

## Convair HC-131A "Samaritan"



<b>Manufacturer</b>	Convair Aircraft Corporation, San Diego, California
<b>Designation</b>	HC-131A
<b>Other Designations:</b>	C-131; Convair 240; R4Y-1/2
<b>Aircraft Type</b>	Transport (USAF); medium-range search & rescue & surveillance aircraft (USCG)
<b>Cost</b>	\$316,000 (original purchase price)
<b>Wing Span</b>	105' 4"
<b>Wing area</b>	920 square feet
<b>Height</b>	28' 2"
<b>Length</b>	79' 2"
<b>Fuel Capacity</b>	gallons
<b>Maximum Speed</b>	275 mph
<b>Cruising Speed</b>	250 mph

<b>Stall Speed</b>	
<b>Initial Climb</b>	1,410 fpm
<b>Range</b>	450 statute miles
<b>Empty Weight</b>	29,248 lbs.
<b>Gross Weight</b>	47,000 lbs.
<b>Crew</b>	3
<b>Passengers/freight</b>	27,000 lbs.
<b>Service Ceiling</b>	24,500'
<b>Armament</b>	None
<b>Engine(s)</b>	2 x 2,500 hp Pratt & Whitney R-2800-99W

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**Historical Information:**

The Coast Guard's first experience with the Convair C-131 aircraft began in 1958 when the service evaluated two R4Y-2 aircraft (R4Y-2 was the US Navy's designation for the C-131). No documentation regarding the testing and decisions made regarding the aircraft are known to have survived but the Coast Guard did not, at that time, permanently acquire any of this type.

Beginning in 1976, the Coast Guard acquired seventeen C-131A transports from US Air Force stocks as an interim replacement for the HU-16 Albatross until the HU-25 Falcons entered Coast Guard service. The C-131A was a USAF transport version of the Convair 240/340/440 series commercial airliner. They were to be used for search and rescue flights as well as coastal patrols of the new 200-mile exclusive fisheries zone. The Coast Guard planned to acquire one aircraft per month from September 1976 through January 1978. Fourteen aircraft were acquired from the boneyard at Davis-Montham Air Force Base and three others were transferred from Air National Guard stocks. For spare parts, three other C-131A's were held in reserve at Davis-Montham (USAF No's. 52-5791; 52-5796; 52-5798) and another, unmodified, was acquired for use at the training school located at ARSC Elizabeth City (USAF No. 52-5804).

After the flight trials of the initial acquisition, the Coast Guard planned to modify the aircraft by adding specialized electronics and search and rescue equipment. Each first underwent an overhaul at Hayes International in Dothan, Alabama. They were then flown to ARSC Elizabeth City for Coast Guard-specific modification. The following electronic systems were added or if already installed, upgraded: AN/ARA-25 UHF/VHF (AM-FM) DF; AN/ARC-84 VHF transceiver; AN/ARC-94 HF transceiver; AN/ARC-160 VHF-FM transceiver; AN-ARN-44 LF ADF receiver; AN/APM-171 radio altimeter; AN/APN-195 radar; ADL-81 LORAN C receiver; and the necessary antennae. The following structural modifications were also made: installation of a drop hatch; the addition of a radio

operator/navigator position and two positions for search-observers; an acoustic locator beacon known as "Pinger"; a mount for the airborne radiation thermometry (ART) sensor; standardization of the cockpit instrumentation; and the reconfiguration of the cargo area.

As the modifications were completed, the aircraft then flew to the AVTRACEN in Mobile, Alabama, for crew and ground personnel for familiarization training. After that, they were assigned to Coast Guard air stations Miami, Corpus Christi, Traverse City and AVTRACEN Mobile. One, CG-5786, was written off after a crash landing at AIRSTA Corpus Christi on 18 January 1982. The remaining aircraft were retired as the new HU-25A entered Coast Guard service.



USCG HC-131A No. 5792; "The Coast Guard acquired 17 of these Convair 240's from the Air Force as an interim replacement for the HU-16 with a planned retirement when the HU-25A arrives on the scene. The Air Force serial numbers were 52-5781 [through] 52-5788, 52-5790 [through] 52-5795, 52-5799, 52-5800, 52-5801 and 52-5806. The Coast Guard dropped the first two digits of the above numbers. Prior to operational service as an HC-131A, each aircraft received depot maintenance at Hayes International Airport, Dothan, Alabama, and a Coast Guard modification at the Coast Guard Aircraft Repair and Supply Center, Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The aircraft were home based at Mobile, Miami, Corpus Christi and Traverse City."; no date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCG HC-131A No. 5790; "HC-131A in flight."; 17 October 1976; Photo No. G-APA-10-17-76 (1); photo by "RAW/ph" (?).



USCG HC-131A No. 5790; no caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



USCG HC-131A No. 5790; no caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.



## HC-131 crashes at NAS Corpus Christi

USCG HC-131A No. 5786; no caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown. CG 5786 crashed on runway 13R while attempting to land at NAS Corpus Christi, where she was stationed, after an instrument approach in foggy weather on 18 January 1982. Fortunately, only

two of the eight persons on board were injured and those injuries were minor. The HC-131A was returning to the station after a four-hour routine flight.



USCG HC-131A No. 5792; "LAST FLIGHT OF THE C-131: The nose of the last C-131 at Miami Air Station, covered with farewell signatures from the Air Station's personnel." 23 November 1982; Photo Release No. 11-14 (no photo number); photo by PA3 Sean Patrick Smith, USCG.



USCGC HC-131A No. 5792; "LAST FLIGHT OF THE C-131: Coast Guard 5792 speeds down the runway on its final flight to the 'bone yards.' Gathering speed, going. . . ."; 23 November 1982; Photo Release No. 11-14 (no photo number); photo by PA3 Sean Patrick Smith, USCG.

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**Sources:**

Arthur Percy, *U.S. Coast Guard Aircraft Since 1916* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), pp. 145-147.

Gordon Swanborough & Peter M. Bowers. *United States Navy Aircraft Since 1911* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), revised, p.479.

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