Boeing Delivers "Spirit of Hawai'i - Ke Aloha," First USAF C-17 in Pacific Region

Officials from Hickam Air Force Base in Honolulu today took delivery today of the first U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III to be based outside the continental United States. Saying the C-17 ushers in a "new era of airlift in the Pacific," the Air Force named the aircraft "Spirit of Hawai'i - Ke Aloha."

Gen. Paul Hester, commander, Pacific Air Forces, accepted the C-17 in a ceremony at the Boeing [NYSE: BA] Long Beach, Calif., assembly facility. "The C-17 gives our nation the flexibility and dexterity to excel across the entire spectrum of military operations -- it can provide humanitarian aid one day and support full-scale combat the next," said Hester, who will fly the new aircraft to Hawaii. "I'm confident that these new aircraft will help bring this vast and diverse region a bit closer together."

The newly delivered aircraft is the U.S. Air Force's 146th operational C-17 and the first of eight scheduled for delivery to Hickam between now and July 2006. Hickam's C-17s will be operated by the Air Force's 15th Airlift Wing and the Hawaii Air National Guard's 154th Wing. The unique arrangement marks the first time C-17s have been jointly operated from the same base by the Air Force and the National Guard.

"Our partnership with the Hawaii Air National Guard is going to be tremendous. There's no better place for the Air Force to initiate this kind of total force concept than here in Hawaii with such rich tradition," said Col. William Changose, commander of the 15th Airlift Wing, and a command pilot with more than 4,300 hours flying airlifters, including the C-17.

"It makes so much sense having C-17s stationed at Hickam", said Brig. Gen. Peter "Skipper" Pawling, 154th Wing commander. "From this location, we'll be able to effectively support all the service branches of our American military."

As the only airlifter that can fly between continents and land on short austere airfields, the C-17 does the work of several planes, said Dave Bowman, vice president and C-17 program manager. "The C-17 is the most reliable, flexible and technologically advanced airlift aircraft ever built," said Bowman. "It's exciting to have the C-17 be a catalyst for the Air Force's new era in Pacific airlift."

The C-17 fleet has amassed nearly one million flying hours -- and in the global war on terrorism, has flown combat missions for nearly 1,600 consecutive days -- with record-setting reliability rates. 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 3,000-foot dirt runways.

A major arrival celebration will be held Wednesday at Hickam, which is undergoing a $190 million facilities upgrades and infrastructure improvement to accommodate the new C-17s -- the largest project at Hickam since the 1940s. The arrival event will feature Gen. Hester, Hawaii's Governor Linda Lingle, and include base and community leaders, as well as state and local elected officials.

In addition to Hickam'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.; McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.; March Air Reserve Base, Calif.; and Altus Air Force Base, Okla. 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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