

517th AIRLIFT SQUADRON



LINEAGE

LINEAGE¹

17th Transport Squadron constituted, 20 Nov 1940
Activated, 11 Dec 1940
Redesignated 17th Troop Carrier Squadron, 4 Jul 1942
Inactivated, 31 Jul 1945
Activated, 19 May 1947
Inactivated, 10 Sep 1948
Redesignated 17th Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 3 Jul 1952
Activated, 14 Jul 1952
Inactivated, 21 Jul 1954
Activated, 24 Oct 1960
Organized, 8 Feb 1961
Redesignated 17th Troop Carrier Squadron, 8 Dec 1965
Redesignated 17th Tactical Airlift Squadron, 1 Sep 1967
Redesignated 517th Airlift Squadron, 1 Apr 1992

¹ 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.

War Insignia Stamp Album, Vol. 4, Postamp Publishing Co., 1942.

Unit history. *A Brief History of the 3rd Wing*. 673rd Air Base Wing History Office. Elmendorf AFB, AK. 2012.

STATIONS

McClellan Field, California, 11 Jul 1940
Hamilton Field, California, 11 Jul 1941
Westover Field, Massachusetts, 13 Jun–31 Jul 1942
Ramsbury, England, 18 Aug 1942
Greenham Common Airdrome, England, 26 Sep 1942
Blida, Algeria, 27 Nov 1942 (air echelon operated from Nouvion, Algeria, 6–27 Jun 1943 and Kairouan, Tunisia, 27 Jun–26 Jul 1943)
Kairouan, Tunisia, 29 Jun 1943
El Djem, Tunisia, 26 Jul 1943
Milo/Trapani Airdrome, Sicily, 1 Sep 1943
Comiso, Sicily, 4 Sep 1943 (air echelon operated from Lalmia, India, 7 Apr–9 Jun 1944)
Ciampino, Italy, 8 Jul 1944 (operated from Istres, France, 8 Sep–11 Nov 1944)
Rosignano Airfield, Italy, 10 Jan–23 May 1945
Waller Field, Trinidad, 4 Jun–31 Jul 1945
Langley Field, Virginia, 19 May 1947–10 Sep 1948
Donaldson AFB, South Carolina, 14 Jul 1952–21 Jul 1954
Dyess AFB, Texas, 8 Feb 1961
Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, 15 Jun 1964

ASSIGNMENTS

64th Transport (later, 64th Troop Carrier) Group, 11 Dec 1940–31 Jul 1945
64th Troop Carrier Group, 19 May 1947–10 Sep 1948
64th Troop Carrier Group, 14 Jul 1952–21 Jul 1954
Tactical Air Command, 24 Oct 1960
64th Troop Carrier Wing, 8 Feb 1961
516th Troop Carrier Wing, 1 Jan 1963
5040th Air Base Wing, 15 Jun 1964
21st Composite Wing, 8 Jul 1966
Twenty-Second Air Force, 31 Mar 1975
616th Military Airlift Group, 1 Nov 1975
3d Operations Group, 1 Apr 1992

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-47, 1941–1945
None, 1947–1948
C-82, 1952–1953
C-119, 1953–1954
C-130, 1961
C-124, 1970–1971
C-12, 1992

COMMANDERS

Capt Aaron H. Hoffeditz, 11 Dec 1940

Capt Albert B. Willett, 10 May 1941
Maj William S. Pocock, 15 Dec 1941
Maj Earl B. Cook, 16 Mar 1942
Maj John T. Thompson, 13 Oct 1942
Maj Laverne L. Cheney, 17 May 1943
Maj Leo J. Hagerty, 7 Nov 1944-Unkn
Capt William B. Parker, Unkn-4 Mar 1945
Maj Leo J. Hagerty, 4 Mar 1945
Capt William B. Parker, 21 Mar 1945-Unkn
None (Not Manned), 19 Sep 1947-10 Sep 1948
Maj Wesley C. Brashear, By Sep 1952
Capt Robert E. Lee, By Oct 1952
Lt Col G. B. Gray, By Dec 1952-Unkn
Capt Charles D. Adams, 8 Feb 1961
Maj Guy E. Ridgeway Jr., 1 Apr 1961
Lt Col Joseph J. Kesler, Oct 1961
Lt Col Guy E. Ridgeway Jr., 25 Apr 1962
Col John H. Statts, 12 Mar 1963
Lt Col Kenneth E. Bethe, 1 Jul 1966-Unkn
Lt Col R. T. Tinney, By 1 Sep 1969
Lt Col John C. Parker, 22 Sep 1969
Lt Col Ora J. Baird Jr., By Mar 1971
Lt Col Charles F. Renner, By May 1971
Lt Col Ora J. Baird Jr., By Jun 1971
Lt Col Charles F. Renner, 4 Jun 1971
Lt Col Ora J. Baird Jr., 3 Sep 1971
Lt Col John D. Hedges, 26 Jun 1972
Lt Col Donald R. Gould, 11 Dec 1972
Lt Col John D. Hedges, By Apr 1973
Lt Col Donald R. Gould, 10 Apr 1973
Lt Col James H. Waldman, 1 Apr 1974
Lt Col William J. Gibbons, 22 Jun 1976
Lt Col Robert T. Shellenberger Jr., 22 Jul 1976
Lt Col David M. Calder, 26 Aug 1978
Lt Col William P. Martin Jr., 30 Sep 1978
Lt Col Donald L. Smith, 1 Jul 1979
Lt Col Ronald B. Dorcy, 2 Jun 1981
Lt Col James W. Prouty, 4 Jan 1984
Lt Col George N. Williams, 14 Nov 1985
Lt Col Ralph G. Bent li, By Jan 1988
Lt Col Andrew M. Gessner, 6 Jul 1989
Lt Col Richard J. Casey, 29 Jun 1991
Lt Col Douglas L. Miller, 28 Jun 1993
Lt Col William M. Hudson, 20 Jun 1994

Lt Col Walter J. Tomczak, 12 Jul 1996
Lt Col Paul A. Curlett, 2 Jul 1998
Lt Col Neil B. Friedli, 17 Mar 2000
Lt Col Paul Stephenson, 23 Mar 2001
Lt Col Patrick Hollrah, 13 Mar 2003
Lt Col Paul E. Feather, 24 Aug 2004
Lt Col Gary J. Gottschall, 27 Jan 2006

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Algeria-French Morocco
Tunisia; Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Rome-Arno
Southern France
North Apennines
Po Valley, India-Burma

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
CBI Theater, 7 Apr–15 Jun 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device
2 May 1967–1 Jan 1968

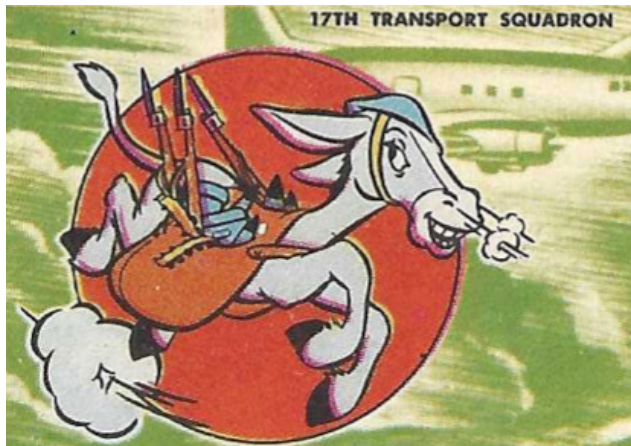
Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1962–15 Jun 1964
16 Jun 1964–31 May 1966
8 Jul 1966–1 May 1967
2 Jan–31 Dec 1968
1 Jan–31 Dec 1969
1 Jan–31 Dec 1970
1 Jan–31 Dec 1971
1 Jan–31 Dec 1972
1 Jan–31 Dec 1974
1 Jan–30 Mar 1975
1 Jan–31 Dec 1979

1 Jun 1986–31 May 1987
1 Jun 1987–31 May 1989
1 Jan 1994–31 Dec 1995
1 Jan 1996–30 Sep 1998
1 Jan 2000–31 Dec 2001
1 Jan 2002–30 Sep 2003
1 Oct 2003–30 Sep 2005
1 Oct 2005 – 1 Nov 2006
2 Nov 2006–1 Nov 2008
2 Nov 2008–1 Nov 2009

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm
1 Sep 1966–1 Jan 1968

EMBLEM



17 Transport Squadron emblem: American ingenuity under the leadership of ship-building Kaiser from Seattle and occasioned by the growing need of troop transports and flying cargo ships has turned the eyes of all toward this extended war operation. Needless to say, the problems of carrying troops and equipment in huge flying freight cars had been mastered in its earlier stages by far-sighted military men. The 17 Transport Squadron activated in December of 1940 as a part of the 64th Transport Group was one of many designed to fit into the army's transportation pattern. It was stationed at Hamilton Field, California, when it received its insignia from the Disney Studios. A donkey galloping post-haste with such speed that it is practically flying, forms the background heraldry of the 17. With regulation army hat and pack containing guns, bullets and shells strapped to his back, he represents the modern version of the classic army mule.

A White disc charged with a Red silhouetted stylized "fire bird" in profile flight. (Approved, 29 Mar 1962; modified, 19 Aug 1970 modified, 16 Feb 1999)

17 Troop Carrier Squadron emblem: The Firebird patch always faced to heraldic right. However, when the 17 was transferred from AAC to MAC, the gaining command required all assigned members to wear the MAJCOM patch on the chest and the squadron patch on the right shoulder. Since this would have had the bird flying towards the wearer's rear (flying backwards), the 17

requested that the USAF heraldry board permit the insignia to be redesigned with the bird facing to the left for those occasions when display would have the bird flying backwards. The heraldry board concurred. The bird continued to be displayed in the more familiar manner, with the bird facing to heraldic right except when worn on the right shoulder. In summary, THE BIRD FACES OR FLYS RIGHT UNLESS THIS MAKES IT FLY BACKWARDS. Gary G. Lattin, an aircraft commander in the squadron, designed the Firebird emblem of the 17 Troop Carrier Squadron. In the early 1960s, the 64th Troop Carrier Wing selected Gary's work of art as being the best entered in a contest to select an appropriate emblem for the newly reactivated 17 TCS.

517 Airlift Squadron emblem: On a disc Argent, a stylized eagle (firebird) volant traversed wings to chief Gules, all within a diminished border of the second. Attached above the disc, a White scroll edged with a narrow Red border and inscribed "517 AIRLIFT SQ" in Red letters. Attached below the disc, a White scroll edged with a narrow Red border and inscribed "FIREBIRDS" in Red letters. The eagle in flight symbolizes the mythical firebird renowned for its strength and reflects the strength, speed and tenacity with which the unit performs its mission. The Squadron's versatility with equipment and flexibility in operation are also suggested by the powerful bird.

MOTTO

VERSATILE, CAPABLE

OPERATIONS

World War II: Included airborne assaults on Sicily and Southern France; support for partisans in Northern Italy, Jan–May 1945; aerial transportation in MTO, and briefly in CBI. Unmanned, 1947–1948. Resupplied Distant Early Warning (DEW) line sites in Northern Canada and radar sites in Greenland, 1964–1975. Parts of the squadron deployed to South Vietnam, 1967–1968 to provide tactical airlift. Provided C-130 aircraft and crews for Pacific airlift to Southwest Asia, Aug–Nov 1990.

12/2007 - ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska (AFPN) - Elmendorf officially received its first C-17 Globemaster III airlifter June 11 during a ceremony here. The C-17, "Spirit of Denali," was delivered by Alaska's Lt. Gov. Sean Parnell. "The C-17 is an exceptional aircraft and what a smooth ride," said the lieutenant governor. "This is a great day for Alaskans, as well for our Air Force and Guard. Never have we been so well-equipped to do so much good in the world around us. 'Whether it's taking 102 Soldiers to strategic locations or flying over 170,000 pounds of humanitarian aid to impoverished nations ... we can do far more, far faster than ever before,'" he said. "For these reasons and many more, I was thrilled to be on this aircraft to contemplate the hope and opportunities the C-17 will provide." The nation's newest airlifter will allow Elmendorf to improve its ability to accomplish the mission of global reach by delivering people and supplies anywhere, anytime. The C-17 mission will be operated and maintained by the active duty Air Force and Alaska Air National Guard.

We start a new heritage today in the Alaska Air National Guard. We make operational the 249th Airlift Squadron," said Brig. Gen. Tony Hart, the 176th Wing commander. "The 249th and 517 are" going to be the cornerstone of the future total force integration that's going to happen here

at Elmendorf." Col. Tom Tinsley, 3rd Wing commander, said there is no better place to have the C-17 deliver airpower for America than in Alaska. "Once the C-17 becomes fully operational here in Alaska, it will perform similar missions to the preceding aircraft (the C-130) with two major differences," Colonel Tinsley said. "We will be able to project mobility and airlift air power on a global scale. We are doing this with an associate partnership with the 176th Wing. We're doing total force integration and making it a reality for the first time in Alaska."

Total force integration at Elmendorf will create efficiencies, retain invaluable human capital, and above all, maximize the capabilities of the Air Force components. Alaska provides a unique advantage for global delivery because it is strategically located near the center of the northern hemisphere. With more than 62,000 square miles of airspace, America's 49th state offers an ideal location for Airmen to test the aircraft's interoperability in an austere environment. "I'll just bet that your pilots are chomping at the bit to take your new C-17 out for a spin in that environment," said Ron Marcotte, Boeing vice president and general manager of Global Mobility Systems and Integrated Defense Systems-Long Beach. The airlift mission at Elmendorf will transform with the change to C-17s. Global-direct delivery will be the mission focus, while continuing to work closely with the Army supporting Fort Richardson Soldiers and the Stryker Brigade.

To support these aircraft, facilities on Elmendorf were built, upgraded, or are being built. These include a large-frame aircraft hangar; a state-of-the-art flight simulator; a dual-bay hangar; survival equipment shop; squadron operations buildings and hangars; egress; battery shops; and life support offices. There will also be construction at Fort Greeley's Allen Army Airfield to upgrade the assault landing zone there. The eighth and final C-17 is scheduled to arrive here in November. Elmendorf AFB is the second Pacific Air Forces location for C-17s.

The arrival of the 17 Tactical Airlift Squadron increased AAC's responsibilities for providing support to other Air Force commands and agencies. Among the commands supported were the Air Force Systems Command's two satellite tracking stations. Donnelly Flats, south of Big Delta, and Chiniak, on Kodiak Island, were operated as part of a worldwide system which tracked and monitored satellites and manned space flights. Donnelly Flats was closed in 1968 and Chiniak in 1975. Their functions were assumed by other tracking sites in the system.

The C-130Ds were sent to the 61st Troop Carrier Squadron (TCS) as was the mission to support the construction operation. After the construction was completed, the supply mission was transferred to the 17 TCS, and in 1963, this unit was put under the Alaska Air Command. In 1967, the 17 TCS became the 17 Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS). Six of the C-130Ds had their ski landing gear removed, and they were used in support of the Alaska sites which had gravel strips. These were designated C-130D-6s.

On 8 October, a magnitude 7.6 earthquake hit Pakistan, and again the US military responded. The death toll is expected to be more than 30,000. Italian C-130J crews arrived with relief supplies on 10 October, and crews from the 517 Airlift Squadron at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, carried out the first airdrop of supplies on 12 October, taking off from Bagram AB, Afghanistan. Crews dropped fourteen pallets of relief supplies totaling approximately 20,000 pounds on that mission. As of 14

October, 140,000 pounds of supplies had been airlifted to Pakistan, with C-17 and C-5 crews later bringing in more supplies and CH-47 helicopters.

A lift for life: Elmendorf C-130 crew helps save infant

By 1st Lt. Amy Hansen 3rd Wing Public Affairs

2004-01-11

ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska - When a newborn child hovered between life and death, an Elmendorf C-130 and its crew made the difference. Capt. Dave Meier, 517 Airlift Squadron aircraft commander, and his crew recently flew to Misawa Air Base, Japan, to pick up a critically ill infant. After the pick-up, the crew delivered the baby boy to Kadena AB, Japan, for an operation that saved his life. The Elmendorf C-130 was in Fukuoka, Japan, conducting a routine Pacific Command support mission when the crew received a call requesting help from the Pacific Air Forces Air Mobility Operations Control Center. While they were in the middle of loading cargo, the crew heard that the emergency medical evacuation was being set up, Captain Meier said. The PACAF AMOCC initially asked the crew how quickly the C-130 could be airborne and the estimated flight time to Misawa AB and then Kadena AB. "We began flight planning and stopped our upload in case we got the new mission," Captain Meier said. "We were ready to go when AMOCC called back 15 minutes later, and were airborne about 15 minutes after that, heading for Misawa AB."

According to Lt. Col. Eric Stone, 35th Medical Operations Squadron commander, KC-135s are normally used for medical evacuations from Misawa AB, but they are poorly suited for the special demands of neonatal transport.

"When the Theater Patient Movement Requirement Center notified us that Misawa AB had a newborn that needed immediate transport to Kadena AB for an operation, I immediately called down to Fukuoka," said Mr. Stefan Wenska, AMOCC airlift planner. "I spoke with Captain Meier about the re-route, and he and his crew were all over it. "They made it up to Misawa in record time, waited for the medical crew, loaded the patient, and extended their duty day to fly that baby to Kadena AB," he continued. The entire mission, from notification to final landing, took less than 14 hours, said Captain Meier.

The Elmendorf C-130 carried the infant, his parents and a special neonatal transport unit from Misawa AB to Kadena AB in less than five hours. The newborn made it in good shape, and is now off life support and doing well, said Colonel Stone. "It was good to see everything come together to help out this family," said Captain Meier. "We were glad to be in the right place to be part of it." "This was the most rewarding mission I've ever done," said 1st Lt. Carrick Yaws, 517 AS copilot. Other members of the crew included 2nd Lt. Dawn Carter, navigator, and Airman 1st Class Philip Martin, loadmaster. Mr. Wenska sent a thank-you note to the 517 AS director of operations a day after the emergency airlift mission. "Yesterday, a tragedy was averted by the above-and-beyond efforts of Captain Meier and crew ... Captain Meier should be proud of this humanitarian accomplishment - all of you should share in this success. Please pass on my heartfelt thanks to him and his crew for a job extremely well done."

The 17 Tactical Airlift Squadron (TAS), assigned to Alaskan Air Command, was flying Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft in late 1969 when, on December 1, the squadron took on strength two C-

124s. Used to airlift outsize cargo to remote Alaskan radar sites, the C-124s could do what the unit's C-130s couldn't. Often, the giant planes landed on incredibly short runways and did it in perfect safety. So effective were the C-124s, that the squadron continued flying them until October 1, 1971, at which time the airplanes were turned over to the 5041st Tactical Operations Squadron.