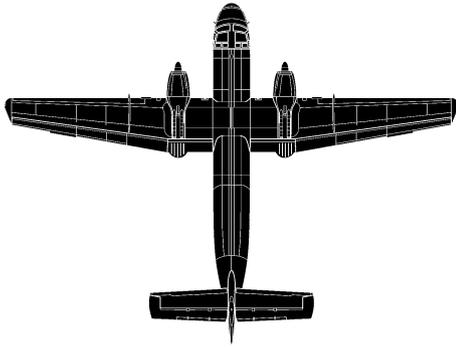


C-7 Caribou



The C-7 Caribou was a twin-engine, short takeoff and landing (STOL) transport that saw extensive service in Vietnam, where it proved invaluable. The Caribou, built by de Havilland in Canada, started its US service in the Army, where it was known as AC-1 and then CV-2. On Jan. 1, 1967, a USAF-Army interservice agreement transferred the tactical airlifter into the Air Force inventory, where it was a star performer. USAF originally formed six C-7A squadrons, two each at Vung Tau, Cam Ranh Bay, and Phu Cat. By war's end, it was down to five squadrons.

The Caribou was de Havilland's third STOL design, and built on lessons learned in the operation of the Beaver and Otter. One was the need for two engines, which Caribou was given. The Caribou was a high-wing utility transport designed for operation from primitive fields. It was used primarily for tactical airlift from short, unimproved

airstrips in forward battle areas. It could carry 32 passengers, 26 fully equipped combat troops, or more than 8,000 pounds in cargo.

In the war, it hauled everything from troops and howitzer shells to live pigs, ducks, and eels to feed Vietnamese troops. Capable of taking off and landing from very short runways, the Caribou demanded a high level of pilot skill in its operations. Perhaps its most famous mission came on Aug. 25, 1968; Maj. Hunter Hackney flew several aerial resupply missions at low altitude through intense enemy fire, incurring heavy damage. The airplane was a true workhorse.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: C-7 Caribou—#61-2391—as it looked in 1967 when assigned to USAF's 459th Tactical Airlift Sq., Phu Cat, South Vietnam.



A USAF C-7 Caribou on a mission over Vietnam in January 1967.

In Brief

Designed, built by de Havilland ★ first flight July 30, 1958 ★ crew of two or three ★ number built 307 ★ two Pratt & Whitney R-2000-7M2 radial engines ★ armament none ★ load 32 troops or two light vehicles ★ **Specific to C-7A:** max speed 216 mph ★ cruise speed 152 mph ★ max range 1,175 mi ★ weight (loaded) 28,500 lb ★ span 95 ft 7 in ★ length 72 ft 7 in ★ height 31 ft 8 in.

Famous Fliers

Air Force Cross: George Finck, Hunter Hackney. **Notables:** Eugene Habiger (former commander USSTRATCOM), John Handy (former commander USTRANSCOM), John Jumper (former CSAF), Steve Pisanos (World War II ace), Francis Scobee (astronaut).

Interesting Facts

Carried out many operations in Laos and Cambodia, serving Army's Special Forces ★ captured models flown in North Vietnamese Air Force in the 1970s ★ featured inward-opening rear doors ★ required takeoff run of only 1,200 feet ★ shorn of de-icing, cabin heating, and crew oxygen systems when operated in Vietnam ★ used extensively by CIA proprietary Air America ★ supported Army's Golden Knights demonstration team ★ served in 26 air forces and more than 20 civilian airlines ★ still in use as "bush" airplane.