

302nd AIR DIVISION

MISSION

LINEAGE

302nd Transport Wing (Special) established, 2 Nov 1943
Activated, 5 Dec 1943
Inactivated, 15 Dec 1945
Activated in the Reserve, 20 Dec 1946
Redesignated 302nd Troop Carrier Wing, 31 Dec 1946
Redesignated 302nd Air Division, Troop Carrier, 16 Apr 1948
Inactivated, 27 Jun 1949
Redesignated 302nd Air Division, 1 Sep 1959
Inactivated

STATIONS

Sunninghill, England, 5 Dec 1943
Grove England, unkn-8 Sep 1944
Cranford, England, 8 Sep 1944
Paris, France, 15 Nov 1944
Grove, England, 1 Oct-9 Dec 1945
Marietta AAB (later, AFB), GA, 20 Dec 1946-27 Jun 1949

ASSIGNMENTS

IX Air Service Command (later, IX Air Force Service Command), 5 Dec 1943
Air Service Command, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, 1 Sep 1944
Continental Air Depot Area, United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (later, Continental Air Depot Area, Air Technical Service Command), 9 Dec 1944
Ninth Air Force, 1 Jun 1945
United States Air Forces in Europe, 18 Jul 1945
Army Service Forces, 8-15 Dec 1945
Fourteenth Air Force, 20 Dec 1946
Ninth Air Force, 22 Dec 1948

Fourteenth Air Force, 1 Feb-27 Jun 1949

COMMANDERS

Col Leslie P. Arnold, 5 Dec 1943
Col Charles W. Steinmetz, 6 Jul 1944
Col Leslie P. Arnold, 1 Sep 1944
Col Martin A. Bateman, 3 Dec 1944-unkn
Col H. C. Allen, 6 Aug 1945-unkn
Unkn, 20 Dec 1946
Col William L. Plummer, 17 Jan 1947-unkn

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II European-African-Middle Eastern Theater

Campaign Streamers

None

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

None

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 302d Transport Wing made its first official appearance in the European Theater of Operations on 5 December 1943. Few people, if any, will recall this date in connection with the wing for this was a paper appearance only. It wasn't until 6 July 1944, thirty days after the invasion of the European Continent, that Col Charles W Steinmetz assumed command of the wing and commenced organization of the headquarters.

The original plan was to have assigned to the wing some ten transport units equipped with Douglas C-47 type transport aircraft. There were many times later in the history of the wing that pilots, air crews and ground crews, as well as many high officials wished there had been ten such organizations to carry out the mission of resupply by air of army and air force units on the continent and the evacuation of casualties and escaped prisoners to hospitals in the United Kingdom, for the work performed by the command exceeded by far the expectations of the original planners.

Although many units of the 302d Transport Wing, as it was known Victory in Europe Day, had been in operation within the United Kingdom since August 1942 as carriers of mail, passengers and cargo, and other units had emmraanced their direct, eoitjtaental support on D plus five day, the wing itself was still in its infancy, for an infant, it Had performed a man-sized job, for in nine months aircraft of the wing carried over 95,000 tons of materials.

In this period of time, three commanders led the organization in its important mission. On 1 September 1944, the 302d Transport Wing was reassigned to the Air Service Command of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe and Colonel Leslie P. Arnold formerly of Eastern Air Lines, and one of the pilots to make the first round the world flight, was appointed commanding officer by Major General Hugh Knerr. Three months later Colonel Martin A. Bateman, a young command pilot who had formerly been executive officer of the Base Air Depot Area of the Air Service Command, was appointed commanding officer, and Colonel Arnold was reassigned to the Zone of Interior to return to the commercial airline.

The transport wing's aircraft have hauled an endless variety of cargo In support of the forces that for so long slugged it out with the "Jerries." They have carried winter overcoats, ammution, overshoes, bayonets and helmets. They have lugged flares, rockets, bombs, tires, belly-tanks, tanks, propellers, airplane engines and instruments for fighter-bomber squadrons; wire laying equipment, cables, communications apparatus aadevm telephone poles for the Signal Corps; radio equipment, gasoline and tank tracks for the armored divisions of the Third Army; land mines for the Corps of Engineers; ordnance for the Twelfth Army Group; tens of mapa for the Infantry; penicillin, sulfa drugs, whole blood and blood plasma for the Medical Corps; propaganda leaflets for the. Psychological Warfare Division. In addition to this, ferry organizations of the command have moved every type of aircraft used in the theater from ports of entry or assembly depots to combat units of the Eighth, Ninth and even the Fifteen Air Forces.

Normandy "D Day" found the 302d Transport Wing still on paper. The 31st Transport Group was located at Grove, Berkshire and the 27th Air Transport Group was spread all over the United Kingdom but had its headquarters and two squadrons near London at RAF Station Heston.

The Wing headquarters was organized just prior to the closing date of this campaign. Colonel Logan T. McMenemy was named Traffic Control Officer and Lt Col Robert O'Hara, Operations and Training Officer. Later Colonel McMenemy was named Executive Officer; Lt Col O'Hara, Chief of Administration; and Lt Col Orié W. Coyle, who was transferred from the 27th Air Transport Group, where he had been supervising operation of intra-island air travel for the organization, Chief of Operations. Plans were immediately drawn up for the operation of existing terminals and the installation of standard terminals in liberated countries. The primary function still remained the trans port of passengers and cargo as designated by the Ninth Air force. The 31st Transport Group increased its operations by adding to its call, list the air strip at Colleville.

During the first fifty-one days of operations, which extends just slightly over the last days of the Normandy campaign, over 7,000,000 pounds of cargo was flown from England to France, over 4,000

passengers were transported both ways, and 11,574 casualties were evacuated to the United Kingdom hospitals.

It was during the campaign of Northern France that the Wing was reassigned from the Ninth Air Force to the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe; It was also during this campaign that the Wing was assigned the 27th Air Transport Group, and moved most of all its units to 'the continent, or, as it was known then, to the "far shore"'.

They considerable increase in cargo and passenger traffic and evacuation of wounded during the month of July as compared with June, continued during, August. The total tonnage amounted to over 8,000,000 pounds, which exceeded the two previous months combined. The largest increase requiring better air travel service was the rise in the number of casualties to be evacuated. The figure grew correspondingly with the enlargement of allied battle operations on the continent. In August over 13,500 men were moved back to the United Kingdom by of the Wing.

The time required for loading, unloading, stacking and manifesting cargo was greatly reduced with the improvement in method and with the growing experience of officer and enlisted personnel.

The landing strip at Colleville was enlarged and therefore capable of taking a larger number of aircraft. The airstrip at Quereueville, near Cherbourg was opened on the 8th of August. During this month, operations commenced at Biniville; Bolleville; Beille, east of Le Mans; Montdesir, north of Orleans; and, just shortly after the liberating of Paris, the capitol and queen city of France, aircraft of the wing was unloading their freight at Le Bourget, the famous airdrome on which Charles Lindberg landed on his transatlantic flight.

The chief difficulty encountered by the Wing during this campaign was the lack of communication between the United Kingdom and the "far shore", and on the "far shore" itself. Radio communications were not only overloaded by many different commands and organizations, but further, were frequently jammed by the enemy. Tar shore strips were acquired and abandoned in such quick succession that proper teletype communications could not be had. For these reasons, not only was coordination between the United Kingdom and the far shore terminals made difficult, but transmission of strength reports, statistical reports and other important data was considerably delayed and frequently cause COB fusion. The scheduling of aircraft and relaying of information pertaining to traffic could not, therefore, be done with the desired coordination between terminals

In addition to transport between England and the continent, a courier service was maintained in the United Kingdom. A similar service was instituted on the continent, making stops twice daily at sixteen Ninth Air Force stations. Many special flights were carried out on the continent, in the United Kingdom and between the two.

With the reassignment of the Wing to the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe and the joining forces of the two groups the 31st Transport Group, which had primarily been fully occupied in cross channel operations, and the 27th Air Transport Group, which had been hauling passenger, mail and cargo from the date of provisional activation of its units in the theater in August of 1942,

an organization equaled by none other was formulated, abundantly equipped with trained forces, and eager to apply itself to the colossal tasks of operating rapidly expanding aerial supply lines.

Colonel Arnold who assumed command just two weeks prior to the close of the campaign, named Colonel Laurence B. Hickam as Chief of Operations for the Wing, and Lt Col James Douglas as commanding officer of the 27th Air Transport Group, filling the position he had vacated.

Units moved from old to new stations quickly, and speedily adapted themselves to new and more difficult working conditions and environment. From all of this it might appear that the 302d Transport Wing, during this time was primarily faced with a paper war and a checker game affair of moving units about in the United Kingdom and in France, but during the month of September over 21,000,000 pounds of cargo was carried in addition to over 50,000 passengers and 9,000 casualties evacuated.

Close of the Northern France Campaign found squadrons and detachments of the three groups of the Wing operating from Northern Ireland to Southern Cornwall of England, from London to Southern France, Belgium and Holland, and moving into the airdromes that surround Paris.

One hundred crews and aircraft of the Air Transport Command were placed on duty with the Wing for a ninety day period to increase the operating capacity of the organization. This was a strain on the operating capacity of the organization. This was a strain on the administrative sections throughout the squadrons, groups and the Wing headquarters but it provided for more airlift to move the needed supplies to the fighting units. Many of these crews requested, reassignment to the various squadrons of the wing at the completion of their temporary duty. Many of the friends made during this campaign included officers and men of that command. A number of them are included on the killed and missing roll of the Wing. These crews earned the nickname "ATC-allergic to combat" as far as their buddies were concerned.

With all of the moving about by units of the two groups in the month of November, aircraft of the Wing still carried over 13,000,000 pounds of cargo, 17,000 passengers and 6,500 evacuees. For twenty-five days of the month, Wing aircraft were used to carry package gasoline to the Twelfth Army Group, which was made up of the Third, First and Ninth Armies. Thirty-five aircraft were dispatched for the first day's operation with Lt Col Kenneth A. Reeher making an initial run to see that operations and off-loading procedures were functioning smoothly, Lt Col Reeher was then assistant to Colonel Hickam in Wing Operations. During the period of this operation, 2,377,668 pounds of gasoline were hauled to us army group. Air evacuation increased over the previous month due to the installation of evacuation procedure at Le Bourget to provide aircraft returning to the United Kingdom from the Paris area with loads of allied casualties destined for the hospitals near Membury and Ramsbury in England. A total of 287 flights were made in air evacuation this month.

In the early days of December, Colonel Martin A. Bateman was appointed commanding officer of the Wing and immediately set upon a plan to make all operations and administration top in efficiency or non-existent.

During the month of December the 31st Transport Group returned to its original home Grove, Berkshire in England. Priority air cargo was building up at that station and soon reached the highest known in the theater. The Grove air freight terminal soon became the second largest terminal in the world, second only to that where air freight is collected for flights over the "hump" in the China-Burma-India Theater.

Upon the formation of the Wing, composed of the two groups, the duty was given to the Base Air Depot Area to insure the delivery of these aircraft but the wing was still required to furnish the pilots who flew in these operations. In February the Wing was once again charged with the full duty of ferrying. The 1302d Ferrying Squadron was formed as a provisional organization later to be replaced by the 310th Ferrying Squadron, which was reassigned to direct wing control from the 31st Transport Group. During the remainder of the Rhineland Campaign this squadron ferried over 4,000 aircraft from storage depots to the United Kingdom and ports of entry to combat units of the Eighth, Ninth and First Tactical Air Forces and assisted combat units in the movement of some 1500 others. These aircraft consisted of every type used in the European Theater. Heavy losses in the ground forces, exceeding reinforcements sent from the Zone of the Interior caused a necessary drawing from the available and physically fit men of the service and air forces in the theater. During the Rhineland Campaign over 250 men were drawn from the service squadrons, the truck company, headquarters squadron, and the flying squadrons as well, to supplement the number furnished by other commands. Along with these went many of the original members of both groups as the reassignment was limited to personnel of the last four grades and many worthy men had been held in these grades due to lack of position vacancies in their squadrons.

The wing reached its highest mark during the sixty day period of March and April and were carrying on this record on V-E Day. Aircraft of the organization carried 35,000 tons of passengers, mail, cargo, evacuees, and liberated prisoners and displaced persons. This included over 75,000 evacuees; 40,000 passengers, 45,000, 000 pounds of freight and one and a half million pounds of soldiers' mail. During this period over 4,500 aircraft were ferried by the 310th. Ferrying Squadron, communications flights maintained and assisted in flying over 85 various types of aircraft, over 200 men were re-assigned to the ground forces as reinforcements, the total flying hours for the command exceeded 40,000 hours, thirteen aircraft were away in Sweden and Russia on secret missions, and the strength of the command reached the lowest point witnessed since the previous October. Brigadier General I. W. Ott, Commanding General of the Central Air Depot Area, the command to which the wing was assigned during this period recommended the entire organization for the award of the meritorious service plaque. An interpretation of the regulation by the Judge Advocate of Air Technical Service Command declared that the wing was too large an organization to be awarded this citation. Groups and separate squadrons were eligible for such recognition but not the wing as a whole.

The wing, in less than nine months, had carried 95,000 tons of passengers, evacuees, mail and cargo and ferried over 9,000 aircraft. It was commended by each of the higher air force headquarters of the theater and by many of the ground and service force and headquarters. The hornet tail black and yellow striped C-47s had covered the United Kingdom, and the European and West Asiatic

Continent.

When the 302d Transport Wing was reassigned from the IX Air Force Service Command to the Air Service Command of the U S Strategic Air Forces in Europe and Col Arnold was named commanding officer to succeed Col Steinmetz, he carried with him from the 27th Air Transport Group the majority of his staff officers.

To the 302d Transport Wing was delegated any and all jobs that resembled air transportation and ferrying by Air Service Command. Among the various projects were the detaching of flying personnel to the Base Air Depot Area test flight sections to ferry aircraft throughout the United Kingdom, the detaching of ten crews and transport aircraft to an undisclosed destination on a top secret project, later called Project "A", the detaching of separate crews to fly high officials, and the operation of communications flights for various headquarters of the air forces and the air staff of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces,

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 25 Aug 2010

Updated: 21 Oct 2019

Sources

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

Unit history. *302 Transport Wing*. Nd.

Unit History. *Gooney Birds and Ferry Tales; The 27th Air Transport Group in World War II*. Jon A. Maguire. Schiffer Military History. Atglen, PA. 1998.