



FACT SHEET

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THE C-7A CARIBOU

In 1962, when this STOL (short take off and landing) assault air-lift aircraft made its debut in South Vietnam, it belonged to the U.S. Army. Although called the Caribou, it then was designated the CV-2B.

As a result of an agreement reached by the Chiefs of Staff of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Air Force, the Air Force took over the Caribou aircraft on Jan 1, 1967. At the same time, the Caribou was redesignated the C-7/A.

The 483rd Troop Carrier Wing was organized under the 834th Air Division to operate the C-7A. The wing headquarters is at Cam Ranh air base. Two of its six squadrons also are there. Two other squadrons have their headquarters at Phu Cat; the other two at Vung Tau.

Designed and built by the deHavilland Company of Canada, the C-7A is especially well-suited for delivering ammunition and other needed combat supplies to forward operating locations.

Many of the strips Caribou crews land on and take off from are both primitive and short. Some are relatively unimproved dirt strips - mud during the rainy season. Others have literally been hacked out of the jungle. A short but straight piece of road sometimes serves the purpose. Caribou pilots can land a fully loaded C-7A within 700 feet and take off in less

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than 800 feet.

A strip doesn't have to be very wide either. The wheels on the landing gear are about 25 feet apart, so if the strip is about 40 feet wide, that's enough. Of course, the pilot must be prepared to use all of his professional flying skills. A crosswind can present him with some interesting control problems that demand immediate attention.

Low visibility due to weather or darkness and relatively few ground-based navigation and landing aids increase the demands made on the skills of the Caribou crews.

There are almost 300 landing strips and air bases in the Republic of Vietnam that can be used by the Caribou. Powered by two Pratt and Whitney R-2000 engines, it can cruise at 140 miles per hour while carrying a full load over 350 mile distances, much farther than most point to point flights in Vietnam. Fully loaded, C-7A crews take off with 6,000 pounds of cargo, 32 passengers, 28 troops with full combat gear, or 20 litter patients.

Where there is no landing strip, the Caribou can be used to paradrop cargo to its customers. "Bundles" of supplies can be dropped with accuracy from as low as 400 feet. Caribou crews can also "LAPES" cargo to the ground. To deliver cargo this way, the aircraft flies just above the ground and, at the right time, a small chute is popped out through the open rear cargo door. The chute pulls the cargo out of the plane almost at ground level. The acronym LAPES means low altitude parachute extraction system.

Paratroops like the Caribou, too. Although they can jump through the two side doors of the C-7A, they particularly like to step out through the open rear cargo door. When they go out the back, they are protected from the boiling air currents created by the aircraft in flight. This means no tumbling or twisting before the parachute opens.

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Caribou crews are versatile. They have to be. A Caribou crew is really a trio: pilot, co-pilot and flight mechanic. No provision is made for a navigator. The pilot and co-pilot handle those chores. The flight mechanic doubles as the loadmaster for the crew.

Their missions are varied. A crew may take off with a package of Army radio equipment that enables the Caribou to serve as an airborne radio relay station. Other crews will be airlifting troops, supplies or equipment to special Forces camps, inaccessible by land and beyond the range of helicopters. The Caribou serves other users well, too: U.S. Marines, other Free World Forces and the United States Agency for Inter-national Development.

And it's an all-weather bird. The radar on the C-7A can be used to pick a path through or around thunderstorms. It can also be used to navigate when the ground is obscured by clouds or the black of night.

You'll see the Caribou just about everywhere in Vietnam, working away at its airlift job. Few people would describe it as a beautiful airplane, but everyone's happy to see it coming in with a load of supplies that just couldn't get there any other way.

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NOTE: This item has been cleared for release by MACV.