

317 AIRLIFT SQUADRON



MISSION

The mission of the 317 Airlift Squadron is to recruit, train and support combat ready aircrews in order to meet global taskings. The squadron's major responsibilities are to maintain combat-ready aircrews in support of ever-changing global taskings such as contingencies, humanitarian relief, presidential support and exercises. Unit Size: 79 Officers, 54 Enlisted

LINEAGE

317 Transport Squadron (Cargo and Mail), constituted, 25 Oct 1943

Activated, 28 Oct 1943

Disbanded, 9 Apr 1944

317 Troop Carrier Squadron, Commando constituted and activated, 1 May 1944

Redesignated 317 Troop Carrier Squadron, 29 Sep 1945

Inactivated, 28 Feb 1946)

317 Air Commando Squadron, Troop Carrier constituted, 6 Apr 1964

Organized, 1 Jul 1964

Redesignated 317 Air Commando Squadron, Utility, 15 Jun 1966

Redesignated 317 Special Operations Squadron, 8 Jul 1968

Inactivated, 30 Apr 1974

317 Transport Squadron (Cargo and Mail), 317 Troop Carrier Squadron and 317 Special Operations Squadron reconstituted and consolidated, 19 Sep 1985

Redesignated 317 Airlift Squadron (Associate), 20 Feb 1992

Activated, 1 Apr 1992
Redesignated 317 Airlift Squadron, 1 Oct 1994

STATIONS

Camp Griffiss, England, 28 Oct 1943-9 Apr 1944
Camp Mackall, NC, 1 May 1944
Alachua AAFld, FL, 7 Jun 1944
Dunnellon AAFld, FL, 21 Jun 1944
Camp Mackall, NC, 15 Aug 1944
Baer Field, IN, 29 Sep-Oct 1944
Sylhet, India (air echelon), 2 Nov 1944 (detachment operated at Tulihal, India, 10 Nov-c. 18 Nov 1944)
Bikram, India (air echelon), 30 Nov 1944 (deployed at Myitkyina, Burma, 5 Dec 1944-6 Jan 1945)
Kalaikunda, India, 16 Dec 1944 (detachments operated from Dinjan, India, 8-13 Jan 1945 and Bikram, India, 22-30 Jan 1945)
Palel, India, 7 Feb 1945
Kalaikunda, India, 13 Apr 1945 (detachment operated from Akyab, Burma, 29 Apr-1 May 1945 and Comilla, India, 3-20 May 1945)
Ledo, India, 1 Jun 1945
Liangshan, China, 10 Sep 1945
Hsian, China, 25 Sep 1945
Kunming, China, 3 Nov 1945
Salua, India, 10 Nov 1945
Hijli, India, 18 Dec 1945
Titagurh, India, 12 Jan-28 Feb 1946
Eglin AF Aux Fld #9, FL, 1 Jul 1964
England AFB, LA, 15 Jan 1966
Eglin AF Aux Fld #9, FL, 15 Apr 1970-30 Apr 1974
Charleston AFB, SC, 1 Apr 1992

ASSIGNMENTS

Eighth Air Force, 28 Oct 1943-9 Apr 1944
2 Air Commando Group, 1 May 1944
Tenth Air Force, 10 Sep 1945
US Army Forces, India-Burma Theater, Jan-28 Feb 1946
1 Air Commando (later, 1st Special Operations) Wing, 1 Jul 1964
4410 Combat Crew Training Wing, 15 Jul 1969
1 Special Operations Wing, 15 Apr 1970-30 Apr 1974
315 Airlift Wing, 1 Apr 1992
315 Operations Group, 1 Aug 1992

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Unkn, 1943

CG-4, 1944-1945
CG-13, 1944-1945
C-47, 1944-1945
C-46, 1945
C-123, 1964-1965
U-10, 1966-1973
C-47, 1966-1970
AC-47, 1967-1968
T-28, 1967-1968
UH-1, 1970-1974
C-123, 1972-1973
CH-3, 1973-1974
C-141, 1992-1993
C-17, 1993

COMMANDERS

Unkn, 28 Oct 1943-9 Apr 1944
Maj Arthur Kaufman, 1 May 1944
Maj Wirt E. Thompson Jr., 31 Jul 1944
Maj Richard G. Edwards, 8 Dec 1944
Maj Wallace B. Black, 23 Sep 1945
Cpt Eugene H. Edison, 16 Nov 1945-28 Feb 1946
Lt Col David W. Roderick, Jul 1964-Dec 1965
Not Manned, Jan-12 Jul 1966
Lt Col Russel R. Uhlmann, 12 Jul 1966
Lt Col Herman E. Luebbert, 26 Aug 1966
Lt Col Clyde C. Angley, 10 Apr 1967
Lt Col Jack B. Shattuck, 10 Mar 1969
Lt Col Marc S. Barthello Jr., Apr 1970
Lt Col Robert E. Hubeli, 15 Jan 1972
Lt Col Charles E. Mcmillan, 12 Jan 1973
Lt Col William O. Schism, 11 Feb-30 Apr 1974
Lt Col Michael L. Smith, 1 Apr 1992
Lt Col Michael J. Lierley, 16 Aug 1992
Lt Col John G. Grones, 2 Apr 1995
Lt Col William R. Fingar
Lt Col Ricky E. Carter, 9 Nov 1997
Lt Col Theodore L. Truex, 11 Jul 1999
Lt Col Michael D. Kim, 4 Aug 2001
Lt Col Russell W. Fingar, Jun 2007
Lt Col Edward G. Paylor, 1 Jun 2010
Lt Col Brent Merritt

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II

European-African-Middle Eastern Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II

India-Burma

China Defensive

Central Burma with two Arrowheads

China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

[1 Jul 1964]-Jun 1965

15 Apr 1970-15 Apr 1971

1 Jul 1993-30 Jun 1995

1 Jul 1995-30 Jun 1997

1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 2000

1 Sep 1998-31 Aug 2000

11 Sep 2001-10 Sep 2003

1 Aug 2005-31 Jul 2007

EMBLEM

On a disc Azure, on a pile throughout Celeste, a bend Argent charged with three bendlets Gules, surmounted by an oval, axis per pale White, bearing a compass rose Or, between two parachutes deployed chevronwise reversed of the third, all within a diminished bordure Yellow. Attached below the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border inscribed "317 AIRLIFT SQ" in Yellow letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The pile shape is symbolic of the support provided by the Squadron to its parent command. Capability in counterinsurgency operations throughout the world is represented by the parachutes. The compass rose suggests a flare, and the red bendlets allude to a tracer stream and, together, imply air commando functions. (Approved, 15 Mar 1968; slightly modified, 23 Sep 1999)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Airlifted cargo and mail for Eighth Air Force within the United Kingdom, 1943-1944. Between Nov 1944 and Aug 1945, airlifted troops and cargo in India and Burma, 11 Nov 1944-c. Aug 1945, including assault landings in Burma in Feb and Apr 1945. Provided aerial transportation

for US and allied units in China briefly after the war, Sep-Nov 1945.

On November 10, 1944 the air echelon of the 317 Troop Carrier Squadron, Commando, arrived in India and was immediately committed to combat, dropping supplies in the Chindwin Valley, and ferrying urgently needed Chinese Troops from Nan Sin to Kunming and Chan Yi and later transporting critical airfield and road materials to Myitkyina. The Squadron sustained its only serious casualties of the campaign during this period, losing 4 ships and 3 crews.

The 317 Troop Carrier Squadron got the jump on the rest of the 2nd Air Commando Group as far as early entrance into combat is concerned. The air echelon arrived in the theater on 10 November 1944 and was immediately assigned to dropping supplies in the Chindwin Valley and to the vital mission of ferrying Chinese Troops from Nam Sin to Kunming and Chen-Yi. Completing this mission, the C-47's were switched to the task of flying asphalt to Myitkyina for the Ledo-Burma road.

On 4 February 1945 the Troop Carrier Pilots, led by Major Richard Edwards, began the airlift of the two Fighter Squadrons and the 327th Airdrome Squadron to Cox's Bazar and immediately thereafter went to work transporting troops and equipment for the 14th Army in its preparations for the drive against Meiktila. The Glider section was employed to bring heavy engineer equipment from Northern Burma down to Sinthe. It was anticipated that a bridge would have to be built across the Irrawaddy and an airfield constructed near Meiktila. Neither of these steps were necessary and only one glider, piloted by Captain Watson A. Sudduth was employed to bring runway control equipment into Thabutkon Air Strip on 26 February 1945. From 27 February to 2 March 1945 the 317th Troop Carrier provided airlift for the 99th Brigade into Meiktila where they reinforced the 17th Division. This was an extremely hazardous and exhausting task, many pilots making as many as three round trips daily from Palel to Meiktila. They were constantly endangered by Japanese artillery fire from the hills around Meiktila, and it is remarkable that the entire lift was accomplished without injury to personnel of the Squadron.

For weeks afterward the 317 continued its sorties into the Meiktila area flying precious supplies to the 17th Division. Between the 15th and 18th of March the 9th Brigade was flown to Meiktila as additional reinforcement for the IV Corps.

On 12 April 1945 the Troop Carrier planes returned to Kalaikunda, the Group rear base, to prepare for an ambitious paratroop drop in the Rangoon area. The 23rd Battalion Group of the 50th Parachute Brigade, 15th Corps also came to Kalaikunda where joint maneuvers were conducted for a week. On April 29th the C-47's flew with the Paratroops to Akyab and on May 1, one day before an amphibious task force was to strike Rangoon, the 317, operating with the 1st Air Commando Group, executed a perfect drop on Elephant Point which was reportedly occupied by the Japanese defenses of the Rangoon River estuary. Again supplementary supply missions were flown, and then on May 4th the Squadron went to Comilla where under the Combat Cargo Task Force they continued the vital activity of air supply. During the months from

December to June, the 16 planes of the 317 Squadron amassed an amazing total of hours flown, and cargo and passengers carried.

Without the Troop Carrier planes the Group could not have operated successfully since in addition to combat missions the 47s were in constant use hauling supplies for the Fighter and Liaison Squadrons and materials for the maintenance of the Group's several bases.

Naturally with such concentrated and extended activity the pilots of the Squadron led by Major Richard Edwards piled up massive totals of individual combat hours and distinguished themselves by bravery and gallantry in action.

The Group took sober pride in the record of the 317, remembering the unfortunate loss of four crews during the first missions from Myitkyina. Within 20 days 9 men were killed or missing in action, including Major Wirt E. Thompson, Commanding Officer of the Squadron. The fatal hazard was the malevolent weather of the Hump route to China.

On 17 November 1944, C-47 #820 crashed at Tulihal on takeoff due to single engine. Total loss.

Captain JOHN GILMORE-, Pilot. Killed.

Lt. GEORGE BLANCHARD, Co-pilot. Seriously injured.

S/Sgt. EARL WISE Seriously injured.

S/Sgt. HENRY SCHRIEBER. Seriously injured.

On 5 December 1944, C-47 #698 crashed into the mountains at Kucing District, China. 27 killed. 1st Lt. WILLIAM CLEGGi Pilot. Killed. 2nd Lt. GEORGE BOLTON, Co-pilot. Killed. T/Sgt. JOSEPH WINDISHMAN. Killed. S/Sgt. EMMET MARRS. Killed. Passengers were Chinese soldiers.

Also on 5 December 1944, C-47 #821 was missing on flight from Myitkyina to China. Aircraft never found. 29 missing.

317 Troop Carrier Squadron commander Maj Richard Edwards

The C-47 pilots and crews of the 317 Troop Carrier Squadron flew their airplanes from the United States to South America, across the Atlantic and Africa, then across the Near East to India. This group arrived so far in advance of the boat people that they were sent into combat operations before the rest of their squadron arrived in India.

All squadrons arrived without equipment, supplies, and planes except the 317 Troop Carrier Squadron. They flew their planes over from the States, arrived a month before the rest of us, were committed to help the British-Indian units in combat in the Chindwin Valley Campaign, and transported a Chinese division and animals from Myitkyina to China over "the Hump". Most of the ground personnel for the 317 came on the boat. They too had to set up operations at Kalikunda in January.

As the month progressed, equipment and supplies arrived gradually. Airplanes were ferried in, serviced, checked out, and flown. By the first week of February, combat operations were near, and the massive airlift to Cox's Bazaar for the operation of the fighter squadrons began. The 155th Liaison Squadron moved to Central Burma, the 127th to Akyab, the 317 Troop Carrier to Palel, and later the 156th Liaison to Central Burma - all moves were efficiently carried out while the four airdrome squadrons were taken where they were needed. A concept of the work and planning involved in this short time is obtained when one considers that the Second Air Commando Group arrived in Kalaikunda, India, on December 14, 1944 and the fighter squadrons flew their first combat mission out of Cox's Bazaar February 16, 1945. From this time until the Group disbanded, elements were distributed all over parts of China, Burma, and India - a true representative of the CBI.

While fighters were striking in one direction, the 317 Troop Carrier Squadron (Commando), under Mai. Richard Edwards of Carson City, Nevada, was doing the heavy and dangerous aerial trucking of the campaign. Three round trips a day, each over 600 miles, were commonplace. In Feb., March and April alone, the hard working pilots of the 317 carried over 8,000 troops and 8,500,000 lbs of cargo, frequently over enemy territory. At the end of April the glider pilots of the squadron saw action at Lewe and Toungoo air fields, to which they transported bulldozers, scrapers, and other heavy construction equipment. The engineers had to work fast to put the fields into service for the C-47 planes to follow. At Lewe four gliders were destroyed during a Japanese sneak attack, but the precious engineering equipment was saved, and no lives were lost.

Major Arthur Kaufman was the first Commanding Officer, but was replaced in late April or early May by Major Wirt Thompson. On 10 May 1944, the unit was redesignated as the 317 Troop Carrier Squadron, Second Air Commando Group.

The technique of glider "Snatching" was introduced about this time as a retrieval system. On one night glider mission there was a premature release and a glider landed in a peanut patch. The next morning it was retrieved by the Snatch method and the glider pilot brought about half the peanut crop back with him on the nose skids.

In early June the 317 TCS was deployed to Dunnellon, Florida, for training in Commando tactics and survival training with all the other elements of the Second Air Commando Group. All the gliders were towed to Alachua Field, Gainesville, Florida. Glider pilots were given training in night "Blitz" type landings. This technique involved the locating of a drop zone with a pre-positioned "Rebecca" set, supposedly set up by an agent. The fields were lit only by two flare pots to indicate the landing direction. You could not tell the wind direction. The first flare pot was used to land on or near, the second to keep alignment of the field to park the gliders. Under totally blacked out conditions the glider pilots positioned themselves behind the towing aircraft by the exhaust flame from the engine. When they cut loose from the tow craft, the pattern was maintained solely on the flare pots.

About the third week in September the squadron was recalled to Camp Mackall for a massive maneuver and final training of the 82nd and 101st Airborne units prior to their deployment overseas. A number of daytime drops were made. On the night of 26 September a massive night drop was made under totally blacked-out conditions - no navigational or formation lights. Trouble developed when some planes could not maintain position because of the darkness. One unidentified element arrived over the drop zone at the same time as the lead element of the 317 TCS from a slightly different angle. Paratroopers from that element got entangled on the number three aircraft of this first Vee, causing it to crash with no survivors. Lt. Wayland Rose and Sgt. Victor Graves and unknown crew members died in this crash.

On 29 September, 1944 the 317 TCS departed to Baer Field, Indiana, to pick up new aircraft for the deployment overseas. The new planes were equipped with long range tanks. At Morrison Field all tanks were purged as a precautionary measure and refueled with filtered gas. All of the pilots found the new aircraft a dream to fly. The planes had excellent landing characteristics.

The first leg of the overseas journey was to Borenquin Field, Puerto Rico, 10 October 1944. Unlike Florida, there were no restrictions on tobacco items or rum. Many crew members took advantage of this. The squadron progressed on schedule and generally in formation to Trinidad and then to Georgetown, Guiana. Out of Georgetown a "Rake" type search pattern for downed aircraft had to be flown, purportedly for B-17s and most notably, Tom Harmon's. In flying the "Rake" pattern out of Georgetown, some aircraft flew an easterly heading before turning south to a landfall on the Amazon River, then to Belem, Brazil. Others flew southerly headings, while others had to fly westerly headings, turn south to the Amazon and back east to Belem. Those flying the southerly and westerly headings flew over dense tropical rain forests, all swamplands. Unless search aircraft were directly overhead, downed aircraft would be impossible to find.

The last over-land flight in the Americas was from Belem to Natal. Here aircraft were dispatched individually over the Atlantic to Ascension Island. Departure was midnight, 15 October 1944.. From this point, because of many factors, the aircraft began to spread out. At no time was the last plane more than four days behind.

Navigators placed aboard at Morrison Field to augment the four squadron navigators were put to work doing celestial and solar navigation. Ascension Island was supposed to transmit a homing beacon at specified times to home in on by radio compass. Many aircraft were not able to pick up this signal until very close in. At approximately one and a half to two hours before ETA, aircraft would let down below the overcast to perform a landfall. All of the squadron aircraft seemed to hit Ascension dead ahead.

For many the next stage to Accra was the first stage of cultural shock. The heat, humidity, body odors and fetid odors of all descriptions from the environment had to be physically overcome. The next leg was to Maiduguri, Nigeria. To beat the heat of the Sahara all crews were up early and off to El Fashir. On this portion of the route the lower region of Lake Chad was traversed. Truly there is nothing more desolate or forlorn. Again everyone was off to an early start. A few miles from the Nile Delta signs of humanity began to show. By the time the Nile was reached it

was a lush green belt as far to the north and south as one could see. At Khartoum crews were quartered in the dormitories of the Khartoum University.

The next leg from Khartoum to Aden Protectorate passed over the Eritian Mountains near Asmara, Il Duce's favorite haunt, then down part of the Dead Sea to Aden. Aden was pretty much a bustling seaport town, metropolitan in nature, and some of the crews got a chance to see it. Masirah, elevation two feet, was a British air base.

At Karachi Major Thompson was located and the long range tanks were removed. On 26 October Major Thompson and Captain Edwards departed for Dum Dum Airport, near Calcutta, via a refueling stop at Agra. Arriving late in the afternoon they were diverted to Barrackpore. The next morning both attended briefings at the Bengal Air Depot and departed for Sylhet, near the Shillong Hills on 27 October. Quarters at Sylhet were bamboo shacks called "Bashas". Beetles chewed into the rafters like termites leaving everything covered with a fine dust called "Lac". The smell of mildew got into everything.

On 12 November the unit moved to Tulihall in the Imphal Valley. The first drop was on the Chindwin River below Kohima where the British had made a successful break out. During the next week, many drops were made progressively along the Chindwin down to Homalia, Thaugndut, Sittang, Kalewa, Tiddim and Fort White.

On the second day here one plane had a chute open inside. As the load fell out, the chute hung up on the cargo door. This caused severe buffeting and slowed the ship down. Lt. Wayne Bishop reached out to cut the shroud lines and free the load. He fell, or was pulled out of the plane, but held on to the shroud line and continued slashing at them until the load fell free. Crew members pulled him back inside.

Accommodations at Tulihal were meager. All slept on litters under the wings of the aircraft. On nights that were cold and foggy the crews moved into the planes. Several crew members came down with dengue fever caused from flea bites. The unit moved back to Sylhet the last week of November.

On 4 December the unit moved to Myitkyina. It's first mission was to move troops of the Chinese 4th Army back to China. Major Wirt Thompson led the formation and Lt. William Clegg flew on his right wing. Lt. Howard Bennett, leader of the second element, saw as soon as he was airborne that a heavy cloud cover was over the first ridge east of Myitkyina. He also noticed that Major Thompson made only one turn over the field for Lt. Clegg to form up before heading directly out enroute. The minimum safe altitude on "Dog" route was 14,000 feet. Lt. Bennett made several turns over the field until he reached approximately 10,000 feet and then headed out. All other planes followed his pattern. Weather was encountered over the first ridge and lasted to Yunnanyi where planes broke out over a cloud deck. There was a large hole over the lake south of Kunming. All aircraft in the area were making their descent through this.

Lt. Bennett was the first to land at Kunming. After all landed, Captain Gus Edwards, Operations Officer, gathered us together and asked if anyone had seen Major Thompson or Lt. Clegg en route. All replies were negative. Captain Edwards then ordered us to return to Myitkyina. When we returned, it was confirmed that Major Thompson, Lt. Clegg, and their crews were listed as Mission in Action. Soon after, Captain Richard (Gus) Edwards was promoted to Major and designated Commanding Officer. Captain Robert Tyrell became Operations Officer.

When we moved to Myitkyina, our ground support elements joined us from Kalaikunda. At last tents and a mess hall were provided.

After making four or five trips over the "Hump", our mission changed to also include hauling horses out of Sahmaw to Chanyi. On the second day of this mission weather over Chanyi forced instrument let-downs. Lt. Reusche, while in a procedure turn, lost his artificial horizon and went down on his back with a load of horses. Recovery was made on needle and ball, and he went to Kunming to land. Upon return to Myitkyina it was found that mud doblers had built a nest over the filter of the gyro.

At the time horses were being hauled to China the route changed from "Dog" to "Easy". This was a dog leg bend from Myitkyina to Paoshan, then to Kunming. The minimum safe altitude on this route was 11,000 feet. With a load of horses and no Turbos in the "A" model C-47s, this was a welcome relief.

The day after Christmas on a return trip from Chanyi, a crew spotted wreckage of two planes at about 11,500 foot level on a ridge east of Myitkyina near the village of Sadon. They circled as low as possible and identified tail numbers. The wreckage was reported to Lt. John Ferraro, Intelligence Officer. The serial numbers turned in were those of Thompson and Clegg. The unit moved back to Kalaikunda the last week of December.

On 2 January, 1945 three ships were delegated to tow gliders for the British at Bikram. In the heat and humidity of the plains during the day, it was a tiresome and grueling task for the crews. Twelve tows were made the first day, six the second day, sixteen the third, and twelve each on the fifth and sixth days. It was back to baked beans on toast and tea for breakfast at the British mess.

The rest of January was spent mainly getting the fighter units set up for their move to Cox's Bazaar. This meant many trips to the supply depots daily. Some of our aircraft were also detailed to support the British in their move down the Irrawaddy. An air landing was made at Bhamo. All aircraft were immediately under small arms fire from the retreating Japanese. None were hit. The next day an air drop was made in the small valley of Mu-Se, a prelude to the taking of Mandalay and Lashio. This marked the end of our air drops here. All future troop support missions were in the central valley on hastily prepared strips from the rice paddies.

Through February, flying time was divided between support for the fighter squadrons and the British 14th and 4th Army units. Our unit moved to Palel on March 5 as the British moved down

below Mandalay. Diversions of returning flights were frequently made to haul prisoners or wounded to Comilla, Momywa, or Ondow. Supporting the British Army units on short airstrips of 1,000 to 1,200 feet which were hacked out of rice paddies was a challenge. Landing twelve to sixteen C-47s into these short strips while British lorries were scurrying about unloading planes became frenetic.

Tragedy struck after arriving at Palel. Captain John Gilmore and 1st Lt. George Blanchard lost power on take-off. Heavily loaded, the plane crashed into a rice paddy dike off the end of the runway. Captain Gilmore died instantly. Lt. Blanchard's feet and legs were horribly mangled. The aircraft broke in two and threw the rest of the crew out. All were immediately flown to Calcutta for treatment.

By March 15th the British were driving to capture the Thabutkon airstrips. A glider piloted by Watson Sudduth was flown into Meiktila the day after capture to evaluate the feasibility of air landings. Usually the Japanese would take the strip at night, but by 10:00 A.M. the British would re-take it. The entire squadron was ordered into Meiktila, but before the last plane left Palel, it was learned the British had not taken the field back that morning. The last plane in the air had to relay this information to the squadron leader that all ships were to proceed to an alternate field at Nyangu. The first planes made it to Nyangu as directed, but found the Japanese moving in on this field also. They had to scramble back into the air under heavy ground fire. This caused confusion as the planes scrambling out were meeting planes coming in. From explosions around the strip, the planes in the air got the message and orbited until all were back in the air. Major Edwards then gave the word to proceed to Meiktila, At Meiktila the strip was under heavy artillery fire. Plane #744, flown, by Lt. Roy Burger, received a hit directly in the cargo door area, broke in half, and caught fire. The crew evacuated through the escape hatch in the pilots compartment. The engines were running at the time. It was a good twenty foot drop to the ground. Lt. Arthur Steddom received a fractured ankle from the leap. All other ships made it into the field and discharged their loads. Some ships received small arms fire in the fuselage, luckily not in the wings. The second day was much the same. On the third day as more troops were hauled in, cargo doors were put on to prevent Indian troops from leaping out enroute. A second plane was hit and heavily damaged on take-off on this day but made it back to Palel. A crew member on that flight went berserk and had to be evacuated to Calcutta in a straight jacket.

About this time a glider mission into Lewe was made carrying engineers' equipment. Once on the ground the pilots had to dig in as the field was strafed by Zeros. Five gliders burned. The personnel were evacuated safely the following day.

From the 19th to the 31st of March military activity seesawed across the valley. Momywa, Tadaa, Myitche, Sadaung and Ygzago were scenes of activity. Two trips a day were the rule, occasionally three, three to five landings a day were normal. Dr. Gordon Seagraves, the famous Burma surgeon, was picked up and taken to Ledo or to Comilla on two occasions. The first few days of April saw the British move into Dwehla, Ondaw and Nanjing. The only relief crews got during this time was to fly the "M & M" (Meat & Mail) runs. The flight would leave Palel, fly to

Cox's Bazaar and Palel. On days meat was available the route was extended to include a run to the depot at Tezagon.

Through May and early June the squadron flew support missions and moved troops for the British Army units in their move toward Rangoon and then moved back to Kalaikunda.

On 13 June, 1945 the squadron moved to Ledo to be nearer the depots and RTOs supporting the invasion of lower Burma. The monsoon season was in full force. Navigation became a real problem.

The former British air base was used for air evacuation of wounded personnel. The double walled tents were still there, but had to be pulled up and restaked. Several warehouse bashes were available for storage of equipment. Two of these were demolished one day when one of the replacement pilots made a low approach, hit the top of one and went through the second on landing.

Four aircraft and all the squadron navigators were placed on detail with "Operation Salad" in Rangoon. The missions were flown at midnight to avoid Japanese intervention in Indo-China. Supplies to OSS and British agents were airdropped in mountain valleys which were difficult to find.

With older crew members rotating to the States and loss of personnel on details and transfers, the squadron seemed to slowly disintegrate. One crew was detailed to fly the Repatriation Team to release Allied prisoners of war in Bangkok on the 26th of August. Shortly thereafter the Japanese surrendered and the squadron moved to China.

June found the squadron in China. Missions were down carrying Chinese troops, missions flew mainly fresh meats, gasoline, and ordinance to Myitkyina, Lashio, Bhamo, Iahka, Lawksawk, and Pangtara airfields. A great amount of supplies were dropped in the Northern Burma area to isolated Burmese villages and outposts. South of Lashio a great deal of supplies were dropped to troops pushing the Japs out of the Shan States. All operations in June were flown in inclement weather; the monsoon rains were always a threat to the return of planes, but more flights were flown in June than in any other month overseas.

STATISTICS: NOVEMBER 1, 1944 to June 30, 1945:

HOURS FLOWN	14,314
TROOPS CARRIED	19,300
WEIGHT CARRIED	9,374 tons
TROOPS TO CHINA	1,850
WEIGHT TO CHINA	562.4 tons
HORSES TO CHINA	353
MULES TO CHINA	272
WEIGHT IN GLIDERS	63.2 tons
PARATROOPERS DROPPED	440

Trained special operations personnel for combat, 1964-1973. Since 1992, the squadron has flown worldwide airlift missions.

2007 was a productive and exciting year for the 317 AS. The squadron welcomed its new commander, Lt. Col. Russell Fingar on June 22nd. Support for Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terror continued to be of top priority. Squadron personnel made significant personal sacrifices to fulfill Air Mobility Command's worldwide contingency needs. Countless combat missions were flown safely into Iraq and Afghanistan and other points across the globe supporting the war effort.

The squadron flew numerous high-profile and specialty missions including numerous DV and aeromedical evacuation missions. Among the dignitaries transported were The Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, General Peter Pace, and USCENTCOM Commander Admiral Fallon.

The squadron participated in multiple operations and exercises, including Olympic Titan, New Horizons, and Fundamental Justice. The New Horizons exercise was a Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed exercise to deliver humanitarian and civic aid to the people of Nicaragua through exercise-related construction projects. It also provided basic medical attention for the local population. One C-17 record was broken this year. It involved carrying two special warfare boats with trucks from Navy North Island, California to San Juan International Airport, Puerto Rico. This was the first loading of two boats at one time. By the year's end, the squadron had airlifted 21 million pounds of cargo, transporting over 11,000 passengers and logged nearly 5,000 flight hours. The 317 AS also took on the role of training initial C-17 aircrews from Dover AFB, Del. and will prepare these aircrews for world-wide missions.

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 25 Sep 2010
Updated: 3 Nov 2019

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.