



# Wonder Warthogs

**The A-10 was always a beast. Now, the Maryland Guard's A-10Cs have precision weapons, too.**

Photography by Rick Llinares





*A brace of A-10Cs—the latest, most powerful Warthogs yet—skims the cloud tops over Maryland.*

**T**HE A-10C is the product of the precision engagement upgrade to the standard A-10. The digital upgrade gives the Warthog the ability to use the latest precision weapons, plus up-to-date navigation, communications, and displays. [1] An A-10C of the Maryland Air National Guard's 175th Wing shows off its 30 mm cannon. [2] Two uprated Hogs zoom in from the Chesapeake Bay followed by a Maryland ANG C-130J of the 135th Airlift Squadron.



[3] Crew chiefs prep a Hog at Martin State Airport near Baltimore, home of the 175th. [4] The 135th AS C-130J forms up on two of the 175th's A-10Cs.



*[1] The Maryland ANG's 104th Fighter Squadron not only was the first unit to be equipped with the upgraded A-10s, but it helped field the improvements package. The squadron worked closely with the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron from Nellis AFB, Nev., to perfect the upgrade. [2] The A-10's weapons repertoire now includes virtually every tactical weapon in the USAF inventory. A Maverick missile is carried here on a training sortie. [3] The A-10's fearsome 30 mm gun has been used extensively in Afghanistan, providing the precise close air support for which the aircraft was originally designed.*



*[4] The Warthog's pilot is seated in an armored "titanium bathtub" that provides extra protection from small arms. The bulletproof canopy of diffusion-bonded acrylic offers further safety. [5] An A-10 shows off its belly and "false canopy" painted underneath. The optical trick is meant to keep enemies wondering about what the aircraft is about to do.*



**[1]** Lt. Chris Cisneros adjusts his earplugs on the noisy Martin State Airport flight line. **[2]** The A-10C upgrade gives the aircraft the ability to use advanced targeting devices such as the Litening pod carried here on the outboard right wing. The pods provide detailed target images from long distance, and also full-motion video feeds to a command center if desired.



**[3]** Renowned for its versatility, the A-10 offers 11 hardpoints for carriage of fuel or weapons. **[4]** Maj. Eric Murphy in the A-10's front office. Many of the analog steam gauges have been replaced with color displays and computers as part of the precision engagement upgrade.

Lockheed Martin photo by Guy Acacio





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*[1] The Warthog offers exceptional effectiveness at low levels, but the A-10C upgrade provides it with more punch from higher altitudes and through bad weather. [2] Originally built by the Fairchild Republic company, the A-10s have been upgraded by Lockheed Martin's Systems Integration group in Owego, N.Y., in part-*

*nership with Northrop Grumman and BAE Systems. The nose graphics feature the logo of Baltimore's NFL team, the Ravens. [3] Lt. Col. Robert Brawley leads wingman Lt. Col. Paul Johnson in maneuvers. The two Maryland Hog drivers are well-seasoned, with a combined 4,100 hours in the type. [4] An A-10 has surrendered its*

*mammoth GAU-8/A Avenger 30 mm cannon for service. The seven-barreled gun and its ammo drum are 13 feet long and weigh more than two tons.*

**[1]** Lt. Col. Jim Tillie runs cockpit checks before a mission. “Boomhauer,” the fast-talking character from TV’s “King of the Hill” cartoon, graces the access ladder door. **[2]** A sharp pullup over Maryland’s Eastern Shore. **[3]** Originally spec’d for 8,000 hours, most A-10s have already reached that milestone. The A-10C model first flew in January 2005, and the Maryland Air Guard got its first improved air frame in August 2006.



**[4]** TSgt. Anthony Tringler checks the paperwork as an inert cluster bomb dispenser is loaded on an A-10 pylon for training.

Lockheed Martin photo by Guy Aceto



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*[1] A-10s and a new C-130J of Maryland's Air Guard fly over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. [2] Two A-10Cs show off their self-defense capability: AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. [3] Besides the precision engagement upgrade, 242 A-10s will also get brand-new wings. The two upgrade packages should keep the Warthog in service through 2028. [4] A Hog driver presents a salute. First flown in 1972, the A-10 promises to be one tough-fighting bird past its 55th birthday. [5] Designed to thwart hordes of Soviet armor, the A-10 has earned its battle stars against the Iraqi Republican Guard and the Taliban of Afghanistan. ■*