

A high-angle aerial photograph of a C-130 Hercules aircraft in flight, banking to the right. The aircraft is dark grey with the number '129' on the nose. Below the aircraft, a coastal city with a large airport and a body of water are visible. The title text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

# Commemorating the Retirement of *The First Lady*

*Willis M. Hawkins*



919th Special Operations Wing

Eglin AFB Field 3, Florida

**SPECTER #129**



53-3129

## *The First Lady*

The "First Lady" was the first production C-130 produced by Lockheed. It made its maiden flight on April 7, 1955 and suffered serious damage one week later on April 14, 1955. While returning from a test flight an engine fire broke out. The fire continued to burn and burned the left wing off just after the aircraft was evacuated on landing. The aircraft was accepted by the Air Force on October 28, 1958. On July 17, 1961 it was redesignated as a JC-130/A by Temco Aerosystems at Greenville, Texas and was assigned to the 6515th Test Squadron at Patrick AFB Florida where it flew missions for NASA over the Air Force Eastern Test Range. Conversion to the AC-130/A Gunship II configuration was completed on December 2, 1968 by LTV Electrosystems at Greenville, Texas. This configuration included four M-61 20mm cannons and four GAU-2B 7.62mm miniguns. The "First Lady" was the seventh and last of the original seven C-130As converted to AC-130As. With completion of this conversion the "First Lady" was assigned to the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing at Ubon Royal Thai Air Force

Base in Thailand and started flying combat missions. During the next three years 129 flew over 3,000 hours of combat time with the 16th Special Operations Squadron. During this time the aircraft received battle damage from AAA on four occasions; March 27, 1969, February 19, 1970, April 18, 1970 and March 26, 1971. In May 1971, the aircraft returned to LTV and was upgraded with the Surprise Package configuration which deleted two of the 7.62mm miniguns, two 20mm cannons and added two 40mm Bofors cannons. Following modification 129 was assigned to the 415th Special Operations Training Squadron at Hurlburt Field where it trained gunship crews. On July 25, 1975, the "First Lady" was assigned to the 711th Special Operations Squadron at Duke Field. While at Duke Field, 129 participated in UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. The "First Lady" will retire with over 13,600 hours of flying time. Upon retirement the "First Lady" will assume a place of honor on display the Air Force Armament Museum at Eglin AFB.