

Airlifters from around the world descended on Pope AFB, N.C., for a week of competition and camaraderie.

Photography by USAF Combat Camera Photographers

RODEO 2000

A giant C-5 Galaxy from Dover AFB, Del., is moments from landing at Pope AFB, N.C., site of Air Mobility Command's Rodeo 2000. The week-long competition in early May tested the professional core abilities of air mobility forces from the US Air Force and several foreign countries. In the end, the 6th Air Refueling Wing, MacDill AFB, Fla., captured the top award as best overall air mobility wing.





USAF photo by SSgt. Jeffrey Allen



Since its beginning in 1962 as a combat skills competition, Airlift Rodeo has brought together the best air mobility forces to test their abilities against each other, compare tactics and procedures, and exchange ideas. Rodeo 2000 teams competed in several categories: aerial port, aeromedical evacuation, airdrop, air refueling, cargo loading, maintenance, security forces, assault landing, single integrated operations plan, and special tactics.

At right, the C-130 team from Brazil arrives at Pope and—flags flying—lets the flight line know it. USAF's international air mobility partners began competing in Rodeo in 1979. The top international team this year came from Belgium.



USAF photo by MSgt. Steven M. Turner

USAF photo by A1C D. Myles Cullen



Flown by many countries, the C-130 is a seasoned Rodeo competitor. At left, a Turkish maintenance crew stands by while their C-130 is inspected. Below, an Egyptian C-130 prepares to drop US Army paratroopers over a Ft. Bragg, N.C., drop zone.



USAF photo by SrA. Lee E. Rogers

C-130s from the host 43rd Airlift Wing taxi down the runway before loading up paratroopers for a personnel drop at Ft. Bragg, located adjacent to Pope.

Rodeo 2000 commander Maj. Gen. Silas R. Johnson Jr. noted, "This is the largest air mobility competition the world has ever seen." More than 3,000 people and 79 aircraft participated. The personnel came from 34 active duty, 10 Air National Guard, and 18 Air Force Reserve Command units and eight foreign countries. Thirteen other nations and air forces sent representatives to observe.



USAF photo by SSgt. Jerry Morrison

The venerable C-141 still gets the job done. At right, SSgt. Marcel Rodarte with the 452nd Air Mobility Wing (AFRC), March ARB, Calif., stands ready to taxi a C-141.



USAF photo by MSgt. Steven M. Turner

USAF photos by TSgt. James E. Loiz



Rodeo's aerial refueling competition is judged on aircraft timing and accuracy in navigating to the air refueling track, as well as air refueling operations. At left, KC-135R boom operator SrA. Matt Galloway assists in making the calculations to refuel a C-5. At left below, he refuels the aircraft. Galloway is from the 22nd ARW, McConnell AFB, Kan. Below, the KC-135R prepares to refuel the C-5 from the 60th AMW, Travis AFB, Calif.



A boom operator from Fairchild AFB, Wash., described the aerial refueling challenge: "The only thing we can't do in Rodeo is talk to the pilot on the receiving end," said SSgt. Alicia Judd. "So, sometimes that gets a little tricky as you have to stay connected for 24 minutes."





Aeromedical emergency scenarios in the Rodeo competition require teams to assess and initiate patient care quickly and efficiently. At left, Capt. Angie Cleek of the 156th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron from Ohio calls out for the next litter to be loaded onto a C-141. Below, "patients" await their turn to participate in the scenario.



This year was the third time Rodeo included an aeromedical evacuation event. However, it was the first time for an aeromedical evacuation obstacle course. At right, 514th AES members from McGuire AFB, N.J., work their way through the low crawl portion of the obstacle course. They are judged on using proper body mechanics and lifting techniques.



A KC-10 from the 60th AMW, Travis AFB, Calif., arrives at Pope. KC-10s took part in events including aerial refueling and cargo loading, where teams were evaluated on preparation, loading and unloading, and mission paperwork.



A C-17 from Altus AFB, Okla., performs an assault landing on a dirt landing strip. Aircraft in this Rodeo event aimed for a smooth, consistent approach to a specific point 250 feet into the touchdown zone and received points for proper speed, smooth approach, and landing without bouncing.

Air transportation specialists SSgt. Wayne Donnelly and SrAs. Kevin Taboada, Timothy Chew, and David Owens, all with the 97th AMW at Altus, exit a C-17 after finishing an engines running off-load. The engine running onload/off-load event demonstrates wartime skills in quick-turn missions flown from deployed locations. This year, instead of teams bringing their own drivers to load Army vehicles onto aircraft, the Army provided drivers, and the competing teams were matched with drivers through a lottery.



More than 100 aircrew umpires judged Rodeo 2000's flying events, and additional chief umpires handled ground events. Belgium, Canada, and the UK provided umpires, too. Umpires MSgt. Keith Claus (at far left and above) and CMSgts. John Wilson and Jerry Parrish complete inspections of a C-5 from the 97th AMW.



A French commando listens to directions from an umpire (right) and receives help with the 40-pound rucksack he carried on the special tactics 10K run. Below, SMSgt. Ralph Humphrey (left) and SSgt. Charles McHarney help SrA. Ron Fripp after he sprained an ankle in the special tactics endurance course.



Rodeo 2000 featured a new competition—special tactics—for combat controllers and pararescuemen. The teams competed in a biathlon, combat obstacle course, parachute employment/assault zone establishment, and the rucksack run. At right, SrA. Lee Raley from the 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope gathers his parachute after a High-Altitude Low-Opening jump. In this event, the teams perform a HALO jump, then navigate a four-kilometer compass course, establish a helicopter landing zone, and perform personnel recovery.



“Rodeo turns the focus to teamwork,” said Gen. Charles T. Robertson, commander of Air Mobility Command. “It takes everyone—aircrews, aerial porters, maintainers, and security forces—to make up a team.” At left, SSgt. Dale Vince Cruz, from the 60th Aircraft Generation Squadron at Travis, enjoys the camaraderie of fellow C-5 ground crew members. Everyone who attends Rodeo is specifically selected by their unit. It’s not only a big honor to go but a big responsibility, once they return, to teach what they have learned at the competition.



TSgt. Chuck McNeill, a C-130 loadmaster from Willow Grove ARS, Pa., prepares to drop a pallet in a drop zone at Ft. Bragg. Crews are scored on joint airdrop inspection and also on low-level route turn points, timing to the drop zone, and accuracy in releasing loads over the drop zone. Success depends on planning and crew coordination between the pilot, loadmaster, and navigator. This element of Rodeo provides valuable joint and combined training: The paratroopers for personnel airdrops come from the Army's 18th Airborne Corps.



Above, a drag chute pulls a pallet out of a C-130, and at the right, green smoke marks a drop zone. Enoch Johnson, assault zone manager, observes the action.



A C-17 sits on the ramp at Pope, waiting for the next mission at Rodeo. The biennial readiness competition gives air mobility forces an opportunity to showcase their abilities and build relationships with each other. Rodeo commander Johnson called Rodeo 2000 an international demonstration of airpower and told the competing teams, "You have truly demonstrated full force mobility in action." ■