

C-17 Globemaster III



The C-17 Globemaster III, USAF's newest airlifter, joined the active fleet in 1993 and soon went into near-constant operational use. The flexible McDonnell Douglas (and then Boeing) airplane carries out strategic airlift, tactical airlift, combat airdrop, and aeromedical evacuation duties. In many cases, it delivers troops and cargo straight to forward bases in combat areas.

C-17 development was long and hard, filled with setbacks and threats of cancellation, but the lifter proved superb. This high-wing, four-engine, T-tailed transport could use small, austere airfields because its powerful engines allowed it to take off quickly and its thrust reversers permitted landing on runways as short as 3,500 feet.

The C-17 could back up and turn around using a three-point star turn. Airmen loaded cargo through an aft door and ramp large enough for military vehicles and palletized cargo.

The C-17 was first used in a major operation in 1995, when it carried NATO peacekeepers into Bosnia. It anchored USAF's airlift operations in Serbia, Afghanistan, and Iraq and was employed for humanitarian purposes. The C-17 was acquired by nine air arms of eight nations—US, Australia, Britain, Canada, India, Kuwait, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates—plus the multinational, Europe-based Heavy Airlift Wing. Production ended on Nov. 28, 2015.

—Robert S. Dudley with Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: USAF C-17A Globemaster III—#05-5153, *Spirit of Kamehameha-Imua*—as it looked in 2015 when assigned to the 535th Airlift Squadron, 15th Airlift Wing, JB Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.



A C-17 from Charleston AFB, S.C., banks to the right.

In Brief

Designed and built by McDonnell Douglas (now Boeing) ★ main purpose, strategic airlift ★ first flight Sept. 15, 1991 ★ number built 279 (224 USAF) ★ crew of three (two pilots, one loadmaster) ★ four Pratt & Whitney F117-PW-100 turbofan engines ★ armament, none ★ max payload, 170,900 lb ★ cargo capacity (notional), one M1 Abrams tank, three Strykers, or six M1117 armored vehicles ★ seating, 134 troops ★ max speed 570 mph ★ cruise speed 515 mph ★ max range (unrefueled) 2,785 mi ★ weight (max T/O) 585,000 lb ★ span 169 ft 10 in ★ length 174 ft ★ height 55 ft 1 in ★ service ceiling, 45,000 ft.

Famous Fliers

Mackay Trophy 2003: Shane Hershman, Bob Colvin, Matt Clausen, Shawn Brumfield, Chris Dockery (aircrew of Vijay 10, lead C-17 in 2003 combat airdrop). **Air Medal:** Paul Sonstein, Andrew Oiland, Anne Lueck, Jim Alexander, Eric Olsen (aircrew that safely landed C-17 hit by SAM over Baghdad). **Air Force Cross (UK):** RAF Flt Lt. Tim Eddy. **Other**

Notables: Andreas Ix (Kolligian Trophy); Michael Freyholtz, Aaron Malone, Jeffrey Hill, Thomas Cicardo (aircrew killed in 2010 crash); Tim Harris (pilot of C-17 that carried 10,000-lb killer whale to Iceland). **Generals:** Hawk Carlisle, Carlton Everhart II, John Handy, Raymond Johns Jr., John Jumper, Arthur Lichte, Darren McDew, Duncan McNabb, Charles Robertson Jr., Paul Selva. **Test Pilots:** First flight—William Casey (pilot) and George London (copilot); First tactical descent—John Millander (pilot) and Kyle Fields (copilot). Director, test force, Terry Tomeny.

Interesting Facts

Awarded Collier Trophy for 1994 ★ carried forward name of two airlifters—C-74 Globemaster, C-124 Globemaster II ★ broke 22 records for oversize-load flight ★ nicknamed “Moose,” “Buddha,” “Barney,” “Mighty Mouse” ★ designed to airdrop 102 paratroopers and gear ★ suffered landing gear collapse delivering whale to Iceland ★ survived inadvertent “wheels up” landing in Afghanistan ★ has crashed only once—in 2010 in Alaska.

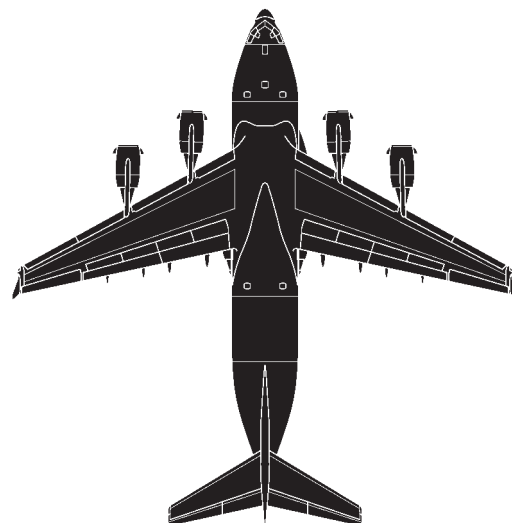


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