

## MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND



### LINEAGE

Air Corps Ferrying Command established, 29 May 1941

Redesignated Army Air Forces Ferry Command, 9 Mar 1942

Redesignated Army Air Forces Ferrying Command, 31 Mar 1942

Redesignated Air Transport Command, 1 Jul 1942

Redesignated Discontinued, and inactivated, 1 Jun 1948

Military Air Transport Service, established as a major command and activated, 1 Jun 1948

Air Transport Command consolidated with Military Air Transport Service, 1982. Consolidated unit retained Military Air Transport Service designation.

Redesignated Military Airlift Command, 1 Jan 1966

Inactivated, 1 Jun 1992

## **STATIONS**

Scott AFB, IL

## **COMMANDERS**

MG. Robert W. Harper, 1 Jul 1947  
LTG Laurence S. Kuter, 1 Jun 1948  
LTG Joseph Smith, 15 Nov 1951  
LTG William H. Tunner, 1 Jul 1958  
Gen Joe W. Kelly Jr., 1 Jun 1960  
Gen Howell M. Estes Jr., 19 Jul 1964  
Gen. Jack J. Catton, 1 Aug 1969  
LTG Jay T. Robbins (acting), 12 Sep 1972  
Gen Paul K. Carlton, 26 Sep 1972  
Gen William G. Moore, Jr., 1 Apr 1977  
Gen Robert E. Huyser, 1 Jul 1979  
Gen James R. Allen, 26 Jun 1981  
Gen Thomas M. Ryan Jr., 1 Jul 1983  
Gen Duane H. Cassidy, 20 Sep 1985  
Gen Hansford T. Johnson, 20 Sep 1989

## **EMBLEM**

On a silver disc a white globe with dark blue gridlines; overall a symbolic aircraft in red and dark blue; on dexter border from upper edge of globe to upright wing of aircraft the Morse code dots and dashes in red, white, and blue for letter AFATC.

## **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

The badge represents aircraft being transported from the West to the East which refers to President Roosevelt's directive to the command that aircraft be transported "with the greatest possible speed".

## **OPERATIONS**

The organization that would become widely known as the Air Transport Command was established in May 1941 as the Air Corps Ferrying Command, and was charged initially with flying aircraft overseas for delivery to the British. No real antecedents of this command are to be found, for until 1941 the Army's air arm had no pressing need for a major organization devoted primarily to ferrying aircraft and transporting troops and cargo by air. There were a few squadron echelon units involved in air transport from the late 1930s and a group from 1937, but most Air Corps units ferried their own aircraft and moved their own cargo.

Air transport grew in importance during World War II, as it provided the sole means of supply in many cases of crucial need. Both the Army Air Forces (AAF) and the Navy operated world-wide air transport systems that greatly aided the Allied war effort. During the war, air transport subsumed several different facets within it, including aircraft ferrying and delivery, airborne troop operations, and long and short-range transport of men and materiel. In the postwar period, the air transport mission came to mean primarily movement of personnel, materiel, mail, and strategic materials, while airborne assault troop carriers remained assigned to tactical forces.

After the war, the Secretary of Defense Forrestal intended to establish a single air transport service for the Military Establishment in the interest of economy and efficiency and with no interruption of service. Emphasizing the central control over this air transport operation, Forrestal prohibited delay or diversion of aircraft or crews by theater, area, fleet, air force, or other commander unless such actions were necessary for the safety of the crew or aircraft.

In 1948 the Air Transport Command and the Navy Air Transport Service merged into a new organization, the Military Air Transport Service (MATS). The Military Air Transport Service was to be commanded by a Commander appointed by the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force, with the consent of the Secretary of Defense. Naval as well as Air Force officers were eligible for the office.

MATS was responsible for the transportation by air of personnel (including the evacuation of sick and wounded), materiel, mail, strategic materials and other cargoes for all agencies of the National Military Establishment and as authorized for other government agencies of the United States, subject to established priorities. The responsibility for air transportation for the National Military Establishment does not include responsibility for the tactical air transportation of airborne troops and their equipment, the initial supply and resupply of units in forward combat areas, or that required for the fulfillment of the mission by the Navy, or air transport over routes of sole interest to the Naval forces where the requirements cannot be met by the facilities of MATS. The mission also included the Navy or the Air Force using their equipment as a secondary function for the evacuation of sick and wounded when circumstances were required.

The establishment, control, operation and maintenance of facilities assigned to MATS within the United States and on air routes outside the United States which facilities were, or maybe made, the responsibility of the Chief of Staff, United States Air Force. In such areas outside the continental limits of the United States, where there were no other United States military authority charged with that responsibility, the Commander of MATS had all normal responsibilities and prerogatives of Commands of theaters of operation, area commands or base commands.

The first test of the newly created MATS was the Berlin Airlift--"OPERATION VITTLES". On June 26, 1948, the airlift began. MATS transports from around the globe began making their way to Germany, including 2 of the U.S. Navy's air transport squadrons assigned to MATS. This operation would continue for some 15 months until the Soviets lifted the blockade. MATS would provide numerous humanitarian airlifts of global proportions.

Within MATS there were other technical services such as Air Weather Service (AWS), Air Rescue Service (ARS), Special Airlift Mission (SAM), Air Photographic and Charting Service (APCS), and the Aeromedical Transport Wing (AMTW). The U.S. Navy was an integral part of MATS, providing 5 transport squadrons to the joint service effort.

As early as 1960, MATS was evolving into the role of combat airlift support rather than scheduled airlift support of overseas forces. The result was more money and effort spent on preparing for and practicing combat deployments, rather than on running a peacetime passenger and freight service. In 1961, the MATS Commander, Lt. Gen. Joe W. Kelly, wanted to redesignate his units to common descriptors since both troop carrier and air transport units

performed the same mission. Yet, each operated under different restrictions regarding numbers of crews, unit equipment, and flying hours. Headquarters USAF had approved the redesignations in 1962, but reversed itself prior to implementation due to the expense and inconvenience involved.

In June 1962, Congressman L. Mendel Rivers had proposed redesignating MATS to MAC, making MAC a specified command under the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), and consolidating all strategic airlift resources within the new command. Rivers' bill failed, and the issue lay dormant for three years. On 5 May 1965, the House of Representatives passed a bill changing MATS to MAC, and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law on 11 June 1965. There was no mention of a change in status to a JCS specified command. As a result of the new law, Headquarters USAF issued an order, under the authority of the Secretary of the Air Force, directing the redesignation. At the same time, MATS was authorized to redesignate its transport air forces to numbered air forces and its air transport/troop carrier units to military airlift units, effective on 8 January 1966. The change marked the reorientation of air transport back to its combat role by providing the organizational structure to support it.

HQ USAF inactivated MAC in June 1992 merging its resources with tanker resources from Strategic Air Command and forming the Air Mobility Command.



MADE IN AUSTRALIA  
IN 1944 (VARIATION  
WITH WOMAN)





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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

AFHRA

Air Force Magazine Almanacs. Air Force Association. Arlington, VA. Various years.

Command History. *Toward the Air Mobility Command; A Chronology of Tanker and Airlift Events*. Office of History, Air Mobility Command. Scott AFB, IL. 1993.

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