
The Airlifter Volume XXIX



The Airlifter

Newsletter of the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association

Promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage

www.troopcarrier.org

June 26, 2016

Volume XXIX

Tenth Anniversary!

On June 26, 2006, the Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association was chartered by the state of Texas as a non-profit Texas corporation, which makes us ten years old today. However, although that is the date when we became official, the organization could be said to date back to sometime in the 1990s when a bored Sam McGowan decided to do a search of America Online profiles for mentions of C-130 and started sending out group Emails. Realizing that there were no (and still aren't) organizations dedicated to the C-130, there was some discussion about forming one. In the fall of 2003, Sam visited the late Major Howie Seiboldt in Miami and they agreed that when Howie came back to the US the following year, he would come to Sam's home in Houston and they'd get together with Howie's friends. However, Howie passed away the following April due to kidney failure. Sam had attended a reunion of Blind Bat veterans (that came out of the same Emails) in 2001 and began thinking about hosting a similar event in Galveston, Texas where veterans of the aerial port squadron from Lockbourne AFB, Ohio had been getting together. After considerable hemming and hawing about when, Bob Ruffin finally said, i.e. "you can't please everybody, just pick a date and let's do it!"

Bob, who served with the 463rd TCW at Langley and later with the 516th at Dyess and the 314th at Little Rock, agreed to work on the planning and became instrumental in setting things up with the Galveston tourism committee. He flew down to Houston and he and Sam went to Galveston to look at facilities. Originally, the reunion was going to be for TAC and overseas C-130 veterans but we decided to expand it to include everyone who was ever in troop carrier/tactical airlift in any capacity. The reunion – we called it "Troop Carrier Homecoming" – was held over Veterans Day weekend 2005 with over 100 veterans their spouses and guests in attendance. We had veterans whose service covered World War II, Korea and Vietnam as well as the post-Vietnam era. On Saturday morning, there was some discussion about forming an organization. Ace Bowman suggested that we use the emblem of the IX Troop Carrier Command as our emblem.

We took no action toward organizing other than talking about it. Shortly afterwards, the late Bill Cannon recommended that we incorporate as a non-profit so we could receive tax-deductible contributions from industry. Finally, Ernie Gassiott took the bull by the horns and drew up the papers and submitted them to

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

the Texas Attorney General's office and they were approved and signed on June 26, 2006. The Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Association was born.

We now had an organization but had yet to organize. The incorporation papers listed Sam McGowan, Bob Ruffin and Tony Girtman as the founders with Sam McGowan as executor. At the Galveston reunion, those present had generally agreed that we should meet there every year and we made plans to come back in 2006. During the meeting, Ernie sat down with Sam McGowan, Tony Girtman and Ralph Bemis, who had agreed to act as treasurer due to Bob Ruffin's and his wife's health issues – Bob was unable to attend. Ernie advised that we needed to submit paperwork to the IRS requesting recognition as a 501c (19) veteran's organization and we needed to elect a board. Sam McGowan agreed to set up the paperwork. Sam had previously set up a bank account with Bank of America. We visited the Galveston branch and had Ralph and Tony added to the account. We selected a slate of temporary officers and board members from those present – plus Bob Ruffin, who had said that he would be able to serve as vice-president – and voted on them at the banquet.

Our next step was to draw up a set of permanent bylaws. After consulting bylaws of several similar veterans organizations, Sam McGowan drew up a set of bylaws that added a Chairman of the Board and Vice-Chairman to head the board of directors with the Chairman having overall responsibility for the conduct of the organization and the President having responsibility for day-to-day operations. This was done to establish a division of powers. We were planning to return to Galveston in 2007 but the meeting was cancelled at the last minute due to an expected low turnout. Consequently, we decided to have a special organizational meeting at the Clear Lake Hilton in Clear Lake, Texas in February 2008. The proposed bylaws were scrutinized, amended and adopted and a new slate of officers and board members were chosen and elected by those present. Ace Bowman agreed to be our first Chairman and Hector Leyva was our first President. Hector and Andy Vaquera agreed to host a 2008 members meeting in San Antonio (there had been some griping about returning to Galveston). The meeting and reunion was held at the Hyatt Place on the Riverwalk over Veterans Day weekend. We voted to change the frequency of future meetings from annually to biennially. Since that time, we've held meetings in conjunctions with reunions in Galveston, Warner Robins, Georgia, Tucson, Arizona and Little Rock, Arkansas. Our next meeting/reunion is being planned for Dayton, Ohio in October 2018.

Chairman's Corner

Comments from the Chairman,

My, how time does fly! The Little Rock reunion has come and gone and we are now beginning to think about Dayton in 2018. For those of you who could not make it to Little Rock, it was about as good as it gets. Bill Kehler and his team did a magnificent job and although we know at times they were "paddling like hell under the surface to keep up," it was totally transparent to the attendees. Food, facilities, adult beverages and sleep was available to all but the comradeship we all experienced was the highlight of our time together. The spirit and enthusiasm of the senior leadership from the base could not have been better. Our tour of the base, the catfish/chicken buffet at the Jacksonville Museum of Military History and the hospitality displayed by the Wyndham Hotel staff was all outstanding. Ben Kraljev, our banquet speaker, gave us amazing insights into what the Son Tay Raid looked like through the eyes of a Pentagon planner. In addition may I take this opportunity to thank all of you at the membership

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

meeting for your "outrageous generosity" in support of the planned Memorial to be placed at the Air Force Museum in 2018. May your wonderful spirit of promoting and preserving the troop carrier/tactical airlift heritage be recognized by all who view the Memorial. If you have not yet contributed to the placing of the Memorial, please consider doing so if you are able. Thanks also to those members who have seen fit to upgrade their status to Life Members.

What a great organization the TC/TAA is; where else could you rub elbows with entertainers such as Mickey Spillane, loads like Al Capone and Chaplains like James Bond with a 007 club card number?

See you in Dayton!

Turning 3

George Dockery

President's Page

Flash From the Prez:

George covered the 2016 Little Rock, Arkansas Reunion in detail, so I will not go into the reunion as much - except Bill Kehler and team deserve an Attaboy/girl for all the hard work they put into the reunion. We always knew what was happening and there was plenty to eat and drink at all times, plus the tall tales told will live forever.

I would like to cat about our upcoming 2018 Fairborn, Ohio Reunion where we will be installing a memorial in the Air Force Museum Memorial Gardens honoring all Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Members from the past who gave their lives for us to live this wonderful life in the good ole USA. We were able to add ~\$5,000 to the memorial fund during our 3 day event in Little Rock, which puts us half way there to the magic \$25,000 cost. How can you help - First, plan on attending and on October 13, 2018 we will be installing the Memorial and will have a full house there to honor those people who have given their lives. Second, put down some numbers on a check and send it in so we can get this Memorial started to be carved in the granite. Remember, we are a 501 (c) organization so it is all tax deductible - just ask Treasurer Ralph Bemis for that coveted receipt.

Be safe out and stay healthy and hope to see all at the Holiday Inn, Fairborn, Ohio in October 2018.

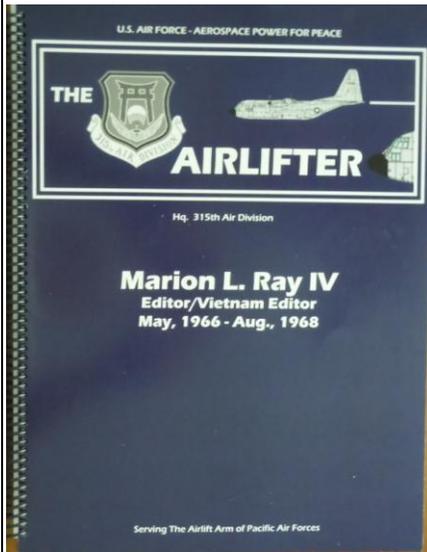
Mike Welch
President, TC/TAA

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

Finances

As of today, our bank account balance is \$27,488.65, of which \$14,495 is dedicated to the Memorial Fund. That leaves \$12,993.65 in our general fund. Members present in Little Rock contributed \$4,970.00 to the memorial fund and the auction raised \$925.00, which was added to the \$8,600 already in the fund, of which \$5,000 was designated from the general fund. The reunion planners and officers will be providing a detailed accounting of the reunion funding and spending in the very near future.

The Airlifter Volume



We wish to thank Tom Stalvey for graciously volunteering to have copies made of the bound volume of 315th Air Division newspapers that was presented to the AIC Marion L. Ray of the division PIO when he left Tachikawa in August 1968. Ray died in the 1990s and his papers are now in the hands of his daughter, Samantha Wales. Samantha graciously allowed me to borrow the volume and have copies made for myself and others who wished to pay the cost of copying. Some 70 copies were made in 2003. Bob Ruffin had a few additional copies made prior to the 2005 Troop Carrier Homecoming.

Some 20-25 copies have been purchased and the remainder are now available. Please send your check for \$75.00 plus \$10.00 for shipping and handling to Andy Vaguera, 1506 Oak Cask, San Antonio, Texas 78253.

Association Bookstore

Speaking of books, remember that we have our own bookstore on Amazon.com at <http://astore.amazon.com/tt0bbb-20>. (You can also access it from www.troopcarrier.org.) Members and the public can go there and order troop carrier/tactical airlift-related books and the Association receives a referral fee for each item ordered. We've had to "rebuild" the store and are in the process of adding new titles. If anyone knows of any book that is not listed, please let us know and we'll add it to the store.

Dayton in 2018!

At the Tucson meeting, we voted to hold the 2016 meeting in Little Rock with the 2018 meeting to be held in Dayton, Ohio, at which time we will be presenting a memorial to the US Air Force Museum for display in the museum's memorial garden. Mark your calendar for the weekend of October 10-14. Ray Snedegar, Garry Arndt and Jack Brankamp, who live in the Dayton area, are planning the event. The highlight of the activities will be the presentation of the memorial on Friday, October 12. We'll be having a banquet inside the museum on Saturday evening, October 13. To find out more about the museum, check the website at www.nationalmuseum.af.mil. (A fourth building has just been opened at the

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

museum. Featured is a C-141 that brought the first POWs out of Hanoi. They won't tell you that the MAC C-141s were guided into Hanoi by a radio beacon operated by a combat control team who flew in earlier in the day on a PACAF C-130E. In fact, PACAF C-130s had been operating in and out of Hanoi for two weeks prior to the release.)

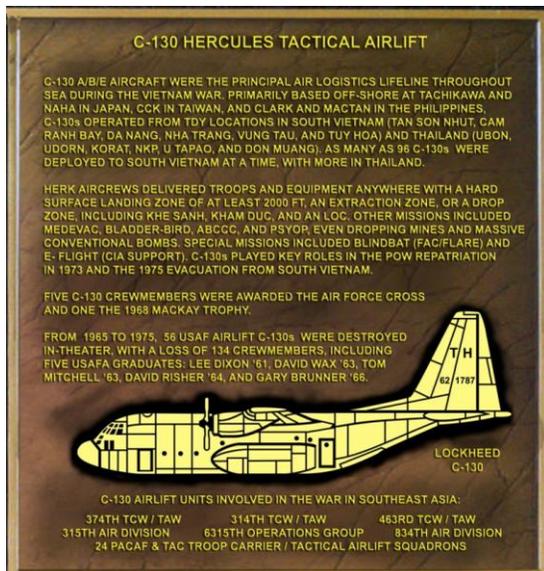
The Memorial



A memorial committee was appointed at the Tucson members meeting in October 2014. We have presented our ideas to Dodd Monuments, an Ohio monument company with a long history of designing and placing monuments at the museum. Their design team came up with the preceding design as a preliminary. (There will be some minor changes, mainly changing “Troop Carriers” and “Tactical Airlifters” from the plural to the singular.) The big job now is raising the remainder of the approximately \$30,000 we’re going to need. Air Force regulations limit the cost of monuments to \$25,000 without USAF approval and we can expect to spend close to that. We won’t know the final cost until about its

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

time to start work on it due to the cost of the stone. The cost of the slab and walkways leading to it is not counted in the \$25,000. Although we don't have a definite cost for the slab at this time, we can expect it to be in the neighborhood of \$5,000. As of right now, we have \$14,995 in the Memorial Fund with another \$500 pledged, which puts us at half of what we need. We'll need to pay half the cost to Dodd before they will begin work on the monument. We should expect to pay that around the first of 2018, with the balance due prior to placement. That gives us right at two and a half years to raise the rest. However, the sooner we raise it, the better. Send your contribution to our treasurer, Ralph Bemis, at 248 Valley View Drive, Kerrville, Texas 78028. (If we can raise the other \$15,000 in a timely manner, we might want to consider raising another \$5,000 or so and adding a bench so visitors will have a place to sit down and contemplate the memorial.) Don't hesitate to hit up your non-member buddies and any corporations you might have contact with!



USAF Academy Memorial Plaque

We have recently learned that a group of Air Force Academy graduates who served in Vietnam on C-130s have commissioned the plaque shown at left and plan to place it at the Academy on Wednesday, September 21 at 10:00AM. All C-130 veterans who flew in Vietnam or supported the mission are invited to attend. If you're interested, contact Tony Mrsa at tonylinda@insight.net. Several of our members are planning to attend. The funds have already been raised and the plaque produced. Any contributions received over and above the cost will be used for the presentation. Tony advises that he got the idea for the plaque after noticing there was no C-130 recognition when he was at the Academy to present the plaque for Lance Sijan.

The C-130 in Tactical Airlift in Southeast Asia

The information on the USAFA plaque raises a few questions as to just which C-130 squadrons were involved in airlift operations in Southeast Asia. When the AFA group researched the number of squadrons, they came up with a number of 24, of which 13 were squadrons assigned to PACAF with the others being Tactical Air Command squadrons on rotation. Due to the convoluted history of the Air Force as squadrons, groups and wings have been deactivated and replaced (on paper) by other units, it's difficult to trace the actual history. A good example is when the 314th at CCK transferred to Little Rock and the 374th designation from Naha transferred there to "replace" it as the Naha wing inactivated. Consequently, there is no continuity for the 374th Troop Carrier/Tactical Airlift Wing. The same thing happened in TAC when the wing at Lockbourne was shut down and the 317th transferred, on paper, to Pope to replace the 464th Tactical Airlift Wing and the 464th's squadrons were replaced by two of the squadrons assigned to

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

the 317th and the 41st, which had been at Naha. We will attempt to sort out some of the details in this article.



The role of the C-130 in Southeast Asia dates back almost to the beginning of C-130 operational history. USAF plans called for six C-130 troop carrier squadrons in the US and six overseas, with three in the Pacific. The first C-130s were assigned to the 483rd Troop Carrier Wing at Ashiya AB, Japan in 1958 when the 815th and 817th squadrons received C-130As. A third squadron, the 21st, was based at Tachikawa AB, Japan where it was used primarily to provide airplanes for CIA use. The 21st transferred to Naha AB, Okinawa and equipped with C-130As while continuing its role of supporting the CIA, particularly in Tibet. (E Flight came later during the Kennedy Administration.) During the transition and afterward, PACAF's 315th Air Division was supplemented by rotational squadrons from TAC's 314th and 463rd Troop Carrier Wings. The first C-130 operations in Southeast Asia occurred in 1958 when 315th Air Division used C-130s and C-119s in support of Laotian government forces prior to and during the Laotian Civil War. PACAF and TAC C-130s were no strangers to South Vietnam during this period either. The 483rd inactivated in 1960 and Ashiya closed. The 815th transferred to Tachikawa and the 817th to Naha to join the 21st.

From 1958 through 1962, TAC squadrons reinforced 315th Air Division. When C-130Bs started coming into service, new squadrons activated at Sewart and Dyess AFB, Texas. The 345th converted from C-123s to C-130As in 1961. There is some confusion over the 345th's assignment in 1962. The squadron went to Naha on June 1, 1962 but this seems to have actually been a TDY. According to squadron veterans, the 345th left Sewart in January 1963 for Naha and as its crews reached the International Date Line, they became part of the 35th Troop Carrier Squadron. (Some Naha veterans who were in other squadrons claim the 345th was already at Naha but that's not what 35th veterans say.) The 345th designation transferred immediately to Dyess where the 516th Troop Carrier Wing activated. To serve as a command unit for the three Naha squadrons, the 6315th Operations Group was activated. Ironically, only the flight crews and operations personnel were assigned to the 6315th. The airplanes and all maintenance personnel were assigned to the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. There was one exception – in 1961 President John F. Kennedy ordered the Air Force to provide four C-130s for CIA use in support of Vang Pao's army in Laos and E Flight was activated within the 21st TCS. Enough maintenance personnel to support the four airplanes transferred to E Flight.

The Airlifter Volume XXIX



(Sewart C-130E at Dong Ha, October 1965)

In 1963, TAC began receiving C-130Es. The 516th TCW at Dyess was the first to get them followed by the 464th at Pope, which converted from C-123s in a move that had been postponed due to the assignment of C-123s to TDY duty in South Vietnam in late 1961. The 314th at Sewart also equipped with Es. The 314th's B-models went to a new wing at Forbes AFB, Kansas where the 313th TCW replaced a SAC B-47 wing. The 463rd transferred to Langley to replace a deactivating tanker wing. A reorganization in Europe led to the transfer of the 317th TCW from France to Lockbourne AFB, Ohio where it was eventually joined by the 18th Troop Carrier Squadron from Sewart. In August 1964, TAC sent several squadrons TDY to the Far East in response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident on ONE BUCK. Although it was not part of the original deployment, the 18th TCS replaced a Sewart B-model squadron at Clark and operated in the Pacific for a time, including missions into and within South Vietnam. ONE BUCK included squadrons from Langley and Sewart. TAC rotational squadrons would remain with 315th Air Division until early 1966. Prior to 1965, US ground troops were in South Vietnam in an advisory capacity. That changed early that year when the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 1st Marine Division moved to Vietnam from Okinawa, with 315th Air Division moving personnel and equipment with its assigned C-130s and TAC rotational squadrons. In April, President Lyndon Johnson ordered the commencement of ROLLING THUNDER, a sustained campaign of air attacks against North Vietnam. TWO BUCK involved the movement of two additional TAC C-130 squadrons to the Far East, bringing the number of TAC C-130 rotational squadrons to four – one each from Dyess, Langley, Pope and Sewart at Naha, Clark and Kadena. SIXTEEN BUCK was the August movement of a second Pope squadron to Mactan, a tiny island in the Philippines.

A number of proposals had been made to assign C-130s to South Vietnam for airlift operations but they were opposed by 315th Air Division, which advocated that its squadrons could provide airlift by making multiple stops in country during missions from Okinawa and the Philippines. A few crews were

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

assigned to operate out of Tan Son Nhut on “Southeast Asia Trainer” missions of a few days at a time. In June 1965, 315th established the first rotational operation at Tan Son Nhut with TAC airplanes and crews. By the end of the year, additional detachments had been established at Vung Tau and in Thailand at Bangkok and plans were underway for a detachment at the airfield at Cam Ranh Bay, which was still under construction.



To this point in the war, the following squadrons had definitely been involved in Southeast Asia: The 21st, 35th and 817th from Naha, the 815th from Tachikawa, the 772nd, 773rd and 774th from Langley, the 776th, 777th, 778th and 779th from Pope, the 50th and 18th from Sewart and the 345th from Dyess. The 61st and 62nd from Sewart had probably been involved along with the 346th and 347th from Dyess. (There had actually been two 345th's involved – the 345th from Sewart with A-models and the reactivated 345th from Dyess with Es.) The 18th TCS had one TDY to Clark in conjunction with ONE BUCK.

In the fall of 1965, USAF decided to beef up tactical airpower in PACAF to fight the escalating war in Vietnam. Along with a number of fighter and recon units, eight C-130 squadrons and two wings transferred from TAC to PACAF's 315th Air Division. The 463rd TCW transferred from Langley along with its three squadrons, the 772nd, 773rd and 774th. The wing went to Mactan along with the 772nd and 774th and the 773rd to Clark where it was joined by the 29th TCS from Forbes in early 1966. The 41st TCS transferred to Naha from Lockbourne and brought the number of C-130A squadrons in PACAF to five. The 50th transferred initially to Clark from Sewart, the 345th from Dyess to Naha and the 776th from Pope to Tachikawa. The three E-model squadrons eventually transferred to CCK on Taiwan to the 314th TCW, which had transferred there from Sewart. The name of the base was changed from Kung Kwan to Ching Chuan Kang shortly after the 314th arrived. The transfer of the TAC squadrons brought 315th AD strength to five squadrons of C-130As, four of C-130Bs and three of C-130Es. (A fourth C-130E squadron would

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

transfer from TAC in early 1969.) Shortly after the transfer, the C-130 force suffered its first reported combat losses, a 345th E-model at Tuy Hoa and a B-model at Pleiku.



(Photo courtesy of Don Horton)

Prior to late 1965, the Tan Son Nhut detachment was the only C-130 force assigned to South Vietnam. Originally, a force of four C-130s was assigned there for “indefinite” duration. Within a few weeks, the in country C-130 force had grown to nine – six at Saigon for shuttle as required and three to move cargo out of Qui Nhon to interior bases. Additional C-130s were sent in country on an as-needed basis for specific operations, such as the movement of troops from coastal bases, where they arrived by ship, to their permanent bases. With the transfer of the TAC squadrons, 315th AD decided to set up detachments at Vung Tau and the new base at Cam Ranh Bay of five airplanes each, all C-130Es, and eight more operating out of Nha Trang. The Tan Son Nhut operation had grown to fourteen airplanes, all Bs. In addition, a C-130 operating location had been set up at Bangkok’s Don Muang airport with four TAC C-130Es in September.¹ The Bangkok operation was taken over by the 463rd briefly in early 1966.

In the spring of 1966, 315th AD reorganized its Southeast Asia operations. The C-130 flare mission at Da Nang was shut down and a new mission established at Ubon, Thailand with the same airplanes and crews. Funding for the Da Nang operation transferred to a new operation at Cam Ranh. Thirteen C-130As were assigned to the new operation – eleven from Naha and four from Tachikawa. The C-130Es that had previously been operating from Cam Ranh and Vung Tau were withdrawn and the number of E-models operating in country on a semi permanent basis was reduced to eight at Nha Trang. The E-model force

¹ There is an error in Bowers’ history – he says the Bangkok airplanes were B-models from Mactan. They were based at Mactan but were TDY TAC E-models from the 779th TCS at Pope. B-models didn’t arrive at Mactan until later in the year.

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

took over most of the scheduled cargo missions operating between Naha and bases in Southeast Asia.² The Saigon force was increased to twenty-three C-130Bs. The B-models that had taken over the Bangkok operation were replaced by A-models. In addition, the 6315th Operations Group from Naha was providing airplanes and crews for the C-130 FAC/flare mission at Ubon.



(C-130A flaeships at Ubon – May 1966)

There was another C-130 operation that was out of the ordinary. When the Air Force decided to build a new airfield at Tuy Hoa, the contractor insisted on having an airplane and crew dedicated to their operation to provide transportation between Tuy Hoa and their Asian office at Taipei. When 315th Air Division balked at their request, they appealed to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who authorized the assignment of a single C-130A from the 17th Troop Carrier Squadron at Elmendorf, Alaska to support Operation TURNKEY.³ The 17th kept an airplane and crew in Taiwan for several months.

Flight crews at the Southeast Asia “shuttle” bases were sent down for periods of sixteen days, counting the day they flew in and the day they flew back home. According to the history of the 374th Troop Carrier Wing, its C-130As and their ground crews went to Cam Ranh for nine days at a time.

² Prior to the establishment of the Cam Ranh rotation, it was common for Naha crews to arrive in country and be told they were to stay for an indefinite period. Their clothes would have to be sent down on another airplane. There were even instances when crews on local training flights were diverted to South Vietnam for periods of up to two weeks.)

³ The assignment has led to claims by 17th TCS vets that it was because they were more proficient in unimproved runway work. In fact, the assignment came about because the company had been involved in construction work on the DEW Line. After 315th AD said no, they requested that an airplane be sent from Alaska to support them and McNamara agreed.

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

Maintenance and other support personnel were on temporary duty ranging from two weeks to as much as 179 days. Flare mission flight crew rotations varied from 45 days to 179 days. Initially, there was no distinction in assignment to forward field operations between the three models. However, after two major accidents due to prop reversal problems, the A-models were restricted to paved runways with a minimum length of 4,000 feet (including overruns). Meanwhile, C-130Bs were restricted only by their aircraft performance limitations. The Tan Son Nhut based Bs were bearing the brunt of the forward field operations and would continue to do so until the restrictions on the A-models were eased and additional E-models were assigned to in country operations as MAC took over more and more Western Pacific airlift work.

Overseas assignment periods varied. Tachikawa and Naha were three-year assignments for accompanied personnel and eighteen months for unaccompanied. CCK and Mactan were considered isolated tours and were for only thirteen months, while accompanied tours at Clark were for two years and unaccompanied were eighteen.⁴ This meant a rapid turnover of personnel in the E-model units and in half of the B-model squadrons. The replacement of experienced personnel by less experienced men led to an increase in the accident rate. The problem was compounded by the assignment of men from other aircraft types to C-130 units. Many were former SAC personnel whose previous experience was restricted to taking off and landing on 10,000-foot runways. Problems were compounded even further by the return to the cockpit of pilots who had been in desk jobs, some for years. The author knew one pilot at Naha whose last assignment as an aircraft commander had been in B-24s!⁵ Some were competent pilots; some were not. Flight engineers were often fresh from SAC flightlines where they had worked as B-47 mechanics. Replacement loadmasters often came from MATS; they had to adapt to tactical operations in a combat environment. The following table illustrates how the accident rate was affected by personnel experience level.

Operational Losses

| | | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|-----------------------|----------|
| 24-4-65 | C-130A | 57-0475 | 815 th TCS | Thailand |
| 18-9-65 | C-130A | 55-0038 | 35 th TCS | Qui Nhon |
| 8-12-65 | C-130A | 56-0502 | 817 th TCS | Chu Lai |
| 9-1-66 | C-130B | 61-0970 | 774 th TCS | An Khe |
| 3---66 | C-130A | 56-0506 | 41 st TCS | Tuy Hoa |
| 29-3-66 | C-130 | 61-0953 | 29 th TCS | Pleiku |
| 17-6-66 | C-130E | 63-7785 | MAC | mid-air |
| 17-2-67 | C-130B | 60-0307 | 463 rd TCW | Tay Ninh |
| 12-3-67 | C-130E | 63-7772 | 345 th TCS | An Khe |
| 16-4-67 | C-130B | 58-0722 | 29 th TCS | Bao Loc |
| 9-6-67 | C-130B | 58-0737 | 29 th TCS | mid-air |
| 17-6-67 | C-130B | 60-0293 | 772 nd TCS | An Khe |

⁴ The tour at CCK was later increased to fifteen months.

⁵ He was a scientist who had flown the last B-24 in the USAF inventory when it was used for icing tests in the 1950s.

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

| | | | | |
|----------|--------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 8-10-67 | C-130B | 61-2649 | 773 rd TAS | Phu Bai |
| 12-10-67 | C-130A | 57-0467 | 21 st TAS | Dak To |
| 15-10-67 | C-130E | 64-0548 | 50 th TAS | Khe Sanh |
| 2-3-68 | C-130A | 56-0549 | 21 st TAS | Phu Bai |
| 3-3-68 | C-130E | 62-1814 | 50 th TAS | Cam Ranh |
| 13-4-68 | C-130B | 61-0967 | 774 th TAS | Khe Sanh |
| 16-4-68 | C-130A | 56-0480 | 35 th TAS | Bunard |
| 15-5-68 | C-130 | 63-7875 | MAC | Quang Tri |
| 28-11-68 | C-130B | 61-2644 | 463 rd TAS | Tonle Cham |
| 6-10-69 | C-130B | 58-0718 | 774 th TAS | mid-air explosion |
| 13-12-69 | C-130A | 56-0499 | 41 st TAS | Bu Dop |
| 21-2-71 | C-130B | 61-2642 | 463 rd TAW | Da Nang |
| 5-17-72 | C-130E | 62-1854 | 374 th TAW | Kontum |

There were several reorganizations in 1966. The first was the command organization in South Vietnam when the Second Air Division headquarters was elevated to the air force level and became Seventh Air Force. General George Brown returned home and was replaced by Lt. General William “Spike” Momyer, whose background had been entirely in tactical operations. As a colonel in TAC, Momyer had been involved in C-130 development. He requested an air division dedicated to airlift and 834th Air Division, formerly an F-100 unit in Louisiana, transferred to Saigon. Brig. General William G. Moore, an experienced TAC C-130 commander, went to Saigon to command it. Momyer also wanted a wing of C-130s but was finally convinced that the offshore basing arrangement would be more effective in terms of maintenance and would maintain a higher experience level while providing a large pool of personnel who wouldn’t be counted against established troop levels. With the arrival of the 834th headquarters, 315th’s operating locations transferred to the new division. The Tan Son Nhut location became Detachment One, 834th Air Division and the Cam Ranh detachment became Det. Two. The C-130s remained under 315th Air Division; they and their crews continued their 16-day rotations but were under 834th operational control. The parent wings and squadrons were responsible for providing trained crews and operational airplanes but had no command authority over Vietnam operations. Later that year there was another reorganization at Naha where a convoluted arrangement had the aircrews assigned to the 6315th Operations Group while their airplanes and maintenance personnel belonged to the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. The historic 374th Troop Carrier Wing was reactivated as the command organization at Naha and the 6315th Ops Group inactivated. The four squadrons transferred into the new wing along with their airplanes and flight line maintenance crews. A field maintenance squadron activated as the command organization for maintenance specialists. In May 1967, the C-130Es at Nha Trang moved to Cam Ranh. Later that year, in October, a new detachment was set up at Tuy Hoa to handle ten C-130Es until additional facilities could be constructed at Cam Ranh – it remained there until February 1969.

The 1968 Tet Offensive and simultaneous Pueblo Crisis in Korea led to an increase in 315th Air Division C-130 strength as TAC squadrons returned to the war after a two-year absence. Several squadrons went to PACAF with the bags and baggage for TAC fighter and recon squadrons being sent

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

over to beef up defenses in Korea. Two TAC squadrons, one from Forbes and one from Sewart, sent airplanes and crews to Japan to work under MAC control on airlift operations in Korea. The sudden increase in intensity of combat operations in South Vietnam led CINCPAC to request additional C-130s on February 2 and two squadrons, one from Pope and one from Langley, deployed to Tachikawa. Sixteen C-130Es and their crews redeployed from Tachikawa to Cam Ranh the following week and began operations on February 11. On February 15 the mixed Forbes/Sewart squadron moved to Clark and began operations under 315th control. On February 25, an eight-plane detachment made up primarily of airplanes and crews from Langley began operations out of Nha Trang. The TAC airplane brought the total number of C-130s in Vietnam to ninety-six, the highest level reached during the war. As the intensity of the war lessened, so did the need for the additional TAC squadrons and they were sent back home. However, the war remained at a higher intensity than it had been prior to Tet. Rather than continuing the TAC rotations, USAF decided to transfer another C-130 squadron to PACAF and the 346th Tactical Airlift Squadron went to CCK from Dyess to join the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing.⁶



President Richard Nixon took office in January 1969 and one of his first actions was to order General Creighton Abrams, who had replaced General William Westmoreland as commander of Military Assistance Command Vietnam, to make the reduction of American casualties his first priority. Nixon also ordered a reduction in troop levels and by the end of 1969, the withdrawal was well underway. In

⁶ The troop carrier designation was replaced with "tactical airlift" on August 1, 1967.

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

conjunction with the troop withdrawals, USAF began downsizing its role in the Pacific, including a reduction in C-130s and personnel. Plans were made to transfer the C-130As, some of which dated back to 1953, and C-130Bs to the Guard and Reserve. In April 1969, 315th AD inactivated due to a study that determined there wasn't a need for two air divisions in PACAF dedicated to airlift. Instead of shutting down 834th, 315th was deactivated instead, at least in part because MAC was advocating that it could handle logistical airlift in the Pacific with its new all-jet fleet. The last of MAC's C-130s had already transferred to TAC and its C-124s were being sent to the bone yard. (To alleviate the loss of outsize cargo capabilities, a handful of C-124s were assigned to the 463rd TAW at Clark and the 17th TAS in Alaska.) When the division inactivated, the PACAF C-130 wings transferred to the numbered air force in whose region they were assigned, with the 374th transferring to Fifth Air Force while the 314th and 463rd went to Thirteenth.



With the transfer of the older C-130s to the reserves, plans were made to shut down the A and B-model squadrons in PACAF. The 815th at Tachikawa was the first to go. When 315th inactivated, it transferred to the 374th TAW. The 815th ceased operations at the end of 1969. The 29th at Clark was the first B-model squadron to inactivate. In May 1971, the 374th wing at Naha shut down. It did not deactivate however. In a paperwork shuffle, USAF transferred the 314th designation back to the United States and moved the 374th to CCK. The transfer was to preserve the lineage of the 374th, which had originally activated in Australia in 1942 and has never been assigned to the United States. There seems to have been an original intent to redesignate the CCK squadrons with the designations of the Naha wing but military politics prevailed and only the 21st designation survived.⁷ It replaced the 346th. For some reason, USAF decided to shut down Naha while keeping CCK open, even though it was a temporary base that had been set up solely to support operations in Southeast Asia. However, the 374th would later transfer to Clark. The 463rd inactivated on December 31, 1971 but the 774th TAS remained active for a few months as part of the 405th Fighter Wing.

⁷ In later shuffle, MAC transferred the 21st to Travis where the 22nd, which had been part of the original 374th, was already located. So much for preserving lineage!

The Airlifter Volume XXIX

The number of C-130s in Vietnam steadily declined. At the end of 1969 there were sixty-four C-130s operating in South Vietnam; by the end of 1971 there were twenty-nine. The C-130As were withdrawn at the end of 1970 but B's continued operations into early 1972 when USAF operations at Cam Ranh Airbase ceased. Henceforth, all C-130 operations were out of Tan Son Nhut until November 1972 when the 374th TAW detachment was ordered to give up its revetments so the South Vietnamese could use them for their newly acquired C-130As. The USAF C-130s relocated to Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. The C-130 role in Southeast Asia continued after the last US ground troops were withdrawn in 1972, but they were mostly in support of anticommunist forces in Cambodia and Laos. The four 374th TAW C-130 squadrons performed mostly logistical operations while a TAC force called EASTER BUNNY was responsible for airdrop due to their airplanes being equipped with AWADS. EASTER BUNNY was made up of crews from Pope and Little Rock; they had been sent to PACAF in mid-1972 for operations in support of the South Vietnamese but their operations shifted out of country. Fearful of the potential loss of American military personnel, USAF elected to pursue a plan to hire civilian flight crews to operate US-supplied airplanes on missions into and over Cambodia. Bird & Sons, a contractor who had been doing business in Southeast Asia for several years, won the contract and set up a company called Birdair to employ crews made up mostly of recent Air Force retirees and reservists with C-130 experience. Unlike CIA operations with E Flight airplanes, Birdair crews flew USAF airplanes supplied and maintained by the 374th TAW. Birdair continued operations until the war finally came to an end with the capture of Phnom Penh and Saigon in the spring of 1975.

The role of the C-130 in Southeast Asia was long and glorious. It started out primarily logistical then became tactical and finally became logistical again. A total of 52 C-130s were lost in Southeast Asia during American participation in the war and another, a MAC airplane, was lost to artillery after delivering supplies to the South Vietnamese in April 1975 – 103 C-130 crewmembers lost their lives.

