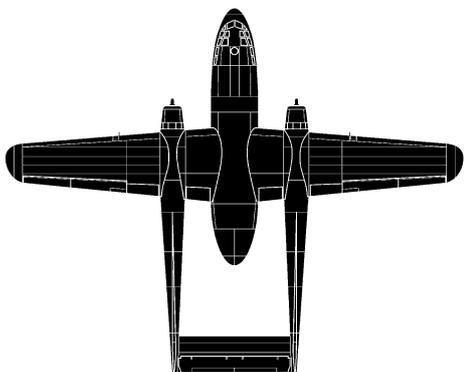


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

C-119 Flying Boxcar



The C-119 Flying Boxcar developed out of the World War II-era C-82 Packet. The Fairchild-designed transport aircraft performed well in the Korean War, in which, for instance, it dropped 2,011 parachute troops and 201 tons of supplies in a single day, March 23, 1951. In Vietnam, it flew first in the French Air Force and then with USAF. Conceived as a workhorse transport, the C-119 operated in a variety of roles, including satellite recovery, medical evacuation, aerial resupply, and gunship.

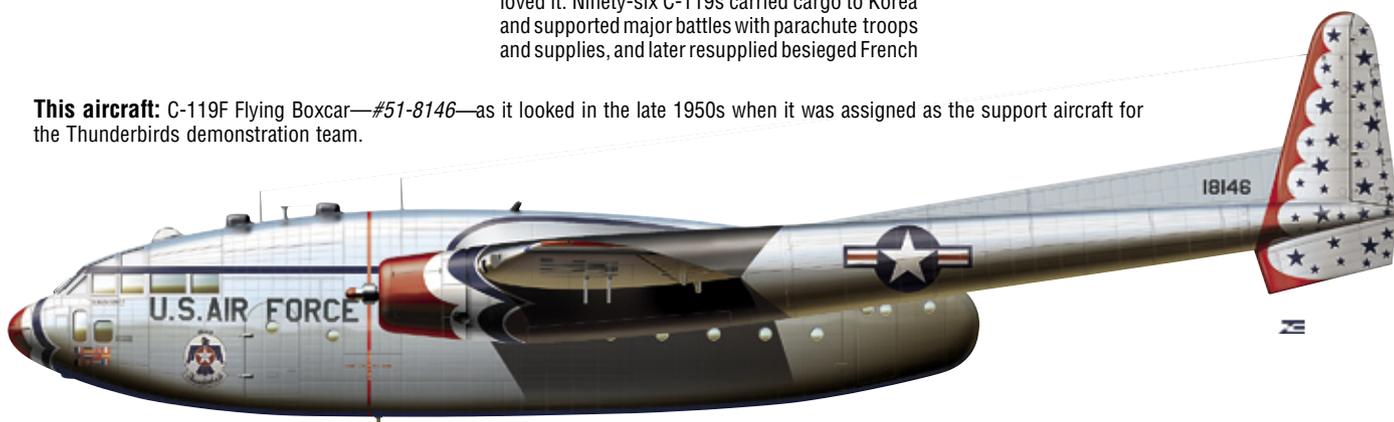
The Boxcar was built for close-in action. Its distinctive twin-boom design and low-slung fuselage with clamshell doors made it easy to load and unload. Still, the early C-119s suffered from structural problems and poor single-engine performance. It was an airplane you had to fly a lot before you loved it. Ninety-six C-119s carried cargo to Korea and supported major battles with parachute troops and supplies, and later resupplied besieged French

at Dien Bien Phu. It eventually saw use with Troop Carrier Command, Tactical Air Command, Strategic Air Command, Military Air Transport Service, and the US Navy.

The need for gunships in the Vietnam War brought about Project Gunship III, in which 26 Reserve C-119Gs were modified into the AC-119G Shadow, and 26 C-119Ks were modified into the AC-119K Stinger. The Shadow supplemented the AC-47 in the troops-in-contact role. For the more firepower intensive attacks on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the Stinger had a J85 jet engine under each wing, adding almost 6,000 pounds of thrust. The AC-119's size, relative maneuverability, and extended loiter time made it an effective supplement to the AC-47 and AC-130.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: C-119F Flying Boxcar—#51-8146—as it looked in the late 1950s when it was assigned as the support aircraft for the Thunderbirds demonstration team.



C-119s disgorging cargo in a paradrop.

In Brief

Designed by Fairchild ★ built by Fairchild, Kaiser-Frazer ★ gunship conversion Fairchild-Hiller ★ first flight November 1947 ★ number built 1,150 ★ **Specific to C-119G:** crew of six (pilot, copilot, navigator, radio operator, flight engineer, loadmaster) ★ capacity 62 troops or 35 stretchers ★ two Wright R-3350-89A radial engines ★ armament none ★ max speed 281 mph ★ cruise speed 186 mph ★ max range 1,630 mi ★ weight (loaded) 72,700 lb ★ span 109 ft 3 in ★ length 86 ft 6 in ★ height 26 ft 6 in ★ **Specific to AC-119K:** armament four MXU-470/A minigun modules; 24 Mk 24 flares; LAU-74/A flare launcher; two 20 mm Gatling cannons ★ crew of 10 (pilot, copilot, navigator, night obs sight operator, radar/FLIR operator, flight engineer, illuminator operator, three gunners).

Famous Fliers

R. W. Henderson, James McGovern, William Fairbrother, Charles Robertson, Richard Marr, John Williams, Larry Elton Fletcher.

Interesting Facts

Originally nicknamed “Creep” (gunship variant), changed to “Shadow” ★ used by 17 air forces in at least 21 variants ★ flew at 3,500 ft above ground level on CAS missions ★ suffered only five combat losses (gunships) ★ used up to 16 JATO bottles for quick takeoffs ★ used to snag capsules returning from orbit ★ recovered film capsule from Discoverer 14—first aerial recovery of an object returning from Earth orbit.