

THE 513TH *On the Go!*



Fifth in a series of stories on the Troop Carrier Groups who made history in Operation Vittles—the most outstanding air cargo job of all times

RHEIN MAIN, GERMANY— They say this is a muddy place in the Winter. To buttress this statement, there is a story hereabouts of an officer of the VR-6 Air Transport Squadron, Navy component of the 513th Troop Carrier Group, who, while sloshing along in the mud, found a white cap under his feet. He stooped to pick it up, and lo!—a head was underneath.

“What are you doing down there, sailor?” the officer demanded.

A hand came up to the head in salute. “Trying to start my jeep, sir,” the head replied.

Of course, the preceding falls under the heading of Vittles Humor; but the verbal barrages aimed at the Rhein Main mud have been so highly colored that repetition here probably would bring us into mortal conflict with the postal authorities. The point is that the mud had virtually no effect on the Berlin airlift.

Before the airlift began to taper off as a result of the settlement between the disagreeing powers, someone here sat down with pencil, paper, and a sheaf of statistics, and figured out the percentage of time on duty spent by Vittles pilots. The final figure proved to be 43 percent. And don't play down the on-duty time spent by the ground crews.

The 513th Troop Carrier Group, which is composed of the 330th, 331st, and 332 Troop Carrier Groups and the VR-6 Air Transport Squadron previously mentioned, is one of the two Groups comprising the 7497th Airlift Wing, commanded by Colonel Stanley

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T. Wray. Colonel Frank Norwood commanded the 513th, but at the time of my visit to Germany Commander Harry Badger had taken over in the temporary absence of Norwood.

Both the 330th TCS and the 331st TCS arrived here to join Vittles on July 28 of last year, after taking off at Westover, Massachusetts. However, they weren't known as the 330th and 331st at that time; they sported the respective banners of the 11th and 12th Air Transport Squadrons of the 520th Air Transport Group. Each was assigned to temporary duty with the 1422nd ATG, before the change to its present status came four months later. At the time of their arrival, both squadrons brought over nine C-54s each.

The 332nd's arrival at Rhein Main came exactly two weeks after its sister squadrons. Known as the 8th ATS, of the 518th ATG, the squadron's eight C-54s had made the flight from Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas. It, too, became attached to the 1422nd ATG for temporary duty; and on the same day that the others became activated as squadrons of the 513th TCG, the 8th, now the 332nd, joined them.

Which brings us to Navy Squadron

VR-6 whose even dozen *Skymasters* flew from Guam to join the 513th TCG on Armistice Day, 1948. If the truth must be known, the two Navy squadrons were the real stars of the airlift. (The second Navy squadron is VR-8, attached to the 61st TCG.)

It was only natural that the keenest sort of rivalry should exist between the 513th and the 61st. Probably the biggest reason was that both Groups were based at Rhein Main. Efficiency ratings of these Groups always were close. On the Howgozit Board—a daily tabular record issued by the *Task Force Times*—the 513th and 61st nearly always clung to each other, struggling for top honors. Here's a typical newspaper report of the 513th's cargo-hauling activities:

“The 513th TCG made the competition interesting by hauling 28,463.3 tons for 99.9 percent efficiency in January, 25,011.5 for 99.6 percent in February, and 31,336.4 for 106.6 percent in March.”

Not even a World Series game captured more interest than the Howgozit Board. I was present the time the 60th TCG, based at Wiesbaden, posted a claim to the effect that it was the second Group to exceed its monthly quota of Berlin-bound freight. The shriek emitted from the 513th's headquarters jostled the local natives' memories back to the days of air raid alerts.

“What's the goddam idea?” an officer of the 513th yelled. “We beat 'em by exactly seven minutes.”

A later check proved that the 513th's

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for boning meat or treating low quality cattle. Some cattlemen contend that their beasts lose condition in the stock yard waiting to be killed. For these, and other reasons, the number of cattle promised for treatment were not all delivered. The manager, Gordon Blythe, believes that the company will have to spend a further £A10,000 to enlarge the chilling space, improve the stock yards and carry out other developments.

Despite these initial setbacks, Air Beef Ltd. is confident that the beef airlift has an Australia-wide future. The Queensland State Government is already considering the possibilities of a similar scheme for the isolated cattle country around the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Enthusiasts believe that one day small abattoirs will be dotted about the northern cattle country and a fleet of "beef freighters" will provide a regular service to export points at Wyndham, Darwin, Cairns, and Townsville. Experts, however, believe that the experiment is doubtful at distances of over 300 miles from a port. Economically, the scheme holds out greatest advantages where stock routes are particularly bad. Most of its advantages are long-term. By enabling growers to market younger cattle the airlift may lead to increased carrying capacity and better quality beef.

Matter of Economics

The success or failure of the Glenroy scheme is largely a matter of economics. Experts say that unless the cost of killing, transporting by air, and handling at the port meat works is reduced to a total of less than 3½d. a pound, the scheme will be less economical than the present method of droving. The present estimated cost is slightly below 4d. a pound, including 2d. a pound for air transport. Meanwhile, the Federal Government is pushing ahead with its scheme for improved stock routes. It has agreed to finance 507 miles of road and a major bridge across the Ord River as well as meeting half the cost of four main stock routes into Wyndham.

The immediate benefits of these stock route improvements will be felt more in the East Kimberleys and the Northern Territory than in the West Kimberleys, scene of the beef air lift. Actually, only about five percent of Australia's beef cattle come from the Kimberleys and about 11 percent from the Northern Territory. Of the total beef cattle in Australia (about 9,000,000 head) half are reared in Queensland. New South Wales (21 percent) and Victoria (eight percent) both raise more beef cattle than the Kimberleys. The Kimberley turn-off for meat is

about 10 percent of the herd compared with 25 percent for the rest of Australia. The average slaughter weight is about 500 pounds compared with 750 pounds for the other cattle areas. Australia's production of beef and veal for 1948 was 572,6600 tons, slightly above prewar average.

AIR IS THE OCEAN

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be spent on quicker delivery to the customers.

Which are the advantages of air-freight traffic using planes of a Swiss company? For Switzerland the air is the ocean. Import and export traffic between overseas countries and Switzerland by air is not subject to control by neighboring countries. Strict seclusion of the country, as experienced during the Second World War, will not mean total blockade for Switzerland as soon as the necessary air connections are at her disposal for the importation of

urgently required foodstuffs and raw materials. If Swiss export goods are transported by Swiss planes, the whole proceeds remain in the country. The Swiss Air Transport Company has known how to transfer the reputation of quality to its services and has in this way been able to open up a new source of earnings to the country.

An important factor of export publicity must not be disregarded. Swiss-air airplanes (for passenger, freight and mixed passenger-and-freight transport) which carry the Swiss Cross over lands and oceans, indirectly make propaganda for Swiss products. They remind people again and again that Switzerland has world-wide connections and creates new ones. It may, perhaps, appear paradoxical, but it is nevertheless a momentous fact: as international as air transport is in its own structure, it helps to strengthen independence and freedom, the very foundations of existence for the small country in the heart of Europe.

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record-breaking plane had been clocked at 5:48 p.m., and the 60th's at 5:55 p.m.

Such were the little incidents behind the airlift; the little daily, almost hourly, occurrences which smashed records and hastened the end of the land blockade.

No magazine article—not even a book—can do justice to every facet of the historic airlift. Volumes would be required. Even though the average Vittles man pooh-pooed his role in the airlift—an odd sort of shyness, going hand-in-hand with a vast amount of bitching—his effort cannot be turned aside. In the final analysis, thousands of little guys made possible what the brass figured out on paper.

I was at a mobile snack bar manned by a couple of pink-cheeked, toothy German girls, and committed the unpardonable error of referring to my three companions—two pilots and an engineer, all of the 513th—as heroes. I was slapped down so fast, I never again ventured to use the word again. But I have flown in their planes, watched the loading and unloading jobs, gone through their maintenance shops, and I still am at a loss for a better word. A job of the proportions of Vittles is no two-bit operation—and the 513th did much to set a hot pace for the rival Groups.

All of them professed to being sick and tired of the job. They swore at this



Blockaded Berliners watch from afar the operations at Tempelhof



Partial view of 25-ton load of flour flown by a C-74 into Berlin

and swore at that, condemned the ignorance of certain superiors, but continued expending greater effort to establish new tonnage highs. Symptomatic of all this was the following parody on *I've Been Working on the Railroad*, which I picked up in my meanderings around the base:

I've been working on the airlift
All the live-long day;
I've been working on the airlift,
And I cannot get away.
Can't you hear the engines roaring
E'er so early in the morn'g?
Can't you hear the engines missing
From night to early morn'g?

One evening, at the Wiesbaden Press Center, I had dinner with a captain of the 513th, who took a sober view of the whole situation.

"Don't glamorize us," he cautioned me. "There's nothing glamorous about us at all. No more of that coming-in-on-a-wing-and-a-prayer stuff. All we do is fly coal and flour and equipment to Berlin, and come back empty. The whole business goes 'round and 'round, and I suppose some day it'll stop. We're truck drivers without union wages."

"But whether you like it or not," I said, "you're participating in modern

history. Your children and grandchildren will be reading about and studying Vittles in their classrooms."

"Maybe," he said with a shrug. "Only it doesn't feel that way now. Yesterday I was killing Germans, now I'm feeding them. That's ancient history."

The heyday of the airlift is over. Personnel rotation has been in order for a long while; but the old stories, the old achievements, the old back-breaking work such as on the Big Easter Push earlier this year are being told first- and second-hand over bottles of Danish beer and cokes. The 513th, which was runner-up to the 313th and 317th, at the end of the push (called *Der Tag* by some wags), was happy just the same. Not only had the four squadrons produced an efficiency rating of 187 percent for the day, but it edged past the rival 61st by three points.

No doubt most of the men of the 513th have forgotten the statistics which were so all-important a few short months ago. But very few will ever forget the ceaseless labors to keep a former enemy capital alive by air.

Heroes? No, not that! they protest. But what else?

AIR COMMERCE

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land traffic, both eastbound and westbound, has, during the two years of S&W's existence, led this country's air trade with all other European and Middle East countries.

Contained in an economic survey covering the period May 10, 1947-March 31, 1949, the statistics embrace 1,885,000 revenue-miles, more than five million commercial freight ton-miles, and 2,305,006 pounds of commercial freight. S&W, which operates five DC-4s, operates between New York and points in Western Europe and

the Middle East. Nearly three million military freight ton-miles are not included in these figures.

Arthur V. Norden, vice president-general manager, who issued the report based on his company's survey, pointed out that of the total commercial freight flown, 1,672,550 pounds constituted United States exports, and 632,550 pounds imports. Of the eastbound total, 454,005 pounds (27.1 percent) went to Switzerland, while Swiss westbound cargoes formed 230,247 pounds (36.5 percent) of the total traffic.

While United States-Swiss air traffic looms high in the Seaboard analysis, there are indications this will not be maintained for long because of the general recovery in Western Europe. For example, company traffic between this country and Italy, negligible during the period covered by the analysis, suddenly came to life in the Spring and has been going great guns right into the Fall. From March through September, a total of 120,347 pounds of imports and exports were hauled by S&W. Company officials state that there is every indication that this segment of the air freight line's routes will become increasingly important.

Westbound traffic always has been a headache. In July, Seaboard's westbound traffic reached a high of 72 percent of the eastbound traffic. This was 150 percent above the July, 1948, figure.

Here's how Seaboard's export and import traffic stack up percentage-wise:

U. S. Exports	
Switzerland	27.10%
Belgium	21.20
Germany	17.20
Netherlands	14.60
Greece	4.88
S. Arabia	3.44
Italy	2.88
France	2.38
Egypt	2.10
Scotland	1.48

U. S. Imports	
Switzerland	36.50%
Germany	19.20
Netherlands	15.20
France	11.00
England	8.60
Belgium	4.24
Italy	2.35
Iraq	1.42
Eire	1.30
Scotland	.29

And here are some additional aspects of the survey:

Twenty-three-and-a-half percent of the total tonnage consisted of individual shipments weighing more than three tons, 52 percent more than a ton, and less than five percent 100 pounds and less . . . 58 percent of the total tonnage consisted of merchandise valued at less than \$10 per pound, 37 percent less than \$5 per pound, and 15 percent less than \$1 per pound . . . 46 percent of total export traffic consisted of wearing apparel, 16.4 percent iron and steel manufactures, 5.7 percent office supplies, 3.6 percent medicine and pharmaceuticals, 3.1 percent dressed and undressed furs, and the rest miscellaneous . . . 16.3 percent of the import traffic comprised watches and movements, 11 percent live animals, 10½ percent iron and steel manufactures and alloys, 8.4 percent dry goods and fabrics, 8.3 percent cameras, projectors, and parts, 4.8 percent leather products, 4.1 percent household goods and personal effects, 2.9 percent essential oils, perfume and toilet articles, and 2.9 percent furs.

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S. E. Russ, manager of cargo sales for TWA, recently announced international air cargo rate cuts which meant savings of from three to 19 percent for air shippers. What with recent foreign currency devaluations, TWA expects a "short-term decline in dollar revenue" which will be "offset by the tremendous impetus given to international trade by the devaluation of currencies." Lowered air cargo rates affect those in the "over 100 pounds" column and "under 100 pounds" column. Specific commodity rates, eastbound, remain the same; but those moving westward have been reduced to conform with the reductions in the basic rates.

Westbound cargo traffic, which has been averaging about half that of eastbound traffic, was upped to 58 percent during the