

Fat Albert Airlines

The Blue Angels maintenance and support crew travel aboard a Marine Corps C-130 Hercules aircraft, affectionately known as "Fat Albert." The C-130 is a tactical transport aircraft built by Lockheed Martin and is flown by an all-Marine crew consisting of three pilots and five enlisted aircrew. First integrated into the team in 1970, Fat Albert now flies more than 100,000 miles each season carrying 45 maintenance and support personnel along with the specialized equipment needed to complete a successful air show. Every week, Fat Albert departs Pensacola in advance of the demonstration jets to prepare for their arrival at each show site. The Blue Angels could not perform without this versatile aircraft.

In addition to providing logistical support for the team, Fat Albert opens the show by displaying the tactical flight characteristics of the C-130 aircraft. On select show days, Fat Albert also demonstrates its jet-assisted takeoff (JATO) capability. Eight solid-fuel rocket bottles, four per side, thrust the Hercules skyward. Fired simultaneously and burning for nearly 14 seconds, the JATO bottles propel the large aircraft 45-degrees nose up to an altitude of 1000 feet. Getting Fat Albert airborne in minimal time and distance simulates the conditions in hostile environments or on short, unprepared runways.

Fat Albert weighs 155,000 pounds fully loaded and cruises at speeds of more than 320 knots (approximately 370 miles per hour) at altitudes as high as 35,000 feet. Powered by four Rolls-Royce turboprop engines producing more than 18,000 shaft horsepower, Fat Albert was designed as a tactical transport aircraft capable of lifting heavy payloads into and out of unimproved airstrips as short as 2,500 feet. Additionally, Marine Corps KC-130's provide aerial delivery and in-flight refueling of jet, helicopter and tilt rotor aircraft in support of military operations throughout the world.