AVSIM Commercial Aircraft Review

DH C-7 CARIBOU

Product Information		
Publisher: AlphaSim		
Description: Aircraft add-on.		
Download Size: 35 MB	**Format:** Download	**Simulation Type:** FS 2004
Reviewed by: Gene Davis AVSIM Senior Staff Reviewer - August 10, 2006		

Introduction

I have spent the last few days trying to figure out how I would go about writing up the C-7 Caribou from Alphasim, about how I could justify writing another glowing review on yet another aircraft add-on for MSFS; but I have to say no matter how hard I tried I could find nothing I didn't like about this aircraft. In fact, it has quickly become a favorite of mine every time I boot up MSFS.

In my opinion; ALPHASIM has masterfully captured everything that the C-7 Caribou was and then some, it is a small piece of aviation history that has been revisited and produced exceptionally well for our desktops and has allowed our imaginations to recapture an aircraft that has long since vanished from our modern aviation world.

Installation and Documentation

Purchase and download is done through the Alphasim website and is as usua, relatively painless. It is important to note though that at the time of this review, there has been a patch issued by ALPHASIM to correct some issues with the reverse prop features. By either downloading the patch or simply downloading the entire aircraft again will update your C-7.

Once the product is installed you will find a full list of checklists available on the kneepad in MSFS for this aircraft, the checklists cover everything from takeoffs to landings.

I would have really liked to have see more in the documents department explaining in detail the types of missions and or flights this aircraft was used for. The information I did find was found through Google as well as further information about flying the plane. As usual, there is a plethora of information on the web and a quick Google search revealed some much needed information.

The C-7 From AlphaSim

Once the product is installed you will find 5 different liveries to choose from; three being US Military, one being an RCAF United Nations plane and the final one; the most impressive, is that of the White Knights parachute team's drop plane. Each livery is historically accurate to that of its real world aircraft right down to its own designation number.

As you explore each aircraft, you will find that a lot of care went into the creation of this aircraft. Each variation includes all of the traditional moving parts and eye candy as well as a fully modeled interior from the cockpit to the cargo hold. As you walk around the aircraft there really is a great deal of detail that went into this package. The wheel wells, engine housings and flaps have all been nicely done and just have a very believable look to them. I guess what I am getting at here is that this is a solid aircraft and it shows in its design.

Going from the outside to the inside is also a visual treat! The cockpit to the cargo hold is all visible from the virtual cockpit mode and if you are feeling a little adventurous during your flight, I urge you to take a walk to the back and open the cargo bay doors in flight; watch that first step it's a big one! The interior of the aircraft is highly detailed, right down to the circuit breakers behind the pilot's seat.

Flying the C-7 is a lot of fun as it is very computer friendly; while the aircraft is well detailed it doesn't bog down system resources and you can manage an entire flight from your virtual cockpit. So for those of us with a Track IR it is an aircraft of choice. I noticed very few pauses or stutters when flying this aircraft, the virtual cockpit remains drawn during the entire flight, even when you are switching between the different views.

The flight model that is included in this package is very believable as the aircraft performs well under normal flight situations as well as simulated in-flight emergencies. I found that the aircraft will fly okay with one engine, but if you are fully loaded, it can be a little tricky and the need to offload cargo and fuel is a necessity. Being designed as a STOL aircraft, I was quick to give it some tests on some small airfields and it performed surprisingly well.

Using the aircraft in a STOL situation is relatively easy if you fly with correct trim and flap settings,although I do think the flight model is a little too forgiving as the aircraft seems to just take to the air regardless of how much weight is on board.

My Experience With The C-7

Flying the C-7 is a lot of fun, designed as a STOL capable aircraft, I was quick to give it a run using FS Passengers in one of the war zones included in that software. I ended up in Kenya on a small airstrip out in the middle of nowhere. Firing up the engines, I set flaps and trim once my passengers were seated and brought the engines to full throttle and released the brakes. Within a matter of seconds, the C-7 was reaching skyward and I was away; all the while dodging ground fire from small arms fire by performing a series of S turns on my ascent. I have to say this aircraft is very responsive and with its STOL capabilities, it performs very well when fully loaded. I managed to fly about 25 miles northeast of the airfield that I flew out before finding a place to land. I got my passengers off, and turned around and went back to evacuate the remaining people and equipment from my original location.

This time though, on landing I was hit in the right engine with small arms fire and I was able to get the plane down; get the people onboard and get out of there on one engine; though my landing back at my base of operations was rather hard as I managed to overstress the landing gear and my passengers weren't very happy. Something about no in flight movie; hey?! It's a war zone people!

C-7 History

The C7 was built by DeHavilland Aircraft of Canada as a twin engine STOL aircraft that was used mainly for utility transport by the military and saw a great deal of service during the South East Asian Conflict. The aircraft's ability to get in and out of small confined areas made it a good choice for delivering troops and supplies to remote airfields.

The C-7 was powered by two Pratt and Whitney R-20007M2's that produced almost 3000 combined engine horsepower, thus giving the aircraft the STOL ability as well as a max speed of 216 mph and a cruising speed of 152 mph. The aircraft had a service ceiling of almost 25,000 feet and its range was roughly 1200 miles, thus making it an easy choice for the military.

The Caribou made its first flight in 1958 and the first of its prototypes were delivered to the Army in 1959 for evaluation which ultimately began the first delivery of 22 aircraft out of 159 in 1961 for military use. Throughout the years following, the C-7 was designated AC-1, and then CV-2 in 1962; and ultimately re-designated to C-7 when the US Air Force took responsibility for all fixed wing tactical transports in the first part of 1967.

The Flight Deck of the C-7

Climbing into the cockpit is a visual treat, especially if you are into the virtual cockpit. This is my personal preference for this aircraft as its interior and panel layout have been masterfully recreated right down to the reflections in the cockpit windows. The virtual cockpit has a nice 3D feel to it; in fact the gauges even have a 3 dimensional look when you get up close and personal with them. Not only is the cockpit laid out in 3 dimensional beauty, but so is the passenger/ cargo bay. I was amazed at all of the functioning levers and switches that are accessible in the VC and in my opinion this is probably one of the best VC's Alphasim has done to date.

The 2D Panel is also nicely done and deserves some attention as well, as it does come with the traditional GPS, radio/ nav panel and an electronics panel. I would really like to have seen more of the cockpits functions though, especially

when dealing with the electronics. I would like to have seen an additional control panel that controls the rear cargo door, as we see more and more programs that require the opening of doors. It would be a welcome change rather than having to hit Shift E or Shift E+2.

The gauge layout in the aircraft is very well done and matches that of its real world counterpart and from what I can tell, the gauges have all been designed specifically for this aircraft giving it a very realistic flair and feel to the overall package of the C-7.

Sounds

Here is the portion of this add-on that I was a little leery about. After having reviewed the F-4D, I was waiting with baited breath to see what kind of sound package would come out with the C-7 and this time around Alphasim delivered on an excellent sound package!

Being heavy piston engines, the need for a throaty and rough sounding package was a necessity if this aircraft was going to be believable; and they pulled it off well. From startup to shutdown, the sound fits this aircraft to a tee and at times you can almost feel the power of the aircraft through its sound. I also liked that the sound changes when adjusting fuel and prop pitch, this is nothing new but it isn't very noticeable at times with a lot of aircraft, but with the C-7 it is.

The only thing I don't like about the sound package are the flap sounds, they seem a little too default for me. The quickest answer here is to simply find a set of flap sounds that sound like the C7 flaps and replace the ones that came with the C-7. I would venture to guess they may sound a lot like the flaps on the DHC-6 Twin Otter.

It would have been nice to have had a sound for the rear cargo door when it is opened and closed, as well as some kind of environmental sound when the cargo bay is open in flight as the aircraft is open from the cockpit to the rear of the cargo hold and the extra sound from the outside would have been a nice addition.

Test System
P4 3.0 800 FSB W/HT 2GB Of Corsair Ram ATI X1600 PRO 512 CH Flight Yoke & Peddles Saitek X52 Flight Control System Track IR 3 W/ Vector EXP Patchberri Flight Panel **Flying Time:** 15 hours

In The End

Do I like this airplane? Heck, yes! This is one aircraft add-on that will keep me going back for more. I really like what Alphasim has accomplished with this plane as it offers a very nice flying experience in MSFS at a low cost. There are no complex systems to learn, no modern avionics; it is just you and the airplane doing it the way they used to do it, the old fashioned way!

I spent a lot of time looking at aircraft after aircraft and one might say that I am a Flight Sim junky. It seems like I just can't get enough and it takes an awful lot to impress me when I sit down and look at a newly released aircraft.

There has to be something that catches my interest besides flying from point A to point B and I have to tell you that the C-7 Caribou is a welcome change, as it is a class of aircraft that hasn't received a lot of attention and is a welcome change in my MSFS hanger.

So, grab your C-7 Caribou and head on out to South East Asia circa the 1960's and drop some troops and supplies

into the jungles of Viet Nam!

What I Like About the Caribou

- Absolutely everything

What I Don't Like About the Caribou

- The flap sounds

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Caribou

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