

Military airplanes land, load troops from Mt. Vernon

*C-130 planes load
over 500 troops early
Saturday morning*

MT. VERNON — Saturday was a busy and exciting day at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport as several U. S. Air Force airplanes made stops to airlift troops. Eight airplanes, each called Lockheed C-130 Hercules, arrived at the Airport throughout the day to load over 500 troops.

"We've had two [planes] come in the last 60 days," said Chris Collins, Manager at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport. "Last fall, we started working with the 182nd Air Wing and by talking about letting the military use the airport. The Air Wing is one we've been working with to use the facility in the past. We've been working with them to get them to the Fly-In, but there has always been something where they couldn't come. We had reached out to them in July of last year to let them use the Airport as a practice space, and so because of that, when this exercise started being planned, they said they'd come to Mt. Vernon."

Collins said that the Airport is designed for DC-9 Airplanes, which are twin-engine, single-aisle commercial jet airliners made specifically for frequent, short flights. These airplanes usually weigh about 100,000 pounds. On the other hand, the Lockheed C-130 Hercules is a four-engine turboprop aircraft than can weigh anywhere from 120,000 to 150,000 pounds.



LOADING AND PREPARING FOR LIFT-OFF — One of eight Lockheed C-130 Hercules airplanes loads about 70 troops at the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport Saturday morning. The Airport recently underwent a runway study, which determined that these heavy airplanes could land in Mt. Vernon. The Airport helped airlift over 500 U. S. Air Force troops throughout the day.

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"They can bring a lot of weight in," said Collins. "We did a runway study last fall to see if the runway could hold the weight [of a C-130], and it can."

Of the eight flights, six arrived in the morning and two arrived in the afternoon. Each flight airlifted 68 troops from the southern third of

Illinois, for a total of 544 troops.

"What we're seeing here is the combination of a great location, with Mt. Vernon being so near the two interstates; a great airport infrastructure, which are things like the security fence and rescue fire fighters on scene; and great airport service. It's a testament to the airport that the military allows us to do airlifting of the troops," said Collins. "It has been good; it went off really well. They've been very appreciative of the volunteers and the

professionalism."

The landing and take off of the C-130s at the Airport may have been a one-time only event, added Collins.

"I hope [this event will bring more planes to Mt. Vernon's Airport]," said Collins. "That's why we're doing these things. If we do something for this wing, hopefully that will reverberate around and bring more people to the area."

Collins also wanted to thank all of the volunteers on behalf of the Airport who helped make the day success-

ful.

"We hope that we meet their needs [so they will come back again]," he said. "We tried to take care of every detail as best we could. I want to thank the volunteers for being here every time I call and ask for their help. We have about 40 to 45 people here today, two board members, and the board president helping out too. We couldn't do this without the volunteers and all of the planning. Everyone has pulled off their duties, so kudos to them."

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