



Building and Delivering a *Globemaster*: Excerpts from a Commander's Diary

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November 2007

The nineteenth day began like any other, but turned out to be very special. It marked the start of the assembly of the 194th C-17 *Globemaster III* at Boeing's Long Beach, Calif., plant. Some parts for the airlifter are manufactured in-house, but many more come from different suppliers in nearly every other state. Ten different aircraft are in production inside the hangar at any given time.

Shortly after assembly of the wing skins and struts began, Thanksgiving was upon us. As we prepared for the holiday, I was informed that a new captain due to report for duty during the next week was, instead, to deploy to Kuwait within a month of his arrival. The new captain would help DCMA meet its quota in the initial surge of contracting personnel recommended for deployment by the Gansler Commission. One aircraft was finished before his arrival, and the production line kept moving!

December 2007

December was busy. U.S. Air Force Capt. Anthony Driessen signed in and immediately began preparing to depart on his six-month deployment to Kuwait. My other new military member, U.S. Air Force Maj. Richard Hallbeck, arrived and settled in for the holidays with his family. He knew it would soon be his time to deploy.

We flew, accepted and delivered two C-17s to Dover Air Force Base, Del., and Australia. During this time, the fuselage of C-17 F-194 was laid and initial "bending of metal" happened. Various parts from all over the U.S. and Canada arrived so this plane could be built. The first quarter of 2008 was relatively quiet. As the country was gearing up for the presidential primaries, Boeing Long Beach was focusing on delivering C-17s to our allies. We delivered four aircraft that quarter — two to Canada and one each to Australia and Great Britain. These planes were a mixture of direct commercial

sales and foreign military sales. As we assessed each airplane, DCMA Boeing Long Beach staff had to tread carefully in determining how to bill every hour we performed against each aircraft. A few of these aircraft were considered both direct commercial sales and foreign military sales — an airplane was bought as DCS but the flight test was FMS. Record keeping became extremely important. Somehow, though, we made it through.

April 2008

By April, DCMA was in full swing preparing fiscal year 2009 budget and staffing numbers. All DCMA offices were working hard analyzing data. In short, most members of DCMA management were just miserable.

However, on April 22, our new "baby," F-194, had a historic day. The four major parts — wings, fuselage, empennage and nose — were transported from the Long Beach factory and loaded into the Nicholson tool. The Nicholson tool is a monstrous, mechanical jig that aligns the wings and centers the fuselage, nose and empennage to within thousandths of an inch. For the first time, F-194 looked like an

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Faulkenberry meets DCMA staff members with P-177 nearby.



People enjoy the Mid-Production Boeing Open House at the Boeing Long Beach facility.

airplane. Its final journey within the Long Beach plant had begun. During the rest of the second quarter 2008, we delivered three more C-17s, one each to Dover AFB, Travis AFB, Calif., and Great Britain. As we made these deliveries, F-194 received its landing gear, flaps, control surfaces and engines. It moved forward three major workstations on the assembly line. Also during this period, this aircraft stopped being “F-194” and became known as P-177, or the 177th C-17 for the U.S. Air Force.

During this same period, our budget submission firmed up, and we knew exactly how many of our billets were at risk of being cut. It looked as if this would be another tough year.

July 2008

Finally, July arrived. We all wanted to take time off to celebrate; but first, we had to deliver an aircraft, P-174, to Dover AFB on July 3. Its takeoff and delivery served as the beginning of our Independence Day celebration.

Throughout July, we worked hard on delivering P-175, while P-177 moved from final assembly to the paint hangar. Both Boeing and DCMA worked tirelessly to streamline the final inspection and acceptance process, since this was the first time we were using a new inspection and delivery procedure. The two organizations redoubled their efforts to reduce preparation time in delivering a defect-free product. This meant that the entire month was focused on flying and fixing any problem that was uncovered. The jet was going to be “clean;” we were determined to have it “combat ready” from day one.

On July 25, P-175 was delivered to Dover AFB. Unbelievably, it flew its first operational mission the very next day; it was needed in Iraq.

Less than 24 hours after departing Long Beach, P-175 was heading into harm’s way, delivering necessary supplies to our troops. This surprised us all — most aircraft do not go from

acceptance to combat so quickly. We were proud that our new, streamlined ramp procedures worked. July brought us other joys and concerns as well. Our two new military members “changed positions.” We welcomed Driessen back from his deployment as we sent Hallbeck away on his.

August 2008

August proved to be just as busy as we prepared both P-176 and P-177 for delivery to Dover AFB. We quickly overcame several small problems as these two aircraft were prepared. On Aug. 19, we delivered P-176 to Dover AFB and discovered that it, too, was bound for immediate deployment to the combat zone — our second in a row to go “from factory to fight.” Later that month, our budget for FY09 had gone final, and we had successfully protected everyone’s billet. Things were looking up as we headed into Labor Day weekend.

September 2008

September began in a flurry of



Engineers fix the ramp toes on P-177.

activity as we performed the first flight of P-177. First flight is always a cause for concern, because we can never perform enough preflight inspections, engine tests and low-speed and high-speed taxi tests to completely remove all the concern that comes with taking off for the first time in an aircraft that you followed from the start. Much to everyone's relief, this new aircraft soared into the air and performed flawlessly.

On Sept. 10, Air Force Brig. Gen. Barbara Faulkenberry, Commander, 15th Expeditionary Mobility Task Force, Travis AFB, toured the C-17 plant and received her "checkout simulator ride" so she could deliver this aircraft. Faulkenberry is a KC-135 navigator but is preparing to accept this newest C-17 on behalf of the U.S. Air Force.

The next morning, before dawn, the general and the aircrew arrived. Waiting for her to speak were 30 of the more than 6,000 men and women who built this aircraft. Also present were three DCMA Boeing Long Beach staff members, all service veterans, involved with oversight of various Boeing efforts.

One of the veterans, Susan Burrows, is an Air Force reservist and serves as one of our quality assurance inspectors. Aircraft P-177 was her

"baby." Burrows was responsible for this aircraft from initial lay down to final flyaway. She had signed off that the engines, instruments, paint,

in theater handling cargo, troops and wounded personnel. He was able to personally vouch for its utility on the field of conflict. Faulkenberry



C-17 P-177 takes flight.

gear and airframe were all ready — she knew this entire aircraft better than any maintenance crew ever will.

The second staff member, quality assurance specialist Dean Carlson, was our newest employee. He had been at DCMA for less than two weeks and came to us from the Navy. Carlson monitors and tracks the delivery performance and quality of a multitude of critical safety inspection parts. Working with Boeing and their subcontractors, Carlson ensures that everything arrives on time and poor performing subcontractors "get their stuff together." While in the Navy, Carlson saw the C-17 in action both while deployed and during standard tours.

The last individual to greet Faulkenberry was Driessen, our deployee who had recently returned from Kuwait. He had just seen firsthand how this aircraft performs

addressed the Boeing workers and thanked them for a job well done. After shaking each hand, she told them how the brave men and women she serves with are using the C-17. She also relayed that this aircraft would be pushed into service early.

When the aircraft arrived at Dover AFB later that day, it would likely be turned around and sent to aid in hurricane evacuations, as Hurricane Ike was bearing down on Texas, and several locations had asked for help in transporting their hospital patients. Once again, the Air Force and the products we deliver were needed both here in the U.S. and overseas to save lives and perform our mission.

With that, Faulkenberry and the audience had their pictures taken. She and the crew then boarded the aircraft, taxied and took flight. As they lifted off, they gave a wing-wave "goodbye" to Long Beach and those who had brought U.S. Air Force's 177th C-17 to life. All in all, it was a memorable start for everyone present on Sept. 11, 2008. **C**

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