald Morris, 81st Aerial Port Squadron vehicle operator, provides hand signals to direct a vehicle being loaded onto a C-17; a crew chief signals to ensure proper wing clearance as a C-17 taxis out for takeoff; a C-17 co-pilot scans for ground traffic while taxiing for takeoff.

