

Antarctica Sun Times - *ONLINE*

December 29, 1996

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Twin Otters Take The Middle Ground

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

The LC-130 "Hercules" aircraft take care of the long hauls, delivering tons of cargo, fuel and personnel to various areas in Antarctica.

Helicopters cover the local areas such as the Dry Valleys.

But, it is the Twin Otter aircraft that handle the middle ground, going to areas beyond helicopter capability, but not quite reaching the cargo capacity of Hercs.

Twin Otters are quite versatile and can land on just about anything, according to Henry Perk, a pilot for Kenn Borek Air which is contracted through Antarctic Support Associates (ASA).

"We land on sea ice and on glaciers. We land on blue ice and on top of mountains," Perk said.

Perk has been flying for 19 years. He has spent 10 seasons in the last 11 years on the continent, providing Twin Otter support.

"It's a good way to get into a lot of places that you can't get into with a Herc," he said. "You can go fairly long distances, certainly a lot further away than a helo."

The Twin Otters provide support not only for researchers, but also for helicopters and the LC-130s.

"A lot of the open field support that we do, like the AGO project, we actually have to put in groomers so they can build a skiway so the Hercs can get in and out," Perk said. "We fly fuel out for the helos if they need to go somewhere further where it's not economical for them to carry extra fuel, so we put out fuel caches for them," he added.

Perk does about 200 open-field landings each season. Many times in these types of landings, crevasses become a concern. However, Twin Otter pilots do not do the ski drags like the LC-130s do to identify any crevasses. In the proper light, pilots can identify areas that are safe to land on.

"You can see them from the air," Perk said. "These kind of open field landings, you can only do in good visibility. You have to have good sunlight. With the proper sunlight, you have to do a couple of circles around. You can pick out whether or not there are crevasses, there because of the shading of the snow."

Perk has flown to many places on the continent. He has been to just about every base on the peninsula, including Palmer Station and the British Station, Rothera. He has also been to the Russian Station Vostok. He is scheduled to go to Wasa, a Swedish Station.

"We covered more territory than anybody, really," he said, smiling. "We get to go to more places than the Hercs. They have to have a skiway, or the snow conditions have to be right. We can just land on a lot more places "unapproved" - open fields, on top of mountains."

A twin otter can travel about five hours or approximately 600 miles with a normal fuel load, though the aircraft can carry more fuel in an auxiliary tank.

The aircraft can carry quite a few passengers, but here they are never full to capacity. "They're certified for 18 back in the real world. Down here we usually don't carry more than seven or eight. That's just because there's no need for it. Plus, there's always a lot of survival equipment." Payload is kept to about 2,400 pounds.

The aircraft can be operated with various landing gear including floats for water landings, ordinary wheels, big tundra tires for soft ground such as sand bars, and wheel skis that are similar to the LC-130 ski systems.

The wheel skis are carried on board the aircraft until they hit Punta Arenas, Chile. There they are put on and used until arrival at McMurdo Station, where the wheel skis are replaced with the board skis.

"Once we get down here, we operate on straight skis, board skis we call them," Perk said. "The advantage is that they are lighter, they take more punishment than wheel skis, and wheel skies are a lot more expensive... and need a lot more maintenance."

With all the advantages the Twin Otters have, they also have a few disadvantages "Too small, too noisy, too slow," Perk said. "You can't walk around in the cockpit."

Currently, there are six Kenn Borek Air Twin Otters, on the continent. Two are being used by USAP. One supports the McMurdo mission, while the other is set up to support the aerogeophysical research project in the Siple Dome area. Another is being used by the Italians, and the last three are at Patriot Hills supporting a non-government project.

Because there is only one aircraft here, the flight crew is tasked to the limit. "I fly 150 hours a month, which is the absolute maximum we are allowed to," Perk said.

The harsh environment of Antarctica is not a major concern for the pilots and engineers. Kenn Borek Air is located in Calgary, Alberta, which has a similar climate.

"It's the same environment as we have in the Arctic," Perk said. Lots of times when we're done here, we go up and do North Pole Trips. We work out of Greenland. Quite often we come out of South Pole the first week of February, and by the end of March, we're up to the North Pole."

AROUND USAP

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

McMurdo Station - The annual move of flight operations from the ice runway to William's Field skiway was completed last Sunday. The first module was moved at 7:45 a.m., and by 1:30 p.m. the tower and radar were once again operational. Willy Field was totally operational by 5:30 p.m.

A fourth entertainment television channel has been added to McMurdo Station's TV lineup. The new channel,

called "Newsports," is part of the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service BC '96 upgrade. The channel is currently broadcasting only part-time, but will commence with full time broadcasting on Friday, Jan. 3.

South Pole - The Old South Pole Station fuel recovery project was completed by Antarctic Support Associates personnel. About 8,000 gallons of fuel was recovered. Because of the cost of delivering fuel to the South Pole, the recovery saved the United States Antarctic Program about \$100,000. The fuel will be used by the Polar Ice Coring Office for their drilling projects.

R/V Nathaniel B. Palmer - Researchers continued obtaining water, ice and sediment samples around the clock in the Southwestern Ross Sea and Terra Nova Bay. Ice in Terra Nova Bay made mooring retrieval impossible.

The research is an interdisciplinary study that includes meteorologic forcing phenomena, sea-ice dynamics and ocean hydrography.

R/V Polar Duke - During the week, the ship retrieved a sediment trap mooring array just north of Hugo Island and another one in the Palmer Basin before heading back to Palmer Station. The traps are for research on the marine ecosystem.

Once at Palmer, they unloaded cargo then headed for Rothera, the British station. While enroute, personnel constructed a hut that was scheduled to be delivered to Rothera.

Christchurch - Antarctic Development Squadron SIX (VXE-6) personnel took time out from work to visit the Cholmondley Home, a children's foster home in Governor's Bay. This annual event provides gifts for children and gives Sailors an opportunity to give something back to New Zealanders. The event was organized by the squadron's First Class Association. During the day, Sailors played with the children and cooked lunch, consisting of tacos and sausages, on the home's patio. Santa Claus then gave out gifts, bought by squadron members, to each child.

AS1(AW) Jeremy McMullen was named the Naval Antarctic Support Unit (NASU) Sailor of the Year.

The Navy's footprint in Christchurch is gradually decreasing. Two of NASU's old barracks have been removed and a third is being removed. All of the buildings will be reused, some as youth hostels.

Palmer Station - The station hosted a visit by the Spanish Armada research vessel B.I.O. Hesperides. The ship arrived in the Arthur Harbor area on Dec. 19. Station personnel provided tours to 20 researchers and five officers from the ship.

MacElex' Last Season Marked By Success

by JO2 Trevor Poulsen

Naval Support Force, Antarctica's (NSFA) Electronics Division (MacElex) is set to close shop Oct. 1, 1997. Their departure leaves behind a reputation of quality work maintaining McMurdo Station's airfield landing systems, electronic weather observation equipment and communications systems on continent.

Headquartered in Building 165, MacElex has 14 Electronics Technicians (ETs) working at four separate locations in and around McMurdo.

One location is the runway where ETs maintain Navigational Aid (NavAid) equipment. The Precision Approach Radar (PAR/FPN-36) guides approaching aircraft in from 10 miles and the Tactical Air Navigation system (TACAN) provides pilots with distance and bearing information up to 200 miles from station.

Another area is the Transmitter complex (T-site) above McMurdo. Four ETs stand watch over the 1,000 watt high frequency transmitters which send radio signals to the South Pole Station, field camps and aircraft.

MacElex also has a Receiver Shop to handle communications between outlying areas and local operation

centers. In addition, two ETs maintain automated weather equipment at Marble Point, the runway and in town.

This year has been very successful for MacElex, according to NSFA Communications Officer, LT Mike Newton.

He lists some of their greater accomplishments: overhauling the TACAN's at South Pole and McMurdo, establishing a solid radio link between Marble Point and McMurdo for weather observations, certifying a four-approach runway radar, establishing successful communications with the Coast Guard icebreaker and installing a hybrid solar/wind/diesel generator supporting remote weather stations.

"I've been pleasantly surprised by how well we've kept the gear up," Newton said. "Operationally, they haven't missed a beat."

When MacElex closes shop Oct. 1 next year, division responsibilities will be assumed by NISE from East Charleston, SC and Antarctic Support Associates (ASA) from Englewood, CO.

NISE East will assume all NSFA meteorological and air traffic control functions, including maintenance of NavAids and automated weather equipment.

ASA will assume responsibility for radio communications at Mac Relay and operation and maintenance of equipment at the T-site and Receiver Shop.

Electronic Division personnel have been working closely with their counterparts at NISE East and ASA this season to ensure a smooth transition.

"The quality of personnel has been superb," Newton said. "They're part of the team - there's no they/us type of mentality, only teamwork."

SCIENCE PROJECT UPDATE

by JOC(AW) Jacqueline Kiel

Flow Mechanisms of Antarctic Ice Streams (S- 157)

The overall purpose of this research is to establish the physical mechanism of rapid movement in the West Antarctic ice streams. With this information, researchers will be able to assess the stability or instability of the ice sheet in relation to global change.

Upstream C, which is the focus of study this season, ceased its rapid movement about 130 years ago. Dr. Barclay Kamb and his field-team will try to identify the change in physical conditions responsible for the cessation of rapid movement in the ice stream. They will compare conditions at the base of ice stream C with ice stream B, which is a rapidly moving ice stream that was studied last year.

Antarctic Ice Core Records of Oceanic Emissions (S- 161)

The focus of this research is the development of long-term records of aerosol-born, marine-derived elements in the Antarctic ice sheet that were deposited from the atmosphere.

Field team members traveled to Vostok, the Russian Station, to assist with drilling, sampling and researching on an ice core in a joint Russian/American/French study. They are scheduled to return to McMurdo Station in February.

Ice cores will be shipped to both the United States and France for further studies.

IAP Rewards Employees

by Barbara Kaptanian

Beginning Jan. 1, International American Products (IAP) will be implementing a "Spot Check" program to reward their team members for outstanding customer service.

The various departments - management, food service, janitorial, laundry and hairdressing are all included in the program.

The spot check program will enable the McMurdo community to recommend IAP personnel for rewards due to outstanding service within the various IAP departments.

To recognize an individual, just pick up a spot check coupon, which will be located in the galley. Simply fill out the date, the persons name, what he or she did and sign it. Then put the coupon in the IAP Suggestion Box located outside the galley, or hand it to any IAP Supervisor.

IAP will decide what kind of reward the individual will receive. These awards will range from letters of commendation to monetary rewards.

IAP's desire is to reward IAP employees who provide the best possible service to the community. The opinion of the McMurdo community is important to IAP and its team members. We look forward to serving our community through superior customer service.

Thank you from IAP and the Team Member Staff.

New Shuttle Schedule

The dedicated Scott Base shuttle has been discontinued during the weekdays. To get to Scott Base, take the Willy Field Shuttle. It departs Derelict Junction every half hour at the top and the bottom of the hour, except for 6:00 am and 6:00 p.m. The Terra bus operates then.

On Saturday, the Scott Base shuttle operates from 7 p.m. to 1 a.m., and on Sunday it operates from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. These depart derelict Junction at the top of the hour and scott base at the bottom of the hour.

Willy Field shuttle service resumes Sunday at 6:30 p.m.

USAP PERSON OF THE WEEK

by JO3 Roland Ortiz

Radio Division Section II Watch Supervisor RMSN Douglas Patotzka joined the Navy to see the world. Thanks to the Navy he's doing just that.

Ironically, Patotzka's first duty station, Naval Support Force, Antarctica, homeported at Port Hueneme, Calif., took him to within 50 miles of Los Angeles, where he was born and raised, and one mile from his parent's home. However, once deployed, Patotzka wound up over 8,000 miles from home.

As a Radioman in Antarctica, one of Patotzka's responsibilities is monitoring radio signals, which must be monitored 24 hours a day. "We monitor all the radio equipment to make sure everybody's frequencies are always up, " he said. "We monitor military operations and civilian field operations," he added.

Patotzka and his fellow Radiomen stand 12-hour watches to cover the day.

Another responsibility for the radiomen is checking for radio transmission problems. "We check to see if files are being transferred properly," Patotzka said. "If any problem does arise we trace down the problem to the receiver

or the transmitter."

Patotzka also overlooks e-mail message traffic to ensure messages get to the appropriate accounts. These accounts include outlying camps, such as Upstream Charlie, Siple Dome, and Terra Nova Bay.

To see even more of the world, Patotzka will be departing McMurdo aboard the Coast Guard vessel Polar Sea in mid-February. "I will be on a 45-day sea trip, stopping in two Australian ports and one in Shanghai," he said excitedly.

Patotzka plans to return to Ventura College once back at Port Hueneme, Calif. He also plans to apply for the Enlisted Commissioning Program (ECP). He will be stationed at Port Hueneme, Calif. until April 1998.

NAVY NEWS

New Garrison Caps To Hit Stores Soon

Story courtesy of Navy Exchange Command

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. (NWSA) -- The black garrison cap was approved for wear with the winter uniform in September 1996. With an estimated total requirement of 250,000 for officers, chiefs and enlisted Sailors, 36,000 caps were needed to satisfy the short term demand for the shift to winter uniforms in October.

Due to the immediate requirement of this item, the initial shipment of caps was constructed of fabric without a fused backing.

"The fused and unfused caps are nearly identical in appearance and are of comparable quality," said Becky Adkins, director of the Navy Uniform Program at the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM). "The main difference is that the fused caps are stiffer, retain their shape better and present a sharper military appearance."

NEXCOM has fused caps on order from three different suppliers. The first shipments have already been received at many Navy Exchanges. Production capacity will reach 50,000 caps per month by the end of December.

Any individual who purchased an unfused cap can exchange it for the stiffer fused cap at no charge as supplies become available. "While both caps are authorized for wear, Sailors are encouraged to take advantage of the free exchange policy," said Adkins. "Our goal is to completely satisfy our customers in Uniform Shops around the world."

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