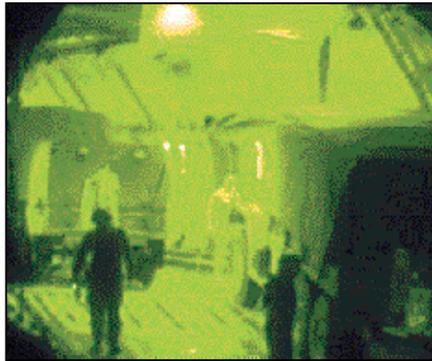


Ready & Able

615th AMOG crucial link to success in Afghanistan



Courtesy photo
Personnel load the C-5 under the cover of darkness as seen through Night Vision Goggles. The C-5 was loaded at night and with engines running to minimize the threat to resources and personnel.



Staff Sgt. Jim Verchio / 60th AMW Public Affairs
Loadmasters wench a Canadian Coyote vehicle into place in the cargo box of a C-5 Galaxy. Crews moved the cargo and more than 780 Canadians in 24 sorties — three less than the original estimate.

By Staff Sgt. Jim Verchio
60th AMW Public Affairs

When the C-5 community made its first trip into the austere and desolate conditions of Kandahar, Afghanistan recently, it took a team of dedicated men and women from many Air Force specialties to get the job done.

The Tanker Airlift Control Element from the 615th Air Mobility Operations Group was a key team of mobility specialists on the ground at the Kandahar International Airport preparing for the C-5's first missions into the country in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The team also included hand-selected members from the 60th Aerial Port Squadron air transportation specialists, 60th Aircraft Generation Squadron aircraft maintainers, 621st AMOG aerial porters from McGuire AFB, N.J., and personnel from Air Mobility Command Headquarters at Scott AFB, Ill. Chief Master Sgt. Tim Reuning from Headquarters AMC was particularly instrumental in the success of the mission. He worked with each C-5 crew to ensure it was taking as much cargo as possible for a given temperature and pressure altitude. This helped decrease the number of C-5 missions required to complete the Canadian move.

The mission was to extract the Canadian forces and their equipment. Knowing that the C-5's payload capa-

bilities could handle the personnel and equipment in the fewest trips, Air Force leaders decided it was the right aircraft for the job.

With the aircraft assigned, the logistical planning was put into motion. This was one of the first obstacles leaders at Travis had to face.

"Since this was the first time we were going to send the C-5 into Afghanistan, we knew it was imperative to get the right people and equipment on the ground in Kandahar," said Chief Master Sgt. Sam Sarmiento, senior enlisted manager for the 615th AMOG. "We had to 'right size' the package if we were going to make it work to design."

The mission was set into motion in mid July. C-5s from Travis and Dover AFB, Del., traveled forward to an operating location enabling them to reach Afghanistan. Once staged, crews awaited word from Kandahar to come and get the Canadians out.

Leaders knew how much cargo and how many personnel the Canadians were going to bring out because the AMOG helped deploy them from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada back in February. Armed with knowledge from the initial deployment, Air Force leadership determined it would take 27 sorties to get the war-proven Canadians home. They also knew that planning was going to play an important role. To make sure every issue was addressed, the TALCE dispatched an

advance team into Kandahar. Leaders knew when the mobility experts could see the conditions and equipment first hand; they would be able to fine-tune the plan to best suit the capabilities of the C-5.

"One of the biggest reasons the mission was successful was because of the ADVON team and its close coordination with the 60th aerial porters," said Lt. Col. Sean O'Neal, Director of Operations for the 615th Air Mobility Squadron. He also said when the ADVON team arrived, much of the equipment slated to be moved out of the country was already inspected and ready to load.

Engine Running On loads, done only at night to take advantage of the cooler temperatures, would be the standard for the mission as much as possible. Engine Running On loads are not normally accomplished in the C-5, so this was a unique measure to ensure success. By not shutting down the engines, the aircraft systems generally perform better. EROs also had the advantage of minimizing ground time and the reducing the threat against the aircraft.

"Maj. Gen. John Becker, commander of the 15th Air Force, was a strong advocate for the EROs," said Col. Rick Martin, commander of the 615th AMOG and overall mission commander for the C-5 operation. "He recognized early on that EROs were going to be key to making the mission happen."

When the C-5s touched down in Afghanistan under the cover of darkness, the planes taxied to a predetermined location to accept their cargo. With engines running, the aft doors and the front visor would open to begin the load. This is when the members of the AMOG were cued to begin their duties for the evening.

K-loaders, special trucks designed to load pallets onto the aircraft, would spring to life out of the darkness. Appearing from what looked like a black hole, AMOG specialists, as well as aerial porters on scene, donned in goggles to keep the sand out of their eyes, double-timed it into the C-5s cargo box to push pallets and chain down rolling stock — the Air Force's term for vehicles loaded into a cargo aircraft. According to officials, the estimated ground time, including taxi and loading cargo and personnel, was two hours. On many occasions, the time to accomplish these objectives was met in about an hour and a half. According to officials, this "pit crew" capability was the result of everyone pitching in to load and tie down the cargo as safely and quickly as possible, including help from maintenance troops.

"It was really amazing to see the AMOGers go to work," said Lt. Col. Jim Spaulding, 715th Air Mobility Squadron commander and deployed TALCE commander. "The folks we brought with us are the best at what they do. The mission's success is testament to their dedication and professionalism. It's also a testament to the quality of our organization as a whole."

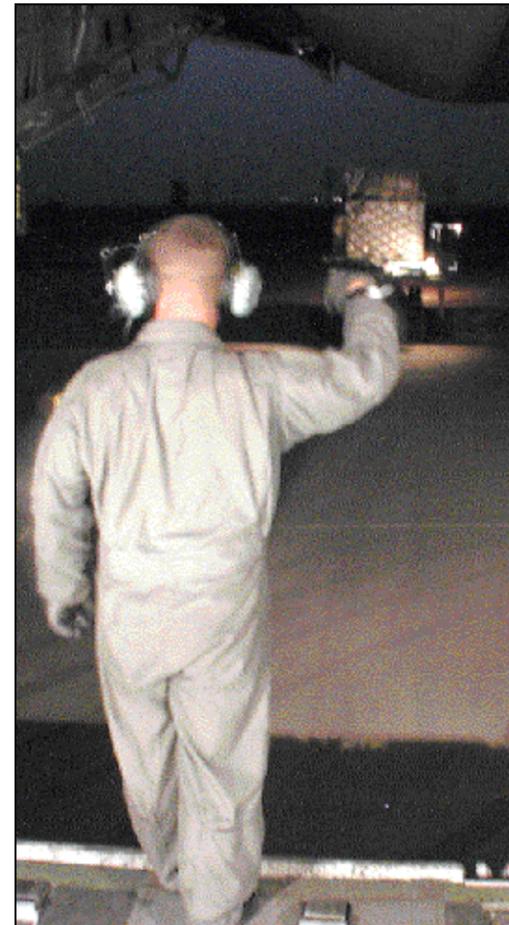
Although the initial estimate for mission completion was 27 sorties, through careful planning and assistance from every person involved, the mission was complete in 24 flights.

"Even though this is was a new mission for the C-5, we [the AMOG] are the enabling force for global-power projection," Martin said. "We have a tremendous capability to accomplish the mission across a wide spectrum of conditions. We [the total team of crews, maintainers and all support personnel] made the most of this expeditious effort, and the success of this mission has great implications for a global mobility task force."

When the C-5s returned to their respective bases, it was proven the C-5 is crucial to global reach and global power. Leaders were able to eliminate three sorties because of careful planning and hard work. More than 1,350 short tons of cargo were loaded and more than 780 Canadian warriors are home with the families thanks to the men and women who are dedicated to doing it right. As Colonel Martin stated, "Teamwork and planning is what made the mission a success. The seamless interaction of mobility professionals from many locations definitely made the difference."



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(Left) Staff Sgt. Pat Del Selva, a loadmaster assigned to the 22nd Airlift Squadron, directs the K-loader into place while the C-5 leaves its engines running at the International Airport in Kandahar, Afghanistan. (Top) Members of the 615th Air Mobility Operations Group chain down cargo in the belly of a C-5 Galaxy. The 615th AMOG moved more than 1,350 short tons of cargo out of war-torn Afghanistan. (Above) A C-5 from Travis is ready to accept its cargo on the ramp in Kandahar. The C-5 was chosen for the mission to Afghanistan because of its capability to hold larger loads and its extended fuel range.