

MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE
AIR TRANSPORT SQUADRON EIGHT
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

HISTORY OF

AIR TRANSPORT SQUADRON EIGHT

1 July 1949 through 31 December 1949

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PART I

CHRONOLOGY

- A. Names of Commanding Officers with dates of Command:
1. Air Transport Squadron EIGHT, Rhein-Main, Germany.
Commanding Officer to 28 July 1949:
Commander J. O. VOSSELLER, 63184/1310, U. S. Navy.
Commanding Officer after this date and up to present:
Captain J. C. CLIFTON, 63318/1310, U. S. Navy.
Officer-in-Charge, VR-8 Detachment, Hickam Air Force Base, Territory of Hawaii until 15 September 1949:
Commander R. W. CONRAD, 82508/1310, U. S. Navy.
Officer-in-Charge, VR-8 Detachment, Guam, Marianas Islands for period of this report:
Lieutenant Commander M. H. HAWKINS, 146497/1310, USN(T).
Officer-in-Charge, VR-8 Detachment, Kwajalein Island until 12 September 1949:
Lieutenant (jg) J. J. McMONIGLE, 368971/1310, U. S. Navy.
From 12 September through balance of period:
Lieutenant A. R. HARRISON, 278175/1310, U. S. Navy.
Officer-in-Charge, VR-8 Detachment, Fairfield-Suisun Air Force Base, California for period of this report:
Lieutenant C. B. HARRINGTON, 124361/1310, U. S. Navy.
Officer-in-Charge, VR-8 Detachment, Johnston Island from 1 July 1949 through 9 September 1949:
Ensign K. W. WATERS, 497965/A3, U. S. Naval Reserve.
From 9 September 1949 to 31 December 1949:
Ensign D. L. RECKLING, 497902/ALL, U. S. Naval Reserve.
- B. Place in the echelon of command with changes therein.
1. Rhein-Main Air Force Base, Germany, 61st Air Transport Group.
 2. Hickam Air Force Base, 1500th Air Transport Wing, under Commander, Pacific Division, Military Air Transport Service.
- C. Geographical location of Headquarters and Detachments with changes therein.
1. Air Transport Squadron EIGHT, Rhein-Main Air Force Base, Frankfurt, Germany and Hickam Air Force Base, Territory of Hawaii after 16 September 1949.
 2. VR-8 Detachment, Hickam Air Force Base, Territory of Hawaii until 16 September 1949.
 3. VR-8 Detachment, Harmon Air Force Base, Guam, Marianas Islands.
 4. VR-8 Detachment; Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands.
 5. VR-8 Detachment; Fairfield-Suisun Air Force Base, California.
 6. VR-8 Detachment, Johnston Island, Territory of Hawaii.
- D. Area of geographical responsibility: Routes of the Pacific Division, Military Air Transport Service.

PREFACE

The accomplishments of Air Transport Squadron EIGHT in the Berlin Airlift have been adequately reported upon. The "Howgozit" figures released daily in the "Airlift Times", official publication of the combined Airlift Task Force Command, are proof of Air Transport Squadron EIGHT's leadership in daily tonnage carried, aircraft utilization, and payload efficiency ratings.

Recognition for outstanding achievement in the Berlin Airlift have come to Air Transport Squadron EIGHT in numerous ways. While figures are not available, Air Medals awarded to officers and men participating in one hundred (100) missions to Berlin, have been presented to a large number of officers and enlisted men. Other awards have included the Legion of Merit presented to Commander J. O. Vosseller for meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services. Press releases in stateside newspapers have lauded the Navy, as have articles in ALL HANDS* and NAVAL AVIATION NEWS**. Last but not least has been the recognition awarded the Squadron in the form of letters of commendation and messages of congratulations from top military and industrial leaders***.

* "2 Navy Air Transport Squadrons Fly Record Loads into Berlin via Airlift", ALL HANDS, August 1949, page 33.

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"Airlift Gets Navy Lift", Ibid, February 1949, page 11.

** "Navy Wins Airlift Honors", NAVAL AVIATION NEWS, November 1949, page 15.

*** "The Berlin Airlift", congratulations to the Navy from Secretary of Defense Louis B. Johnson, NAVY DEPARTMENT BULLETIN of 31 October 1949, 49-761.

Congratulations from Douglas Aircraft Corporation, NAVY DEPARTMENT BULLETIN, January-June 1949, 49-401.

Commendations from 61st T.C.G. and Major-General William H. Tunner, Commanding the combined Airlift Task Force, were frequently received.

PART II
NARRATIVE

A. The Last Month of the Airlift for Air Transport Squadron EIGHT.

The last month of VR-8's participation in the Airlift, and the first for the period this report covers (July 1949), found the squadron continuing with its mission of assisting the supply of life for the two and one half million people in Berlin who were cut off from all means of land transportation to the outside world.

Instead of flying the maximum number of flights daily, as had been the policy, each squadron attempted to fly a daily quota assigned by the 61st Task Carrier Group, this daily quota ranging from 24 to 38 round trips to Berlin. (This quota was subject to change almost daily due to the aircraft availability within the respective squadrons in the Group and to weather conditions).

During July 889 round trips were made to Berlin. This resulted in 6,547 pilot hours flown and 9,412 tons of supplies delivered. In addition, approximately 356 pilot hours were flown during delivery and return of aircraft from Moffett Field, California, for heavy maintenance, and to Burtonwood, England, for 200 hour maintenance checks. The engineering department, consisting of 5 officers and 180 enlisted men, broken down into 3 sections working 12 hours on and 24 hours off, 7 days a week, maintained its consistently high utilization factor (11.9 for July) with a total of 8.8 aircraft assigned. For the 889 trips flown, 3273.7 flight hours were logged for an average of 372 hours per aircraft. A total of 6 engine changes were performed during the month, while 3 aircraft were transferred to VR-44, Moffett Field, for heavy maintenance and 5 aircraft were received from VR-44.

The last Navy "Vittles" flight was made on 31 July 1949. In the meantime, the VR-8 Detachment located at Hickam Air Force Base, T. H. was continuing to aid the skeleton MATS organization in the Pacific. Flying U. S. Marine Corps and Air Force Skymasters, 1039 pilot hours were flown in scheduled transport flights between Fairfield, California and Harmon Field, Guam, Marianas Islands. With one R5D and one R4D assigned for training purposes, 299.2 pilot hours were utilized for upgrading pilots (37.1 pilot hours were flown at night). During this month, seven plane commanders were designated, three pilots were advanced from class B to class A, and one pilot was advanced from class C to class B. Eleven pilots meanwhile completed the C54/R5D ground engineering course maintained by the 1500th Air Transport Group, Hickam AFB.

B. Redeployment:

The move from Rhein-Main Air Force Base, Frankfurt, Germany to Hickam Air Force Base, Territory of Hawaii.

The latter two weeks of July were filled with rumors of the approaching end of the Airlift and probable locations of the two Navy squadrons if and when deployment took place. In spite of these, VR-8 maintained its heavy schedule and workload until official notification was received on 1 August 1949 to make preparations for redeployment from Rhein-Main to Hickam via Patuxent River, Maryland and Moffett Field, California

A readiness program was set up on VR-8 aircraft which was strictly adhered to. All planes were thoroughly checked, cleaned, test flown, loaded, and dispatched to Patuxent River, on a set plan. No deviation from the schedule was permitted. Each aircraft carried a selected maintenance crew that was capable of making any necessary repairs on the long trip home, and adequate spare parts kits and tools were aboard each plane.

"Phasing-out" commenced on the fifth of August with two aircraft departing for Moffett Field. Each aircraft departed with nineteen crew members and with sufficient squadron gear to give a maximum gross take-off weight of 70,000 pounds. Two aircraft departed daily through the tenth of August.

Two days prior to each aircraft's departure, the flight crew test-hopped their aircraft. The following day the aircraft were loaded with squadron gear and personal baggage. A guard was posted in each aircraft until the aircraft departed the following day. Certain crew members in each aircraft were designated as Engineering and Aircraft Supply Officer, Airborne Weight and Balance Officer, Personnel Officer, Airborne Mess Officer, and Leading Chief in order to coordinate with the Plane Commander the various respective responsibilities involved during the time the squadron was engaged in movement. In addition; each aircraft had at least two Plane Commanders, two Co-Pilots, and two Navigators to share duties so that no rest periods were necessary enroute. Despite the fact that long range navigation had not been used because of the specific radio type navigation used on the Airlift, sufficient pilots were found to act as navigators for return to the states and Hickam. Officers selected to act as liaison officers at Lagens, Azores; Argentia, Newfoundland; Patuxent River, Maryland and Moffett Field, California departed on the first aircraft. Their duties were to meet each aircraft and to assist as necessary to eliminate any delay. These liaison officers returned with the last aircraft.

One aircraft, which required major repair due to a collapsed nose-wheel at Templehof, Berlin, Germany, did not return with the previously mentioned aircraft until 20 August 1949. All planes, however; arrived at Patuxent River with no discrepancies encountered enroute.

In matters pertaining to the Squadron Supply Department, the redeployment from Germany to Hawaii entailed a phase-out program incident to the departure from Rhein-Main Air Force Base and a program of reorganization and re-outfitting after arrival at the Hickam Air Force Base. During the month of July the squadron's active participation in the Airlift and preliminary fold-up projects required a 24 hour work day for the Supply Department. Rhein-Main provided the major portion of aviation material required for squadron maintenance and support, though it was necessary for the squadron to stock R5D peculiar spares, special and flight clothing and sundry Navy Administrative supplies. Upon the announcement of "D" day (Departure Day), less than a full week before the first two aircraft were to leave, the squadron in anticipation of the move had already made substantial steps to identify, segregate, and prepare for shipment all squadron equipment that was to be returned to the U. S. The phase-out program was performed in accordance with a predetermined disposition plan. In general, clothing and electronics equipment was consigned to NAS Norfolk; ground handling and test equipment to NAS, Moffett Field; aircraft engines to NAS Patuxent

equipment to NAS, Moffett Field; aircraft engines to NAS Patuxent River; aviation spares to Naval Air Station, Alameda, California; and tools and in-flight spares to the squadron's ultimate destination. Shipment of squadron gear and other critical items suitable for air shipment was made on returning VR-8 aircraft and scheduled MATS aircraft. Other material was placed in the hands of Navy representatives who remained behind to coordinate surface shipment to the designated points.

During August, the month of transit, the Supply Department was disbanded. Supply personnel were borrowed from points enroute to receive and screen material turned into store. All material designated to accompany the squadron was temporarily stored at Naval Air Station, Moffett Field and then shipped in proportionate lots

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to Hawaii on VR-8 aircraft as they were accepted from heavy maintenance.

The Supply Department personnel allowance during this period was complete and adequate. LTJG C. A. Smith, SC, USN, served as Supply Officer during July 1949 and was assigned temporary additional duty after departure of the squadron for the purpose of clearing the squadron accounts. LTJG Smith was detached from Rhein-Main Air Force Base on 17 August after satisfactorily completing this project. LTJG J. T. Robison, SC, USN, reported on 17 July 1949 for duty as Supply Officer and accompanied the squadron to Hawaii for the purpose of handling supply matters while enroute. Ensign R. L. Rainey, SC, USN, was attached to the squadron as disbursing officer during July and performed disbursing duties for both VR-8 and VR-6. Ensign Rainey accompanied the squadron as far as the United States and was detached without relief. Settlement of Ensign Rainey's disbursing accounts was accomplished by the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts.

Upon arrival at Naval Air Station, Patuxent River, pilots and crew members were detached from TAD, VR-8 and permanent duty with VR-3, and granted leave in accordance with time spent in Germany. This leave was granted at the rate of five days for each month spent in Germany and counted against annual leave. Preference was given to those wishing East Coast or West Coast leave, the latter being used to ferry the planes on to Naval Air Station, Moffett Field. Approximately 30 officers returning from VR-8 were assigned to VR-8 Hickam. Officers and crew members returning from leave and from the Hickam detachment were used to ferry the planes from Naval Air Station, Moffett Field to Hickam after the planes were released from overhaul.

In addition to aiding in the ferrying of aircraft from Naval Air Station, Moffett Field, the pilots at the Hickam detachment, in August, flew 1039 scheduled transport hours on the Hickam-Fairfield-Guam runs. 304 hours were devoted to pilot training in the R4D and R4D type aircrafts, with 61 pilot hours being devoted to night training. During this month 7 pilots were designated as Plane Commanders on VR-8 routes; 3 Co-Pilots were advanced from Class B to Class A; and 1 Co-Pilot was upgraded from Class C to Class B. Three Co-Pilots were sent to the Co-Pilot School maintained by VR-44 at Moffett Field, the same Co-Pilot School which so successfully trained Plane Commanders and Co-Pilots for replacements in the Airlift.

C. Reorganization.

Since the arrival of the last plane from Naval Air Station, Moffett Field on 8 September and the return of officers and enlisted personnel from leave and reassignment, the history of Air Transport Squadron EIGHT has been one of reorganization and integration; reorganization into a smooth functioning squadron with coordinated departmental activities and integration once more into the MATS scheme of things.

PICTURES

Captain J. C. CLIFTON being congratulated before leaving Rhein-Main for Patuxent by Colonel R. DeVania, Commanding Officer, 61st Air Transport Group, under whom VR-8 operated. Background, left to right: LCDR J. C. LAFFERTY, 168007/1310, LCDR R. W. HART, Jr., 114188/1310, LT W. F. JOHANSEN, 283849/1310, LTJG G. W. TARLETON, 447978/1310, ENS R. S. MARTIN, 495653/ALL, PAUL, W. L. ADC, 243 87 63, USN, LINDLEY, J. E. AD2, 552 12 40, USN



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AIR-LIFT
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VR-8

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The last crew to arrive at Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland.
Left to right: LCDR H. F. STANFORD, 85957/110, LT M. A. ROOD, 170966/A5L,
LT W. F. JOHANSEN, 283849/1310, LCDR J. C. LAFFERTY, 169007/1310, LCDR R.
W. HART, Jr., 114188/1310, Captain J. C. CLETON, 63318/1310, Commanding
Officer, VR-8, ENS R. S. MARTIN, 495653/AL PAUL, W. L., ADC, 243 87 63, USN,
LTJG G. W. TARLETON, 447978/1310, Unidentified officer, LINDLEY, J. E., AD2,
552 12 40, USN, SMITH, M., AEC, 382 72 37, USN, MAULER, J. "A", YN2, 581 21 54,
USN, STEVENS, W. A., ADC, 291 62 82, USN, HARDIN, D.M., YN2, 567 65 37, USN,
Two unidentified VR-3 radiomen, ALMGREN, O. A., YN2, 255 68 34, USN, and
LCDR C. S. DENEEN, 106390/A3.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- "Airlift Gets Navy Lift", Ibid, February 1949, page 11.
- ** "Navy Wins Airlift Honors", NAVAL AVIATION NEWS, November 1949, page 15.
- *** "The Berlin Airlift", congratulations to the Navy from Secretary of Defense Louis B. Johnson, NAVY DEPARTMENT BULLETIN, of 31 October 1949, 49-761.
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- Commendations from the 61st T. C. G. and Major-General William H. Tunner, Commanding the combined Airlift Task Force, were frequently received.
- Air Force Aircraft Accident Review, Department of the Air Force, The Inspector General, USAF, Office of the Air Inspector; Flying Safety Division, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, Vol. IV, No. 43, 28 October 1949, page 15.
- Ibid, Vol. IV, No. 51, 23 December 1949, page 6.