

## **85<sup>th</sup> AIR DEPOT WING**



### **MISSION**

The 85th Air Depot Wing, a vital part of the NATO air arm, is the only unit of its type currently stationed in Germany. Its main objectives are to provide maintenance, supply, procurement, storage, reclamation, disposal, and evacuation facilities for all US Air Force units stationed in Germany, plus certain military attached units in Africa and the Near East.

Making up the Wing are five groups, the 85th Air Base Group, 85th Supply Group, 85th Maintenance Group, 85th Medical Group, and 85th Transportation Group, each of which performs a specific part of the overall mission.

### **LINEAGE**

85<sup>th</sup> Air Depot Wing

### **STATIONS**

Erding, Germany

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **COMMANDERS**

Col Ben I. Funk, 1 Apr 1952

### **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

### **EMBLEM**

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

Erding Air Depot, the home of the Wing, was established in June 1945, just twenty-eight days after the end of the war in Europe, by a small advance group from the 9th Air Service Command. The site they chose had been a major supply station and jet aircraft base for the German Air Force. It had been used as a main ordnance depot, supplying aircraft parts and equipment for much of the once powerful German Air Force, but now it was from 50 to 80 per cent destroyed as a result of heavy Allied raids.

Virtually all of the old supply division hangars had been reduced to heaps of rubble. Writing in the base history for the first month, one member of the pioneer group observed, "We are not heartened by the sight of devastation that meets the eye. " Amid this chaos, the first squadrons to arrive on June 9 began the tremendous job of forging a permanent supply and maintenance center for United States Forces in Europe.

The first task that confronted the Erding pioneers was to clear away the rubble, making space for living quarters and supplies. In addition, rehabilitation of nearly every supply hangar and warehouse was necessary and a new runway was needed. The debris had scarcely begun to be cleared away, however, when still another staggering task presented itself—the arrival of vast amounts of supplies and equipment from all over Europe.

During the first weeks of the Depot's life, 1,800 carloads of rubble were shipped off the station, while supplies arrived at the rate of sixty to seventy carloads a day. Freight cars were frequently backed up for 25 miles, waiting to be unloaded.

In beginning its major mission of supplying all US Air Forces in Europe, the Depot also started the huge task of sorting and segregating the acres of jumbled Air Force supplies. This project—one of the biggest processing operations in Air Force history—was completed in July 1948. In all, more than 30,000 long tons of material, valued at \$126,000,000, were screened.

Return of much of this valuable war-remnant property to active stockpiles resulted in savings of millions of dollars to the American public and helped to reduce the stockpiles here to a size proportional to the Depot's supply responsibilities. It was at this point that the Wing completed the close-out of several satellite stations and the transfer and consolidation of more supplies, plus various maintenance functions and services, to Erding.

July 1948 is a historic month on the Erding calendar in yet another respect—it marked the beginning of the Depot's highly important supporting role in the Berlin Air Lift. For nearly one year, Erding's supply specialists and maintenance technicians were on their toes twenty-four hours a day in order to meet the tremendous logistical demands imposed by the famed "Operation Vittles". Today, although virtually all of the faces have changed, the 8jth Air Depot Wing is accomplishing another purposeful job. Efficiently and effectively, its men and women are furnishing the logistical support so vitally needed in the construction of a strong air defense for Western Europe.

In an average week, more than a dozen aircraft, F-84, C-119s, L-19s pass through the Depot's sprawling repair hangars. At the same time, thousands of tons of stockpiled material from the long rows of supply warehouses are funneled out to far-flung air bases by truck, rail, and the Depot's own cargo planes.

Other Wing functions are the training of NATO-nation airmen; furnishing necessary support to the several dozen US air attache and foreign mission groups scattered throughout Europe and the Near East; providing depot maintenance for numerous Army liaison planes; and performing other important missions that help give a solid foundation to NATO air security.

Depot Maintenance and Supply are the primary functions of the Wing, which renders depot support to USAFE aircraft; attached Military mission and MDAP organization aircraft; Military Air Transport Service aircraft; and US Army planes.

In addition, the Wing supports more than 4,600 vehicles, not including ground-powered units, consisting of approximately 600 engine-driven vehicles and nearly 300 trailers that are in service, plus about 2,000 vehicles that are either in stock at Erding or are undergoing repair or rebuilding.

The Wing communications and electronics work consists of performing depot maintenance on all types of this equipment, including overhaul of Ground Control Approach units, repair of ground and airborne radio and radar equipment, and repair of the power units required to operate this equipment.

But by far, the biggest function of the 85th Air Depot Wing is Supply—the indispensable function that gives backbone to the mission of United States Air Forces in Europe. The fact that nearly 19,000 tons of supplies are shipped in and out of the Depot during an average month testifies to this.

It takes volumes of paper work, of course, to keep these farflung installations supplied, and the scope of the administrative work that goes on behind the scenes covers such myriad chores as the assigning, in an average month, of more than 32,000 vouchered numbers.

Just how well the Wing serves its customers, or US Air Bases in Europe, can be measured by its "fill rate"—the disposition of requisitions after they have been received. During a typical month,

positive action was taken on 68,400 of 73,500 line items that were requisitioned from the Depot.

Of the requisitions filled, on the average 70 per cent were shipped to the requisitioning organizations and 30 per cent were back ordered to the U.S.A. Further proof of the versatility of supply and maintenance personnel of the 8jth Air Depot Wing is the fact that there are several mobile teams operating throughout Europe and the Middle East providing specialized services. One of these unique crews is a jet recovery team which, upon notification of a crash, proceeds to the location of the downed aircraft. There, it makes either on-the-spot repairs or disassembles the aircraft and transports it to Erding for repair. After being declared airworthy, the craft is flown from the Depot to its home station.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *85 Air Depot Wing, Arrowhead, 1953. Erding Germany*. Montgomery Publishing Co. London, England. 1953.