

437th AIRLIFT WING



MISSION

Manages assigned airlift and supporting units (4,200 military and 1,700 civilians) to provide airlift of troops, cargo, passengers, and mail; aeromedical airlift, and participates in operations involving the airland/airdrop of troops, equipment, and supplies.

LINEAGE

437th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium established, 10 May 1949
Activated in the Reserve, 27 Jun 1949
Ordered to active service, 10 Aug 1950
Inactivated, 10 Jun 1952
Activated in the Reserve, 15 Jun 1952
Inactivated, 16 Nov 1957
Redesignated 437th Military Airlift Wing and activated, 27 Dec 1965
Organized, 8 Jan 1966
Redesignated 437th Airlift Wing, 1 Oct 1991

STATIONS

Chicago-Orchard Aprt (later, O'Hare Field Chicago Intl Aprt), IL, 27 Jun 1949
Shaw AFB, SC, 14 Aug–16 Oct 1950
Brady Field, Japan, 8 Nov 1950–10 Jun 1952
O'Hare Intl Aprt, IL, 15 Jun 1952–16 Nov 1957
Charleston AFB, SC, 8 Jan 1966

ASSIGNMENTS

Tenth Air Force, 26 Jun 1949
Tactical Air Command, 14 Aug 1950

Fifth Air Force, 8 Nov 1950
314th Air Division, 1 Dec 1950
315th Air Division (Combat Cargo), 25 Jan 1951–10 Jun 1952
Tenth Air Force, 15 Jun 1952–16 Nov 1957
Military Air Transport Service (later, Military Airlift Command), 27 Dec 1965
Twenty-First Air Force, 8 Jan 1966

ATTACHMENTS

FEAF Combat Cargo Command, Provisional, 8 Nov 1950-24 Jan 1951

WEAPON SYSTEMS

T-7, 1949–1950
T-11, 1949–1950
C-46, 1949–1952
C-46 1952–1957
C-47, 1955–1957
C-119, 1957
C-124, 1966–1969
C-130, 1966–1967
C-141, 1966
C-5 1970–1973
C-17, 1993

COMMANDERS

BG John P. Henebry, 27 Jun 1949
Col John W. Lacey, 26 Jan 1951
Col John R. Roche, 26 Feb 1951
Col Kenneth W. Northamer, May–10 Jun 1952
Col Reed G. Landis, 15 Jun 1952
LTC Edwin L. Preston, 1 Sep 1954
Col John W. Lacey, 19 Jan 1955
LTC Joseph E. Whitwell, 2 May– 16 Nov 1957
None (not manned), 27 Dec 1965–7 Jan 1966
BG Howard W. Kreidler, 8 Jan 1966
BG William V. McBride, 26 Jul 1966
BG Clare T. Ireland, Jr., 1 Mar 1969
BG Thomas B. Kennedy, 1 Aug 1970
BG Robert L. Moeller, 1 Apr 1972
BG Thomas M. Sadler, 1 Feb 1974
BG Tedd L. Bishop, 14 Mar 1975;
BG George B. Powers, Jr., 1 Mar 1978
Col Eugene D. Robinett, 20 Jun 1979
Col Donald A. Logeais, 23 Jun 1981
Col Paul E. Landers, Jr., 20 Jul 1983

Col James C. McCombs, 28 Jun 1985
Col James F. Hinkel, 11 Jun 1987
Col David B. Marcrander, 17 May 1988
Col John W. Handy, 10 May 1990
BG Thomas R. Mikolajcik, 25 Jul 1991
Col Barry F. Creighton, 9 Dec 1992–(temporary)
BG Walter S. Hogle Jr., 3 Jun 1994
BG Gary A. Voellger, 25 Jul 1995
Col Steven A. Roser, 2 Jul 1996
BG Robert D. Bishop Jr., 8 Jun 1998
BG Vern L. Findley II, 20 Mar 2000
Col Brook L. Bash, 3 Jun 2002
Col Susan Y. Desjardins, 19 Oct 2004
Col John C. Millander 25 Jun 2007
Col Glen G. Joerger 22 November 2005
Col. John Wood

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Korea

CCF Intervention

First UN Counteroffensive

CCF Spring Offensive

UN Summer-Fall Offensive

Second Korean Winter

Korea Summer-Fall, 1952

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Grenada, 1983

Panama, 1989–1990

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

11 Jul 1966–10 Jul 1967

11 Jul 1967– 10 Jul 1968

11 Jul 1968–12 Jun 1969

13 Jun 1969–12 Jun 1970

13 Jun 1970–30 Jun 1972

1 Jul 1972–30 Jun 1973

1 Jul 1982–30 Jun 1984

1 Jul 1984–30 Jun 1986
1 Jul 1988–30 Jun 1989
1 Jul 1989–30 Jun 1990
21 Sep–31 Oct 1989
1 Jul 1989-30 Jun 1990
21 Sep-31 Oct 1989
1 Jul 1993-30 Jun 1995
1 Jul 1995-30 Jun 1997
1 Jul 1997-30 Jun 1998
1 Jul 1998-30 Jun 2000
1 Jul 2011-30 Jun 2012

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
1 Jul 1951–[10 Jun 1952]

Bestowed Honors

Authorized to display the streamers earned by the 437th Operations Group for the period prior to 27 June 1949

Service Streamers

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Rome-Arno
Normandy
Northern France
Southern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
France, [6–7] Jun 1944

EMBLEM

Or a vol Argent surmounted by a silhouette of a minute man courant grasping a rifle at high port Azure. A running figure of a Minuteman with rifle at high port, in blue silhouette, stands for control of the skies, the theater of Air Force operations. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The golden background stands for excellence. White wings, encircle and joined, symbolize the global support and Samaritan missions of the wing. The American Colonial Minuteman symbolizes the courage and inspiration derived from our heritage and further represents preparedness and

action at a minute's notice. (Approved, 24 Nov 1953)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Trained as a Reserve troop carrier wing under supervision of the 2471st Air Force Reserve Training Center, Jun 1949–Aug 1950 and Jun 1952–Nov 1957. Served between Aug 1950 and Jun 1952 on active duty.

On July 28, 1950, the Air Staff directed Headquarters Continental Air Command to order the 452d Bombardment Wing (Light) at Long Beach MAP in California, and the 437th Troop Carrier Wing (Medium) at O'Hare ZAP in Chicago to active military service on August 10 for twenty-one months unless sooner relieved. The headquarters was also directed to activate the motor vehicle, air police, food services, and installations squadrons originally withheld when the wings were organized in 1949.

The reorganized wings were to be given sixty days' intense training before they deployed overseas. The 452d Light Bomb Wing was clearly the best prepared among the reserve wings, but lacking sufficient manpower, the 437th Troop Carrier Wing was not nearly as ready. These two were the first to be called primarily because each was collocated with another wing under its respective flying center. This collocation permitted the use of the second unit's personnel and equipment to replace shortages in its mobilized companion. In addition, in the expectation that the Korean emergency signaled a worldwide crisis, General Whitehead thought that some of his northern bases, including O'Hare at Chicago, should be cleared of troop carrier operations to make way for fighter units for air defense.

Two major problems dominated the mobilization of the 452d and 437th: the orders to reorganize the units concurrently with their mobilization, and the poor condition of individual and unit records. The guidance to retain all four of its flying squadrons while adding the four new support units more than doubled the 452d's authorized strength of 2,784. In addition to the personnel required to man the new component units, each flying squadron was authorized 12 additional combat crew members. However, the 437th Troop Carrier Wing could not simply redistribute the resources of its disbanded fourth tactical squadron to man its new support units. The surplus personnel were primarily rated officers who could not be matched to the new authorizations for ground support personnel. So it was not a simple matter of mobilizing the entire wing as it stood; selectivity and matching had to be exercised.

Personnel officials of both mobilized wings criticized their supporting flying centers for the chaotic condition of the files that they received. Many of the individual files contained incorrect addresses for the reservists. Airmen's records often contained incomplete forms, and many files were missing. On the other hand, two weeks after arriving at Shaw AFB, South Carolina, the 437th had files for hundreds of people not assigned to it.

On August 15, 1950, the main contingent of the 437th Troop Carrier Wing, commanded by Brig. Gen. John P. Henebry, left O'Hare for Shaw AFB, South Carolina, by rail, air, and private automobile. At Shaw, personnel officials reconciled as best they could the number of persons on orders with the locator files and individual files, correcting errors in names, ranks, and serial numbers and trying to rectify mal-assignments. Commanders interviewed each man, making logical adjustments as they went along, immeasurably improving morale and efficiency. On September 2, personnel officials conducted a four-hour session in which commanders literally traded personnel back and forth. At that time 1,441 men were assigned to the 437th Troop Carrier Wing, acquired from the sources indicated in the following table.

On October 15, the day before the 437th left Shaw, it got up to its full wartime strength of 1,569. Most of the additional men came from the Regular Air Force, including 60 from Sewart AFB, Tennessee, and another 59 fresh from basic training at Lackland AFB, Texas. The 437th had sixteen C-46s at O'Hare. On August 10, it acquired the fifteen that belonged to the collocated 441st, and at Shaw it received seventeen others from various flying centers, bringing its aircraft complement to the forty-eight authorized. It began local flying at Shaw on August 22.

Augmented by a few maintenance men, the command and operations elements of the wing deployed their C-46s to Japan. Delayed on the West interference was meager, and the wing suffered no injuries to personnel nor damage to aircraft.

Helped evacuate personnel from threatened airfields, hauled gasoline, napalm, and other explosives, dropped cargo and paratroops, flew spraying missions to rid areas of insects, and also flew routine courier missions until replaced by another wing in Jun 1952.

During seven months of Korean service, the 437th TCW carried nearly 66,000 tons of cargo, 6,500 patients, and 240,000 passengers. Inactivated on June 10, 1952, it returned to Reserve status.

On 10 June 1952, the 315th Air Division inactivated the wing and its units and assigned its assets to the 315th Troop Carrier Wing, returning the 437th designation to the Reserve. Five days later, on 15 June 1952, the Air Reserve activated the 437th Troop Carrier Wing and its previously assigned units back at O'Hare International Airport under the command of Tenth Air Force and Continental Air Command. While there, the wing continued to fly C-46s and also began flying C-47 Skytrains in 1955. On 16 November 1957, just after transitioning to the C-119 Flying Boxcar, the Air Reserve inactivated the wing and its units.

By 1960, the Military Air Transport Service's (MATs) airlift mission evolved from supporting Strategic Air Command's (SAC) nuclear forces and Tactical Air Command's (TAC) fighters and bombers to deploying U.S. Army and Navy combat forces worldwide and maintaining an aerial resupply system. In order to carry out its new combat airlift mission, MATs made significant organizational changes including a change of host unit at Charleston AFB. On 27 December 1965, the 437th Troop Carrier Wing was redesignated the 437th Military Airlift Wing (MAW)

and activated at Charleston AFB, replacing the 1608th Air Transport Wing as host unit effective 8 January 1966. Flew joint training missions with Army forces, aeromedical evacuation missions, mercy and humanitarian missions as needed, and airlifted personnel, cargo, and mail worldwide, primarily to Europe, the Middle East and Africa, but also to South America. Participated in numerous tactical operations and exercises, particularly those of NATO. Wing aircrews were augmented by attached Reserve aircrews.

Upon their assignment to the wing, the 41 MAS and 76 MAS flew C-130 Hercules aircraft, while the 3 MAS flew the new C-141 Starlifters and the 17 MAS flew C-124 Globemaster IIs. But the Air Force had changes in mind. By July 1966, the 76 MAS completed its conversion to C-141s, as did the 41 MAS on 27 June 1967, when the last C-130 departed Charleston AFB. The 17 MAS continued operating C-124s until its inactivation on 8 April 1969, with the loss of the last C-124 on 15 May 1969.

During the late 1960s, the wing flew channel missions around the world and supported the NASA Gemini program, but its highest priority was to provide airlift to and from Southeast Asia in support of the Vietnam War. Only four days after its assignment to the 437th, on 12 January 1966, the 3 MAS with other C-141 units airlifted the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division from Honolulu, Hawaii, to Pleiku, South Vietnam. Codenamed BLUE LIGHT, the operation airlifted 3,000 troops and 4,700 tons of equipment in 231 sorties.

By April 1966, the wing began operating new cargo channels using a modified polar route. These channels originated at Charleston and served offload points in the Philippines and Vietnam via Alaska and Japan. As the U.S.'s involvement in the Vietnam War escalated, so did the wing's support of it. In November 1967, the wing helped transport the 101st Airborne Division from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to Bien Hoa Air Base, Vietnam, during Operation EAGLE THRUST, at the time the longest airlift of combat troops from the U.S. to a war zone. Then on 13 February 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson visited Pope AFB to initiate Operation BONNY JACK, the no-notice combat airlift of the 82d Airborne Division to Vietnam. The 12-day operation was an outstanding success, finishing 23.5 hours ahead of schedule. The wing's C-141s and other C-133 aircraft flew 161 missions, airlifted 3,719 troops and 2,273.3 tons of cargo, and established a 99 percent on-load reliability rate.

Another aircraft change was in the works for the wing in the early 1970s. On 6 June 1970, the wing received the C-5A Galaxy, making the 437th the first C-5 operational unit in the Air Force. On 29 October 1972, the 3 MAS began the first C-5 round-the-world trip, logging 95.5 flying hours during the 16-day trip that required six C-5 aircraft and 17 missions through seven countries. The C-5 was not to remain at Charleston for long. On 1 August 1973, the 3 MAS was reassigned to the 436 MAW at Dover AFB, Delaware, and the 20 MAS to the 437 MAW. The aircraft each flew changed places as well, with the 437th's 16 C-5s moving to Dover and Dover's C-141s coming to Charleston. The last C-5 left Charleston on 27 August 1973.

During the 1970s, the wing's mission was similar to today's. The 437 MAW conducted channel missions around the globe, Special Assignment Airlift Missions (SAAMs) supporting thousands

of users, presidential and vice presidential support missions, hundreds of humanitarian relief missions, and thousands of missions supporting the other Services during Service, joint, and international exercises. The wing flew missions supporting the hostages in Tehran. It airlifted the U.S. Navy's porpoises around the world. It repatriated two Navy Sailors held hostage by Eritrean rebels. It airlifted children out of Saigon during Operation NEW LIFE. It assisted the Marines during the USS Mayaguez incident. And in Operation SNOW GO it assisted Buffalo, New York in digging itself out of the blizzard that had buried the city. For its exceptionally meritorious service from 1966 to 1973, the wing received five Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards.

The next milestones for the 437th came in 1983. First, on 19 October, a military council killed the Prime Minister and seized the independent Caribbean nation of Grenada. The U.S. was concerned about the safety of 1,000 foreign students on the island, most of them American, and about the stability of the region. So, on 22 October 1983, the U.S. began Operation URGENT FURY to extract Americans and other foreign nationals and to overthrow the revolutionary Marxist forces. The U.S. invaded the island nation on 25 October, depending heavily on Military Airlift Command's ability to airdrop nearly 500 Army Rangers and airlift thousands of personnel and thousands of tons of cargo into the fight. The combined 417 aircrew members from the 437 and 315 MAWs flew 105 missions airlifting personnel, equipment, and supplies to Grenada, Barbados, Puerto Rico, and Howard AFB in Panama for URGENT FURY, which officially ended in December 1983. The second significant event of 1983 began within days of URGENT FURY.

On 1 July 1988, the 437th flew the Air Force's first airlift cargo mission into Moscow. For its service during the 1980s, the wing earned its seventh and eighth Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards from 1984-1986 and 1988-1989.

1989 was a year of significant humanitarian efforts. The wing flew relief missions for the Armenian and San Franciscan earthquakes, flew United Nations humanitarian relief missions to Pakistan, and flew missions in support of the Nicaraguan Contras. Charleston International Airport served as the hub for Operation BLADE JEWEL: the voluntary repatriation of all U.S. citizens from Panama in light of the nation's growing unrest. Even as the wing and Charleston AFB supported the rest of the world, they suddenly faced their own possible demise. Hurricane Hugo tore through the Low Country on 21 September 1989, causing billions of dollars in damage. Yet, despite the destruction around the base, the 437th continued to help others, flying relief missions to St. Croix, Virgin Islands, which Hugo decimated. For its "superior teamwork and dedication," the wing received its ninth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award from 21 September to 31 October 1989.

Then, on 20 December 1989, 14 of the wing's C-141s teamed up with 70 other aircraft to airdrop almost 5,000 paratroops from about 500 feet over Panama. Operation JUST CAUSE had begun. This operation was significant for the Air Force in that it marked the first use of night vision goggles during a contingency. The 437th flew 51 missions during the operation, which at the time was the largest and most complex air operation since Vietnam and the largest

nighttime airborne operation since World War II. For its actions during JUST CAUSE, the wing received its tenth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award from 1989 to 1990 and earned its only Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamer: Panama 1989-1990.

In August 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait, and by 13 September 1990, Twenty-First Air Force had established stage operations at Charleston for the entire East Coast. The next month "Desert Express" began at Charleston AFB, a daily C-141 flight dedicated to airlifting critical spare parts to Operation DESERT SHIELD units deployed to the Persian Gulf. During the crucial build up of U.S. forces in the Middle East, Charleston personnel supported 839 aircraft departures from 28 November to 28 December 1990. Only 20 days later on 17 January 1991, the U.S. and Coalition forces began the first phase of Operation DESERT STORM. In February 1991, MAC added a second Desert Express mission to Charleston AFB's repertoire. The wing remained a significant player in the Middle East even as conflict began to decrease. The wing's C-141s participated in Operation DESERT CALM, the redeployment of troops after the formal ceasefire agreement signed 4 March 1991. On 14 March, MAC ended the second Desert Express mission and moved the original Desert Express mission to Dover AFB on 14 April. Then, on 7 April 1991, Operation PROVIDE COMFORT began and the wing's aircraft airlifted relief supplies to the Kurds in Iran, Turkey, and Northern Iraq. On 27 April, the 437th flew to Tehran to deliver 15 tons of supplies for Kurdish refugees, marking the first time in 12 years a MAC aircraft had landed in Iran. In less than one year, from 7 August 1990 through 30 June 1991, the 437 MAW flew more than 2,000 missions as part of five operations supporting combat actions and humanitarian efforts in the Middle East.

In early 1992, the wing began transferring out its first few C-141s in preparation for the arrival of the Air Force's much-anticipated C-17A Globemaster III aircraft, even while continuing its worldwide mission.

During 1992 alone, the wing flew countless channels, exercise support missions, SAAMs, and more than 200 humanitarian missions in support of Operation PROVIDE HOPE I and II in the crumbling former Soviet Union, Operation RESTORE HOPE in famine gripped Somalia, Hurricane Andrew that destroyed Homestead AFB in Florida, and Operation PROVIDE RELIEF (formerly PROVIDE PROMISE) in Yugoslavia, which ended in January 1996 making it the longest humanitarian airlift mission flown yet.

In 1991, the Air Force underwent its largest reorganization since post-World War II, converting from the Tri-Deputate or Deputy Commander System to the Objective Wing Organization, the four-group system similar to what the wing operates with today. In mid-1991, the 437 MAW began restructuring under this program, realigning its maintenance and flying squadron work force and establishing the 437th Logistics Group and 437th Operations Group, originally the 437th Troop Carrier Group. (The units now known as the 437th Mission Support Group and 437th Medical Group were already assigned to the wing at this time.) The program also redesignated many of the Air Force's units by dropping the "Military" from their names. Thus, on 1 October 1991, the 437 MAW became the 437th Airlift Wing and soon after the 17, 20, 41, and 76 MAS became simply Airlift Squadrons (AS). On 1 April 1992, the wing made another

change, inactivating the 41 AS and activating in its place the 14 AS, which came from Norton AFB, California.

For the rest of the 1990s, the 437 AW remained at the forefront of every major operation that took place. In 1994 Haiti overthrew its president again triggering Operation MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY, and ethnic conflict raged in Rwanda spurring relief efforts as part of Operation SUPPORT HOPE. In 1995 Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR began, a peacekeeping mission to Bosnia as part of the Dayton Peace Accords after four years of conflict in the Balkans. This marked the first systematic employment of C-17s in contingency operations. Also in 1995, the wing performed the C-17's first Strategic Brigade Airdrop. In 1996 Liberia exploded into civil war and as a result Operation ASSURED RESPONSE took place that April, in which the wing's C-17 first airlifted special operations helicopters.

The new millennium for the 437th Airlift Wing began much as the last had ended, with its aircraft and personnel spread across the globe on worldwide taskings. But 2000 was another year of change when the last C-141B departed the Charleston AFB runway ending a 35-year relationship between the Lowcountry and Starlifters. With the loss, the 16 AS inactivated in preparation to activate as the wing's fourth C-17 squadron in 2002.

The next test for the wing and the U.S. as a whole came on 11 September 2001 when Al Qaeda terrorists hijacked several commercial jets and plummeted them into the World Trade Center twin towers and the Pentagon killing thousands of people from some 80 nations. In response, President George W. Bush initiated Operation ENDURING FREEDOM—air and ground strikes against terrorist organizations and training camps in Afghanistan. “Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom—the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time — now depends on us.” [President Bush] Only hours after Coalition forces bombed terrorist targets inside the country, two 437th C-17s dropped 35,000 packets of Humanitarian Daily Rations over Afghanistan, escorted by F-15 fighters ensuring air superiority and supremacy for the Air Force's newest airlifters.

In early 2003, AMC designated Charleston AFB the U.S. C-17 stage location and deployed C-17 crews and personnel from the 62 AW at McChord AFB to South Carolina to assist operations. Unknown to most people at the time, this was in preparation for a second GWOT campaign that began on 19 March: Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. Only a week later, on 26 March, 15 C-17s assigned to the 62 AW and the 437 AW airdropped 1,000 “Sky Soldiers” of the 173d Airborne Brigade over northern Iraq—the first C-17 combat insertion of paratroopers. On 10 April, 437 AW C-17s airlifted cargo and personnel to Baghdad International Airport under cover of darkness to establish a mobile command post. The C-17s landed on the airport ramps because the fleeing regime obstructed the runways. In addition to combat, in December 2003 wing C-17s landed in Kerman, Iran to deliver earthquake relief supplies to the devastated Bam region.

During 2004, the 437th Airlift Wing continued its hectic pace around the globe. For the fourth time in as many decades, civil war tore through Haiti and the wing found itself flying mission

back into Port-au-Prince. The wing's C-17s delivered the personnel and outsized equipment need to construct Forward Operating Base Carlson in Afghanistan, conducting AMC's first C-17 low altitude airdrop during contingency operations. Later that year the wing landed the first C-17 aircraft on that 90-foot-wide dirt strip at FOB Carlson, validating the C-17's ability to operate in a high altitude, mountainous environment. Also in 2004, the wing flew interim government of Iraq President Sheikh Ghazi Al-Yawar from Balad Air Base, Iraq to Andrews AFB for former President Ronald Reagan's state funeral ceremony.

In 2005, the 437 AW continued its channels, SAAMs, and contingency missions in support of OEF and OIF. The wing responded immediately to the tsunami-devastated southern Asia as part of Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE.

In 2007, the 437 AW supported several deployments providing the primary airlift (military and civilian aircraft) for delivering the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) armored vehicle to the AOR. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates set a goal of 1500 MRAPS in theater by 31 December; on 20 December, 11 days before the deadline, the 1500th MRAP was delivered to the AOR.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.