

# ***PRESS RELEASE***

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**Heavy Airlift Wing  
Pápa Air Base, Hungary  
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## **12-nation Heavy Airlift Wing reaches 1000 flight hours for its C-17 fleet**

In less than a year from its activation, Heavy Airlift Wing (HAW) celebrates the historic milestone of reaching 1000 flight hours. The landmark was realized during the return from a mission to Kabul, Afghanistan late night on 12 February.

HAW is the operational arm of the multinational Strategic Airlift Capability (SAC) and it operates three C-17 Globemaster cargo planes from Pápa Air Base, Hungary.

“While this is a small accomplishment relative to the entire C-17 fleet, we are proud to contribute to the strong safety record of the aircraft,” said Colonel John Zazworsky (USAF), Commander of the HAW. “We have been able to transition safely from planning to high operations tempo in a very short time because of great teamwork among the Boeing training system and maintenance, NATO Airlift Management Agency (NAMA), our host base, and the airmen of the HAW.”

Since July 2009 the Heavy Airlift Wing has flown 65 missions and delivered over 4.300.000 pounds of cargo and nearly 1700 passengers. Operational missions have included flights to support Kosovo Forces, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan and Coalition Forces in Iraq.

The HAW has also conducted three humanitarian relief missions to Haiti in response to a massive earthquake that struck the island nation on January 12. All three missions were flown in support of requests from Sweden.

The operational pace has increased rapidly since the delivery of the third C-17 in October 2009. During December 2009 and January 2010 HAW was able to conduct 13 missions per month despite the fact that two planned missions had to be cancelled because of the more urgent Haiti missions.

“Reaching the 1000 flight hour milestone within the very short period of operations has only been possible through extensive mission planning and flexible crewmembers and support personnel. It is amazing how easily personnel from twelve nations have been able to achieve as a team despite all operational challenges, differences in background and culture”, Lt Col Tom-Ivar Punsvik (RNoAF), Command and Control Branch Chief pointed out.

All missions have been flown by multinational crews. In the beginning the U.S. was the only nation to have seasoned C-17 pilots, loadmasters and flying crew chiefs. However, other experienced flyers, who joined the HAW were trained during 2009 by USAF experts and quickly integrated into the wing to take advantage of their operational experience in other aircraft and theaters.

"The capability of any unit comes down to the caliber of the personnel in the unit," Colonel

Zazworsky emphasized. "The SAC concept has moved from idea to combat operations in three short years. This has been possible because of the quality airmen from all the nations who volunteered to take on the challenges of this effort, starting with negotiations and now resulting in sustained operations."

The multinational composition of the HAW personnel is not the only unique feature of the SAC program. The whole organization is the first of its kind, operating independently of NATO or any individual country. The HAW answers to a 12-member steering board comprising representatives from each participating country, who share equal voting power.

The pace from the initial idea to the first mission has been incredible. The multinational Strategic Airlift Capability consortium was launched only three years ago in order to acquire three C-17 Globemaster III cargo planes to meet strategic airlift requirements of participating nations for national missions, including missions in support of NATO, the EU and the United Nations.

The first SAC C-17 was delivered to Pápa Air Base in July 2009, the second arrived in September, and the third arrived to complete the deliveries in October.

The SAC participating nations include 10 NATO nations, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Romania and the United States, and two Partnership for Peace nations Finland and Sweden.

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