



## Robins Unit Answers Urgent Call for AC-130 Gunship Repair

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ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- A Robins unit recently developed a prototype infrared suppression system for the AC-130 gunship.

The 402nd Commodities Maintenance Group had an urgent requirement for the IRSS. Working from a design by S&K Technologies, which also provided on-site technical support, 12 highly-skilled production shops and multiple support personnel within the group combined forces to accomplish the task.

The IRSS, known as "tubs" because it looks like a large sheet metal bathtub, is mounted underneath the gunship's engines to protect the aircrew and aircraft from ground fire threats, and disperse and hide engine heat sources from infrared-guided anti-aircraft missiles. The prototype helped alleviate many of the installation and maintenance problems with the current system.

"Tubs require time-consuming maintenance in the field and expensive, difficult maintenance here at the Warner Robins Air Logistics Center," said Chad Langston, AC-130 Gunship program manager. "The new system is made out of tougher, more corrosion resistant materials. It's going to minimize maintenance greatly."

The existing system was not only difficult to install, but once installed, the tubs were "uniquely mated" to a particular aircraft, even a particular engine. The new tubs are designed to be completely interchangeable from engine to engine and from aircraft to aircraft.

"This gives a lot of flexibility out in the field," said Mark Dixon, director of the Gunship Flight, 572nd Aircraft Sustainment Squadron.

In addition to a decrease in installation times of about 65 percent, the prototype is also about 240 pounds lighter.

"That means more fuel savings and longer loiter times, and that translates to longer times with our aircraft being able to watch over our troops on the ground," Mr. Langston said.

The IRSS prototype is different from other WR-ALC acquisitions because it was built here by government employees as part of a partnering agreement with a contractor. George Pierce, Sheet Metal Manufacturing Flight chief in the 573rd Commodities Maintenance Squadron, said S&K Technologies selected WR-ALC because of its heavy industrial capability and its ability to expedite development and meet a compressed delivery date to the customer.

Mr. Pierce said the way so many people came together to complete the project successfully despite a compressed target date was "phenomenal."

Despite multiple planning impediments, and logistics setbacks, more than 75 employees of the 402nd CMXG worked seven-day work weeks, and 10- and 12-hour shifts to deliver the tubs on time. More than 30 employees worked through the Independence Day holiday weekend to ensure the IRSS prototypes were completed.

"The prototype was truly a team effort with S&K Technologies, the systems program office and the men and women of the 402nd CMXG," said Herman Raiff, 402nd CMXG director. "I am proud to have the opportunity to lead such a great team of dedicated professionals."

The heavily armed AC-130U gunship incorporates side-firing weapons integrated with sophisticated sensor, navigation



David Stroupe, a sheet metal mechanic, grinds an inconel steel part to the required dimensions for the C-130 IRSS. (Air Force photo by Dave Hoffman)



and fire control systems to provide surgical firepower or area saturation. Its primary missions are close air support, air interdiction and armed reconnaissance.

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