

unheard of. It has been tried before, and I saw this as just another attempt for the Army to spread their authority over all that they could survey, and my reaction was the same as it's always been. I have no particular objection to the Army but I don't take orders from them. And what a fool I'd be. I mean, where would you be if you started taking orders from every twerp that walked into the gate. You'd finish up in chaos and you'd never do anything.

In southern centres, the RAAF response gathered speed, cancelling the usual Christmas break. It was focused in the main around Nos. 36 and No 37 Squadrons, operating C-130A and C-130E Hercules transports. Sometimes this led to unusual incidents. An aircraft navigator:

... recalled to duty from Pioneer, Tasmania, set out by car to Launceston airport. In an effort to catch a civilian aircraft he travelled fast in his car and was stopped by a police patrol. When he explained the situation, an understanding police officer provided him with an escort to the airport.

Following a request on 28 December, an RAAF Canberra flew a mapping survey mission, with the Army Survey Regiment providing the map sheets. A four-engine P-3B Orion maritime search and strike aircraft carried out a search for four missing fishing vessels on the afternoon of 27 December. The flights backwards and forwards gathered strength. Dave Jones, who was an acting-sergeant loadmaster with No. 36 Squadron at the time, recounted:

I was living in Richmond on Christmas Day when my flight sergeant knocked on the door and asked if I had been drinking. As I was on leave, I was quite rude to him! We were to fly to Darwin the next morning. From memory we took such supplies as disposable nappies with us. On the return trip we carried about 110 passengers south.

On the morning of the 30th we flew down to Laverton to pick up some diesel generators



C-130A A97-216 seen in April 1975. The fleet of C-130A and C-130E Hercules were the backbone of the RAAF Darwin relief operations, contributing almost 1,200 flying hours. (Nigel Daw)