

## Light lift; heavy load: Small aircraft pull their weight

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Marine Corps UC-12W aircraft support the Marine Air-Ground Task Force by providing time-sensitive airlift of high-priority passengers and cargo in current theaters of war. (U.S. Navy photo)

**NAVAL AIR SYSTEMS COMMAND, PATUXENT RIVER, Md.** – Like “Rudy” Ruettinger of the 1975 Notre Dame football team, the Marine Corps UC-12W aircraft is respected among large tactical aircraft in current theaters of war, despite its smaller than average stature.

Forward-deployed in support of the [Marine Air-Ground Task Force](#) (MAGTF), the [UC-12W Huron](#) provides time-sensitive airlift of high-priority passengers and cargo.

“The UC-12W has proven to be extremely beneficial in satisfying fixed-wing assault support requirements,” said U.S. Navy [Capt. Michelle Guidry](#), program manager, Tactical Airlift, Adversary and Support Aircraft Program Office (PMA-207). “The UC-12 utilizes commercial off-the-shelf designs that are cost effective and can efficiently support distributed operations in theaters of war and in support of forward-deployed Marines.”

The UC-12W, a modified version of Beechcraft Corporation’s [King Air 350](#), is equipped with a cargo door, military required equipment, and is a modern and improved variant of the Navy’s current UC-12 Beechcraft King Air 200.

A slightly larger aircraft than its predecessor, the UC-12W has 23.5 percent more engine power, improved speed and rate of climb, added aircraft survivability equipment, enhanced avionics suite and allows more load-carrying capacity than the legacy UC-12B/F/M variants, according to

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Beechcraft Corporation data.

With the initial “proof of concept” deployment of the UC-12W in 2011, tactical assets in Afghanistan, such as the KC-130J *Hercules*, MV-22 *Osprey*, and CH-53 *Sea Stallion*, began resuming their traditional assault support missions instead of intra-theater light lift operations.

After receiving a fleet request for improved cargo handling capabilities, PMA-207 teamed with industry partners to design and manufacture a lightweight cargo decking system for the UC-12W. The first set of cargo decking delivered to Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, provided Marines with the ability to remove passenger seats and quickly install cargo decking -- further increasing the mission flexibility of the UC-12W through multiple seating and cargo configurations.

“Since 2011, the amount of cargo and passengers airlifted has more than doubled,” Guidry said. “Due to the success of the proof of concept deployment, UC-12W forward deployed missions will continue.”

To date, Camp Bastion-based UC-12W’s have flown 1,677 sorties and 1,822.8 flight hours, moved 4,221 Marines and 132.7 tons of cargo.

“They [Operational support airlift] did a great job for us and I only wish they could have been out here more,” said LtCol. Richard Coates, commanding officer, Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force, Black Sea Rotational Force. “They filled the gap where KC-130s would have been overkill and commercial flights were expensive and/or inconvenient.”

The UC-12W’s success is not limited to Marines in Afghanistan. Marines operating in the Asia-Pacific region have been utilizing the UC-12W’s improved cargo capacity and extended range fuel tanks, which increased operational range from 800 nautical miles to 1500 nautical miles at maximum payload to support MAGTF operations across the expansive Pacific Ocean.

“The performance of the C-12W in the Western Pacific has been nothing short of spectacular,” said LtCol. Michael Coletta, commanding officer, headquarters and headquarters squadrons, [Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan](#). “Whether servicing day to day frags [fragmentary order] in support of the Marines and Sailors in Westpac, participating in theater level exercises, or executing real world missions, the C-12W has definitely earned its keep. Based on the parameters of passengers/cargo capacity, fuel burn, and range the C-12W is uniquely suited to handle the long, overwater flights that are a routine occurrence in the Western Pacific.”

Operational support airlift squadrons have been providing light-lift support in the Marine Corps Forces Central Command since 2004.