# 2 Navy Air Transport Squadrons Fly Record Loads into Berlin Via Airlift

Through fog, rain, sleet and air traffic as heavy as the avalanche of Sunday cars on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, two Navy air transport squadrons — VR-6 and VR-8 — have been steadily winging record loads of food and fuel into Berlin since last November.

Despite the fact the land blockade has been lifted and supplies are moving overland again into the beleaguered city, the famed Berlin Airlift — "Operation Vittles" — continues. Navy and Air Force planes are still pouring supplies into the German capitol via the air lanes.

Five months after the Air Force began the mammoth task of supplying Berlin by air (in June 1948) it asked the Navy to provide two squadrons of four-engine planes to assist in hauling supplies over the corridor. The Navy moved fast. Squadron VR-6 gathered its men, tools and spare parts and hastily took off from Guam for cooler climates. Squadron VR-8 bade a hurried aloha to Honolulu. Several days later the 24 R5Ds of the two squadrons landed in the mud of Rhein Main airfield, located in the northwest sector of Germany near Frankfort am-Main. The next day their flour and coal laden planes were struggling off the ground, headed for Berlin. For the next few months practically all flying was done by instrument and most landings were "talked in" by GCA.

To boost the tonnage of supplies hauled into the German Capitol, an "efficiency rating" system was set up. Figures were established for what was considered 100 per cent efficiency, based on hours of flying time, load carried, etc. The 15 Navy and Air Force squadrons raced each other to gain top efficiency ratings.

The first month after it joined the airlift red-hot Navy VR-8 squadron climbed into the top slot with an efficiency rating of over 100 per cent. Once on top it stayed there, showing the highest monthly efficiency of any squadron in the airlift from December through May. VR-6 was not far behind, placing second several months in succession.

Top squadrons in efficiency for the crucial December to April period:

• *Dec:* 1st — VR-8 USN, efficiency rating: 120.2 per cent; 2nd — 15 TC USAF, 97.3 per cent; 3rd — TC USAF, 90.9 per cent; 4th — VR-6