

# HAULIN' HURONS

Photos by Ted Carlson



There are glamorous naval aircraft that bask in the spotlight, performing at airshows and wowing the crowds with high-speed acrobatic flight demonstrations. Then, there are the quiet workhorses that steadfastly perform their missions without fanfare. One of the latter is the versatile C-12 *Huron*. An unsung hero in the logistics arena, the cargo/transport/utility aircraft's

support role is instrumental in helping high-profile aircraft such as F-14 *Tomcats* and F/A-18 *Hornets* meet their missions.

When the Navy started looking for a utilitarian aircraft in the early 1970s, the Beechcraft *King Air 200* was well-suited for its needs. Sixty-six UC-12Bs were initially procured for the Navy and Marine Corps. Currently, 81



Two UC-12B *Hurons* fly over California's Salton Sea area on approach to NAF El Centro on 13 July 2000.

C-12s are operating, while six are in storage at the Aircraft Maintenance and Regeneration Center, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. Of the seven USN/USMC models, including the UC-12F, UC-12M, RC-12F, RC-12M, TC-12B and NC-12B, the UC-12B is the most commonly used.

In addition to the pilot and copilot (who may be a Naval Flight Officer), the C-12 can carry seven

passengers and an aircrewman, 2,000 pounds of cargo, or a mix of both. The aircraft's low accident rate is attributable in part to having two pilots and two engines, as well as being a proven off-the-shelf commercial design.

All Navy and Marine Corps C-12s are maintained via a civilian contract with Raytheon Aerospace, which provides on-site mechanics. Maintenance checks are

Right, Cdr. Peter Hayes, left, and LCdr. Randy Johnson share the cockpit of the UC-12B home-based at NAF El Centro, Calif. Opposite, two *Hurons* form silhouettes against a striking sunset.

performed every 150 hours on the airframe. Per the agreement, the aircraft cannot be flown over 78 hours per month or a maintenance penalty fee can occur. On the average, the aircraft are funded to fly about 50 hours per month.

The typical C-12 driver is a seasoned pilot from either the fixed- or rotary-wing community who is on shore duty after completing a couple of sea tours. New C-12 drivers start out at Flight Safety International in Wichita, Kans., where they are taught basic C-12 aircraft systems in a five-day ground school course, followed by five simulator flights. The student pilots then fly the actual aircraft at one of the two fleet readiness squadrons (FRS): Fleet Logistics Support Squadron (VRC) 30, NAS North Island, Calif., and NAS Oceana, Detachment Norfolk, Va.

A firsthand look at one of the Navy's *Huron* operators, NAF El Centro, Calif., revealed one very busy UC-12B permanently based there. Five base pilots fly the aircraft, which makes frequent logistics and personnel flights. Air Operations Officer Commander Peter Hayes has more than 2,500 hours in the P-3 *Orion* and is qualified in the T-34C *Turbo-Mentor* as well as the UC-12B. He said, "The pilots here are assigned a primary job and fly the C-12 as a collateral duty, which is typical of base flight locations. We have a good group of C-12 crew members and maintainers here. The plane is always ready to go, and with the maintenance contract, we don't have to worry about parts."

Cdr. Hayes described what makes the job of a C-12 pilot enjoyable. "The plane is stable, safe, reliable and fun to fly. Also, there aren't too many jobs where a captain, commander, colonel or lieutenant colonel can still fly. For base XO's, CO's and other personnel, flying the C-12 is a good deal. It keeps those of us that are running the airfield current in aviation." And C-12 pilots receive some additional benefits that other fleet pilots don't. They are shore-based, fly in airliner-type comfort, travel around the world and often meet well-known dignitaries.

Cdr. Rusty Chang, VRC-30's C-12 FRS Officer in Charge, has a career total of 4,500 flight hours, including 2,500 in the C-12. He explained that in the FRS, "We're the UC-12B and UC-12F model managers, the fleet C-12 program manager and C-12 Aircrew Coordination Training program manager. We are billeted for eight instructor pilots and six aircrew instructors, and are the only FRS that offers a seven-day ground school and a fleet instructor-under-training syllabus. We take a minimum of five fleet students per class and train a lot of fleet aviators. We graduate 55 initial flight student pilots and about 45 enlisted aircrew personnel per year, along



## HURONS AROUND THE WORLD

Tail Code	Variant	Location
5A	UC-12B	NAF Washington, DC
5B	UC-12B	MCAS Beaufort, SC
5C	UC-12B	MCAS Cherry Point, NC
5D	UC-12B	MCAS New River, NC
5F	UC-12F	MCAS Futenma, JA
5G	UC-12F	MCAS Iwakuni, JA
5T	UC-12B	MCAS Miramar, CA
5Y	UC-12B	MCAS Yuma, AZ
7A	UC-12B	NAS Patuxent River, MD
7B	UC-12B	NAS Atlanta, GA
7C	UC-12B/UC-12M	NAS Norfolk, VA
7D	UC-12B	NAS JRB Fort Worth, TX
7E	UC-12B	NAS Jacksonville, FL
7G	UC-12B	NAS Whidbey Island, WA
7H	UC-12B	NAS Fallon, NV
7M	UC-12B/NC-12B	NAS North Island, CA
7N	UC-12B	NAF Washington, DC
7Q	UC-12B	NAS Key West, FL
7S	UC-12B	NAS Lemoore, CA
7W	UC-12B	NAS JRB Willow Grove, PA
7X	UC-12B	NAS JRB New Orleans, LA
8A	UC-12F	NAF Atsugi, JA
8D	UC-12M	NS Rota, SP
8E	UC-12M/RC-12M	NS Roosevelt Roads, PR
8F	UC-12B	NS Guantanamo Bay, CU
8G	UC-12M	NAF Mildenhall, UK
8H	UC-12F	NAF Kadena, JA
8K	UC-12M	NAVSUPPACT Bahrain
8M	UC-12F	NAF Misawa, JA
8N	UC-12B	NAF El Centro, CA
G	TC-12B	NAS Corpus Christi, TX
EZ	UC-12B	NAS JRB New Orleans, LA
RW	UC-12B/RC-12F	NAS North Island, CA
None	RC-12F	PMRF Barking Sands, HI



with 15 ground students and 30 instructors under training.

“I’m proud of my entire FRS instructor team,” he continued. “Not a day goes by that we don’t receive calls from around the world requesting their expertise and advice.”

Although not cruising the skies at supersonic speeds, the C-12 has made a name for itself as a reliable logistics platform. After providing support to the Navy and Marine Corps for more than 20 years, the *Huron* is still going strong.

Ted Carlson is a professional photographer whose work regularly appears in *Naval Aviation News*.

Acknowledgments: Capt. Larry Crane; Cdrs. Pete Hayes, John Wilson, Rusty Chang, Dave Koontz and Pat Hyland; Lt. Col. John Mills, USMC; LCdrs. Jeff Harter, Randy Johnson and Clinton Wheeler; Maj. Eric Johnson, USMC; Lts. Holly Hutchinson and Bob Mehal; Capts. Aisha Bakkar-Poe and Mark Carter, USMC; Chief Brian O’Rourke; AD3 Chris Averill; and Bruce Thompson and Jim Hinebaugh.

