

140 MILITARY AIRLIFT SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

140 Air Transport Squadron (Medium) extended federal recognition, 1 May 1956
Redesignated 140 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (Light), 1 Feb 1957
Redesignated 140 Military Airlift Squadron, 1 Jan 1966
Inactivated, 17 Sep 1967

STATIONS

Spaatz Field, Reading, PA
Olmsted AFB, Middletown, PA, 1 Feb 1961

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

C-46
C-119, 1958
C-121, 1962

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

140th Air Transport Squadron (Medium) was announced in 1955. The new unit was to take over the facilities and most of the personnel of the 148th FBS, which was to be transferred to York County Airport in Admire.

The glorious days of the fighter planes finally came to an end for Reading's 148th on 1 May 1956. The nine-year old 148th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron was put on inactive status while awaiting its reassignment to the new York County Airport. Meanwhile, the 140th Air Transport Squadron Medium (AE) was organized and federally recognized at Spaatz Field. Also in May 1956 Major Nicholas J. Bereschak became the Commander.

All of the 148th members became members of the 140th, and the herculean task of converting everything from a fighter unit to a transport unit began. One of the biggest adjustments was that of converting aircraft from F-51s to C-46s.

In June 1956 Colonel Richard B. Posey, was named Deputy Adjutant General for Air of Pennsylvania. Colonel Posey succeeded Brigadier General Robert C. Boden who resigned earlier in 1956 to enter private enterprise. Colonel Posey's most recent post was commander of the 112th Fighter-Interceptor Wing headquartered in Pittsburgh.

The first summer encampment for the newly organized 140th Air Transport Squadron was held 28 July through 11 August 1956 along with the 112th Fighter-Interceptor Wing from Pittsburgh.

The combined strength of the two units was 1,500 men, most of whom traveled to the encampment at Hancock Field in Syracuse, New York, by bus.

By this time, the fighter squadrons making up the 112th Wing had been converted to F-84 while the 140th had five C-46. The 140th was attached to the 112th Wing for the training period.

1957 The unit's transition from the single-engine fighter aircraft flown since 1947 reached a finale on 27 January 1957 when the last F-51 was flown out.

But, February 1957 brought two milestones: on 1 February the 140th Air Transport Squadron was redesignated the 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron, Light, and on 27 February the personnel of the 140th marked ten years of service as a unit of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. Because aircraft could evacuate medical cases more quickly and effectively than any other type of transport, air evacuation had become the accepted practice for moving military patients. The mission of the 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron Light continued their dual objectives. During peacetime, the mission was to provide immediate and medically acceptable air transport service for evacuations within the Commonwealth. In wartime, the 140th was to provide that same evacuation service for all military personnel while serving with the 12th Aeromedical Transport Squadron Continental Division of the Military Air Transport Service.

Rather than fighter pilots flying gunnery practices at Indiantown Gap, over the Atlantic Ocean or Lake Ontario, our "new" transport pilots began running simulated evacuation flights in C-46s between Spaatz Field and various hospital bases throughout the United States.

There were 20 crews flying for the 140th in 1957; each crew consisting of a pilot, copilot, flight mechanic, one nurse, and two medical technicians.

In April, the Aeromedical Section was formed, and with the assignment of the first flight nurse Irene Svadeba, the training of qualified airmen to become aeromedical technicians had begun. Nurses' duties involved patient care including administering medications while in flight. The medical technicians assisted the nurses.

The reunion of all the former commanders of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's unit at Reading was the highlight of the tenth anniversary celebration on 28 March 1957. Attending the dinner-dance with more than 250 unit members and friends were these former commanders: "Colonel Richard B. Posey, the first commander of the original 148th Fighter Squadron and in 1957 was Pennsylvania's Deputy Adjutant General for Air.

Lieutenant Colonel Russel G. Ogan who succeeded Colonel Posey and in 1957 was attached to the Air Defense Command, U.S. Air Force.

Major Peter R. Phillipy, who was LTC Ogan's successor and in 1957 was commander of the 112th Fighter-Interceptor Group in Pittsburgh.

Summer encampment. 1957. (29 June through 13 July) was conducted at Hancock Field. Syracuse. New York.

With its C-46 outfitted to carry patients, the 140th was able to train in its two-fold mission: to provide immediate and medically acceptable air transport service for aeromedical evacuation within Pennsylvania and to provide the same service for the Military Transport Service.

In April 1958 the 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron was again converting aircraft from the C-46 to the C-119J. The new aircraft increased the squadron's medical airlift capability. The initial allocation was five C-119s to serve as ambulance evacuation aircraft to carry sick and wounded personnel.

Aircraft litters were mounted on the C-119s on seven tiers, each five litters high, for a maximum litter capacity of 35 personnel. By altering the configuration, a total of 76 troops could be carried in emergency evacuations. The C-119 carried an aeromedical crew of six (the pilot, copilot, flight mechanic, flight nurse, and two medical technicians).

Much of the squadron's training was accomplished during the monthly weekend training assemblies at Spaatz Field.

Summer camp 1958 was held at the Air National Guard Permanent Training Site at Hancock Field in Syracuse, New York, 7-21 June 1958. There were 383 officers, airmen, and nurses participating.

The purposes of the 1958 encampment was two-fold: to give the aircrews additional opportunities to log transition flights in the C-119 and to conduct in-flight simulated aeromedical evacuation missions for the nurses and aeromedical crewmen.

In 1958 typical training problems included in-flight care and treatment of a polio patient with respiratory paralysis, a tubercular patient, and the use of restraints for the mentally ill.

By mid-1958 there were two qualified flight nurses, a general nurse, and 15 aeromedical technicians assigned to the aeromedical section. A flight surgeon (physician) was to be assigned in the near future.

The units supporting the 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron included:

Operations and Training Section: Captain Wilmer Hepner planned and carried out all aircraft missions.

Aircraft Maintenance Section: Captain Chester Monaghan repaired the squadron's aircraft.

Flight Engineering Section: TSgt Donald Shupp performed maintenance and preflight on the aircraft.

Personal Equipment Section: SSgt Harvey Dietz provided inspection and re-packing of parachutes and maintenance of survival equipment.

Base Supply Section: Captain Daniel Schmehl provided equipment and conducted the refueling of the aircraft.

Air Installation Section: Captain Clarence Withers operated crash trucks and kept the squadron's physical plant operational.

Motor Vehicle Section: CWO Raymond Miller operated and maintained the pool of motor vehicles.

Ground Communications Section: Captain John Kissell handled telephone and other forms of unit communications.

Accounting Section: Captain Chris Athas controlled the expenditure of unit dollars.

Food Service Section: WO Donald Fox fed the squadron's 326 airmen and officers.

There were also 100 full-time technicians and a full-time Air Force Advisor on duty to maintain the facilities and supervise the training of the guardsmen.

1959 summer encampment in August was again held at the Air National Guard's Field Training Site at Hancock Field, Syracuse, NY. Our 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron trained with the 105th Aeromedical Transport Group, New York Air National Guard, from Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn. The two units combined resources and trained in a variety of aeromedical transfers.

By 1960 the unit boasted a manning of 335 enlisted members and fifty officers which included nine flight nurses, a physician, and a dentist.

For the first time since 1954, the 140th performed its summer encampment at home base, Spaatz Field, from 23 July to 6 August 1960. Three to four training missions were flown each day of the encampment to increase proficiency in the transporting of the sick and injured from hospital or disaster area to hospital. Another feature of the encampment was a series of operational readiness flights under simulated combat conditions with mock patients aboard to be cared for by flight nurses and medical technicians.

One air evacuation mission went to Barnes Airport, Mass.; Otis Air Force Base, Mass. Burlington, Vermont; Schenectady, NY; and returned to Reading. A second mission went to Stewart Air Force Base, Newburgh, N.Y.; Syracuse Air Force Station, N.Y.; and returned to Reading. The third mission flew to Griffiss Air Force Base, Rome, N.Y. and returned.

The operational readiness flights were evaluated by a ten-member inspection team from the Inspector General's Office, Headquarters, 14th Air Force, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. Because the readiness inspection was so successful, the 140th received an award for achieving "an

outstanding level of operational readiness." The 140th was one of only nine Air National Guard units determined by the Air Force to be "operationally ready" having all of its authorized aircraft and auxiliary equipment in shape to perform the assigned mission plus having personnel qualified for the mission.

By late 1960, the 140th was notified that it would be converting aircraft from the C-119J to the C-121 which were being phased out of the active forces. This aircraft conversion had much greater impact on the unit than any previous conversion. The C-121s could not be based at Spatz Field because of the airport's short runways and inadequate glide slopes.

Representatives of Headquarters, Pennsylvania Air National Guard and the 140th visited Olmsted Air Force Base in Middletown where an 8,000 foot long runway had been recently built. Discussions concerning the relocation of the 140th from Reading to Middletown were quite favorable and negotiations with the National Guard Bureau and the Air Force were initiated. Olmsted's total runway length could easily accommodate the large four-engine C-121s, and the Middletown base was sufficiently close to Reading so that the 450 guard members and ninety full-time technicians could continue their assignments.

Although commercial airlines were flying Constellations at the Reading Airport, the Super Constellations were at least one-third longer than the commercial version.

On 1 Feb 1961, the 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron was officially relocated to the sprawling Olmsted Air Force Base after fifteen years in Reading. Because of the transfer to Olmsted AFB and the anticipated conversion to C-121, the number of authorized personnel positions was increased by one-hundred.

By early 1961, the 140th was flying ten C-119Js with two internally modified and soundproofed to make transportation more comfortable for patients. The unit anticipated trading in its C-119Js and its one C-47 for eight C-121S by the end of 1961.

Meanwhile, summer camp 1961 (1-15 July) was the first ever conducted at Olmsted AFB. Approximately 375 enlisted men and women and officers, mostly Berks County residents, worked diligently to sharpen their skills in the new active Air Force Base environment. More than 300 hours of simulated aeromedical evacuation missions at a rate of about seven flights per day were flown.

In the case of a true emergency, the unit was capable of having at least one aircraft airborne in half an hour with the unit becoming fully operational within four hours. Although co-located with the active Air Force, the 140th remained self-sufficient and operated without any support from regular units.

Although quite meager, the 140th had hangar facilities, aircraft maintenance shops, a dispensary, and unit supply facilities.

The highlight of the 1961 summer encampment was a visit by Major General Malcolm A. Hay, Pennsylvania's new Adjutant General. (General Hay replaced Major General Anthony J. Drexel Biddle who was named Ambassador to Spain.) General Hay was accompanied on his inspection of the squadron by Colonel Richard B. Posey, Deputy Adjutant General for Air; Major Nicholas Bereschak, Squadron Commander; and Major George L. Spuhler, Squadron Executive Officer. During the summer camp it was announced that the C-121s would come from an Air Force unit and should arrive by the end of the year.

As an aeromedical unit with a mission of flying wounded or injured personnel, the flight nurses were responsible for the welfare of patients being flown from hospital to hospital. The pilots flew altitudes designated by the nurses . . . depending upon the condition of the patients. Enroute, the nurses and medical technicians were prepared to administer transfusions, care for fractures (including broken backs), shock trauma, and were able to restrain mentally affected patients. Oxygen, plasma, a variety of drugs, and even an iron lung (when needed) were carried on each aircraft. The unit's flight surgeon did not treat injured passengers, but rather cared for the health of the unit's members.

In 1962 the manned strength of the 140th was 350 personnel including thirty pilots and eleven flight nurses. "The unit was authorized 705 members of whom over half to be assigned to aircraft maintenance.

The 1962 summer encampment was held at the Air National Guard Permanent Training Site at Otis Air Force Base. Massachusetts. The major reason the encampment was held at Otis (for the first time in our history) was because it had a C-121 training simulator where our pilots were able to become familiar with the cockpit prior to the C-121 arrival late in 1962. During the field training, medical evacuation flights were flown to McGuire, Travis, Scott and Kelly Air Force Bases. Some of the flights carried simulated victims while other flights flew actual patients.

A retirement ceremony was held during the August drill weekend to honor Lieutenant Colonel Earl F. Kochenour. Colonel Kochenour was Deputy for Personnel assigned to PaANG Headquarters, at Indiantown Gap, but he began his career in The Air Service Group which was assigned to the 148th Fighter Squadron.

Finally on 2 November 1962, the first of seven C-121 arrived at Olmsted AFB giving the 140th international flying capabilities. As more C-121s arrived, the C-119s were transferred to an Air Force Reserve unit.

Pilots took transition training at Charleston, SC while flight engineers trained at a school established at Middle-town. Before delivery here, each "Connie" was outfitted with four new engines and the latest radar, Tacan, and distance measuring equipment. The Connies increased the unit's evacuation capability from 35 litter patients in the C-119 to 60 litters. The C-119 non-stop flying distance was 1,500 miles at 170 miles per hour while the C-121 was rated at 2,500 miles flying 370 mph.

The first half of 1963 was spent getting accustomed to the C-121. Unit strength had reached 451 enlisted members and 64 officers who were needed to support the Connies and the expanded global mission.

As everyone was gaining proficiency with the C-121, the very first training flight of the 140th over water from America to another land came in late May 1963 when several crews flew from Olmstead AFB to Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico.

The first transoceanic flight of the 140th departed Olmsted AFB 22 June for Frankfurt, Germany and returned 28 June 1963. Major Nicholas Bereschak, Commander of the 140th, was a member of the crew on the first flight. One month later the second European trip was completed between 20 and 26 July 1963.

The primary objective of the over-water training flights was to thoroughly familiarize crew members and medical personnel with flying and navigation procedures used over the Atlantic Ocean and in Europe. During this training stage, seven different European routes were flown taking the 140th to England, France, Spain, Germany, and Canada as well as stops in Bermuda and the Azores. The 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron was becoming truly international.

Major Bereschak explained in a newspaper article, "Once our aircraft crews are completely oriented in over-water techniques, the 140th can be called upon to fly these same missions with medical passengers. Use of Air National Guard outfits to support regular Air Force units means that these units can direct their men and equipment to more vital, strategic operations."

Another "first" occurred in 1963 when the "Texas Plan" was initiated at the 140th. This meant that rather than the entire squadron performing field training during a primary period as in the past, members would schedule their fifteen days annual training throughout the year

In 1963, most non-flying personnel in administrative and ground support sections completed their annual training at Olmsted AFB during two periods, 15 through 29 July and 27 July through 10 August 1963.

The largest mass swearing-in ceremony since the squadron transferred from Reading occurred on 22 June 1963 when 23 were enlisted, and three more were enlisted the next day bringing the total weekend gain to 26 members. The authorized strength of the unit climbed to 744 members.

The domestic peace-time service of the 140th Aeromedical Transport Squadron was utilized on 23 August 1963 when a C-121 transported Sandra Lee Boyd, a 16-year-old Permside girl, from Reading to Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. Sandra was seriously injured when she was struck by an automobile in Rome, Italy. She was flown on a commercial flight back to the United States where her physician decided she must have special hip surgery performed at a Boston hospital. The one-hour flight from Reading to Boston in a C-121 was flown by Captain Frank J. Lamm. Medical personnel accompanying Sandra were 140th members Captain Connie Aungst, Staff Sergeant Ralph East, and Airman Second Class Daniel Berst.

Another highlight of 1964 occurred on 23 July 1964 when ground was broken at the west end of Olmsted Air Force Base for the construction of a \$446,000 aircraft maintenance dock for the 168th, the first building construction ever authorized for the unit in its seventeen year history.

Because the wing span of the C-121 was too great to fit into building S-300, most maintenance was performed outside. The new dock would allow for inside maintenance. Actually the maintenance dock building was the first phase of a \$4,386,000 building program planned for Olmsted during 1964-65. Other buildings planned for the Air National Guard included a second maintenance dock, a base supply building plus an operations and training building.

Conditions at Olmsted Air Force Base were crowded at best, and the 168th still had facilities scattered from one end of the base to the other. In order to have sufficient classroom space and adequate training facilities, the Group's support, supply, and aircraft maintenance squadrons plus the dispensary attended a summer encampment 24 July through 7 August 1965 at Otis Air Force Base in Massachusetts. The air crews and the aeromedical flight did not participate as their annual training requirement was accomplished when they supplemented official Air Force missions throughout the year.

The 168th announced that it was about to expand operational missions and voluntarily participate in active Air Force aeromedical evacuation operations. The missions were to begin in August 1965 with the airlifting of patients in the Caribbean.

But the highlight of 1965 came in November and December when the 168th Air Transport Group participated in the Department of Defense project "Christmas Star." This was the code name for a project in which Air National Guard transport units were tasked with the airlifting of gifts, Christmas cards, and letters to the U.S. soldiers stationed in Southeast Asia. From 29 November through 14 December 1965, three "Christmas Star" flights flown by the 168th airlifted 30,667 pounds of goodies donated by Central Pennsylvanians to the U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet engaged in naval operations in Southeast Asia.

The 1965 Christmas holiday looked especially bleak to the thousands of service members serving in Southeast Asia. There were literally tons of gifts destined for our troops, but there was no way to transport the gifts overseas. Active duty aircraft were dedicated to priority movement of men and equipment to Viet Nam. Then just as if Santa himself requested help, the Department of Defense ordered the 25 Air National Guard transport units, including the 168th ATG, to each fly three missions to Southeast Asia to deliver the cards and gifts. Named "Christmas Star," the missions called for the initial C121 flight to depart Olmsted at noon, the 20th of November 1965, with 610 pounds of precious necessities plus one ton of cookies donated by the York County 4-H club. After departing Olmsted the aircraft picked up an additional 1½ tons of gifts at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station and then the "four engine sleigh" began its 90 hour flight to Na Trang to arrive four days after its departure from Middletown. There was no formal reception as the transport had to "get in and get out" to make room for other flights to land. Col Bereschak

described the airfield scene as one bustling with activity and compared it to air operations in Berlin during the historic Berlin Airlift. The plane and crew remained there only about five hours. The second of the three flights departed Olmsted at 1052 hours on Monday, the 29th of November 1965 with almost seven tons of Christmas Star parcels on board, its destination was Tan Son Nhut.

Another near capacity load of seven tons of gifts and necessities bound for Cam Ram Bay left Olmsted AFB at noon on the 4th of December 1965. This final load was destined for men of the Seventh Fleet which was engaged in naval operations in Viet Nam.

High on the list of items on the flights included Lebanon bologna, candy, cookies, pretzels, and a variety of toiletries, socks, polish, and other sundries. Gifts came from as far away as Allentown-Easton area and Gettysburg. Central Pennsylvanians responded liberally to the call for gift items, Christmas cards and letters.

On the 22nd of December 1965, the Senate of Pennsylvania honored the 168th Air Transport Group with a resolution offering "its heartfelt congratulations, good wishes and gratitude to the members of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard on the magnificent efforts of its personnel and expressed its commendation to and appreciation of the fine patriotic efforts of the personnel involved in sustaining the American effort in Viet Nam."

Also in January the Pentagon decided that the end of the holidays should not mean the end of Air National Guard airlifts to the war zone in Southeast Asia. So each of the 25 Air Guard units that participated in "Christmas Star" were tasked to provide three airlift missions each month, January 1966 through June 1967, to the combat zones in Southeast Asia.

During that period, the 168th Military Airlift Group flew nineteen cargo supply missions to Viet Nam; participated in nineteen aeromedical evacuation missions to countries including Germany, Spain, Australia, Greenland, Africa, and Japan; flew 54 cargo flights into the European theater; and 82 airlift missions inside the United States. These missions resulted in the successful movement of more than 1,100 tons of cargo, 2,500 passengers, and 742 medical patients by our truly global unit.

Despite all of the "real world" missions, some 400 support personnel of the 168th found time to attend a two-week summer encampment in August at the Air Guard Training Site at Otis Air Force Base in Cape Cod. This was the second consecutive year annual field training was held at Otis AFB because of its abundance of classroom space and other facilities for specialized training. Again, Lt. Col. Clarence Withers was the Detachment Commander.

In October 1966 the 168th was cited as the Outstanding Military Airlift Unit of the 25 airlift Groups in the Air National Guard. The award, presented by Major General Winston B. Wilson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, was based on operational and training participation, operational readiness, personnel strength levels, and overall qualifications of all assigned personnel.

Lt. Col. Nicholas Bereschak, Group Commander, praised the group members "who gave so freely of their time in the missions flown during the past year (1966). We feel that this is indeed an outstanding military accomplishment for a reserve organization."

In addition to this award, the 168th also received an Operational Readiness Award as well as the Military Airlift Command Award for ten years of accident-free flying. Winning that ten-year safe flying award was indeed an accomplishment to be proud of as some 5% million air miles were flown and over 32,000 flying hours logged. This enviable record reached back to 1956 and included F-51, C-46, C-119, and C-121.

One more award was earned by the 168th . . . the Tiger Award was given the unit by the 140th Military Airlift Squadron for flying material into the war zone, unloading, and departing in minimal times.

By November 1966, the fate of Olmsted Air Force Base became clear. The active AF base was slated to be closed by mid 1969. It was announced that the federal government would give the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 643 acres of land that constituted the majority of the south complex of the base for use as a commercial airport. there were 45 acres in the center of the complex determined to be of a high industrial potential and was to be sold to rather than given gratis to the state. The Harrisburg Area Industrial Development Corporation purchased that area for \$700,000.

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 19 Feb 2021
Updated:

Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.