

1739 FERRYING SQUADRON

MISSION

The mission of the 1739 Ferrying Squadron is to perform such ferrying missions as may be directed by this headquarters and to train ferrying crews in accordance with standards established by this and higher headquarters.

LINEAGE

1739 Ferrying Squadron

STATIONS

Tinker AFB, OK

Amarillo AFB, TX, 8 Sep 1952

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Lt Col John K. Thompson, #@1956

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

This official statement of the mission of the 1739th Ferrying Squadron fails to give a really true picture of the activities and the scope of the 1739th. It is extremely difficult to obtain an idea of the squadron and its operations without first looking at some vital statistics. For instance, since its inception on July 1, 1952, the 1739th Ferrying Squadron has made a total of 3,308 aircraft deliveries (through 31 December, 1955) to United States Air Force units and friendly foreign governments throughout the friendly world. During this three and a half year period, crews of the 1739th have delivered 979 aircraft to foreign destinations, including Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Greenland, Iceland, Alaska, Canada, Central America, South America and many parts of the Far East.

To look at these figures in another way, during this three and a half year period, 1739th crews have delivered 1.8 aircraft to domestic destinations every 24 hours; and at the same time, they delivered 0.77 aircraft to foreign destinations during each 24 hour period.

Thus, it is easy to see that the entire friendly world has been, and still is, the theatre of operations for the pilots and engineers of the squadron. At any given moment, personnel of the squadron are in the process of performing an aircraft delivery to both domestic and foreign destinations. The scope of the 1739th Ferrying Squadron is indeed world wide, and its ferrying operations are going on continuously.

The 1739th Ferrying Squadron first came into existence on July 1, 1952, when, as a result of General Order No. 92, Military Air Transport Service, Washington, D.C., the 3075th Aircraft Ferry Squadron, located at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma, was redesignated the 1739th Ferrying Squadron, 1708th Ferrying Wing, Continental Division, Military Air Transport Service.

Movement orders for the squadron were received in August of 1952, reassigning the unit to its present location at Amarillo Air Force Base. At that time, the personnel strength of the squadron consisted of 26 officers and 23 airmen. In three short years, the squadron has grown to the point where, as of the first of July, 1955, there were 117 officers and 135 airmen assigned to the 1739th. Along with this increase in personnel over the past three years, the effectiveness of the squadron in performing its assigned mission has increased considerably.

The squadron is a tenant organization at Amarillo Air Force Base, which is under the control of the Commander, 3320th Technical Training Wing, Technical Training Air Force, Air Training Command. As a tenant organization, the squadron utilizes the facilities of Amarillo Air Force Base, but it is under the direct control of its Group Headquarters, the 1708th Ferrying Wing, located at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas.

Unlike most other squadrons in the Air Force the 1739th Ferrying Squadron does not confine its flying activities to one or two different types of aircraft. Instead, the exact opposite is the case, as squadron crews have ferried 27 different configurations of aircraft over the past three years. The majority of aircraft flown have been twin and four engine reciprocating types but also included in the long list are single engine jet and reciprocating types, helicopters, and recently twin jet

bombers. So, in addition to having a large part of the world as its theatre of operations, the squadron finds itself flying a large majority of the aircraft presently in operational use by the United States Air Force.

When the squadron was first established in July of 1952, 1739th crews moved all types of aircraft, including single and multi-engine reciprocating, and jets. More recently, however, the squadron has tended to specialize in moving only multi-engine aircraft and helicopters. The other two squadrons which make up the 1708th Ferrying Wing, the 1737th at Dover AFB, Delaware, and the 1738th at Long Beach Municipal Airport, California, have in turn stopped ferrying multi-engine aircraft, and instead are now concentrating on the movement of single engine jet type aircraft. Thus, increased effectiveness, through the reduction of the overall number of different types of aircraft flown by each squadron of the Ferrying Group, has been the result of this specialization. However, during the first six months of 1955, crews of the 1739th Ferrying Squadron ferried 16 different types of aircraft; still a high figure in comparison to the normal squadron in the Air Force.

Since the squadron does fly so many different types of aircraft, a complex and continually changing flying training program is vitally necessary for the successful accomplishment of the squadron's assigned mission. As requests to ferry new types of aircraft are received, it becomes the responsibility of the Flying Training Section to adequately train and check out both the pilots and the engineers necessary to perform deliveries in the new type of aircraft. In addition, the Flying Training Section must check out all newly assigned personnel, as well as cross train squadron pilots and engineers in the various types of aircraft as additional crew requests are received. Most pilots and engineers of the squadron are checked out and current in several different types of aircraft; in some cases, as many as 8 different types of aircraft.

As a result of this cross training, more effective utilization of a ferrying crew can be obtained. For instance, a crew may begin its mission by delivering a C-119 to Europe; then bring a C-47 back to the States; and wind up their mission by delivering a B-29 to a stateside destination. Trips of 30 to 40 days are not uncommon in the squadron, with an average of 25 days being the rule.

Though squadron personnel may be away from Amarillo for a relatively long period of time, the result is more aircraft delivered in a shorter period of time, and by fewer personnel.

The squadron has had three commanders since it was organized. Lt. Col. Charles R. Fitch assumed command of the squadron on August 28, 1952, soon after the squadron moved to its new location at Amarillo Air Force Base. Col. Fitch came to the 1739th from the 1708th Ferrying Wing Headquarters, where he had been Wing Operations Officer. Col. Fitch remained as Squadron Commander until January 4, 1954, when he was reassigned to Headquarters, USAF, in the office of the Director of Operations. At that time, Lt. Col. Russell E. Gray took over command of the Squadron. Col. Gray's previous assignment was with the Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, where he was an instructor in the Logistics Staff Officers' Course. Col. Gray remained as Squadron Commander until March 11, 1955 when he was reassigned to the Philippines as the Commander of an Air Rescue Squadron. Upon Col. Gray's reassignment, Lt. Col. John K. Thompson, formerly commander of the 57th Air Transport Squadron at Kelly Air Force Base,

Texas, assumed command of the squadron. Col. Thompson is presently the Commander of the squadron.

Under the able leadership of these three men, the 1739th Ferrying Squadron has continually improved its operational effectiveness over the past three years. Much credit for the successful accomplishment of the squadron's assigned mission must go to its past and present commanders.

Contrary to popular opinion, the squadron does not confine its ferrying activities to the delivery of new aircraft fresh from the factories. Many of the stateside deliveries are made in aircraft cleared on a "one time only, visual flight rules" flight for delivery to modification centers. At the same time, a large number of old and service worn aircraft are flown back to the States from overseas points by crews of the 1739th for needed modification and repairs.

Considering the fact that much of the squadron's flying is done in aircraft which are not in the best of condition, and that a great deal of its flying is done over large expanses of ocean, the flying safety record established by the squadron has been remarkable. In its first three years of operations, from July of 1952 to July of 1955, the squadron had only five major accidents and four minor accidents, with no injuries to personnel involved in these accidents.

During this period, however, there were several near accidents which were averted only through the superior skill of the crews involved. For instance, on January 16, 1954, Captain James T. Beck and his crew flew their crippled C-119 for 6:57 on one engine, over the ocean and after losing 9000 feet of altitude, before making a safe landing at Kindley Air Force Base, Bermuda. For his superior flying skill in averting a major accident, Captain Beck was presented with an award for safety in military aviation.

On July 11, 1955, however, the squadron suffered its first fatal accident since its organization. Captain Roy C. Wagster was delivering a new twin jet B-57 from the Glenn L. Martin factory at Baltimore, Maryland, to Warner-Robbins Air Force Base, Georgia. Thirty minutes after takeoff, Captain Wagster lost an engine, and he turned back to the Martin airstrip. He appeared to have made a safe single engine landing when his aircraft swerved off the runway, and crashed into some nearby construction equipment. The loss of Captain Wagster will indeed be felt by the members of the squadron, and it was with deep regret that the squadron learned of his tragic death.

Over the past three years, the 1739th Ferrying Squadron has grown from a small organization which delivered only 101 aircraft in the first six months of its operation, to a large, efficient unit which completed 543 aircraft deliveries in the last six months of operation. Since the 1739th Ferrying Squadron is one of the Air Force's more unique organizations, its method of operation will be discussed and shown, as far as possible throughout the remainder of this book. It is hoped that after finishing this book, the reader will have a more complete and thorough understanding of the 1739th Ferrying Squadron, its method of operation, and its personnel.

Flying Training, one of the busiest sections of the 1739th. An instrument card expires, or a pilot needs a currency check and is assigned to Flying Training. They keep our aircraft off the ground—

our C-119's average close to 100 hours each month. Look skyward in Amarillo and chances are, Flying Training's got a plane working the range or flying around the flag pole. Each man's an instructor, and among the top pilots in our organization.

Ferry Control, headed by Capt. D. M. Robinson. There's a C-119 in Japan or a B-26 at Prestwick AFB that needs to be moved . . . There's an aircraft delivered at Rhien Main or one out of commission in the Azores. These men follow each crew enroute and control the actual movement of aircraft around the world. Below Captain S. A. Rinaman, Asst. FCO, discusses the movement of an aircraft.

The flights, where pilots and engineers are selected for aircraft to be moved, are the initial expeditors of ferrying. Records of qualification, route and instrument experience, among others, are the prime criterion in selection of a crew to safely and quickly deliver an aircraft.

The Ferry Control Section of the squadron received a crew request from Group yesterday to furnish a crew for a C-119G to be ferried to India. On Tuesday, you were assigned by crew control to be the co-pilot on this trip. Along with the pilot and engineer of your crew, you were briefed by the Navigation and Briefing Officer for a foreign ferry mission. The latest changes in ferrying procedures and new directives from higher headquarters, as well as foreign NOTAMS, were discussed by the Navigation and Briefing Officer. Passports and visas were checked and shot records were reviewed for being complete and up to date. After accomplishing the remainder of your squadron clearance, you proceeded to the Personal Equipment Section, where you drew your parachute and other personal flying equipment. Then you went home to pack your flying equipment and sufficient clothing, for both winter and summer climates, to last at least a month. Bright and early the next morning, you and your crew will depart Amarillo Air Force Base for the aircraft pickup point at Hagerstown, Maryland.

MAINTENANCE: Responsible for the maintenance of assigned aircraft and equipment. Interprets T.O.'s and directives and resolves problems related to operational efficiency, shop equipment and facilities. Supervises preparation of aircraft status reports and aircraft and engine records and maintenance schedules. Monitors OJT program. Maintains liaison with supply activities to insure availability of spare parts, tools, test equipment, and components. Advises operations and staff activities on operational status of assigned aircraft.

Manages Unit Supply Activities; determines organizational structure and ascertains personnel requirements for supply sections within this organization. Plans space utilities requirements for storage of supplies. Determines work schedules and priorities for such supply functions as conducting stock inventories, processing requisitions, and accomplishing proper follow up action on back ordered items in accordance with AFM67-1. Establishes performance standards reflecting quality and quantity of work required for supply positions such as Senior Organizational Supply, Personal Equipment and Technical Supply. Everyone has his maintenance problems, but the mechanics in the Ferrying business are expected to perform maintenance on most any aircraft at the drop of a hat. Both skills and spare parts can be equally hard to find in a situation such as this. But, they have to do it and they do it.

This Squadron is presently assigned two B-26's two C-119's one C-47 and one C-54. Occasionally other types of aircraft are diverted here for our use.

USAF Unit Histories

Created: 25 Jun 2021

Updated:

Sources

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

Unit history. 1739th Ferrying Squadron, Anything Anywhere. @1956.