

1503 AIR TRANSPORT WING



MISSION

The mission of the 1503 Air Transport Wing is a dual one. One part of the mission is to process passengers, mail and cargo for transpacific and inter Far East flights. The other facet of its job is to perform theater airlift with its C-124 and C-54 aircraft.

LINEAGE

1503 Air Transport Wing

STATIONS

Tachikawa AB, Japan

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

One of the major units located at Tachikawa is the Military Air Transport Service's 1503d Air Transport Wing (Heavy). The 1503d is the primary MATS unit assigned to the Far East and its next headquarters in the chain of command is Western Transport Air Force located at Travis Air Force Base, California.

Lining the West Tachikawa flightline are the hangars, shops, giant C-124 and Navy C-54s of the 1503d as well as its passenger terminal and air freight processing facilities.

The 1503d is a relative new-comer to Tachikawa. Although its troop carrier units were located here for many years previously under another command, they did not become a part of MATS until July 1, 1957 when the 1503d absorbed the aircraft, personnel and equipment of the former 374th Troop Carrier Wing. Shortly after that date, on July 15, 1957, the 1503d moved its headquarters from Tokyo International Airport to Tachikawa on May 15, 1958.

The other elements of the transpacific mission include what is known as the "Embassy Run." The "Embassy Run" is made up of small liaison offices (LNOs) along an air route throughout Asia.

Part of the 1503d's mission is providing airlift for the Far East theater with its assigned C-124 and C-54 aircraft which are under operational control of the 315th Air Division. The C-124s are assigned to the 1503d Flightline Maintenance Squadron and flown by crew members of the MATS 6th and 22nd Troop Carrier Squadrons. The C-54s are flown by members of Navy Detachment Alfa, a unit of Air Transport Squadron 7, located at Moffett Field, California.

The unit was initially formed at Tachikawa AAB, Japan in 1946 with a mission to provide transportation for priority passengers and cargo in and around the Tokyo Area; to support the Occupation Government in Japan, and provide strategic transport to the United States.

The 1503d ATW became the main MATS organization in the Western Pacific, supporting numerous tenant organizations such as the Air Rescue Service; Air Weather Service, and Far East Air Force theater Troop Carrier Groups (later Wings) which transhipped supplies and personnel from the MATS Aerial Port at Tachikawa throughout the 1950s.

The first major mission by the 1503d was the evacuation of large numbers of Americans out of China in 1948 after the Communists defeated the Chinese Nationalist forces during the Chinese Civil War.

The Korean War saw operations increase, with Troop Carrier units carrying out the evacuation of American civilians and then transporting the torrent of Allied military men and material flowing into the war zone. Around the clock planes arrived and departed. A typical flight might carry 35,000 pounds of hand grenades to South Korea, with 80 wounded personnel arriving to be

transported to the USAF Hospital on the base. For thousands of servicemen whose tours took them into, through or out of Tachikawa, the USAF hospital became the best barometer of American military activities in the Far East.

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