

44 MILITARY AIRLIFT SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

44 Ferrying Squadron constituted

Activated, 15 Sep 1942

Redesignated 44 Transport Squadron, 24 Mar 1943

Disbanded, 30 Sep 1943

Reconstituted and activated 44 Air Transport Squadron, Heavy, 20 Apr 1953

Redesignated 44 Air Transport Squadron, Medium, 1 Jul 1953

Inactivated, 14 Nov 1955

Redesignated 44 Air Transport Squadron, Heavy

Activated, 1 Nov 1961

Redesignated 44 Military Airlift Squadron, 8 Jan 1966

Inactivated, 1 Mar 1972

STATIONS

Khartoum, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 15 Sep 1942

Wadi Seidna Air Base, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, 1943–30 Sep 1943

Grenier AFB, NH, 20 Apr 1953

McGuire AFB, NJ, 9-14 Nov 1955

Travis AFB, CA, 1 Nov 1961-1 Mar 1972

ASSIGNMENTS

13 Ferrying Group, 15 Sep 1942–30 Sep 1943

Atlantic Division, Military Air Transport Service, 20 Apr 1953

1610 Air Transport Group, 1 Jul 1953
1611 Air Transport Group, 9-14 Nov 1955
1501 Air Transport Group, 1 Nov 1961
1501 Air Transport Wing, 18 Jan 1963
60 Military Airlift Wing, 8 Jan 1966-1 Mar 1972

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-47, 1942-1945
C-46, 1945-1946
C-135B, 1961-1965
C-141, 1965-1972

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Buron R. Fleet, Jun 1942
Lt Col Benjamin F. Kendig, Aug 1943
Unkn, Apr 1945-25 Mar 1946
Major Donald H. Kohl
Lt Col Robert A. Wray, Jr., Jul 1953
Lt Col William A. Brinson, 1962
Lt Col Hartness, 1964
Lt Col Fish, 1970-1972

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Egypt-Libya
Tunisia
Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Rome-Arno
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Central Europe

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Sicily, 25 Nov 1942-25 Aug 1943
Sicily, 11 Jul 1943

France, [6-7] Jun 1944

EMBLEM



MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Included airborne assaults on Sicily, Normandy, Holland, and Germany, and aerial transportation in MTO and ETO, during World War II.

The 44 Air Transport Squadron (M) was activated on 20 April 1953 at Grenier Air Force Base, with a cadre of one officer and three airmen. Major Donald H. Kohl was the first commander and carried out the activation of the squadron. The first aircraft was assigned to the squadron on 1 July 1953 and on that date the squadron became partially operational.

Lt. Col. Robert A. Wray, Jr., assumed command of the squadron in July 1953, and Major Donald H. Kohl assumed duties as operations officer.

The squadron gradually gained personnel and aircraft and became fully operational in March, 1954, having flown over 100% of its commitment during the month of February while the squadron was still on a buildup-status.

February also saw the 44 receive its Initial commitment to fly the Thule, Greenland run. The 44 since Its activation has flown scheduled trips to Torbay and Argentia in Newfoundland, Sondrestrom and Thule in Greenland, Goose Bay in Labrador, Churchill in Canada, Lajes In the Azores, Keflavik, Iceland, and Rhein Main, Germany.

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Logically it was the new 1611th ATW and its two transport squadrons that received the first C-135B, fifteen were also supplied to the 44 ATS at Travis, the only unit of the west coast of the United States to be equipped with the C-135.

During the first quarter of 1965, the C-135B, assigned to the 44 ATS, were phased out in favor of the C-141. Proven reliable during their years of service with the wing, they were unable to handle the heavy airlift mission as well as the newer C-141.

On 23 April 1965, squadron became the first line operational unit to fly the C-141, which it operated over MATS and later Military Airlift Command routes on a worldwide basis, 1965-1972.

Frequently flew cargo and personnel to United States bases in South Vietnam and Thailand during the Vietnam War. Inactivated in 1972 due to budget restrictions as part of the post-Vietnam drawdown of the USAF.

1610th Air Transport Group brought C-54s to the city under the command of Col. Eugene C. Woltz. "The primary task of the 1610th Air Transport Group was support of U.S. military operations in the Arctic region. Destinations such as Argentia in Newfoundland, Sondrestrom and Thule in Greenland, Goose Bay in Labrador, and Keflavik in Iceland had a familiar ring to old hands at Grenier AFB. just a few years earlier, the Air Force activated many Aircraft Control and Warning (ACW) squadrons at Grenier AFB. Personnel from these radar and communication units would deploy to the DEW line sites that were being constructed in the far north. " The 1610th carried out its duties through two Air Transport Squadrons, the 44 ATS - based at Grenier - and the 83rd ATS - originally based at Dow AFB in Bangor - which moved to Manchester in June 1953, bringing with it eight C-54s. Before the summer of 1955 had passed, so had the life of the 1610th Air Transport Group at Grenier.

On 1 October 1961, WESTAF reactivated the 44 Air Transport Squadron and assigned it to the 150th Air Transport Wing, specifically to fly the 17 C-135Bs programmed for Travis. The first C-135B assigned to the base touched down on 28 February 1962. It flew its first scheduled trans-Pacific mission from Travis to Yokota Air Base, Japan on 5-6 April 1962. Barely a month later, on 1 May, the first jet aeromedical evacuation flight from Asia to the United States rushed 38 critically-ill patients from Yokota to Travis in just 9 hours and 7 minutes. This historic flight shaved ten minutes off the commercial B-707 record for a flight from Japan to California. Furthermore, by December 1962, C-135s from Travis were participating in one of MATS' most important and highly visible missions, the "Embassy Run." Flying across the Pacific to the capitals of several Asian countries, including Saigon, Bangkok, New Delhi, and Karachi, they went as far as Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, where a MATS transport from EASTAF took over to complete this round-the-world mission.

As with the arrival of the C-135B, the 44 Air Transport Squadron was chosen to be the first squadron in the wing to fly the new jet airlifter. Two other Travis squadrons, the 75th and 86th, also transitioned from their respective aircraft to the C-141 in succeeding months. By the end of 1965, the 44 Air Transport Squadron was fully operational with 16 C-141s assigned. The 75th had also begun its transition and received its first C-141 in December. A new era in airlift at Travis was underway. In addition to receiving the first operational Starlifter, Travis also became newly trained Travis aircrews managed to eke out a narrow victory of 17 points over the more experienced flyers from McChord.

MAC activated the 22nd Military Airlift Squadron and assigned it to Travis as a second C-5 squadron, the command also transferred 19 of the wing's C-141s to Norton and McChord. This transfer led to the inactivation of MAC's first C-141 squadron, the 44 Military Airlift Squadron, on 8 February 1972. This left the 60th Military Airlift Wing with four airlift squadrons, the 7th and 86th flying the C-141 and the 22nd and 75th flying the C-5.

On 3 August 1965, daily C-141 channel airlift service began between Travis and Tan Son Nhut Airport in Saigon. The first mission, piloted by 1st Lt Shirley M. Carpenter of the 44 Air Transport Squadron, carried 44,315 pounds of priority cargo. The 7,500-mile trip took just 18 hours and 15 minutes, including two refueling stops lasting three hours each at Wake Island and Clark Air Base, the Philippines. This was less than half the time needed for a C-124 to fly a similar mission.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *Grenier AFB, NH. 1954.*

Gary Leiser. *A History of Travis Air Force Base, 1943-1996.* Travis Air Force Base Historical Society. Sacramento, CA. 1996.