

# CAPT'N KEVO'S

## Boating Tips



### C-130 Hercules

It was a warm summer day when I got the word that one of the four U.S. Coast Guard C-130 Hercules aircraft stationed at Air Station Sacramento in McClellan, CA., received a mission to do drills of an actual search and rescue (SAR) off the Coast of Marin County. The mission was to meet a USCG vessel and drop supplies and equipment to a simulated stricken vessel illuminated by flares.

Air Station Sacramento flight

crews perform homeland security patrols, long-range search and rescue, migrant interdiction, drug interdiction, environmental protection, fisheries enforcement, boating safety, maritime law enforcement and living marine resources protection.

Crews cover a 3.8 million-square-mile expanse of the Pacific Ocean including north to the U.S./Canadian border, south to the Galapagos Islands and westward halfway to Hawaii. Air Station

Sacramento is the only Coast Guard fixed-wing aircraft unit on the West Coast. (I didn't know that!)

I headed out at 0630 for Sacramento/McClellan airbase from our home in Pleasant Hill for an 0800 arrival. The flight had been pre-approved for me, so the "red tape" was done. (Remember, we're dealing with the Department of



A USCG C-130J Hercules aircraft flying over the Golden Gate Bridge.

Homeland Security here.)

I arrived right on time and after going through security met the flight crew in the Operations Center of the facility. They all welcomed me and were very accommodating. We went over the plan for the day and then headed out toward the tarmac for our plane – U.S. Coast Guard 1707.

There was a minor (mechanical) “glitch” in the airplane that delayed our departure long enough for me to get a group shot of members of this crew:

Drop Specialist: Petty Officer 2nd Class Cary Kraft

Drop Specialist: Petty Officer 2nd Class Wyatt Kraft

Flight Engineer: Petty Officer 1st Class Christopher Burke

Drop Master: Petty Officer 1st Class Kurt Morris

Pilot: Lt. Kriss Hinders

Kevo (dead weight)

Radio Operator: Avionics Electrical Technician: Petty officer 2nd class Tyson Burchett

Drop Master: Aviation Maintenance Technician 3rd class David Jordan

Co-Pilot: Lt. Jeffery Hustace

Basic Aircrew: Aviation Maintenance Technician Petty Officer 2nd class Ryan Banks

Next, the pilot held a meeting of all crewmembers in the cargo bay of the plane to finalize everyone’s understanding of the mission at hand. Then the pilot went through the pre-flight checklist and started all four engines. We then headed out for a flawless take-off.

Today’s (specific) mission was to fly out over the ocean in front of Stinson Beach and drop three sets of rescue supplies and a message within retrieving distance

from a 47-foot USCG vessel waiting to take part in this training exercise. The supplies are then driven back to Sacramento for further use in training.

The flight deck consisted of five seated positions: pilot, co-pilot, navigator, flight engineer and radioman. I was able to stand behind the flight crew and observe the precise teamwork that goes into flying these airplanes on the way back to the base. (Way cool!)

This exercise duplicates how the USCG would respond to an SAR mission, which only the C-130 can do. For instance: If you were sailing to Hawaii and snapped the main mast 1,000 miles out and were taking on water, these are the guys and gals who would respond. The goal is to drop the supplies and pumps as fast and as close as possible to the stricken vessel.

So the first thing they do is “mark” the target with a smoke flare. They deployed two kinds: MK-25 (burns for 13-18 minutes) and the MK-58 (burns for 40-60 minutes). They are visible both day and night. The flares alert the pilot to wind conditions to be evaluated before the final drop and give the USCG vessel the exact location of the proposed drop site.

The flares are tossed out the rear of the aircraft, which is now totally open to the point where you could



Drop Specialists releasing emergency supplies and equipment from the rear of the aircraft.

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drive a truck out the back. Two airmen (drop specialists) are secured with thick waist bands that allow them to be positioned right near the end of the cargo door. They secured me a little farther back the same way, but I could lean out and see everything that was going on.

After the flares are deployed, they fly a 360-degree pattern around the smoke flare and fly over at between 50 and 100 feet altitude. I have to tell you: this was really cool to be flying in a four engine aircraft this low to the water at about 130 knots for about an hour and a half.

The supplies are in red duffle bags and are tossed out the back by hand and have a parachute attached to slow them down before impact with the water. I was amazed at how precise these guys and gals were at dropping the supplies nearly on top of the smoke flare. Remember: 130 knots!

After successfully dropping the three parcels right on target, we came around for the ultimate test of accuracy: drop an accordion wa-

terproof message pad, which, when deployed, looks like a long iridescent string.

One of the drop specialists scribbled a note on the pad and at the commander's orders, "Drop-Drop-Drop," threw the message out the back. I kid you not – it landed less than 10 feet from the CG vessel! These folks are good, really good!

## C-130 Aircraft Statistics:

Range: .....3000 NM  
Endurance: ..... 12-plus hours  
Max Cruise Alt: ..... 28,000 ft.  
Max Operating Speed: .....290 kts.  
Seating Capacity: .....86  
Standard Crew: ....2 pilots, 5 crewmembers

### Kevo's Tip:

Navigating offshore is serious business. Safety should be your primary concern. There are too many safety items to list right now, but perhaps in a future column.

In the meantime, it's good to know that if you do venture offshore the U.S. Coast Guard is there to help you out of a jam!

Be safe & happy boating.

**As always, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com. ✉**



Kevo and the crew of U.S. Coast Guard 1707.