



Multi-Skill Crew Delivers First C-17 Ahead of Schedule

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10/14/2008 - ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- The C-17 Globemaster III cargo plane that sat in front of a maintenance hangar here looked no different from any other C-17, but the crew around it was unique.

The crew, part of the 562nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, is the first to be trained under a new "multi-skill" initiative. The aim is to speed projects by giving one mechanic the skills to perform a task that previously would have involved three mechanics with varying skill sets. The intent is to have one person complete the same tasks that would otherwise have required two or three mechanics.

The C-17, which arrived Aug. 8, was the first test for the crew that had volunteered for the multi-skill training in May. Functional testing began Oct. 8 and the plane was scheduled to depart Robins AFB by mid-October, meaning the crew will complete the work about one week ahead of schedule.

That's a 15-percent reduction in flow days, which refers to the amount of time it takes to complete maintenance on a plane from the time it arrives. According to Marian Fraley, deputy director of the 402nd Maintenance Wing, the reduction should only improve as the multi-skill crew perfects its abilities.

"We are looking at reducing flow days over a period of time," Ms. Fraley said. "It increases our productivity."

Performing the C-17 workload previously required eight different mechanic job descriptions, explained Mike Doubleday, deputy director of the 562nd AMXS. Those positions are electronics mechanic, electronic integrated systems mechanic, aircraft electrician, sheet metal mechanic, aircraft overhaul mechanic, aircraft mechanic, aircraft pneudraulic systems mechanic and aircraft engine mechanic.

Under multi-skilling, all of those positions are combined into three positions. The three electrical jobs are combined into one position; the sheet metal mechanic, aircraft overhaul mechanic and aircraft mechanic positions make up another single position; and the aircraft pneudraulic systems mechanic and aircraft engine mechanics are combined into the third single position.

Ms. Fraley said those participating have responded well.

"I think the people who volunteered for this program or were selected are excited about the possibility of learning new skills," she said. "We think it's the way of the future."

In May, 40 mechanics took on the multi-skill training to make up the current crew. They were given stringent goals related to early delivery, quality and safety and have met all of those goals, Mr. Doubleday said. They are scheduled to start work on another C-17 in mid-October. A second crew of 40 multi-skill mechanics is expected to start its first assignment on a C-17 scheduled to arrive in January 2009. Long-range plans are to extend multi-skill training throughout the 402nd AMXG.

The work is done under a partnership agreement with Boeing Corp., Mr. Doubleday said. By improving the efficiency of the required work, the base gains a competitive advantage, he said. With the C-17 being the newest cargo aircraft in the Air Force, Mr. Doubleday, in an e-mail, called it "the future of Warner Robins Air Logistics Center."

He added that officials expect the C-17 workload to increase from 550,000 hours in fiscal 2008 to 850,000 hours in fiscal 2011, a 60 percent increase.



Jason Clements and Bill Hurst, aircraft mechanics, check the main landing gear of the first C-17 to undergo maintenance under the multi-skill system. (Air Force photo by Sue Sapp)



The C-17, which cost \$202.3 million each, can transport troops and any military cargo that can be airlifted. It can also perform medical evacuations and drop paratroopers

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