



At the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command headquarters at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Jeremy Mustain and Courtney LaRue, Boeing Special Operations Forces field service representatives, work on an AC-130U Gunship's 105mm gun position.

Supporting SOF

Boeing Support Systems—Special Operations Forces consists of two major programs—AC-130U Gunship and the Integrated Weapons System Support Program. The IWSSP program has four main areas:

- **Sustainment:** Oversees repair center, technical manuals, Interactive Electronic Technical Manuals, and field service representative support and deployment
- **30mm Gun System:** Modifies the AC-130U with new guns
- **Gunship Multispectral Sensor:** Upgrades capabilities of existing All Light Level Television
- **MC-130H Combat Talon II Aerial Refueling Systems:** Converts 20 MC-130Hs to tanker configuration for the U.S. Air Force

craft sustainment. SOF's two major programs are the Integrated Weapons System Support Program (IWSSP) and the AC-130U Gunship (see box below). Teamed with contractors, Boeing's services include depot maintenance and structural and avionics upgrades to aircraft and related systems. Customers include the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command, Special Forces soldiers, U.S. Army Rangers and the Naval Special Warfare Command's SEALs.

"Our team never wavers from its commitment to warfighter readiness for our special forces customers," said Tony Robertson, Support Sys-

tems' Maintenance, Modifications & Upgrades vice president and general manager. "Our customers' support and sustainment requirements are extremely specialized, and their needs must be met rapidly."

Boeing stays close to the customer to prepare, anticipate and meet its needs and continually improve capabilities. SOF locations include Fort Walton Beach, Fla., near the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command headquarters at Hurlburt Field. In May, Boeing opened a new facility at Warner Robins Air Force Base, Ga. In addition, Boeing field service representatives are embedded with customers on base and travel with aircraft crews when they deploy, including into combat theaters.

"Our strategy is to meet their constantly emerging needs and to provide rapid, capable solutions. We're not just in the business of hardware—we're providing solutions," said Ken Hill, Special Operations Forces program manager. "We have the expertise across all disciplines and functions to prepare warfighters and bring them elements they can't get elsewhere."

The IWSSP provides the U.S. Air Force

Always be ready

Ron Bookout photos

Meet the team that works 24/7 to deliver preparedness for a special military unit

By KATHERINE SOPRANOS

They're not told what the mission is. But their task is ensuring warfighter readiness for it.

Daunting? Not for Boeing employees who deliver around-the-clock preparedness

to the special forces units of U.S. militaries—enabling these elite combat groups to perform their covert operations successfully under any threat and in any environment.

The element of surprise and high level of secrecy for special forces are critical, so these skilled warfighters depend on Boeing to provide reliable aircraft and systems to aid their missions, which may range from an unexpected ambush on an enemy target to a humanitarian airdrop into a remote location.

IDS Support Systems' Special Operations Forces employees provide special forces with maintenance, modification and upgrades for warfighter readiness and air-

'More of a passion'

Boeing modifies and supports the AC-130U Gunship aircraft for the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command. Michael Dottaviano, AC-130U Gunship program manager, describes Boeing's responsibilities for this one-of-a-kind aircraft and relationship with its Air Force customer.

Q: What are the responsibilities of the AC-130U program for the Special Operations Forces?

A: Under the Plus Four program, we provide the warfighter with four additional aircraft. Two have been delivered to the customer, with two expected to be delivered in the third quarter of 2006, for a total inventory of 17. We modify four C-130H-2 cargo aircraft into an AC-130U Gunship configuration and ensure these assets are quality products that perform as intended for their mission.

Q: What are the customers' expectations of Boeing?

A: We're not supposed to know what the missions are. They expect us to get them there, to help them be successful in operation and to help them come home. Because of the unique aspect of what they do and the role we have in supporting them, there is no other way to be effective than to remain close in location.

Q: Why is working with special forces rewarding?

A: Knowing that this customer counts on us is the most satisfying part of our job. The respect and admiration for the missions they perform makes what we do seem not like work—more of a passion.

—Katherine Sopranos



From left, Paul Parinas, Mike Banning and Steve Fick of Boeing Special Operations Forces in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., test the 30mm weapon system, which is loaded on the AC-130U Gunship.



Tim Hann, Boeing Special Operations Forces field service lead, stands in the forward escape hatch of the AC-130U Gunship at the U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command headquarters at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

Special Operations Command with rapid solutions to aircraft sustainment and modification tasks. Currently contracted through 2008, Boeing modifies and supports the AC-130U Gunship aircraft. AC-130U features include increased weapon and stand-off range, enhanced survivability and a state-of-the-art suite of electronic and infrared countermeasure systems.

“Our repair lab provides repairs for approximately 150 different items that cannot be found anywhere else in the Air Force inventory,” said Bob Boggs, IWSSP program manager. To swiftly respond to special forces fleet sustainment needs, Boeing provides quick turnaround—picking up items at Hurlburt Field, conducting repairs and then delivering them back to the base, often on the same day.

“Just one aircraft down for parts could mean the difference between mission success or failure,” Boggs said. “The customer expects us to meet any unique tasking and solve their problems. It requires agility on our part, and we are always looking at ways to further streamline our processes to always be ready to serve the customer on a moment’s notice.”

One area of IWSSP is Interactive Elec-

tronic Technical Manuals (IETM). With aircraft fleet modifications and upgrades, it’s critical that customers have updated technical manuals. Plus, generations of manuals are still on paper. IETM converts existing paper maintenance manuals into interactive and digital formats.

“The C-130 maintenance manual library, for example, requires constant updates,” said Mike Petersen, Boeing Integrated Product Team leader for IETM. “We provide innovative solutions that allow us to deliver the customer with up-to-date, technically accurate and low-cost digital data.”

IETM’s capabilities include rapid online distribution and automated updates—providing customers with more streamlined processes, better information flow and access to an entire technical library at their fingertips, anytime and anywhere.

Whether it’s the Gunship program or IETM, there’s one common thread across all of Special Operations Forces businesses: the pride Boeing people have working for the elite special forces. “Knowing that our efforts contribute to the defense of the United States, that is a powerful motivation,” Boggs said. ■

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