

## 97 AIRLIFT SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

97 Troop Carrier Squadron constituted, 25 May 1943  
Activated, 1 Jul 1943  
Inactivated, 18 Oct 1945  
Activated in the Reserve, 15 Sep 1947  
Redesignated 97 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 27 Jun 1949  
Ordered to active duty, 1 May 1951  
Inactivated, 4 May 1951  
Redesignated 97 Fighter Bomber Squadron, 26 May 1952  
Activated in the Reserve, 15 Jun 1952  
Inactivated, 1 Jul 1957  
Redesignated 97 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 24 Oct 1957  
Activated in the Reserve, 16 Nov 1957  
Ordered to active duty, 28 Oct 1962  
Relieved from active duty, 28 Nov 1962  
Redesignated 97 Air Transport Squadron, Heavy, 1 Dec 1965  
Redesignated 97 Military Airlift Squadron, 1 Jan 1966  
Ordered to active duty, 26 Jan 1968  
Relieved from active duty, 2 Jun 1969  
Redesignated 97 Military Airlift Squadron (Associate), 25 Jul 1969  
Redesignated 97 Airlift Squadron (Associate), 1 Feb 1992  
Redesignated 97 Airlift Squadron, 1 Oct 1994

### STATIONS

Baer Field, IN, 1 Jul 1943

Sedalia AAFld, MO, 10 Jul 1943  
Alliance AAFld, NE, 7 Sep 1943  
Pope Field, NC, 4 Jan 1944  
Baer Field, IN, 14-22 Feb 1944  
Bottesford, England, Mar 1944  
Exeter, England, 26 Apr 1944 (operated from Ombrone Airfield, Italy, 18 Jul-24 Aug 1944)  
Reims, France, 13 Sep 1944  
Le Mans, France, 28 Sep 1944  
Orleans, France, 4 Nov 1944-18 Oct 1945  
Scott Field, IL, 15 Sep 1947  
Wold-Chamberlain Muni Aprt, MN, 27 Jun 1949-4 May 1951  
Ft Snelling, MN, 15 Jun 1952  
Minneapolis-St Paul Intl Aprt, MN, 8 Jan 1953-1 Jul 1957  
O'Hare Intl Aprt, IL, 16 Nov 1957  
Paine AFB, WA, 25 Mar 1958  
McChord AFB, WA, 9 Nov 1965

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

440 Troop Carrier Group, 1 Jul 1943-18 Oct 1945  
440 Troop Carrier Group, 15 Sep 1947-4 May 1951  
440 Fighter-Bomber Group, 15 Jun 1952-1 Jul 1957  
440 Troop Carrier Group, 16 Nov 1957  
349 Troop Carrier Group, 25 Mar 1958  
349 Troop Carrier Wing, 14 Apr 1959  
941 Troop Carrier (later, 941 Air Transport; 941 Military Airlift) Group, 11 Feb 1963  
939 Military Airlift Group, 25 Jul 1969  
446 Military Airlift (later, 446 Airlift) Wing, 1 Jul 1973  
446 Operations Group, 1 Aug 1992

#### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

C-47, 1943-1945  
Unkn, 1947-1948  
T-6, 1948-1950  
T-11, 1948-1951  
C-47, 1948  
C-46, 1949-1951  
T-7, 1950-1951  
T-6, 1952-1955  
C-46, 1952-1957  
F-51, 1953-1954  
T-33, 1954-1957  
F-80, 1954-1957  
C-119, 1957-1965  
C-124, 1965-1969

C-141, 1969

C-47

C-17

## **COMMANDERS**

Lt Col Jack S. Southard, 11 Jul 1943-1945

Unkn, 15 Sep 1947-1949

Maj James M. Collison, 1949-1951

Unkn, 15 Jun 1952-1 Jul 1957

Unkn, 16 Nov 1957-Mar 1958

Col Thomas G. Bowie, 25 Mar 1958

Lt Col George J. Holland, 11 Feb 1963

Lt Col William G. Hathaway, 4 Dec 1963

Lt Col Martin F. O'Toole, 14 Dec 1967

Lt Col John E. Schneider, 4 Sep 1968

Lt Col Charles S. Chesterman, 7 Oct 1968

Col Richard O. Barnes, 2 Jun 1969

Maj Paul A. Wriggle, 1 Aug 1969

Lt Col Edmund G. Hepner, 7 Aug 1969

Col Paul A. Wriggle, 18 Oct 1970

Lt Col Howard E. Bunch, by Jun 1975

Lt Col Gideon M. Gilbert, by Mar 1979

Lt Col Ronald G. Dye, 22 Jun 1981

Lt Col Charles B. Casson, 15 Aug 1982

Lt Col James O. Fausey, 28 Feb 1985

Lt Col Thomas M. O'Dell, 15 Aug 1988

Lt Col Kenneth E. Lanier, 4 Nov 1989

Lt Col Richard H. Lauer, 30 May 1992

Lt Col Steven J. Cummins, 6 Nov 1993

Lt Col Raymond B. Garrison, 1 Oct 1994

Lt Col Robert S. Graves, 31 Mar 1996

Lt Col Robert H. Campbell

Lt Col Steven J. Cummins, 6 Nov 1993

Lt Col Raymond B. Garrison, 1 Oct 1994

Lt Col Robert S. Graves, 31 Mar 1996

Lt Col Christopher J. Golob, 5 Dec 1998-unkn

Col Lisa Tank, 3 Apr 2005

Lt Col Quinton Glenn, 31 Mar 2007

Lt Col Robert Weichert, 1 Jan 2009

Lt Col Garin Tentschert, 31 Mar 2012

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

## **Campaign Stream**

World War II

Rome-Arno

Normandy

Northern France

Southern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Southwest Asia

Defense of Saudi Arabia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

Panama, 1989-1990

## **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation

France, 6-7 Jun 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

23 Dec 1964-22 Jan 1965

26 Jan 1968-1 Jun 1969

1 Jul 1969-30 Jun 1970

1 Jul 1973-30 Jun 1974

1 Sep 1982-31 Aug 1984

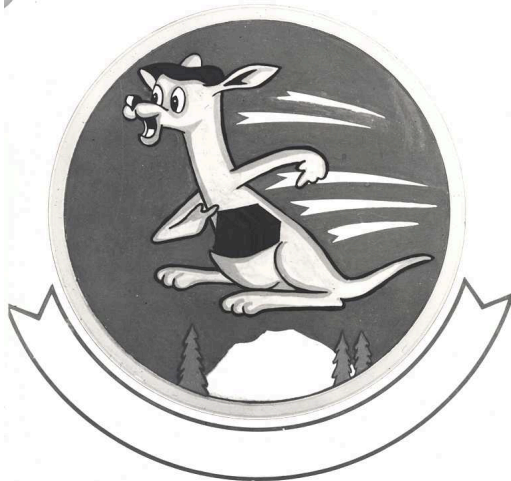
1 Aug 1990-31 Jul 1992

30 Sep 2000-1 Oct 2001.

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

1 Apr 1966-28 Jan 1973

## **EMBLEM**



97 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium emblem: On an Air Force blue disc bordered Air Force golden yellow, above a white mountain peak flanked by three (3) evergreen trees, one in dexter (right), two in sinister (left), all issuing from base, a caricatured brown kangaroo with red cap lined green, bounding through the sky leaving white trails to sinister; his face expressing his eagerness to accomplish the mission, both forepaws pointing to the red cargo carried in his pouch; the kangaroo's eyeballs and highlights on nose and mouth white, outlines and details black throughout. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The kangaroo, a large, powerful animal, able to travel with great speed and to leap over obstacles, is endowed by nature with a "cargo compartment." In this emblem he represents the unit and its mission. His eagerness to accomplish a helpful mission and his anticipation of its successful completion, expresses the spirit of the squadron personnel. The red cap indicates strength and courage, and the golden yellow border represents the unity within the organization. The mountain and evergreen trees signify the type of terrain over which this unit conducts its flying activities. The emblem bears the Air Force colors, ultramarine blue and golden yellow, as well as the national colors, red, white, and blue. (Approved, 26 Aug 1960)





97 Airlift Squadron emblem: On a disc Azure, above a mountain peak Argent flanked by three evergreen trees, one in dexter, two in sinister Proper, all issuing from base, bounding over the peak a caricaturized kangaroo Brün with a cap and cargo package Gules eyed of the second, emitting four contrail lines bendwise sinister Argent; all within a narrow border Or. Attached below the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "97 AIRLIFT SQ" in Yellow letters. **SIGNIFICANCE.** Ultramarine Blue and Air Force Yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The kangaroo, a large powerful animal able to travel with great speed and to leap over obstacles, is endowed by nature with a cargo compartment which represents the unit and its mission. The kangaroo's eagerness to help accomplish a helpful mission with anticipation of its successful completion expresses the spirit of the Squadron personnel. The red cap and cargo package indicates strength and courage with unity within the organization. The mountain and evergreen trees signify the type of terrain over which the unit conducts flying activities. (Approved, 7 Dec 2022)

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

Airborne assaults on Normandy, southern France, the Netherlands, and Germany; relief of Bastogne; transportation of cargo and personnel in the ETO and MTO during World War II.

The 97 Troop Carrier Squadron, along with its sister squadrons and its group, the 440<sup>th</sup> was constituted on 25 May 1943. After the nucleus of its personnel had reported from the School of Applied Tactics, the 97th was activated at Baer Field on 1 July 1943. Although filler personnel came from all over the Troop Carrier Command, the greater portion was acquired from the 434th Troop Carrier Group, Almost immediately, the newly activated unit was transferred to Sedalia Army Air Field, at Warrensburg, Missouri, where the squadron acquired a commanding officer, Captain (later Lt. Col.) Jack S. Southard, who was to lead the squadron through the

entire period of war service; an unusual example of command stability. The task of training was severely handicapped at first by the acute shortage of aircraft.

After a three months training period at Alliance Army Air Base, Nebraska, the squadron moved to Pope Field, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Routine training was delayed at Pope Field while the squadron took part in maneuvers which began two days after arrival. For the 97th, the maneuvers consisted of five missions two carrying airborne infantry and paratroopers while the other three were air landing missions. After the maneuvers ended on 9 January 1944, the squadron returned to its own training tasks.

The 97th left Pope Field on 12 February, and by 13 March it was aboard ship bound for England, arriving there on the 21st. Since the 97th was Troop carrier squadron it did not, of course, plunge immediately into combat as did the bombardment and fighter squadrons. There can be little doubt that the man chafed under a situation which sentenced then to a constant routine of training while the air war was going on around then. The period of waiting and training, however, came to a sudden end in June 1944, with the Normandy invasion; an event which gave the air echelon of the squadron all the combat operations they could assimilate for a while.

On 5 June, eleven planes of the 97th took off, loaded with 181 officers and men of the 101st Airborne Division. Their mission was to begin landing to assist the Fourth Division in the initial assault and capture of Carentan. All planes and personnel returned safely from this initial mission. During August 1944, the 97th took part in Operation BIGOT DRAGOOM.

Forming an advance echelon stationed in Italy, 18 planes of the 97th took off from Italy carrying troops of the 517th Parachute Infantry Battalion to open the invasion of southern France. Immediately afterward, the squadron took part in Operation DOVE, which was a glider counterpart of the mission just completed. By 25 August, all planes of the advance echelon returned safely to England. The group echelon had already moved to France in September 1944 where the squadron was called on to participate in one of its most important missions. For the duration of the operation, the air and ground echelons were separated, the former still operating out of England. For the 97th, the Holland invasion, Operation MARKET GARDEN, consisted of one paratroop and two glider missions. During this whole period, of course, the squadron was frequently employed for supply missions, an activity which steadily increased in tempo as the 97th shared in the effort to keep General Patton's army supplied.

Only a month and a half before the end of the war in Europe, on 24 March, the 97th was privileged to take part in Operation VARSITY, probably the largest airborne operation of the war. The squadron's part in VARSITY was a glider tow of elements of the 17th Airborne Division to the east bank of the Rhine, northwest of Wesel.

With the end of hostilities in Europe, the 97th reverted principally to a training status. This period was ended on 18 October 1945 with the inactivation of the squadron in the European theater.

The subsequent history of the squadron has been entirely as a reserve organization. Remaining inactive for 23 months, the 97th was allotted to the reserves and reactivated on 15 September 1947, and served in a reserve capacity at Scott Field, Illinois, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport until its inactivation on 4 May 1951. A year later, on 15 June 1952, the unit was activated, again as a reserve unit, with a new mission since it was redesignated the 97th Fighter-Bomber Squadron. This phase of the squadron's career lasted until 1 July 1957, when it was again inactivated. But scarcely had the squadron grown cold in the limbo of inactivation than it reverted to its original mission with its redesignation as the 97th Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, and was activated again on 16 November 1957 with a worldwide airlift mission.

Supported contingency operations in Panama, 1989-1990, and in southwest Asia, 1990-1991.

On 21 April 2003, C-17, serial number 95-0107, assigned to the 437th Airlift Wing, Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, piloted by an aircrew assigned to the 97th Airlift Squadron, 446th Airlift Wing, McChord Air Force Base, Washington, departed Ramstein Air Base, Germany, on an airlift mission to an austere combat zone airfield. The runway at the destination airfield was under construction and repair. The entire west half runway was closed and was marked as to indicate that it was closed. Upon arrival the aircraft landed on the full-width runway centerline. During the landing sequence, the aircraft's two left main landing gear rolled through the excavation area, sustaining damage to its landing gear, wheel assemblies, and tires. There were no injuries to anyone on the aircraft or on the ground. There was no damage to private property. The damage to the aircraft was estimated to exceed \$1 million. There was limited media interest in the mishap. The mishap aircraft was on a Special Assigned Airlift Mission flown in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Weather, operations and maintenance supervision, aircraft servicing and maintenance, crew qualifications, and aircraft systems were not factors in the mishap. Board President opined the mishap resulted from the convergence of several factors, none of which alone would be likely to cause a mishap. The simultaneous presence of all the factors resulted in a lack of situational awareness on the part of the aircrew, specifically the lack of knowledge that the west half of the runway was closed and under construction. The factors were as follows: the crew did not read the Notices to Airmen, the approach control and control tower did not advise the aircrew of the runway conditions, runway markings while appropriate were not sufficiently prominent to alert the aircrew on final approach, and the tactics briefing and associated materials given to the aircrew suggested that the full runway width was available.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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#### Sources

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Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

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