

Revealed: America's Secret Special Forces Flights to Israel from UK Base on Cyprus

The US military has been flying covert planes to Israel from RAF Akrotiri since the bombing of Gaza began, Declassified has discovered.

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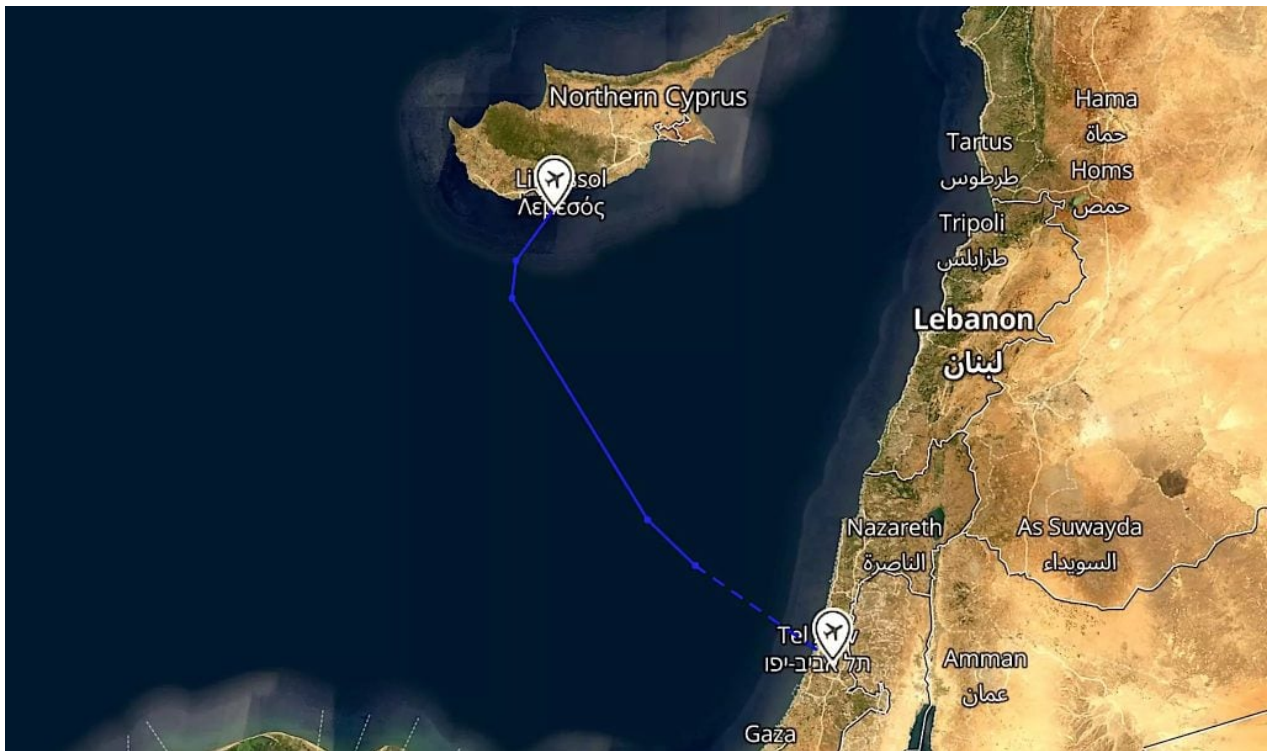
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The US Air Force has been sending unmarked planes from Britain's base on Cyprus to Israel since it began bombing Gaza, it can be revealed.

The planes are all C-295 and CN-235 aircraft, which are [believed](#) to be used by American special forces.

Declassified has found 18 of these aircraft which have gone from the sprawling British air base on Cyprus, RAF Akrotiri, to Israel's coastal city Tel Aviv since October 7.

Akrotiri is the [key node](#) in the international effort to arm and provide logistical support for Israel's assault on Gaza.



Flight path of an unmarked US Air Force plane that flew from RAF Akrotiri to Tel Aviv on 26 June.
(Screengrab: Radarbox)

But the UK government has always refused to divulge any information about US activities at Akrotiri, which is known to include transporting weapons to Israel.

Asked in May how many US Air Force (USAF) flights had taken off from the base since October 7, defence minister Leo Docherty [said](#):

“The Ministry of Defence does not comment on the operations of our Allies.”

But *Declassified* discovered the unmarked planes that flew from Akrotiri to Israel from November to June have a serial number showing they are operated by the USAF. Most of these journeys had the flight number GONZO62.

Six more unmarked C-130 planes have gone from Akrotiri to Tel Aviv since the bombing of Gaza began, which are believed to be USAF, but it was not possible for *Declassified* to locate their operator.

The C-130 can carry [128 combat troops](#) and almost 20 tonnes of cargo.

The new information could further implicate British ministers in war crimes in Gaza. In November 2023, a US military official [revealed](#) that American special forces were stationed in Israel and “actively helping the Israelis”.

A spokesperson for the UK Ministry of Defence would only tell *Declassified*:

“In response to the situation in Israel and Gaza, we are working with international partners to de-escalate the conflict, reinforce stability and support humanitarian efforts in the region. Any use of UK bases will be in line with these objectives.”

Fort Liberty

Most of the unmarked planes show that they were recently at Fayetteville, North Carolina, which is home to Fort Liberty, the [largest](#) US Army base by population with nearly 50,000 active-duty soldiers.

Formerly called Fort Bragg, it is home to the [1st Special Forces Command \(Airborne\)](#) which “assigns, equips, trains, certifies, and validates [Army Special Operations Forces] Soldiers and units to conduct global operations”.

The Pentagon [says](#) this unit is “the most adaptable and capable enabling force in the United States military.”

The planes, the C-295 and CN-235, are produced by Airbus and [believed](#) to be used by 427th Special Operations Squadron which has been described as USAF’s “most secretive squadron” and is based at Fort Liberty.

After a reporter filed a Freedom of Information Act request, the Air Force [told him](#) the unit supports “training requirements...for infiltration and exfiltration” – a reference to the covert deployment and extraction of special forces behind enemy lines.

The aircraft’s primary military roles include maritime patrol, surveillance, and air transport. It can [carry](#) 70 military personnel or 48 paratroopers.

In February 2023, an unmarked CN-235 [went](#) to eastern Europe to support President Joe Biden’s trip to Ukraine and Poland.

This plane arrived at the USAF base in Britain, RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk on February 17, where it spent the night before leaving for Poland the following day.

One journalist [noted](#):

“Sporting a single-tone slate grey livery, this rare, secretive [Air Force Special Operations Command] aircraft wore no identifiable national markings, air arm/unit insignia or serial number details.”

But the serial number of the US plane at RAF Mildenhall was eventually located and is the same as the plane that has flown from Akrotiri to Israel five times since March, including as recently as June 26.



Aerial view of Pope Airfield in Fayetteville, North Carolina, where records have placed the covert US Air Force planes. (Screengrab: Google Earth)

Transport Flights

Declassified has also found 26 marked USAF planes have arrived at RAF Akrotiri since the bombing of Gaza began. These have included 16 huge C-17 military transport aircraft from US bases in Germany, Spain and Kuwait.

The C-17 is capable of transporting 134 personnel and many types of [military equipment](#), including Abrams tanks and three Black Hawk helicopters. The US military [notes](#) that its role is to “rapidly project and sustain an effective combat force close to a potential battle area”.

Respected Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* [reported](#) in October 2023 that over 40 US transport aircraft had already flown to RAF Akrotiri carrying equipment, arms and forces. It is unclear where they got this figure from.

Haaretz reported that the planes were loaded with cargo from strategic depots belonging to the US and NATO in Europe. Around half the US flights were said to be “delivering military aid”.

Declassified has found that during the six days from February 4 to 9 there was a flurry of USAF activity at RAF Akrotiri when six C-17s arrived from Ramstein air base in Germany. All soon returned to their bases.

On June 24, a US-operated C-17 was sent from RAF Akrotiri to Tel Aviv, before flying on to Ramstein. It is possible this plane was transferring weapons to Israel.

USAF planes arriving at Akrotiri since October 7 have also included five C-130 planes coming from the US base Incirlik at Adana in Turkey. The UK government has refused to disclose what they had onboard.

The US Department of Defense did not respond to a request for comment.

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Featured image: Flight path of an unmarked US Air Force plane that flew from RAF Akrotiri to Tel Aviv on 26 June. (Screengrab: Radarbox)

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