

# The Airlifter



## The Airlifter

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

Issue 002

June 30, 2007

*The Airlifter* is the quarterly newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association, a Texas-based non-profit corporation dedicated to the preservation of troop carrier/tactical airlift history and to promoting camaraderie among troop carrier/tactical airlift veterans. The name is borrowed from the newspaper published by Pacific Air Force's 315<sup>th</sup> Air Division in the 1950s and 1960s. Reader contributions are not only welcome, but we would love to have them. Please send articles by Email to [SEMCGowanJr@aol.com](mailto:SEMCGowanJr@aol.com) or by mail to *The Airlifter*, 3727 Hill Family Ln, Missouri City, TX 77459.

### Editorial Comment

I hope everyone enjoys the second issue of the TCTAA newsletter. Our organization is growing and some members have upgraded their status to 5 year or Life Membership. As of this writing, we have 78 members, including one Associate. Association officers and board members are currently planning the 2007 Members Meeting. Look for a calendar of events in the September issue.

As stated above, contributions from members are more than welcome. We are happy to present in this issue an article written by Col. Bob Wright and submitted by member John Limbach about a test mission using a C-130A at Yuma, Arizona.

Note – the more contributions from members, the less BS from the editor!

### Financial Report

Funds in checking acct - April 30	\$5,963.00
Expenditures	
Printing	- 123.65
Postage	- 45.99
IRS Processing Fee	- 300.00
Total Expenditure	\$- 469.64
Membership Dues	\$ 225.00
Funds on hand June 30	\$5248.72
Reunion Funds	\$ 250.00
Total on Hand	\$5498.72

Note – total does not include funds left over from previous Troop Carrier Homecomings.

### Officers and Board Members

President – Jim Lopez  
Vice President – Bob Ruffin  
Secretary/Interim Editor – Sam McGowan  
Treasurer – Ralph Bemis  
Tony Girtman  
Ace Bowman  
Billie B. Mills  
Bobby Gassiott  
Chick Anderson  
Craig Clifton  
Sherman Pyle  
Tony Kelley  
Jim Esbeck  
Legal Advisor – Ernie Gassiott

### Meeting Update

Plans for our first annual members meeting are being finalized and registrations are starting to come in. Loadmaster Sherman "Gomer" Pyle is the first to register for the meeting, which will be held November 9-12 at the Casa Del Mar Condos in Galveston, Texas. We'll have a lot of business to discuss and are looking for as many of our members as possible to turn out for a weekend of fun and reminiscing about the old days. See you there!

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## Pappy Gunn



The military has always had its heroes, characters and legends. Usually, however, in most cases the actual accomplishments of such individuals are exaggerated and not infrequently, they are legends in their own minds. There are exceptions, and in one particular case, that exceptional individual had a limited but fruitful association with what became the troop carrier mission. Paul Irvin Gunn, known to his friends as P.I., and who became a legend as Pappy Gunn, was born and raised in Arkansas, not too far from the site of the present-day home of the USAF tactical airlift mission that developed from his pioneering efforts just north of Little Rock. Until he joined the Navy during World War I – possibly at the insistence of a local judge – P.I. Gunn lived in the tiny community of Quitman, where his father was a law enforcement officer until he was killed in the line of duty. Even as a boy, his mechanical genius was evident, and after he joined the Navy it didn't take long for him to move out of the chow hall where, in typical military fashion, he

had been assigned duty, into the mechanical realm, first as a mechanic in the motor pool then out on the flight line at Pensacola Naval Air Station. After a naval hitch as an aviation machinists mate, he reenlisted to go to pilot training and became an enlisted naval aviator.

When World War II broke out, Gunn and his wife and their four children were living at Manila, where he had taken a job shortly after retiring from the Navy in 1937. Initially hired by Andres Soriano, a wealthy Filipino, to fly his corporate airplane, Gunn had convinced his boss to form an airline. By December 8, 1941 he was chief pilot for the fledgling Philippines Airlines, and oversaw an operation that included three twin-engine Beechcraft transports and a small department of American and Filipino pilots. The airline was growing, and three larger Lockheed Lodestars were on their way to Manila aboard a ship. The appearance of Japanese planes over Pearl Harbor suddenly changed a lot of lives, and P.I. Gunn would be one of the most effected. Immediately after the country found itself at war, Lt. General Lewis Brereton, the senior air officer in the Pacific, called Gunn to his office and told him that his airline was now a US Army air transport squadron and that he was a captain. Although Gunn had expected to go back into the Navy, he later said his sudden induction didn't matter to him – he was back in the military and in the middle of a war.

Unknown to Gunn and everyone else in the Philippines, who expected reinforcements to arrive from the United States at anytime, President Franklin Roosevelt had decided to abandon the Philippines to the Japanese even as US and Filipino troops were preparing to defend

the islands until they could be relieved. Although he was a trained combat pilot, Gunn and his pilots found themselves performing valuable service flying personnel and cargo around the islands through skies that soon were controlled by the Japanese. To avoid Japanese fighters, Gunn flew as low as he could, skimming the tops of trees that he knew would help conceal the outline of his airplane. Already well known in the islands, he became even better known among the military personnel on Luzon and other islands as he carried dispatches and transported aircraft parts, ammunition and rations. One load was a cargo of turkeys for Air Corps personnel on Mindanao. Gunn's role in the Philippines was cut short in late December when General Henry H. Arnold ordered Brereton to move the headquarters of the Far East Air Force to Australia, and to take as many Air Corps personnel with them as they could. Although he was not told that he would be staying, Gunn was ordered to fly a load of staff officers to Brisbane. It wasn't until he got there that he learned that he was to remain. Although he was out of the Philippines, his family wasn't. They would eventually be interned by the Japanese and would spend the rest of the war along with other internees at a camp at Santo Thomas University in Manila.

Upon arriving in Australia, Gunn was told to remain there and take charge of air transportation

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operations in the theater. He had arrived in his own Twin Beech, while two of his other pilots had come down bringing loads of their own. Several modified B-18s had also made the trip. Gunn and the other pilots were put to work flying cargo and personnel around the Southwest Pacific, including making flights back to Mindanao carrying badly needed ammunition and other supplies. Gunn and everyone else in Australia believed they were there to organize a relief force to return to the Philippines. But what he found was a force in total disarray. Dozens of pilots had managed to make their way to Mindanao and on to Australia while a ship carrying ground personnel destined for Manila had been diverted when war broke out. There was no form of military organization and the men had no supervision and little to do. Gunn visited the Brisbane docks where he found eighteen P-40 fighters in crates. He rounded up a crew of mechanics and put them to work assembling the fighters, then found a group of pilots who had been flown out of the Philippines to fly them.

Captain Gunn arrived in Australia just before Christmas 1941. For the next month or so he maintained loose control over transport operations in the theater, and flew missions himself almost every day. Although little effort was made to document the activities of the air transport operations at the time, there is no doubt that he made several flights back to the Philippines and delivered supplies to Bataan. During one of his trips to Bataan he learned that his family was still safe and made arrangements with a Filipino to deliver them to Quezon Boulevard, where he landed his airplane and waited in vain for fifteen minutes for them to appear. A couple of weeks of his activities are left open, and according to his son Nat, he spent the time flying Australian Whiraway fighters over Rabaul until he was shot down and walked out of the jungle. During the ordeal his hair turned white, and when he returned to Australia the sight led to the nickname Pappy. His hair returned to its natural color but the name stuck.

In early February Gunn, now a major, was placed in formal command of the newly organized 21<sup>st</sup> Transport Squadron, which would be redesignated as the 21<sup>st</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron in April. He also wore the hat of commander of the Far East Air Force Air Transport Command, which included the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Transport Squadrons. The two squadrons

operated the assortment of airplanes that had been brought out of the Philippines along with transports that were scattered around Australia, supplemented by some older B-17s that were no longer suitable for combat duty. During the Java Campaign, Gunn flew one of the B-17s on a mission against Japanese ships and reportedly sank a destroyer. He also led the new squadron that had been organized to fly the P-40s he had found north to Darwin. Gunn did the navigating and the fighters followed his transport. A few days after he took command of the 21<sup>st</sup>, the squadron received its first reinforcements when a trio of B-24s that had been modified as transports arrived from the United States. The three B-24s would perform heroically flying transport missions all over Asia until they were all lost. One would be the last American airplane to land in Mindanao. A few days later a ship arrived carrying several Douglas C-53s and the three Lockheed Lodestars that had been on their way to Manila for Gunn's airline. The Lodestars joined the Army as C-60s and were put to work as transports. Except for the B-24 crews and a few pilots with transport training that arrived from the States, the squadrons were staffed by pilots and ground crews who had been assigned to bomber squadrons, but who had no airplanes of their own to fly and maintain.

Pappy Gunn's troop carrier career came to an end in late March when he was transferred out of the 21<sup>st</sup> Air Transport Squadron to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group, a newly arrived outfit that had recently arrived in Australia and had been reinforced with the survivors of a dive-bomber group that had been in the Philippines with no airplanes. The transfer came about because of something that only Pappy Gunn could have engineered. During one of his flights around Australia he came across twelve brand-new B-25 bombers sitting idly on an airfield outside of Melbourne, where they had been delivered to the Netherlands East Indies Air Force. The Dutch had no pilots to fly the airplanes and US bomber squadrons had no airplanes, so Gunn concocted a plot to have the airplanes transferred to US control and literally stole the airplanes from the Dutch! When senior Far East Air Force officers learned what he had done, they decided to use the bombers in a raid in the Philippines and chose Gunn to lead the B-25s north since he knew the way. After flying a couple of missions, the combined force of B-17s and B-25s were ordered back to Australia but Gunn and his crew remained behind for several more days to fly a

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classified mission. They flew north to Panay and picked up a couple of Japanese-American intelligence agents who had been in Manila and who had been ordered to Australia by Douglas MacArthur, who had just left the Philippines himself.

After leaving the air transport business, Gunn became famous for what he could do to airplanes. When Lt. General George Kenney met him, he was in the process of converting A-20 light bombers into gunships by packing the noses with salvaged .50-caliber machine guns. Kenney was so impressed by the unorthodox major that he immediately transferred him to his personal staff. A few months later Gunn had completed a project to modify enough B-25s the same way he had done with the A-20s to equip a squadron. The two squadrons would play the major role in the American victory in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in early 1943. Gunn remained in the Pacific for the duration of the war, refusing to return to the US except for a TDY stint in the summer of 1943. His family was in the hands of

the Japanese and his only goal was to end the war so they could be set free. His own role in the war came to an end during the invasion of Leyte when he was hit by a piece of shrapnel from a Japanese incendiary bomb and had to be evacuated to Australia. After the war he returned to the Philippines and the airline business. In the 1950s he and his sons operated their own air taxi business, and the United States government was their best customer. They evacuated Nationalist Chinese out of China to Formosa in 1949 and flew non-communist Vietnamese out of North Vietnam to Saigon. Gunn's company played a major role in the little known US effort to drive the Dutch out of Indonesia, delivering guns and ammunition to Indonesian rebels. Pappy Gunn lost his life when his Twin Beech was forced into the water by a downburst under a tropical thunderstorm, then hit a mango tree as he tried to recover. His remains were flown back to the States aboard a US Air Force C-124.

### Major Warren L. "Huey" Long



To members of the 464<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing at Pope AFB, NC from 1963 to 1965, Captain Warren L. "Huey" Long was an icon. After coming to Pope from Elemendorf AFB, Alaska he quickly became known as one of the best pilots in the wing and was soon elevated to instructor pilot and then to Stan/Eval pilot. In November 1964 he was TDY to Evreux, France with the 777<sup>th</sup> TCS and was the pilot of Chalk One in the DRAGON ROUGE/RED DRAGON joint US/Belgian rescue force that went to the Congo to rescue hostages held by Simba rebels. Huey flew the lead airplane in the baptism of fire for the Hercules and the first US combat airdrop since the Korean War. His airplane took several hits from .50-caliber machinegun fire. A few months later in April 1965 he was pilot of the lead airplane in the 144-airplane formation that took off from Pope to drop elements of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in the Dominican Republic. TCTAA board member Bobby Gassiot was his navigator. Later that year Huey transferred to TAC Headquarters at Langley, where he remained until he went to the 50<sup>th</sup> TAS at Ching Chang Kuan AB, Taiwan in 1968. Huey died tragically in the crash of a C-130E at CCK on March 9, 1969. His daughter Cindy is our first associate member.

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## The Month of June

Oddly enough, the month of June is a significant one for troop carriers, with a number of historic events occurring that month. The first of these is the famous and historic airdrops in advance of the Normandy Invasion in the early morning hours of June 6, 1944. On that date C-47 and C-53 crews from the IX Troop Carrier Command dropped troops of the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions on drop zones in the vicinity of St. Mere Eglise. After the drops, the troop carriers returned to their bases to pick up gliders loaded with additional troops and equipment. Four years later on June 24, 1948 United States Air Forces, Europe troop carriers commenced what came to be known as the Berlin Airlift. The airlift of commodities such as coal and flour into the city continued until the following May, as five troop

carrier groups provided the American element of the international resupply mission. Exactly two years and one day after the commencement of the Berlin Airlift, Far East Air Forces troop carriers found themselves in a real shooting war again when North Korean troops rolled across the demilitarized zone into South Korea. FEAF C-54s evacuated US civilians and personnel out of Seoul during the initial hours of the conflict, then flew troops of the Eighth Army into the Pusan Peninsula. The heavy weight of the C-54s caused the airfields to deteriorate and the troop movements were picked up by C-47s. Troop carrier operations were an important part of the conflict, which continued until truce was declared in 1953. In June 1972 the tactical airlift successors to the troop carrier mission were at it again, this time in the final phase of the Battle of Kontum in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

### There We Were at 18,000 Feet

by

Col Bob Wright, USAF (Ret)  
Planning Systems Incorporated

"There we were at 18,000 feet..." That introduction is usually followed by moving hands and an embellished story of a fighter pilot's air-to-air engagement. While not as dramatic, there was an interesting chance encounter at the US Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) the last week in October 2004. The encounter had historical as well as current significance and dealt with another important aspect of warfare – the airdrop of combat and humanitarian supplies from high altitude, out of and above harms way.

A very busy week of precision airdrop testing had been scheduled over the desert ranges of the proving ground. This included high-altitude drops of a variety of advanced Global Positioning System (GPS) self-guided parafoil systems and the Precision Airdrop System (PADS) for real-time accurate wind estimates, all under development by the US Army Natick Soldier Systems Center. The Air National Guard deployed a C-130H to the proving ground to drop test payloads up to near 25,000 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL). To meet the demanding test requirements, YPG leased a C-130A from International Air Response (IAR) in Chandler, Arizona, flown by an IAR aircrew. IAR also owns and operates another C-130A, as well as DC-7 aircraft, each modified for a various airlift and airdrop operations, including aerial fire fighting.

I was scheduled to fly and test drop the latest version of a hand-launched GPS wind dropsonde from the C-130A. Walking in for the "O-Dark Thirty" mission briefing, I saw John Limbach, CMSgt USAF (Ret), sitting at the briefing table wearing a baseball cap embroidered with "Vietnam Veteran – I Served With Pride". After a brief introduction and hand-shake, I asked, "Were you involved in the resupply of An Loc?" "You bet!" was the proud reply. So after 32 years, fate conspired to place me, a retired weather officer and the contract program manger for PADS, with a combat veteran involved in the An Loc airdrop operation. An Loc is arguably the birthplace of the requirement for high-altitude precision airdrop and where these operations were first executed on a large scale. John, as a certified loadmaster, joined the IAR team that week at YPG from Big Sky Aviation International, Billings Montana, where he serves as the Executive Director.

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The siege of An Loc and other cities and villages in South Vietnam during the 1972 Nguyen Hue Easter Offensive by the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong is well documented in US Air Force and Army histories. The following is a brief summary of the historical information about the An Loc operation extracted from The Army Historical Foundation, *The Siege at An Loc: How Air Resupply Helped Save the City*, by Lt Col Len Funk, US Army (Ret); the Combat Airlift Review Volume 6, Issue October 2000, *An Loc*, by Sam McGowan; and from a now-declassified HQ PACAF Project Contemporary Historical Examination of Current Operations (CHECO) Report, *Airlift to Besieged Areas*, 7 Apr – 31 Aug 72.

The enemy surrounded An Loc, the capital of Binh Long Province about 50 miles northwest of Saigon, and interdicted roads and ground supply routes into the city, using strangulation and starvation tactics akin to Medieval sieges of castles. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, and their American advisors defending the city and the civilian population soon required ammunition, fuel, water, food and medical supplies. In early April 1972 Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) and US Army CH-47 Chinook and OH-13 Sioux helicopters began air-land re-supply. During the same period, the VNAF also conducted low-altitude daylight C-123 Provider and C-119 Flying Boxcar airdrop operations. Some VNAF pilots dropped from around 5,000 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) but inaccurate wind information put most of the bundles in enemy territory. Air land and airdrop operations were exposed to enemy mortar, .51-caliber, 37MM and 57MM Anti-Aircraft Artillery and small arms fire with lethal effect. Helicopters were damaged or destroyed on the Drop Zone (DZ) and C-123s were damaged or shot down with the loss of aircrews. All these operations were cancelled by mid-April 1972.

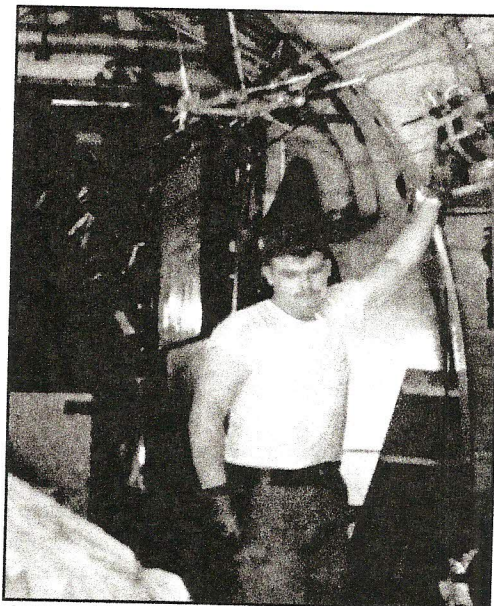
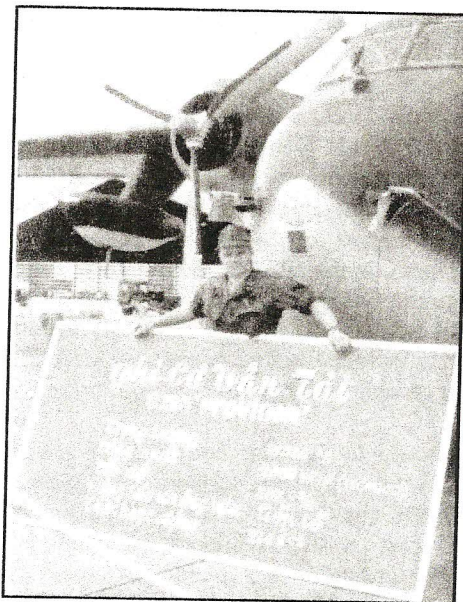
The US Air Force 374<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Wing began C-130E Hercules low-altitude and high-altitude airdrop operations for An Loc 14 April 1972 from Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam. The small size of the DZ, a 200 meter by 200 meter soccer field, and other small DZs near An Loc, added to the airdrop problem. The first high-altitude airdrop was conducted from 8,500 feet AGL with over 65% of the bundles lost to the enemy. To offset the effects of inaccurate winds, High-Altitude Low-Opening (HALO) systems, using timed cutters, and high-velocity delivery systems were used. However, some parachutes opened at high altitude because of rigging problems, resulting in low accuracy due to wind errors. Parachutes also failed to open in time, which destroyed payloads. When available, AC-130 Specter gunships were used to estimate the mean effective wind based on expected versus actual impact points of 25mm GAU-12 Gatling gun rounds. The only other available observed wind sounding information was that from Bien Hoa Air Base some distance away, and that information was normally more than six hours old. Improper use of honeycomb cushioning on the payloads for high velocity ring-slot parachute delivery systems also resulted in unacceptable payload damage. In addition, the enemy had recently deployed the SA-7 Strella shoulder-fired, heat-seeking, surface-to-air missile system in South Vietnam. On 11 May 1972 the first SA-7 firings were reported at An Loc. The SA-7 threat forced the safe airdrop altitude to 10,000 feet AGL, making precise airdrop even more challenging. Assistance was needed, and it was requested from the Tactical Air Warfare Center (TAWC) in Florida.

TSgt John Limbach, then assigned to the TAWC, had over 1,400 C-123 combat sorties in South Vietnam under his belt. The photographs below show John in front of the venerable C-123 at Bien Hoa Air Base in 1967 and at work in the cargo bay of a C-123 in 1968. John arrived back in-country 5 May 1972 and immediately set about correcting the HALO rigging and payload packing problems. John recalls, "Due to the extremely low inventory of de-reefing cutters and the high demand for resupply, I worked with US and Army of the Republic of Vietnam riggers and rapidly developed an ad-hoc high velocity delivery method using two clustered 15-foot extraction parachutes, all that were available in quantity, married to a 2,000 pound Container Delivery System bundle rigged with extra honeycomb." John flew on the early test airdrop missions and confirmed that his solutions worked.

John's efforts, together with improved navigation and high-altitude release procedures, markedly improved the airdrop re-supply of An Loc. High velocity airdrops from 10,000 feet AGL approached a 90% effectiveness rate, and 97% of the high-velocity drops from the same altitude were reported on the DZ during the 11-16 May 1972 enemy direct attack of An Loc. That attack was repelled by the re-supplied defenders of An Loc and by tactical air power. People from the US Army Natick Laboratories (forerunner of the US Army Natick Soldier Systems Center), arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base 21 May 1972 with a new two-stage HALO system using cutters activated by barometric pressure. This new system was used

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for later An Loc re-supply operations. High-altitude C-130E airdrop resupply operations for An Loc continued through December 1972. High-altitude airdrop operations were also used to resupply other locations in Southeast Asia during the Nguyen Hue Offensive, but they had their beginning at An Loc. Before the modified high-altitude airdrop operations were employed at An Loc, the enemy received the majority of the goods delivered. John remembers that, "There were no further battle damage reports once the drops moved to high altitude." Before that, the results of An Loc air land and low-altitude airdrop operations were 37 aircraft damaged, aircrew members wounded, 2 C-123s and 3 C-130Es shot down – and 15 fatalities.



Airman First Class John Limbach, C-123, Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, 1967  
and In Action Onboard a C-123, 1968

Since An Loc, navigation accuracy, payload rigging, delivery procedures and wind forecasting accuracy have all improved significantly. However, little has changed in the basic way high-altitude airdrop operations are planned and conducted. This is about to change. The US Army Natick Soldier Systems Center and the Air Mobility Command have been working together to develop and field the latest technologies applied to precision airdrop. This was fueled by the results of high-altitude humanitarian airdrop over Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1996, and later, airdrop operations in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom. The resulting new system, PADS, has been operationally tested and has demonstrated, in the hands of operational aircrews, that it significantly improves the accuracy of high-altitude high-opening (HAHO) ballistic airdrop from altitudes up to 25,000 feet MSL.

Wind measurements from GPS-based dropsondes deployed from the airdrop aircraft, or an advance aircraft, have replaced the AC-130 gunship mean effective wind and distant, aged ground-based wind sounding information. High-resolution four-dimensional forecast fields produced by the supercomputers at the Air Force Weather Agency, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska have replaced the single forecast ballistic wind. The procedures to determine the Computed Air Release Point for HAHO ballistic loads have been improved from a time-of-fall offset based on a forecast ballistic wind, to a full-dynamics payload release, parachute opening and descent trajectory model applied to a final three-dimensional wind and density field as modified by the underlying topography. This is all produced by PADS software on a pressure-ruggedized laptop computer operated aboard the airdrop aircraft using near real-time winds from the hand-launched wind dropsonde and other available wind data sources such as Pilot Reports. This integrated technology has resulted in demonstrated high-velocity HAHO ballistic Circular Error Average accuracies of less than 400 meters from altitudes between 18,000 feet and 25,000 feet AGL from C-130 and C-17 airdrop aircraft.

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The US Army Natick Soldier Systems Center, as with its predecessor during operations in Vietnam in 1972, remains at the forefront of solving the high-altitude airdrop accuracy problem, first with PADS and now with guided systems. For very precise airdrop delivery requirements, on the order of 100 meters or less, a family of GPS self-guided systems are in development under the Joint Precision Airdrop System (JPADS) program managed by the Natick Soldier Systems Center. The development of these systems is directly parallel to the development of laser and GPS-guided bombs and munitions that provide accuracy much better than that possible with so-called “dumb bombs” that can not correct for wind and other delivery errors after release.

The JPADS program addresses four categories of total payload weight. JPADS-XL (Extra-Light) is focused on 500 to 2,200 pound payloads. JPADS-L (Light), aimed at payloads in the 2201 to 10,000-pound category, is part of an Office of the Secretary of Defense Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration program. Delivery of heavier single payloads is being addressed by JPADS-M (Medium), 10,001 to 30,000 pounds, and when funded, by JPADS-H (Heavy), 30,001 pounds to 60,000 pounds. JPADS-XL systems are the most mature – a small number of systems have been rapidly fielded to current Area of Responsibility (AOR). Systems range from completely parafoil-based designs to a parafoil-round canopy hybrid where round ballistic parachutes are opened for the terminal phase to ground impact. A controllable round parachute system is in development, in the JPADS-XL category, which has an inserted guidance and control unit that applies riser pulls to the G-12D canopy to slip to the PADS wind-predicted ballistic trajectory to the Point-of-Impact. PADS will also be used to wirelessly update onboard guided systems with the planned PI and latest PADS wind estimate before release. PADS and selected guided systems are earmarked for fielding to the AOR this coming summer.

The significant advances in precision airdrop to date are the result of a strong Government-Laboratory-Industry team headed by the Natick Soldier Systems Center. The team includes the Air Mobility Command, guided airdrop system developers, the Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Forecast Systems Laboratory, and Planning Systems Incorporated. More information on current precision airdrop programs can be obtained from the US Army Natick Soldier Systems Center (Richard Benney, 508-233-5835, [Richard.Benney@natick.army.mil](mailto:Richard.Benney@natick.army.mil)). Specific information on PADS also can be obtained from the author (Bob Wright, 703-788-7746, [rwright@plansys.com](mailto:rwright@plansys.com)).

Now back to “There we were, at 18,000 feet...” An unplanned link with history was made during the C-130A October 2004 test drop missions at YPG, with John Limbach as loadmaster. Onboard the aircraft before engine start, I further explained to John how the GPS dropsonde and PADS work together to solve the high-altitude airdrop accuracy problem. John nodded and said, “It’s about time we did something about that.” He then prepared me to hand-launch the test dropsondes. From just under 18,000 feet MSL I released PADS GPS wind dropsondes to measure winds below the aircraft. Guided parafoil systems, with up to 10,000 pounds total weight, were dropped. Even though wearing a safety harness that could hold an elephant, I still felt much better with John close-at-hand watching out for my well-being as I stood in the paratroop door and deployed the dropsondes – soon to be a loadmaster task. After one of the missions, we took the photo below by the IAR C-130A.

Though this C-130A did not see service in South Vietnam, IAR’s other C-130A (S/N 54-1631) did. From records provided by IAR, “54-1631” was assigned to various US Air Force and US Air Force Reserve units from 1964 through 1975, some having served in South Vietnam. It was assigned to the 924th Tactical Airlift Group, 446th Tactical Airlift Wing, Ellington AFB Texas, March 1968 to October 1972. While “54-1631” probably was not flown in support the 1972 An Loc airdrop operation, IAR physically confirmed that the aircraft did indeed see action in South Vietnam. IAR acquired the aircraft October 1989 from the US Forest Service. During an inspection, IAR found an enemy .51-caliber round lodged between the floor and skin aft of the troop door, fuselage station 737, right side, by the ramp hinge – a reminder of the need to drop from high-altitude.



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John Limbach, Bob Wright, C-130A, Yuma Proving Ground, October 2004

## New Members

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## Life Members

Alfred C. "Ace" Bowman  
Samuel E. McGowan Jr  
Billie B. Mills  
Sherman Pyle  
Rodney Crawford  
Gary L. Robinson  
Emil M. "Max" Friedauer  
John F. Limbach  
Robert D. Chandler  
William Goodall  
Joe A. Newman  
Bruce E. Parr  
Robert Ruffin  
Ken Jaroz

**Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association Members Meeting  
Galveston, Texas November 9-12, 2007**

**Registration**

Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Units \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a TCTAA Member? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Note – It is not necessary to be a member to attend.



Registration Fee

Member = \$55.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest = \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

TCTAA Membership/Renewal  
(\$25.00 annual, \$100 5-year, \$250.00 Life) \_\_\_\_\_

Reception = \$25.00 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Dinner = \$45.00 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Golf Outing = \$25.00 per person \_\_\_\_\_

Total Submitted \_\_\_\_\_

**Make Check Payable to "Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association"**

**Mail Check and Form to:**

**TCTAA c/o Sam McGowan  
3727 Hill Family Lane  
Missouri City, TX 77459**