Boeing C-17 Becomes McGuire Air Force Base's First New Aircraft Since '60s

Officials from McGuire Air Force Base today received their first new aircraft in nearly four decades, during a delivery ceremony for a Boeing [NYSE: BA] C-17 Globemaster III airlifter at the company's award-winning Long Beach, Calif., assembly facility.

This is the U.S. Air Force's 125 th operational C-17, and the first of 13 scheduled for delivery to McGuire. Named "The Spirit of New Jersey," the newly delivered C-17 will be flown and maintained by the Air Force's 305th Air Mobility Wing and the Air Force Reserve Command's 514th Air Mobility Wing at McGuire. The remaining 12 C-17's for the New Jersey base are now in various stages of production at the Long Beach factory. These aircraft will be delivered, one approximately every three to four weeks, between now and June 2005.

"We're extremely proud and excited to receive the C-17 here at McGuire," said Col. JJ Jackson, commander of the 305th Air Mobility Wing. "It's an extraordinary aircraft that increases our ability to accomplish our global reach mission, which is critical to the global war on terrorism."

The C-17 fleet has amassed 750,000 flying hours -- and, since the beginning of the global war on terrorism, C-17s have flown combat missions for 1,082 consecutive days. With a payload of 160,000 pounds, the C-17 can take off from a 7,600-foot airfield, fly 2,400 nautical miles, and land on dirt runways in 3,000 feet or less.

"The C-17 does the work of several planes. It's the only airlifter that can fly between continents and land on short austere airfields," said Dave Bowman, Boeing vice president and C- 17 program manager. "On behalf of the thousands of C-17 employees across the country, and all our supplier partners, we're pleased to welcome McGuire to the C-17 family -- and we're proud to build this technologically advanced aircraft for them. "

The C-17s replace McGuire's aging fleet of C-141 Starlifters, the last of which was ceremonially retired Sept. 16. McGuire air mobility assets also include Boeing KC-135 Stratotankers and KC-10A Extenders. New Jersey 's only Air Force base is undergoing an $85 million facilities upgrade and infrastructure improvement to accommodate the new C-17s -- the largest project at McGuire since the 1980s.

The Spirit of New Jersey comes home to McGuire Friday, where it will arrive amid great fanfare with a major military ceremony and celebration, scheduled for 3 p.m. EDT .

In addition to McGuire's new aircraft, C-17s are based at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C.; McChord Air Force Base, Wash., the Air National Guard Base at Jackson, Miss.; and Altus Air Force Base, Okla., where initial aircrew training occurs.

Assembly on the first of eight C-17s for March Air Reserve Base, Calif , is underway. That aircraft is scheduled for delivery in August 2005. In addition, four C-17s are leased to the United Kingdom 's Royal Air Force.

Boeing currently is on a multi-year production contract to design, build and deliver 180 C-17s to the U.S. Air Force through 2008.

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