

THE ARCTIC “HERC RATS”  
PACIFIC WESTERN AIRLINES  
THE WORLD WAS THEIR LANDING STRIP

By

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The story is about the twenty year history of the Pacific Western Airlines (PWA) operation of the military designed Lockheed Hercules (Herc) cargo aircraft. The airline was one of the very few civilian operators (the CIA was another!) of this military cargo aircraft. The aircraft was primarily used to assist oil companies in the winter exploration for oil and gas in the Canadian High Arctic. In the summer, during the ice breakup and tundra melt in the Arctic, the fleet of Herc would be dispatched on worldwide contracts. These varied from building hydroelectric dams in Northern Canada, to supplying a mine in Angola, Africa and to moving a Canadian nuclear reactor to Argentina, South America.

The book will explain the history of PWA, the challenges of arctic aviation operations, the aircraft itself and the crews that operated the Herc from the jungles of Africa to the Arctic ice. Extensive interviews will be conducted with the airline crews to get the many anecdotes of such a challenging operation. One of these stories is about the crew that escaped with the PWA Herc from military unrest in Angola by flying very low level at night to South Africa, without getting shot down!

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