



Candy Bomber wants to fly over Baghdad

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DAYTON, Ohio (AP) - The pilot known as the Candy Bomber for air-dropping handkerchief-tethered chocolate and gum to the children of Berlin in 1948 wants to do the same for the kids of Baghdad.

"I'd give my right arm to do it," said retired Air Force Col. **Gail Halvorsen**. "I've had the experience of the reaction of the kids on the ground. It's just incredible."

When the Soviets formed a blockade around Berlin after World War II, Halvorsen and other U.S. pilots airlifted food, medicine and other supplies into the city. During that time, Halvorsen collected rations from his Air Force friends and began to quietly drop little parachutes of candy to the children.

"I didn't have permission. I almost got court martialed," he recalled.

Halvorsen later got permission, and he and his colleagues air-dropped 23 tons of candy to the German children.

Halvorsen still makes his trademark candy drops.

In 1994, he flew a C-130 cargo plane over Bosnia and dropped candy-bar parachutes to the children there. And over the past year, he's made a dozen similar flights in the United States to demonstrate the drops to schoolchildren.

Halvorsen said he plans to ask his friends in the Air Force if he can make a candy drop over Baghdad once the war is over.

"I'm planning on how to do that when the dust clears," he said.

Halvorsen, 82, of Spanish Fork, Utah, was in Dayton to speak at an aviation symposium to mark the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight.

Halvorsen said the candy drops brought hope to the children of Berlin.

"That's what the airplane would bring to Iraq," he said. "They've been mistreated so long, with resources diverted to other things. The bottom line is it would lift their spirits."

Halvorsen said such a drop would be a humanitarian gesture rather than a propaganda move. And he believes it would show the Iraqi people how Americans feel about them.

"It would be a ray of hope, a symbol that somebody in America cares," he said. "That makes all the difference in the world on attitude."

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