

## 326 AIRLIFT SQUADRON



### MISSION

The 326 Airlift Squadron mission is C-17 global strategic airlift with 18 combat-ready aircrews flying over 4,500 hours annually in support of National Command Authorities on overseas airlift missions, joint service exercises, humanitarian relief, presidential movement and aircrew training.

### LINEAGE

1 Combat Cargo Squadron constituted, 11 Apr 1944  
Activated, 15 Apr 1944  
Redesignated 326 Troop Carrier Squadron, 29 Sep 1945  
Inactivated, 26 Dec 1945  
Activated in the Reserve, 15 Jul 1947  
Redesignated 326 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 2 Sep 1949  
Ordered to active service, 15 Mar 1951  
Inactivated, 1 Apr 1951  
Activated in the Reserve, 14 Jun 1952  
Ordered to active service, 28 Oct 1962  
Relieved from active duty, 28 Nov 1962  
Redesignated 326 Tactical Airlift Squadron, 1 Jul 1967  
Redesignated 326 Military Airlift Squadron (Associate), 25 Sep 1968  
Redesignated 326 Airlift Squadron (Associate), 1 Feb 1992  
Redesignated 326 Airlift Squadron, 1 Oct 1994

### STATIONS

Bowman Field, KY, 15 Apr-1 Aug 1944  
Sylhet, India, 21 Aug 1944 (detachment operated from Yunanyi, China, 15 Sep-2 Oct 1944, and Hathazari, India, 19 Oct-Dec 1944)

Tulihal, India, 29 Nov 1944  
Tsuyung, China, 12 Dec 1944  
Hsingching, China, 29 Jan 1945 (detachment operated from Liangshan, 11 Mar-9 Jul 1945)  
Chengkung, China, 16 Aug 1945  
Piardoba, India, 15 Nov-26 Dec 1945  
Morrison Field, FL, 15 Jul 1947  
Reading Muni Aprt, PA, 2 Sep 1949  
New Castle County Aprt, DE, 1 May 1950-1 Apr 1951  
New Castle County Aprt, DE, 14 Jun 1952  
Willow Grove NAS (later, US NAS Willow Grove), PA, 20 Jul 1958  
Dover AFB, DE, 25 Sep 1968

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

1 Combat Cargo Group, 15 Apr 1944  
Fourteenth Air Force, 16 Jun-26 Dec 1945  
435 Troop Carrier Group, 15 Jul 1947  
512 Troop Carrier Group, 2 Sep 1949-1 Apr 1951  
512 Troop Carrier Group, 14 Jun 1952  
512 Troop Carrier Wing, 14 Apr 1959  
912 Troop Carrier (later, 912 Tactical Airlift; 912 Military Airlift) Group, 11 Feb 1963  
512 Military Airlift (later, 512 Airlift) Wing, 1 Jul 1973  
512 Operations Group, 1 Aug 1992

### **ATTACHMENTS**

69 Composite Wing, 16 Aug-10 Nov 1945

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

C-47, 1944-1945  
Unkn, 1947-1949  
C-46, 1949-1951  
AT-7, 1949-1951  
AT-11, 1949-1951  
C-46, 1952-1957  
C-119, 1957-1968  
C-141, 1968-1973  
C-5, 1973-2007  
C-17, 2007

### **COMMANDERS**

Unkn, 15-26 Apr 1944  
Maj Frank S. Aitken, 27 Apr 1944  
Capt Wilson Gillis, Dec 1944  
Maj Timothy R. Johnson, 27 Jan 1945  
Maj Joseph G. Manyo, 21 Jul 1945

Lt Col William F. Duncan, 19 Aug 1945  
Maj John W. Chapman, 29 Aug 1945  
Capt John R. Boyle, Nov-26 Dec 1945  
Unkn, 15 Jul 1947-Oct 1948  
Capt George P. Lescanec, Oct 1948  
Lt Col Ignatius Sargent, 4 Oct 1949  
Unkn, Jan-1 Apr 1951  
Unkn, 14 Jun 1952-Mar 1959  
Lt Col Alfred J. Wood, Apr 1959-unkn  
Lt Col James R. Morrow, Dec 1962  
Unkn, Dec 1966-Sep 1968  
Lt Col Arthur J. Kiefer Jr. 25 Sep 1968  
Lt Col Theodore J. Killian, Apr 1973  
Lt Col Edward R. Graves, Jul 1973  
Lt Col William J. Cox, 17 Jun 1974  
Col Robert E. Kosikowski, 23 Jul 1976  
Col Robert A. Fean, 1 Jun 1979  
Lt Col David M. H. Sibbald, 23 May 1982  
Col Leland H. Hoffer, 18 Nov 1985  
Lt Col John M. Danahy, 24 Oct 1987  
Lt Col Patrick J. Gallagher, 1 Aug 1991  
Lt Col Jeffrey M. Bricker, 4 Nov 1992  
Lt Col Richard W. Johnstone, 1 May 1993  
Lt Col James E. Randby, 1 May 1996  
Lt Col Edward M. Poling, 15 Jan 1998  
Lt Col David Arthur, c. Mar 2007-unkn  
Lt Col Robert P. Graham, 3 Mar 2012  
Lt Col Rob Shepherd  
Lt Col Mark Chagaris, 1 Jul 2019

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

India-Burma

China Defensive

China Offensive

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

Panama, 1989-1990

### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation

French Indochina, China, and Manchuria, 1-30 Sep 1945

**Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards**

1 Sep 1971-30 Jun 1972

13 Oct-14 Nov 1973

1 Jan 1974-30 Apr 1975

1 May 1975-31 May 1976

1 Jun 1976-31 May 1978

1 Jun 1978-31 May 1979

1 Jan 1988-30 Jun 1989

1 Jul 1993-30 Jun 1995

1 Sep 1996-31 Aug 1998

1 Oct 2002-30 Sep 2004

1 Oct 2008-30 Sep 2010

**Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Crosses with Palm**

14 Feb-11 Mar 1968

25 Sep 1968-28 Jan 1973

**EMBLEM**



326 Troop Carrier Squadron emblem (Approved, 17 Jul 1944)



On a disc Celeste, a propeller aircraft descending bendwise pendent with two sets of saddlebags Vert, garnished Khaki, highlighted Argent, mounted by a rabbit caricature Brown, detailed White, grasping in its dexter paw a riding crop Proper, all within a narrow border Black. Attached below the disc, a White scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "326 AIRLIFT SQ" in Black 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 aircraft equipped with saddlebags signifies the Squadron's transportation of cargo and supplies and its airlift functions. The rabbit denotes the speed with which the unit performs its mission. (Approved, 27 Nov 1995)

#### **MOTTO**

RESERVE AIRLIFT

#### **OPERATIONS**

Trained for overseas troop carrier operations, Apr-Aug 1944. Moved to Asia, and transported troops and supplies to forward areas in China and India, Sep 1944-Sep 1945.

During WWII, the Army Air Forces created a new type of air-supply group, whose only purpose was to be air-resupply and supply ground units in a combat zone. The new groups original

specifications were to: "carry ground troops and auxiliary combat equipment to effective locations in a combat zone", "maintain combat reinforcements, supply and resupply units in the combat zone", and "evacuate casualties and other personnel from such zones." To this end a maximum of four new cargo groups were planned. Seeing that these new units were to be carrying cargo into the heart of the battle, the new units were called Combat Cargo Groups.

The Combat Cargo Groups were to be self-contained groups, capable of being 100% operational and always ready to go at a moment's notice. To that end, each Combat Cargo Squadron was to have an Airdrome Squadron assigned with it. Each Airdrome Squadron's mission was to supply all tasks, including everything (from cooking to aircraft maintenance), necessary for the Combat Cargo Squadron to be self-sufficient. Both of these groups would function as one unit. Each of the Combat Cargo Groups was to consist of four Squadrons, each with 25 aircraft (originally C-47's). To fly these aircraft, 25 complete crews were assigned along with 25 extra Flying Officers.

Combat Cargo squadrons started with 25 planes per squadron, but the number of planes per squadron varied by type of aircraft or mission. As with 1st Combat Cargo Squadron and their parent 1st Combat Cargo Group, three or four like squadrons were often banded together, with the Group headquarters their first link in the chain of command. When operating out of one location, this allowed units to consolidate support elements. Theater commanders could send squadrons off in different directions, or when necessary, concentrate use of these airplanes for whatever that unit's particular mission was. Combat Cargo's mission was to use the C-47 for delivering to combat units, often under fire, vitally needed cargo and replacements, by parachute if no landing strips were available.

1st Combat Cargo Squadron (along with 2nd, 3rd, and 4th CC Squadrons) was constituted on 11 April 1944 as part of the 1st Combat Cargo Group (CCG) by HQ Troop Carrier Command (HITCC). On 15 April 1944, they were activated at Bowman Field, Louisville, KY, with a mission of moving priority people and cargo throughout the China-Burma-India (CBI) combat theater. Bowman Field's 808th Army Air Force Base Unit was responsible for providing training and personnel classification support. Major Frank S. Aitken was named first squadron commander, effective 27 April 1944. The concept of Combat Cargo was in response to the CBI theater's unique requirements, originally designed to support units in a similar manner to that of the 1st Air Commando Group (ACG). The Air Commando's had pioneered use of the C-47 in an austere environment, moving troops and equipment by aircraft and glider, rapidly supplying them through airdrops, and even evacuating sick and injured personnel from jungle airstrips. Conditions in this part of the world included an almost total lack of transportation infrastructure such as roads and railways, with severe, almost impassable geographic features including jungles, mountains, and rivers. The relationship was strengthened during training at Bowman Field by visits and briefings from 1st ACG officers Colonel Philip Cochran and Colonel John Allison, commander and executive officer respectively, and others as well. This influence was reflected by changes in training from the normal Troop Carrier program, emphasizing individual crew performance (as opposed to mass formations) in areas such as night flying, bundle airdrops, including drops on radar reflective beacons, and glider towing and pickup.

This was not the only difference in the 1st CCG from many other units destined for combat service. The entire 1st CCG, including 1st CCS, was led by recalled reservists in command and key staff positions. Many of these officers had extensive pre-war airline flying experience, supplemented by multiple command and staff jobs in various stateside training and support units prior to this assignment.

Training started almost immediately if somewhat slowly, with 50 airplanes and many of the pilots on hand by the end of April. Most pilots were second lieutenants and flying (warrant-equivalent) officers fresh from pilot training. C-47 instructor pilots (IP's) were detailed from other HITCC bases to supplement local IP's. There were a few glitches in the process. One hundred partially trained pilots were transferred out in May, being themselves replaced by new, untrained pilots. Many enlisted personnel were trained with some experience, having been previously assigned to other stateside training and support units. Almost 250 of the mechanics had leave en-route to Bowman Field (a pre-overseas assignment requirement), leaving permanent party mechanics very busy for the first couple of weeks.

Twelve training aircraft were assigned to the 1st CCS. Averaging nine airplanes available for training on any given day and almost nine hours of flying per aircraft per day, 1st CCS crews totaled over 5500 flying hours in just under three months. Local airspace congestion problems created by this intense flying were significantly reduced when two fields across the Ohio River in Indiana; Stout Field, Indianapolis, and Atterbury AAB, Columbus, were declared part of the local area, eliminating paperwork and coordination requirements.

Night flying also eased some pressure, as well as simplifying maintenance since crew chiefs were learning their jobs by fixing the aircraft their crews were flying. Through this intensive effort, most pilots were at least C-47 first pilots, (qualified to fly from the left seat) with more than 160 hours of aircraft time and held a valid instrument card. During training, the 1st CCS had only one serious accident when, on 11 June near Corning, Iowa, one crew brushed a wingtip along the ground while flying too low. While the C-47 was a total loss, crew and passengers received only minor injuries. All was not work as every weekend six aircraft from each squadron flew cross country trips with ten passengers each, giving men short visits home, for some the first since induction. In addition to the flying training at Bowman Field, the 344th, 345th, 346th, and 347th Airdrome Squadrons (AS) were activated on 15 May 1944 and assigned to the 1st CCG for administration, training, and operations. Their mission was to provide maintenance, supply, and cargo handling support to 1<sup>st</sup> CCG units.

Field training for all flying and ground personnel, including personal weapons, camouflage, and chemical warfare training, was very comprehensive. Inspections of one sort or another were an almost every day event. All units participated in a "final exam" at Atterbury AB, with the 1st CCS and 344th AS pairing off first for a 4 day exercise, starting 5 July. This was their first chance to operate the squadron's programmed twenty five aircraft at one time. The entire 1st CCG flew a night airdrop maneuver with 72 aircraft on 20 July and completed their last Preparation for Overseas Movement (POM) Inspection on 30 July.

Certified combat ready, they went to Baer Field, Indiana on 1 August and received their mission aircraft. The unit headed overseas on 7 August 1944, flying from Indiana to Maine, Newfoundland, the Azores, French Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Iran, and Karachi and Agra, India, arriving at Sylhet, India, approximately 250 miles northeast of Calcutta, on 21 August. The trip, while long and tedious, was uneventful and all 1st CCS planes and crews arrived safely. Overall, the 1st CCG experienced no losses, and only minor damage to aircraft. There was one damaged wingtip in a taxi accident, and two crew chiefs had fired off flare pistols inside their aircraft, both of which were fortunately on the ground at the time. Upon arrival, they were assigned to Tenth Air Force, with a tactical support mission. Sylhet was a former British airbase, unused more than three months. Housing was minimal and in disrepair with thatch-roofed bamboo huts in an area where, for the first six weeks, average rainfall exceeded two inches per day. After a couple of weeks of orientation, 1st CCS crews flew their first combat mission on 10 September, supporting the British 177th Wing, delivering 224 troops, 16,800 pounds of supplies and evacuating 128 casualties.

On 15 September, seventeen airplanes with two crews per plane were sent to China, attached to the 322nd Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS), with fourteen planes going to Yunnani, China and three planes to Kunming, China, not returning to India until 2 October. The Yunnani crews moved 8000 Chinese troops from Chungking to Yunnani and 5751 of these troops on to Paoshan to help defend against a Japanese advance in that area. Kunming crews supported defensive operations in Kweilin, delivering 109,600 pounds of cargo and backhauling 80,000 pounds of supplies to Kunming, moved so as to not fall into Japanese hands if Kweilin fell. They lost one plane during this operation when the pilot, running low on fuel, belly landed the C-47 on a riverbank safely. The crew walked out, resuming flying two days after their return.

This was a demanding effort, with the crews being commended by the 322nd TCS Commander who noted "They were called upon to fly long and tedious hours over strange and poorly charted terrain during which enemy gunfire was expected and probable. Their response to these demands was immediate and cheerful and at times beyond the call of duty." This service was a portent of things to come, with 1st CCS returning to China in December, where they served for eleven months until their return to the United States.

On 19 October eight 1st CCS aircraft and eight 2nd CCS aircraft were sent to Hathzari, India, supporting the British 81st West Africa (WA) Division through 10 December. With these planes the only supply source, 2,778 tons of cargo was airdropped, with virtually 100% of supplies recovered. Flying was hazardous, where "low hanging clouds obscured the valleys where the drop zones were located. The zones were often placed in cul-de-sacs necessitating the most skillful handling of the aircraft. Toward the end of the campaign many of the drop-zones were so close to the enemy lines that more than half of the [drop] pattern flown by the aircraft was over enemy territory.

The 98th AS at Sylhet provided most support during this period to 1st CCG units until their airdrome squadrons arrived. The 344th, 345th, and 346th AS completed training on 15 August,



traveling to Baer Field for final POM processing. They traveled by train to Long Beach, by ship to Bombay, India, then train and river steamer to Sylhet, arriving on 7 November. The 347th AS moved separately, joining up with the 1st CCG at Tulihal, India on 25 November. The 344th AS permanently paired off with 1st CCS after arriving in India.

On 25 November 1st CCS moved a few miles east to Tulihal, near Imphal and the border with Burma, joining 3rd CCS in supporting the British 221st Group and their drive on Mandalay, Burma. If anything, this was a step down in living standards, with crews living in mud and straw huts and eating C rations warmed up in a field kitchen. Fortunately, this was soon over when, on 11 December, 1st CCS moved to Tsuyung, China, with 2nd CCS following the next day. 1st CCG headquarters and 4th CCS moved to Chunking on 23 December. They were moving Chinese troops (and their pack animals) who had been training in Burma, back into China for combat service. For the December-January period.

1st CCS moved over 10,500 Chinese troops, almost 1450 tons of cargo and 700 tons of gasoline, losing two airplanes with the crews suffering only minor injuries. Overall, the 1st CCG served in China through 31 January 1945, flying 5,210 sorties (11,207 flying hours), moving 26,272 passengers and 6,155 tons of cargo, losing 12 airplanes to crashes and shootdowns. In what was probably the single most important change for their wartime service, the 1st CCS stayed in China on detached service to General Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force (14 AF) as a separate squadron, effective 29 January, while rest of 1st CCG moved back to India. They became only the third C-47 squadron in China for in-theater support. There were some ATC aircraft to support 14 AF activities, but they were subject to ATC requirements, not always matching local priorities. There was more than enough work to keep 1st CCS crews busy delivering ATC cargo brought over the Hump as well as moving Chinese troops supporting various operations. Keeping Japanese forces tied down in China was in the Allies best interest and airlift was vital in the effort.

This move was the first under command of Major Timothy R. Johnson, transferred on 27 January from the 1st CCG where he had been Operations Officer. The squadron operated 30 planes from two airfields near Chengtu in western China, Hsingching and Liangshang, organized at each base into three flights with five aircraft and ten crews each, including five aircraft with crews on loan from the 322nd TCS. On 9 March, these crews and planes returned to Kunming, replaced by crews and planes from 2nd and 4th CCS's on temporary duty. On 21 March, the assignments were made permanent. Twenty-two Navigators were attached from 14 AF. The squadron lost two aircraft in March, one on the 25th, a ground mishap without casualties, and another on the 29th when a C-47 crashed immediately after takeoff, killing two and seriously injuring three, one of whom died several days later. These aircraft were not replaced and Hsingching operated thirteen aircraft after this. This split operation continued through the end of the war.

The mission for both locations was delivering fuel and bombs by air for American Army Air Force fighter and bomber units operating in western China, along with most of their supplies, parts, and morale items such as mail and PX rations. The poor road system and limited

availability of motor transport, along with enemy activity, made airlift a preferred delivery system. They also could quickly move Chinese ground forces around like firefighting crews, trying to stem Japanese offensives. On 25 March, a Japanese assault on the airbase at Laohokow resulted in evacuating personnel and supplies to keep them from falling into enemy hands.

Operations in China were almost always a challenge with flying conditions, including weather, personnel, and supply shortages as main obstacles. Weather was often miserable and unpredictable, with the result that planes could not take off or, when they did, were unable to land at their destination and so returned or diverted. There were 14 days lost to flying due to weather in March and nine more in April, resulting in 49 separate trips aborted for March, and 16 more in April. After negotiations with the 2nd Weather Squadron, located at nearby Chengtu, quality of weather reports and forecasts improved, resulting in less wasted efforts. The newly assigned navigators resolved a dangerous situation created due to an almost total lack of charts and published procedures, navigational planning equipment, and aids such as radio beacons. This sometimes necessitated flying by dead-reckoning, often dangerous due to enemy activity and the aforementioned weather.

Personnel, including replacements, became a concern during this time since CBI policy was to rotate aircrew who had 600 combat flying hours. With intense demands of preceding months, many crewmembers had reached this goal. Aircrew reaching this mark didn't normally leave until replacements were on hand, although leave at a rest camp and ground duties were both options in the interim. Aerial engineers and radio operators often came from 344th AS maintenance people, either reassigned or attached to 1st CCS for flying. With higher ranks given to combat crew members, it was incentive for these men to move up and move on, earning rotation after reaching the 600 combat flying hour mark. Pilots showed up from replacement depots initially or were transferred from other C-47 units. By March, they were being reassigned or loaned from other units in China as well, including fighter and bomber squadrons, a trend that accelerated after hostilities ceased. By this time, new manpower authorizations and personnel policy changes for enlisted men and officers had resulted in many crew members getting promoted sooner, or farther than previously possible, improving morale. Also, plans were implemented for the post-combat Readjustment Program, with all personnel records reviewed and brought to date.

All was not work. Special services worked hard to provide recreation and relaxation opportunities. Organized sports such as volleyball and softball matched teams from different units at each base. Dayrooms offered chess and cards, along with reading materials, sometimes even current newspapers and magazines. Current news from radio broadcasts was posted and followed closely. Classes in Chinese speech and culture, along with more mundane subjects offered through military correspondence courses were attended by some, although not enough to overwhelm the instructors. Movies were regularly available, when the projector was working, and there was the occasional USO show. Many of these were entertainers in uniform, and put on an excellent show, especially under such limited conditions. A rest camp for crews and ground personnel had been open for several months. As new activities such as a swimming

pool became available and better food was served in the dining halls, it became a valuable morale booster. Overall health was good with only spotty problems such as the random case of malaria. Because of rain, mediocre food, and the stress of hard flying (use of oxygen at high altitudes, and sometimes extreme air pressure and temperature changes along with fatigue) respiratory infections were generally the single most common medical problem for this period of the war.

Consumables such as oil and spare parts were part of the supply problem. During this time, oil suitable for C-47 engines became scarce. Navy oils were available, but being paraffin based (as opposed to Army asphalt based oils), were not really desirable, becoming authorized only as a last resort. Life at the end of the supply pipeline made those type of exceptions almost a rule. Hard flying with lots of short trips for fully loaded (or even overloaded) aircraft resulted in rapid wear and tear on planes. Inventive crew chiefs and mechanics salvaged parts from crashed and washed out aircraft, as well as performing intricate maintenance that just a couple of years earlier was done only at factories by skilled technicians. Airplanes out of commission for major maintenance were often raided for parts to keep others flying. But these efforts were only so good. By April, the bottom of the spare parts barrel had been reached. With the 315th Service Group's assistance, 3000 pounds of parts were issued from the ATC Air Freight Terminal at Kunming and an aircraft detailed to bring them in. There was however, 40 additional tons of parts including wing bolts, floor boards, and tires available for delivery.

Through it all, 1st CCS crews kept flying, moving critically required bombs, fuel, and cargo, helping 14 AF and the Chinese Army to keep up pressure on the Japanese. Three airplanes from each location were detailed to support the 322nd TCS at Kunming, being sent to Chihkiang to supply a successful defense against a Japanese attack. Other activities included six aircraft detailed to support secret missions in Eastern China. One advantage the 1st CCS did have was the 344th AS for support. Because of limited supplies ATC was able to move over the Hump from India, every person in theater imposed requirements against fixed resources. Fighter squadrons were allowed less than half of authorized strength and B-24 bomber crews provided their own line maintenance. Supply of more mundane items such as clothing was still spotty, with numerous shortages and repeated backorders. Ingenuity solved some problems, such as the shortage of weights required for aircraft trailing wire antennas, used by aircraft while flying to extend the effective range of their radios. In an early example of recycling, lead plates from dead batteries were melted and cast in locally produced molds as replacement weights.

On 12 June 45, 1st CCS was administratively transferred to 14 AF. This formalized the assignment since 14 AF had exercised operational control of the squadron since their arrival the end of January. This didn't change the split location of the unit. Operations shifted gears mid month as aviation gas supplies became so critical it was difficult to come up with enough gas to fly C-47's to the Kunming depot to bring more in. Fuel was shifted around and after two days of hard flying, sufficient fuel was in place for most units to resume normal operations, with the aviation gas resupply mission shifted to the Kunming ATC detachment. The supply situation, especially for engine parts, was critical with 12 in-flight engine failures for June, twice as many as May. By June, a lack of tires grounded 5 C-47's, costing 1st CCS 32 aircraft flying days.

Problems had reached such a level that several aircraft were pulled from other runs to fly 20 sorties moving 50 tons of parts from Kunming to Hsingching, obtaining critical parts otherwise unavailable.

Adding to operational problems, 1st CCS also faced changing to a new aircraft. Conversion to the C-46 Curtis-Wright Commando was announced on 1 June and began on 20 June. Its rated cargo capacity of 10,000 pounds was almost twice that of the C-47, a major consideration in an area where qualified aircrews, fuel, and usable airfields were at a premium. The disadvantage of the C-46, besides new supply and training requirements was its design, with a hydraulic system described as a "plumbers nightmare, " among other significant maintenance problems. The Commando had become known within the airlift community as a flying coffin for numerous aircraft which caught fire or exploded in flight. While it carried more, it was also harder to load and unload, sitting higher off the ground than the C-47. The conversion was almost complete by the end of September, mostly by C-46 qualified pilots being assigned to the unit and checking out other pilots during normal operations.

On 21 July 45, Major Joseph G. Manyo assumed command, having previously served as 1st CCS Operations Officer. The navigators assigned in March rotated back to the States after a four month tour of service. Over the preceding several months, there had been great progress in installing electronic aids such as radio beacons and glide path transmitters, both on the ground and in the aircraft. Along with better charts, and a reduction in Japanese threat from fighters, flying had become safer and these additional navigators became less critical.

Cargo management was in fact the Achilles heel of the system by this time, reflected by extended ground times and empty airplanes. Some of this was overcome by adding or shifting manpower around, which became more critical as the C-46 with its larger loads came into widespread service. There was a shortage of equipment such as forklifts and truck mounted boom cranes used to lift engines and other heavy items, especially at some outlying airfields. At other bases, they were available but belonged to the local ATC detachment, making unscheduled use difficult. Matching cargo to available aircraft was another headache.

Communications between bases was not always effective, with airlift requirements supposedly being coordinated, but when crews would show up, there would be no cargo for them to move. Supporting the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), predecessor to the CIA, was becoming part of the mission, with airdrops of personnel and supplies at dusk behind enemy lines. On 21 July, 1st CCS lost their first C-46, when, loaded with gasoline, one crashed at Hsingching after losing an engine on takeoff. The pilot died of injuries on the 23rd. On 3 August 1945, 1st CCS was transferred to Tenth Air Force, whose Headquarters relocated from India as part of a theater reorganization. They became part of the 69th Composite Wing, whose mission had become managing tactical airlift support in China. This was not the only change for the 1st CCS.

Having been settled for almost six months, albeit in two locations, another move was imminent. An advance party was sent to Nanking to prepare for the unit's arrival there, but problems, including some of the heaviest rainfall in years, resulted instead in a move to Chengking,

effective 16 August. This move wasn't overly smooth because they were moving into facilities being vacated by the 27th TCS, whose own move to Liangshan wasn't finished until 23 August. With hostilities against Japan ending on 14 August, going home became the priority for most men. The War Department had established a schedule with points for such factors as age, marriage, children, time in service, time overseas, combat service and decorations. Low point men from now unneeded combat and service units with appropriate skills were transferred in, replacing high point men who had come overseas a year earlier. Many combat crews were from the 341st Bomb Group, a B-25 unit whose mission was now over. This turnover, on top of the 600 combat hour rule for crews, made a difficult scheduling and management job harder, not to mention the clerical staff who ensured records were up to date for accurate calculation of rotation scores.

The 1st CCS had three commanders in six weeks with Lt Col William F. Duncan being assigned from the 69th CW, replacing Maj Manyo on 18 August, who rotated home. Lt Col Duncan returned to the 69th CW on the 29th, replaced by Maj John W. Chapman.

The most significant change was in the mission, with the focus changing dramatically. While cargo still had to be moved, locating, supplying, and rescuing Allied Prisoners of War (POW) moved to the forefront of the priority list and 1st CCS crews were busy. On 22 August, a 1st CCS C-47 became the first Allied aircraft into Hanoi, French-Indo China, carrying emergency supplies for POW's. This was a rather dicey situation as the formal surrender had not yet been signed. The next day another C-47 landed at Kweilin, evacuating 20 people, both medical personnel who had walked in and POW's in the area they were there to care for. On the 27th, a group of Americans parachuted from a squadron airplane onto Hainan Island, off the southeast coast of China. When a 1st CCS C-46 landed on the 31st, they found 3 American and some 350 Australian and Dutch POW's. Also on the 27th, five C-46's carried a Chinese General and his staff into Nanking to arrange for the Japanese surrender.

They were the first Allied aircraft into Nanking in seven years, a fact which the General was aware of. This scene repeated itself numerous times as Chinese and American units and personnel were shifted to accept surrenders of Japanese garrisons.

These activities were continued in September, wrapped up in Operation ABLE, under direction of the 69th Composite Wing. The other focal point of activities was rolling up American forces, primarily to Shanghai, for shipment home. Ten crews were temporarily assigned there, allowing the crews to swap out and keep the aircraft moving. Support at Shanghai was erratic, with availability of fuel, oil, and loading/unloading support contributing to frequent delays of hours, and one worst case delay of eight days. Other units were moved for post-war duties to locations including Peking, Hankow and Tientsen. All American activities were apportioned support, including the Navy and OSS, as well as various Army organizations. POW's were picked up in Hong Kong, Hanoi, and Hue, the last also in French-Indo China. The Hue pickup more resembled a victory parade with a band and an estimated 20,000 local people cheering the Americans arrival.

September brought two major changes to the 1st Combat Cargo. On the 23rd, the 344th Airdrome Sq. was inactivated with its personnel assigned to 1st CCS. There was no change in the mission, but it made reassignment of enlisted personnel to flying billets easier. More importantly, it eliminated a lot of duplicate efforts between the two units and reduced administrative overhead. Effective on the 29th, 1st Combat Cargo Squadron was redesignated, as were all Combat Cargo units, becoming the 326th Troop Carrier Squadron.

For their outstanding efforts in the immediate post-war environment in China and Southeast Asia, the 326th TCS, along with the rest of the 69th Composite Wing, was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for the period of 1-30 September 1945. Cited was their "supply and evacuation of Prisoner of War internment camps," and "missions of mercy and special transport flights to distant areas in French-Indo China, China, and Manchuria where local conditions were unsettled and where the quality of reception by the Japanese was as yet undetermined." Overcoming obstacles such as being "Handicapped operationally by a transition from C-47 to C-46 type aircraft," and "Hampered frequently by inadequate unloading and servicing facilities and flying through unpredictable weather over rugged terrain," was a fact of life. Since "personnel for loading was inadequate at some stations, in many cases aircrews unloaded and loaded their aircraft sometimes disassembling heavy equipment on their own initiative. Numerous changes in schedule were required each day due to alteration in priorities of air lifts, often necessitating reloading and rescheduling," the crews flexibility and dedication was the difference.

Concurrent with the redesignation was one more accident. A C-46 that had left on the 28th was overdue and missing. An ATC crew reported a new wreck near Chihkiang on 3 October, which proved to be the missing plane with dead, 6 crew and 10 passengers. This last crash proved the most deadly. As the drawdown continued, the ATC detachment pulled out leaving the 326 TCS in charge of running base operations and support functions. By this time most of the POW rescues and special missions had been completed and the workload was erratic. Men who had sufficient points were being sent home, with the unit gaining people who were transferred from other units. Pilots though, were in short supply.

Flying activities continued into November. As most POWs were located and liberated, more of the flying time was used in redeploying units within China, mostly for movement back to the United States. 69th CW records for this period show problems as changes to proposed deployments caused unit moves to be changed and canceled, causing disruption in matching available airlift to requirements. Spot shortages of equipment and fuel, along with personnel turnover, further complicated attempts to effectively utilize limited airlift resources. Their other major mission was moving Nationalist Chinese troops around after Japanese garrisons surrendered and were shipped back to Japan.

On 5 Nov 1945, the 326th TCS was notified to expect transfer to Piardoba, India in preparation for return to the United States and demobilization and inactivation. But their work was not done as they continued to receive taskings for more missions. The last one almost precipitated a riot. Ordered to fly ten aged C-47's to Peking, fully loaded with .50 caliber ammunition, the

crews balked until American insignia had been repainted on the aircraft. Other planes properly marked were used instead and this last mission was flown. As the unit pulled out of the base, local villagers and Chinese soldiers overran it and scavenged everything possible. Crews still flying had stowed their footlockers in Base Operations. These were broken into and looted as well. Once everyone was in India, those officers with 75 points and enlisted with 60 points were sent back to the states, including Major Chapman, who was replaced in command by Captain John R. Boyle. At that point, only two officers from the original contingent at Bowman Field remained with the unit.

#### Losses

C-47 43-15917 - 19 Sep 1944 Crashed in China, no injuries

C-47 43-15914 - 23 Sep 1944 Crashed in Lalimar-Hat, India, 1st CCS, 9 KIA

C-47 43-49120 - 23 Dec 1944 Crashed on takeoff, Yunnanyi, China, minor injuries

C-47 43-48633 - 28 Dec 1944 Crashed at Lao Ho Kaw, China, minor injuries.

C-47 43-15841 - 25 Mar 1945 Lost at Laohokow, China, Ground mishap.

C-47 43-15901 - 29 Mar 1945 Crashed on takeoff, Hsian AB, China, 1 KIA

L-5 (unk) 19 Apr 1945 Crashed near Luhsein, 2 KIA

C-47 43-15847 - 23 Jun 1945 Crashed at Liafing, China, no injuries

C-47 43-48625 - 28 Jun 1945 Crashed at Peishiyi, China, no injuries

C-46 44-78306 - 21 Jul 1945 Crashed on takeoff, Hsingching, China, 1 KIA, 3 injured

C-47 43-15904 - 26 Aug 1945 Ground looped due to blown tire, damaged in towing, written off for salvage.

C-47 43-15919 - 30 Aug 1945 Crashed at Yangkai, China, no injuries

C-46 42-101183 - 28 Sep 1956 Crashed 20 Miles SE of Chihkiang, 6 crew and 14 passengers, all KIA

Trained in the Reserve for troop carrier operations, 1947-1951.

Resumed training in the Reserve for airlift missions, 1952. Took part in various contingency and humanitarian airlift operations worldwide.

The 326 Airlift Squadron, a unit in the Air Force Reserve Command's 512th Airlift Wing flew its final C-5 Galaxy flight March 10. The squadron converts to the C-17 Globemaster III mission April 1. The base's first C-17 arrives in June and it will receive 12 more of the aircraft over the course of two years. The base will keep 18 of its original 36 C-5s. The 326 AS has been flying the C-5 since it arrived at Dover in 1973. Their sister squadron, the 709th Airlift Squadron, will continue to fly the C-5. "It's a great moment in history for the 326 AS," said Lt. Col. Louis Patriquin, who has 3,000 flying hours on the C-5 and was the aircraft commander on the final flight. "The squadron has been flying the C-5 for 34 years, and today we're starting a new chapter adding the C-17." It was a bittersweet moment, said Lt. Col. Rob Shepherd, 326 AS commander. He too has flown 3,000 hours in the C-5 and is currently attending C-17 school at Altus Air Force Base, Okla. "The C-5 has been good to me," he said. "I have a long history with the aircraft and have made a lot of great memories. It's taken me all over the world." Colonel Shepherd will continue those travels in the C-17, adding he's excited about the new aircraft

arriving at Dover. "It's an exciting time for the squadron," he said. "It's like getting handed the keys to your dad's new sports car. It's a great aircraft and paired up with the C-5 it will make a great team." Several squadron members are currently in C-17 school, and all squadron members should complete the school by next year. It takes 100 days to train each crewmember, but up to 18 more months to fully season instructors and flight examiners. The active duty unit here, the 436th Airlift Wing, also begins conversion in April. The wing's 3rd Airlift Squadron will fly the C-17 and its sister squadron, the 9th AS will continue to fly the C-5.

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