

## 65 AEROMEDICAL EVACUATION SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

65 Aeromedical Evacuation Flight

Constituted, activated, and allotted to the Air Force Reserve

Activated, 1 Jan 1967

65 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron constituted, 7 Jan 1970

Activated in the Reserve, 1 Mar 1970

Inactivated,

### STATIONS

Hamilton AFB, CA, 1 Mar 1970

Travis AFB, CA, 1 Nov 1970

### ASSIGNMENTS

942 Military Airlift Group, 1 Mar 1970

904 Military Airlift Group, 1 Jun 1970

Western Air Force Reserve Region, 1 Mar 1972

938 Military Airlift Group (Associate), 1 May 1972

349 Military Airlift Wing (Associate), 1 Jul 1973

### COMMANDERS

### HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**



on a blue disc edged with a white border, a red cross coupé surmounted by a yellow flight symbol ascending bendwise. Attached below the disc a blank white scroll. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The emblem is symbolic of the unit and the Air Force colors, ultramarine blue and golden yellow, as well as the national colors, are used in the design. The entire emblem is symbolic of the flying aeromedical evacuation unit, represented by the heraldic symbol of flight. The red cross is symbolic of the humanitarian support rendered by the unit and the saving of life. (*Approved, 3 Apr 1973; 5 Jan 1981*)

**MOTTO**

**OPERATIONS**

Since 1970, the Reserve forces at Travis have also included an important aeromedical evacuation component, namely, the 65th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron of the 349th Military Airlift Wing. This squadron was composed of medical technicians and nurses who cared for the patients airlifted on MAC aeromedical flights. It was originally activated at Hamilton on 1 June 1967. While there, its members flew aboard the C-124s of the 349th, especially during the grim days of 1968, when so many medical evacuation flights brought wounded Americans back from Vietnam. On 1 November 1970, this squadron was reorganized at Travis with elements of the 31st Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron to form the 65th.

Squadron members flew an average of about 50 "live" evacuation missions per year. Many missions that were originally planned for training were diverted while in the Pacific and became real-life, medical evacuation flights.

Lengthy negotiations in Paris between the United States and North Vietnam, spurred by massive B-52 raids over Hanoi in December 1972, eventually resulted in a cease-fire agreement that was signed on 27 January 1973. Among the key provisions of this agreement were the phased withdrawal of all American forces from that region and the speedy return of American prisoners of war from North Vietnam.

MAC designated the 22nd Air Force as the controlling air force for the return of the prisoners. Within a few days of the peace accord, Major General John F. Gonge, the Commander of the 22nd Air Force, and his staff made detailed plans for a massive aeromedical airlift from Hanoi to the continental United States via Clark Air Base in the Philippines. A special control center for Operation HOMECOMING was activated in the Command Post of the Headquarters of the 22nd Air Force at Travis. Manned 24 hours a day during the entire operation, it maintained direct contact with all incoming flights. The first three C-141 s in Operation HOMECOMING touched down at Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi on 12 February 1973. Within two hours, they departed North Vietnam with the first 116 prisoners of war. After stopping at Clark in order to give the prisoners a quick medical checkup and a short rest, the C-141 s proceeded across the Pacific toward home. A crew from the 7th Military Airlift Squadron of the 60th Military Airlift Wing brought the first twenty returnees to Travis. At 4:30 PM on Wednesday 14 February, Valentine's Day, 1973, they landed at the base. As the first man, Navy Captain Jeremiah H. Denton, strode down the ramp, he was greeted by a spontaneous round of cheers and applause from a crowd of more than 400 family members, friends, and off-duty base personnel.

In 1975 squadron members again distinguished themselves during Operation Babylift. This involved the aeromedical airlift and evacuation of children from South Vietnam, through the Philippine Islands and Guam to Travis Air Force Base. Forty of their flight nurses and 61 medical technicians flew as medical crew members. When the first C-5A baby lift flight from Saigon crashed on takeoff on 4 Apr 1975, SSgt. James A. Hadley, one of the 65th's medical technicians, although injured himself, stayed with the wreckage and administered oxygen to the surviving orphans.

During Operation Desert Shield, aeromedical evacuation crews were among the first reservists to be recalled to active duty. Personnel from the 65th AES were involved in early Persian Gulf operations on a volunteer basis and were instrumental in establishing and operating patient airlift centers in Saudi Arabia, Germany, and the United Kingdom. During Operation Desert Storm, the unit activated and deployed 211 personnel, comprising 35 aeromedical evacuation crews, and air-evac operations components based between Saudi Arabia, Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and RAF Waddington, United Kingdom. In addition, the squadron established and managed the Aeromedical Evacuation Control Element at RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom.

In the early 1990s, the squadron had crews staged in Cairo, Egypt, flying both scheduled and

urgent patient airlift missions in support of US and United Nations troops in Somalia.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, Virginia.