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News Release



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317TH TACTICAL AIRLIFT WING (MAC)

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FLIGHT SIMULATOR

POPE AIR FORCE BASE, N.C. -- A C-130 descends to 1,000 feet, breaking heavy cloud cover as the pilot steers toward the runway. Engine failures have left the aircraft feeling a bit shaky heading into its final approach, but the well trained crew calmly completes its checklists and carries out landing procedures.

Pulling back on the yoke, the pilot levels and steadies the Hercules, putting the plane down gently on the centerline, another perfect landing.

But in this case, the "aircraft" never got off the ground, and the "perfect landing" was all part of the continuous training Pope's aircrews undergo at the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing's

FLIGHT SIMULATOR ADD 2-2-2-2

flight simulator branch.

All C-130 crewmembers, from pilots to loadmasters, undergo continuation training to help them maintain their knowledge and proficiency. Much of this training is accomplished in flight, but some of the flying is "simulated" using a sophisticated machine which duplicates the cockpit, functions, characteristics and even behavior of a C-130.

Fourteen civilian instructors, qualified in all crew positions, conduct the training in Pope's fleet of two flight simulators. The machines were designed and built by the Singer Company, now the CAE-Link Corporation. CAE-Link was also contracted by the Air Force in 1987 to maintain the simulators and to conduct simulator-related and other ground training.

"Like everyone else in the Air Force, a C-130 crew member's training never ends," said Charles West, site manager at the simulator complex. "Most of the training they do here is repetitive because they're already qualified when they come here, but we can still teach them a lot."

The refresher training is annual for all crew members and includes academic hours as well as "flying" hours in the simulators for all but the loadmasters. Loadmaster training is given by Air Force instructors in the classroom and in a specially configured C-130 fuselage.

Crews get about 20 hours a year flying time in the simulators, said Mr. West. "We train on the simulators because

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it's cheaper than flying," he explained. "And you can also do things in the sims that you can't do safely in an aircraft. I think that's more beneficial than the cost savings.

"We can simulate situations you wouldn't want to encounter in the air, and train pilots to cope with them. For example, you wouldn't want to practice recovering from a finstall in the aircraft."

Mr. West pointed out that the simulators also allow aircrews to train for situations that would be virtually impossible to practice on a C-130.

"We can show crews what it's like to fly an aircraft without hydraulics, but you wouldn't shut down your hydraulics in flight to simulate a failure on a C-130."

While there are some differences in flying C-130s and flying simulators, the training is highly realistic, said Mr. West, who, like all the branch's instructors, is a former Air Force instructor.

In addition to Pope's aircrews, the flight simulator branch trains crews from Jordan, Israel, the Navy, and Air Force crews from Rhein Main AB, West Germany.

"They all learn something," said Mr. West. "Our instructors can spot weaknesses and help the crewmembers work on them. When we notice someone needs more training, we'll recommend it."

An 11-member maintenance section makes sure the simulators

FLIGHT SIMULATOR ADD 4-4-4-4

and all their associated equipment are in working order and available for training, which they are 98 percent of the time, according to Mr West.

"We have a 98 percent maintenance reliability rate, something any flying outfit would envy," he quipped.