



C-17 crews conduct historic airborne operation

3/27/2003 - **SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, III. (AFPN)** -- Under the cover of darkness, almost 1,000 "Sky Soldiers" of the 173rd Airborne Brigade parachuted from C-17 Globemaster IIIs into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq. This was the first combat insertion of paratroopers using a C-17.

"This is a historic milestone in the evolution of the C-17," said Gen. John W. Handy, commander of U.S. Transportation Command and Air Mobility Command. "The C-17, and more importantly the crews that fly it, have proven their mettle repeatedly while operating in the most demanding environments imaginable throughout the global war against terrorism. Now this workhorse has proven its capabilities in a combat airborne operation."

The C-17 has been used many times in airborne training missions and was instrumental in humanitarian airdrops of food rations over Afghanistan, but this is the first time the Globemaster has been used as a platform to insert paratroopers during combat.

Aircraft and aircrews from Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., and McChord AFB, Wash., as well as planners from the Tanker Airlift Control Center here worked closely with U.S. Central Command to execute the mission.

"This is just one more example of how our forces work seamlessly in the joint environment," said Handy. "Our military has made great strides, not only in equipment and technology in the last decade, but also in the way we train, plan and execute -- maximizing the capabilities that each of the services bring to the fight." (Courtesy of USTRANSCOM News Service)



OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM -- A soldier boards a C-17 Globemaster III. Nearly 1,000 "Sky Soldiers" of the 173rd Airborne Brigade parachuted from C-17s into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq. This was the first combat insertion of paratroopers using a C-17. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Isaac G. L. Freeman)