



511th PIR in World War II – The C-47 “Skytrain”



POWERPLANT: Two Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92 Twin Wasp, 14-cylinder radial air-cooled engines, 1,200 horsepower each.

WEIGHT: Empty 16,970 lbs., Maximum takeoff weight 26,000 lbs.

DIMENSIONS: Wingspan 95', Length 64'5", Height 16'11".

PERFORMANCE: Maximum speed 229 MPH at 8,500 feet, Cruising speed 185 MPH at 10,000 feet, Service ceiling 24,100 feet.

The first DC-3s (commercial) were ordered by the USAAF in 1941 under the designation C-47 (military). Ultimately over 10,000 of these legendary craft would be built. There were countless modifications to the C-47 fleet, some taking place at the factory and some in the field. There were VIP transports (designated VC-47A/B) and there were SC-47s used as search and rescue aircraft. Several C-47s were fitted with pontoons and redesignated C-47C. There were trainer versions designated TC-47 and reconnaissance versions designated RC-47. After World War II the C-47s were used in the Berlin Airlift, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

The 11th Airborne Division heavily utilized the C-47 throughout the war: at Fort Benning, GA in 1943; during the Knollwood Maneuvers in 1944; at Camp Polk, LA in 1944; during training on New Guinea in

1944; for very limited resupply and airdrop movements on Leyte in 1944; during the Luzon campaign in 1945 especially for the drop on Tagaytay Ridge (February 3), the raid at Los Baños (February 23), the Aparri operation (June 23-26) and more; the divisional move to Okinawa (August 1945); and varied use during the occupation of Japan (August 1945-May 1949).

The 11th Airborne also created their own “parachute schools” using C-47s at DeRidder Army Air Field, LA in spring of 1944; at Dobodura, New Guinea from June-August 1944; at Lipa, Luzon in May 1945; and at Yanome, Japan from March-June 1946. General Joseph M. Swing wanted his glider infantry regiments to be parachute trained (and his paratroopers to learn glider movements) as well as train theater C-47 pilots in airborne operations as they had mostly flown only cargo to date.

Some Douglas DC3/C-47 Nicknames:

- **Gooney Bird**
- **Skytrooper**
- **Skytrain**
- **Biscuit Bomber** (511th PIR on and after Leyte campaign)
- **Dumbo** (SC-47 Search and Rescue variant)
- **Sister Gabby** (RC-47 and later EC-47 electronics packaged in Vietnam)
- **Dakota** (RAF, RAAF and RNSAF designation)
- **Spooky/Puff the Magic Dragon** (AC-47 gunship - [video](#))
- **Dowager Duchess**
- **Old Methuselah**
- **The Placid Plodder**
- **Dizzy Three**
- **Old Bucket Seats**
- **Vomit Comet** (nickname given by paratroopers during Normandy invasion)

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