



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Tennessee Air Guard Embarks on New Mission

NASHVILLE - Students from the Republic of Poland were the first to arrive as the Tennessee National Guard's 118<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing in Nashville began its new C-130 aircraft Foreign Training Unit mission this week. The students started classes on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of August.

The 118<sup>th</sup> AW is the third oldest flying unit in the nation. Since its inception in 1921 they've seen many changes before receiving their first C-130 mission in 1971. During that time the aircraft and crews have flown a myriad of State, Federal and Homeland Defense missions doing Airlift, Airdrop and Airland, including Aeromedical Evacuation.

"We have been involved in every major contingency since 1990." stated Col. Randy Jones, 118<sup>th</sup> AW Commander "Our instructors have recent, relevant, world-wide experience in both peacetime and contingency operations, and are highly qualified to be international instructors."

The first class consists primarily of Polish pilots and at the end of their 9 to 10 week training period will graduate as qualified C-130 aircraft pilots. The length of future classes will vary according to the requests and needs of the allied state.

The training mission will benefit local economy with the increased manning and students living in the area for weeks or months at a time. In addition to Berry Field Air National Guard Base, one of the most noted increases in activity will be seen at the Smyrna airport. The airport is currently used for numerous approach scenarios but is unable to support tactical drop missions. This relationship between the National Guard and the Smyrna airport could potentially more than double the flying activity there.

"These new students are just the beginning of an exciting time for us and we anticipate challenges that will enable us to learn new ways to teach our allies according to their needs." said Col Dave Chesser, 118<sup>th</sup> Operations Group Commander. "At the same time we are building and strengthening relationships with those allies."

For more information, please contact the Joint Forces Public Affairs Office at 615-313-0662.

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PHOTO CAPTION: Lt Col William Saupe of Nashville's 118th Airlift Wing, Tennessee Air National Guard, goes over the C130 Hercules aircraft with students from the Republic of Poland. The C130 pilots in training are members of the first class conducted by the 118th under their new international mission training allied pilots and crews on the C130.

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