

6127 AIR TERMINAL GROUP

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6127 Air Terminal Group

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On 2 Feb. The 315th Air Division activated a new permanent Air Force unit to operate all aerial ports under its control. The 6127th Air Terminal Group was stood up and immediately absorbed all Combat Cargo Support Units and made them detachments of the group. Headquartered at Ashiya AB, Japan, the 6127th inherited personnel and equipment resources at locations at the three major Japan bases (Tachikawa, Ashiya, Brady) and detachments at Pusan, Pohang, Tague, and Kimpo. The 6127th ATG was to be a highly flexible unit, capable of sending a trained airhead team immediately into every newly occupied base and operating on its own until it could depend on the base organization for logistical support. This was a more involved process than was at first

realized, because relatively few Air Force men trained in traffic procedures were then available in the Far East.

On March 20 1951. the 6127th ATG finally took over the air and passenger terminals at Tachikawa. Brady and Itazuke. Several days later the terminals at Ashiya was added to the list and the Army was out of the Korean Aerial Port business. From then on the only Army involvement was the 8081 st Quartermaster Company (Air Resupply) who retained responsibility for rigging, loading and kicking air drop supplies. There were numerous rough spots in the Air Force management of the Korean Airlift terminal operation at first, but they straightened out rapidly. The 6127th ATG demonstrated that they could do what General Tunner predicted reduce loading and offloading times, cut down on the ground time for aircraft, and get better aircraft utilization all around.

To resolve the lack of trained traffic personnel in theater, the 6127th ATG turned to the Tachikawa Loadmaster School for expertise. The schoolhouse was instrumental in training scores of 315th AD personnel to assume air terminal duties involving loading/unloading and tiedown of air cargo. Additional semi-permanent detachments were established at Hoensong, Seoul Municipal, Chunchon, and Chinhae.

As new airstrips opened, new 6127th units were moved in immediately. As airstrips declined in airlift importance, detachments were reduced in size or closed and shipped to other locations. Because of uncertainty regarding the future of detachment locations, it was difficult and sometimes inadvisable to plan permanent buildings or major improvements. Undeterred the 6127th men used whatever supplies were accessible to improve their living and work conditions.

The 6127th talents for building construction were given a real opportunity at Seoul. Only tents were erected at first, but the men quickly found enough scrap lumber to build a vehicle repair shop, flight line space control shack, air freight office, and dormitories for the men. This ingenuity was not limited to office/living facilities but included improvements to cargo handling and vehicle maintenance capabilities. Airmen built platforms consisting of 55-gallon oil drums filled with sand and rocks, and drove their vehicles on the homemade racks to expedite repairs. Other airmen took scrap steel from combat junk piles and welded sections together to build storage racks. Mechanics used blowtorches and scrap steel to make loading ramps for trucks to simplify loading of passengers and cargo into the airlifters. Others made hot and cold showers from scrounged pipe and reclaimed oil drums.

In Japan, the 6127th ATG set about improving and enlarging the big Combat Cargo terminals at Tachikawa and Ashiya. Baggage checking stations. 24-hour snack bars, waiting areas and information desks were added to improve passenger terminal services. Detachments were established at Itazuke, Miho. Itami and Komaki air bases. Additionally, the 6127th assigned air terminal liaison personnel at Naha and Clark air bases and Taipei Airport to advise and assist users of the Korean Airlift system.

During the big airborne maneuver Operation Showoff (November 1951) the 6127th personnel

assisted the 187th Regimental Combat Team in airlifting and airdropping the equivalent of 9,000 paratroopers. They provided cargo loading and manifesting support, return of parachutes and airdropped heavy equipment, and the loan of vehicles and equipment. In the fall of 1952, the 6127th supported the mass paratroop drop of the 187th RCT near Seoul and in Operations Feint, the pseudo-airborne attack on the central front. Altogether, the 6127th Air Terminal Group handled some 600,000 air evacuees, 5.4 million passengers and over 1.4 million tons of cargo.

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