file 45
C130 crash

Fayetteville Observer & Times, 27 DEC 87

TOP STORY OF THE YEAR

The July 1 crash of a C-130 in front of 5,000 spectators at Fort Bragg was voted the top story of the year by editors and reporters of the Fayeteville Observer-Times. This photo, shot by Hank Hertl of Carolina Lakes, shows the fireball that erupted seconds after the crash. A roundup of the year's other top stories appears on Page 1B.

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News Staffs Pick Top 1987 Stories

4,000 See Crash At Pope

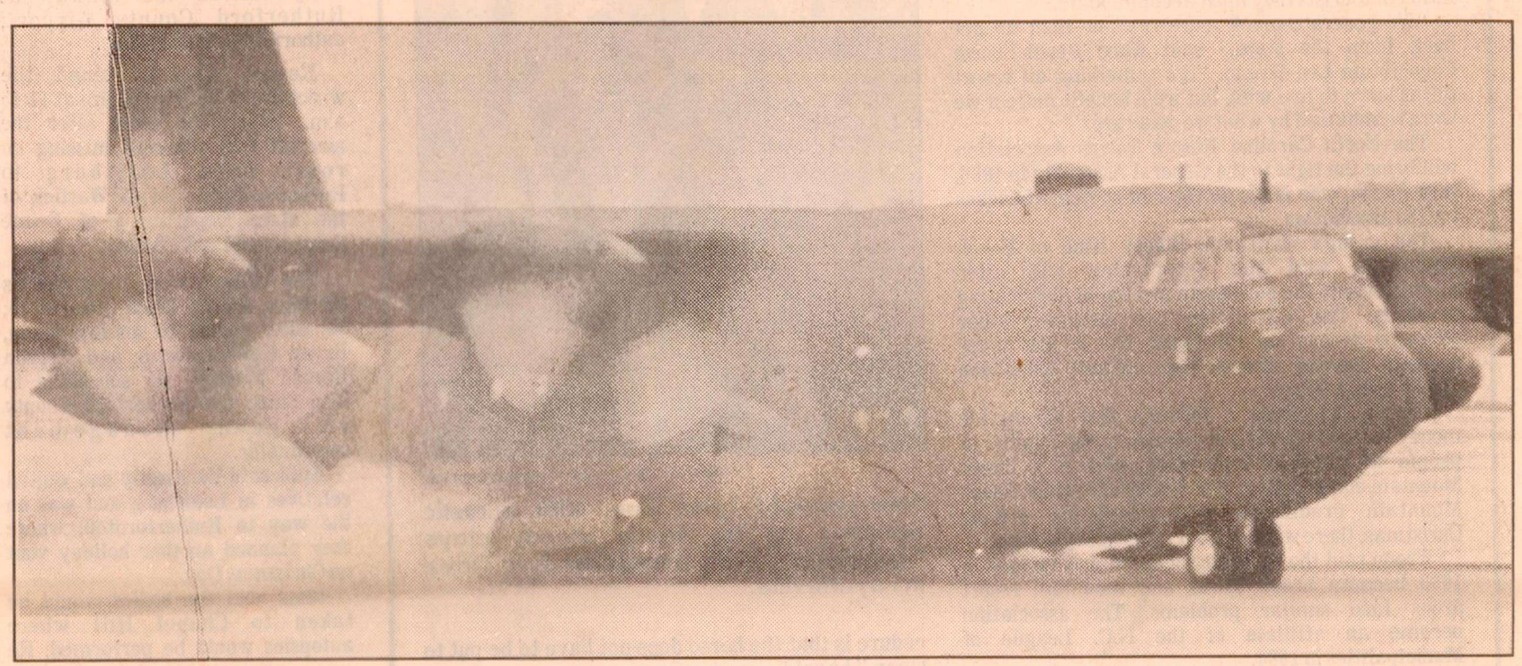

Photo by FELIX ARROYO

Pope C-130 Hercules slams belly onto landing strip, causing loss of control, explosion and deaths.

Five servicemen died and two were injured July 1 when a Pope Air Force Base C-130 transport airplane crashed and exploded into an orange fireball in front of more than 4,000 spectators during a capabilities exercise at Fort Bragg.

Four Pope crewmen and a Fort Bragg soldier on the ground died during the demonstration of a LAPES, Low Altitude Parachute Extraction System, on Sicily Drop Zone in the north central part of the sprawling Army post.

The airmen killed were Capt. Garry M. Bardo Jr., 31, the pilot; 1st Lt. John B. Keiser III, 28, the navigator; Tech. Sgt. Timothy J. Matar, 32, load master; and Airman 1st Class Albert G. Dunse, 23, an additional load master. They were assigned to the 40th Tactical Airlift Squadron of Pope's 317th Tactical Airlift Wing.

Sgt. D. Lance Hunter, 25, an 82nd Airborne Division soldier watching from a military vehicle, was killed as the runaway aircraft skidded off the dirt landing strip and exploded in the nearby pine trees.

Crewmen surviving the crash with severe burn injuries were 1st Lt. Marc A. Lenke, 26, co-pilot, and Sgt. Tony P. Holmes, 28, flight engineer. They were taken to Womack Army Community Hospital and flown that night to the burn center at Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

The accident occurred at about 10:25 a.m. as the plane was delivering a 17-ton M-551 Sheridan armored reconnaissance vehicle during the annual display of Army and Air Force airborne and firepower capabilities.

In a LAPES, a routine method of air-dropping equipment into a combat zone, a transport airplane normally flies about five feet above the ground, a heavy load is dragged out of its rear door by a parachute and the plane re-ascends.

The airplane passed within several hundred feet of the spectators' bleachers which were filled with family members, high-ranking military officials, Congressional aides, reporters, photographers and other disbelieving spectators.

Military officials never explained the crash's cause. Air Force spokesmen say people testifying in mishap investigations are given confidentiality to encourage truthfulness and prevent recurrence of similiar accidents.