

# Commando Solo

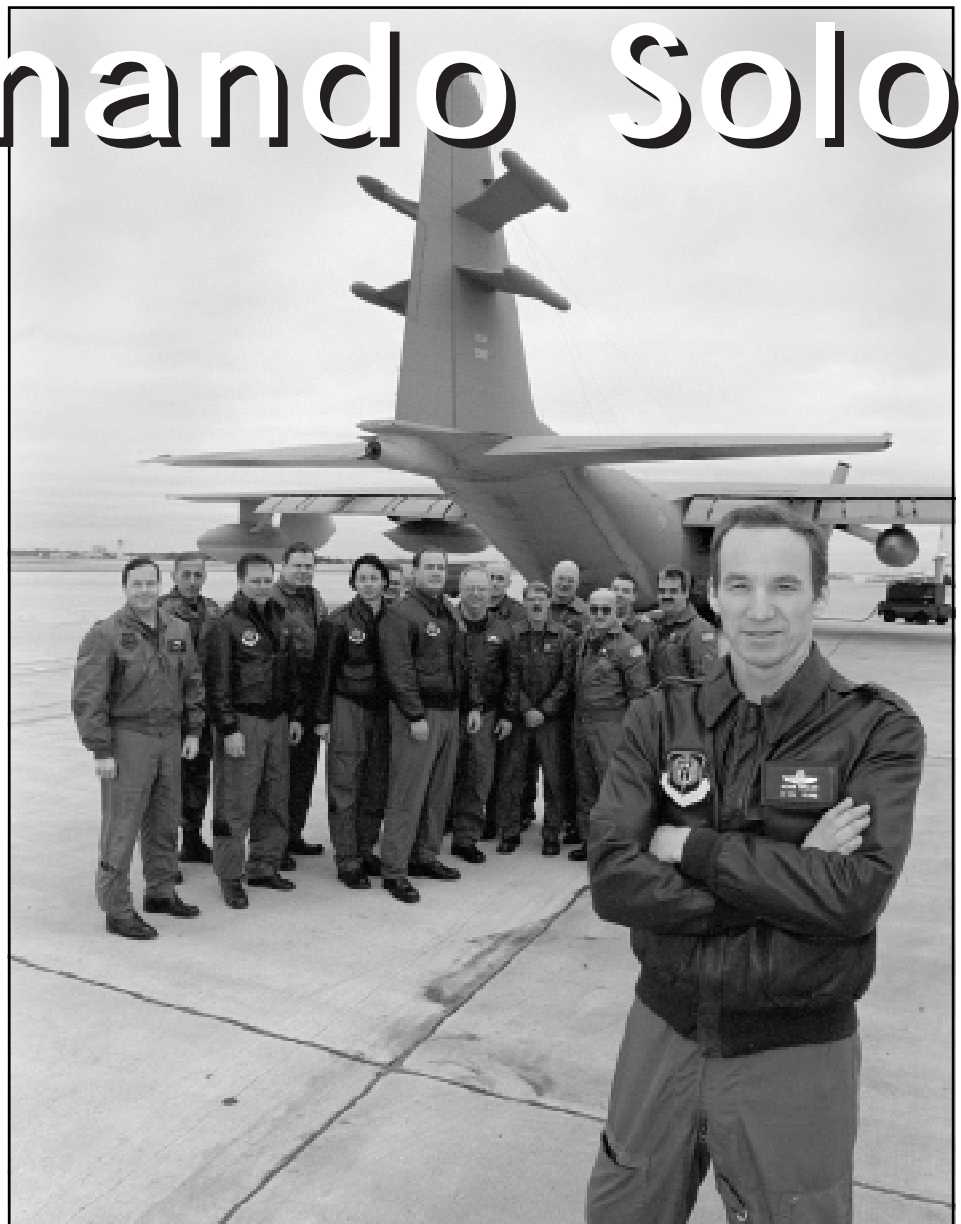
EC-130E  
crew targets  
message  
to  
battlefield,  
troubled  
country

**I**t was a blustery day on the Kelly flightline recently when the Air Intelligence Agency played host to one of six EC-130E Commando Solo aircraft, an airborne electronic broadcasting system which brings to the battlefield the force multiplier effect of psychological operations.

The plane belongs to the 193rd Special Operations Wing of Harrisburg, Pa., and is able to broadcast products developed by Army PSYOP units on AM and FM radio, and TV images over any frequency.

“Commanders are increasingly becoming aware of the significant advantage psychological operations brings to the effort,” said Col. Frank Goldstein, chief of psychological operations at AIA.

“It’s amazing the effect that truthful, accurate information has on people. PSYOP has time and again proven its worth, and the EC-130 is a key part of our overall strategy,” said Goldstein.



Photos by Boyd Belcher

*Lt. Col. John Walsh, Commando Solo aircraft commander, poses with his crew behind the EC-130E on Kelly's flightline.*

Flying high over a battlefield or a troubled country, the six planes of the 193rd SOW, Pennsylvania Air National Guard, do a job they say is unique in the world.

Each of the C-130 cargo planes has been converted to flying radio and television stations, capable of pre-empting a country’s normal programming and replacing it with whatever informational broadcast that is felt necessary to get the message through to the listening audience.

Unit people receive their

mission taskings from the State Department – through U.S. Special Operations Command, Air Force Special Operations Command, and the geographic commander in chief – which has identified a “problem area” requiring the use of these specially equipped aircraft.

The U.S. Army’s 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C., the only active duty component PSYOP unit, is then tasked to develop and produce messages for broadcast. These messages are then reviewed and

approved by the State Department before being delivered to the 193rd.

"If the decision is for the message to be broadcast live, which is preferable to allow for adjustments or modifications to the messages based on late-breaking news, rather than by a taped message, a linguist from the 4th PSYOP Group will accompany

the 193rd to broadcast the message in the native tongue of the target audience," said Goldstein.

Once airborne, the mission control chief and five electronic communications systems operators occupy their search, medium/high frequency and ultra-high frequency monitoring positions in the mission compartment. The compartment has cassette and reel-to-reel audio recorders, a video recorder, television monitors, receivers, noise modulators, transmitters and a live microphone.

The mission control chief, together with the theater commander's planning staff, plan where the orbit areas will be set up to ensure the best reception signal to and from the target audience. Rather than try to overpower an



Crew members set up their stations in the operations section aboard Commando Solo.

existing signal, the crew of the EC-130 will normally broadcast on an open frequency.

The search operator monitors radio and television frequencies to find one that is clear of other broadcasts and is within range of the target. The operators then tune up transmitters inside the aircraft and corresponding antenna on the outside of the aircraft. Signals can be transmitted from either side of the aircraft, depending on the direction to the target.

An electronics operator plays the message tape through a video or audio recorder to other operators who transmit the signal over the airway.

To ensure the target audience is listening, other PSYOP means, such as loudspeaker broadcasts or

leaflets, will inform the target audience of the frequency being used, said Goldstein.

So how effective are the EC-130s in getting their message across? On Thanksgiving Day 1990, the 193rd SOG began broadcasting "Voice of America" into the Kuwaiti theater of operations, helping to prepare the battlefield psychologically by

offering the Iraqi soldiers food, bedding and medical care if they surrendered and reminded them of the consequences if they did not.

"These broadcasts combined with the PSYOP leaflet and loudspeaker broadcast programs were major motivating factors to the estimated 100,000 soldiers who surrendered or deserted by the

war's end," said Goldstein.

The EC-130 was originally modified using the mission electronic equipment from the EC-121, known at the time as the Coronet Solo.

Soon after the 193rd SOG received its EC-130s, the unit participated in the rescue of U.S. citizens in Operation Urgent Fury, acting as an airborne radio station informing those people on Grenada of the U.S. military action.

Commando Solo was instrumental in the success of coordinated



Second Lt. Howard Herbert checks equipment at his station.



Master Sgt. Dave Perry performs a pre-flight inspection.

psychological operations in Operation Just Cause, again broadcasting continuously throughout the initial phases of the operation to help end the Noriega regime.

Most recently, in 1994, Commando Solo was utilized to broadcast radio and television messages to the citizens and leaders of Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy.

The EC-130s deployed early in the operation, highlighting the importance of PSYOP in avoiding military and civilian casualties.

“President Aristide was featured on the broadcasts, which contributed significantly to the orderly transition from military rule to democracy,” said Goldstein.

In 1990, the EC-130 joined the newly formed Air Force Special Operations Command and has since been designated Commando Solo, with no change in mission.



*Tech. Sgt. Michael Kovach, Commando Solo member, warms up his station's equipment.*

This one-of-a-kind aircraft is consistently improving its capabilities, said Goldstein.

On July 13, 1998, the approximately 1,200 members of the 193rd SOG learned that congressional budget approval was given for the new EC-130J aircraft.

The new aircraft developed by Lockheed will be able to fly higher than the EC-130s now

being used, making them better able to avoid groundfire. The new EC-130J is reported to also handle better and have greater range and fuel economy.

The next few years should see continued enhancements to the EC-130 and its worldwide mission, said Goldstein.

AIA's PSYOP division, as the Air Force's center of excellence for PSYOP, will be working closely with AFSOC and the 193rd Special Operations Wing (Commando Solo).

Aerospace PSYOP will play a key role in the success of air expeditionary forces and overall future information operation campaigns, according to Goldstein.

This visit by Commando Solo to AIA is the first in a PSYOP team effort to enhance air and space force. (Information compiled by AIA Public Affairs staff) ■



*Flack stands by props used in Fantasy Island.*

## 324th IS member makes movie appearance

*By Senior Airman Denise Flory  
324<sup>th</sup> IS*

*Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii*

Senior Airman Autumn Flack, 324th Intelligence Squadron, and a dozen other active duty military women volunteered recently to be “extras” in a World War II scene for an episode of NBC's newly revived television show “Fantasy Island.”

The plot of the show centered around a woman's dream of being a WWII war hero in an all-female platoon.

Weeks before the episode was filmed, local casting directors scouted military women willing to act as extras, providing background action for the combat scenes. The casting directors preferred women on active duty because of their combat arms training and familiarity in field conditions.

For Flack, the glamour associated with a more traditional television production was not to be. Instead of spending hours in pre-filming make-up sessions, she was first hastily fitted with a WWII utility uniform. Following that, she was shuffled off to have the make-up artists throw fists full of dirt on her clothes and smear grease and charcoal on her face. After that, she was bussed to the set, a dusty war-torn WWII base camp, to participate in 14-hour filming sessions. Although it wasn't a glamorous experience, for military personnel, the opportunity to appear in a major television show doesn't come around often. Given the chance, Flack said she would gladly participate again. ■