

642 FIELD MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

642 Field Maintenance Squadron

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

A provisional unit was formed from Air Force air depot wings in Japan, Korea, and at Clark Field. Some forty-four aircraft loads of support equipment were loaded at Clark aboard C-54 Skymasters, C-119s, and C-124 Globemasters. The C-47 element, consisting of seven officers and 113 airmen, left Clark the morning of February 5, landing at Cat Bi and moving to Do Son by vehicle. The detachment received its first C-47s for maintenance on February 9. By the end of the month, the Americans at Do Son had worked six thousand man-hours, completing nine periodic inspections.

Living and work facilities at Do Son proved adequate and parts shortages were met by making available Air Force spares. Most Americans shuddered at the condition of the French aircraft, some flying with over a hundred malfunctions and many filthy from carrying livestock. Maj. Kenneth F. Knox, the American commander at Do Son, watched one French mechanic stand on an engine while loosening a spark plug with a sledgehammer. He later conceded that the French were well motivated, but privately resolved not to fly with them. French officers, though, officially complained that the Americans worked too slowly. Total flying time increased. During May and June, the C-47s flew twenty-one thousand hours, compared with twelve thousand hours in January and February.

Overwater airlift missions by Far East Air Forces transports during 1954 were planned increasingly to assist Southeast Asia. Periodic emergency shipments from Japan of various ordnances flares, smoke bombs, bomb clusters were met by diverting 315th Air Division C 119s and C 124s from other tasks. During the critical weeks before the fall of Dien Bien Phu, aircraft of the 315th not already on loan to the French spent nearly half their flying hours in support of the Indochina war. Clark Field became the airlift hub, amid routes from Japan and the continental United States. Because of deteriorating runways in Vietnam, the C-124s usually operated only as far as Clark, hauling military materiel including ammunition, aircraft parts, and parachutes and rigging for airdrops. Surface and air shipments from the United States similarly converged at the Philippines. Final movement into Vietnam was by C-119s and C-54s of the 315th Air Division.

The unit was first designated 642 Field Maintenance Squadron, but was redesignated FEALOGFOR (Far East Air Logistics Force), Field Maintenance Squadron, Provisional, soon after its arrival in Indochina.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.