

317th Airlift Group

1942 – Present



Brian P. Smith
317 AG History Office

Current as of ~~January~~ July 2012

317th Lineage

Established as 317th Troop Carrier Wing (Heavy) on 10 Aug 1948. Activated on 18 Aug 1948. Inactivated on 14 Sep 1949. Redesignated as 317th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium, on 3 Jul 1952. Activated on 14 Jul 1952. Inactivated on 25 Sep 1958. Activated on 13 Mar 1963. Organized on 15 Apr 1963. Redesignated as: 317th Troop Carrier Wing on 1 Mar 1966; 317 Tactical Airlift Wing on 1 May 1967; 317th Airlift Wing on 1 Jan 1992. Inactivated on 18 Aug 1993. Redesignated as 317th Airlift Group on 31 Mar 1997. Activated on 1 Apr 1997.

Note: The 317th Airlift Group is authorized to display honors earned by the 317th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) prior to 18 Aug 1948. Thus, this heritage pamphlet will include coverage of the 317 TCG from its February 1942 activation through activation of the 317th Troop Carrier Wing on 10 Aug 1948.

Stations

Duncan Field, San Antonio, Texas 22 Feb 1942; Bowman Field, Louisville, Kentucky, 17 Jun 1942; Lawson Field, Fort Benning, Georgia, 9 Oct 1942; Maxton, North Carolina, 7 Nov-5 Dec 1942; Camp Stoneman, Pittsburg, California 18-31 Dec 1942; Townsville and Brisbane Australia, 15 Jan 1943; Papua New Guinea, Sep 1943; Leyte, the Philippines, Nov 1944; Clark Field, the Philippines, 5 Mar 1945; Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, 24 Aug 1945; Tachikawa Air Base, Japan, 6 Jan 1946; Celle RAF Station, Germany, 9 Jan-14 Sep 1949. Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, 14 Jul 1952; Neubiberg Air Base, Germany, 17 Mar 1953; Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France, 17 Apr 1957-25 Sep 1958. Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France, 15 Apr 1963-20 Jun 1964; Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio, 20 Jun 1964; Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, 31 Aug 1971-18 Aug 1993. Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, 1 Apr 1997-present.

Note: During its history, the 317th has experienced three periods of inactive service; 1949-1952, 1958-1963, and 1993-1997. For the first period, the 317th Troop Carrier Wing and all its squadrons were inactive. For the last two periods the flying squadrons and their associated imbedded maintaince continued on active service as part of another organization. From 1958-1963 the flying squadrons continued to fly from Evreux, France under the 322nd Air Division. From 1993-1997, the 39th and 40th Airlift Squadrons and their Aircraft Maintenance Units moved from Pope AFB to Dyess AFB and became a part of the combined 7th Wing (C-130s and B-1s) under the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's "one base, one wing" policy.

Aircraft Flown

C-47 "Skytrain", 1942-1948

C-46 "Commando", 1946-1948

C-54 "Skymaster", 1947-1949

C-119 "Flying Boxcar", 1952-1958

C-130 "Hercules", 1957-present

C-124 "Globemaster II", 1963-1964

C-123 "Provider", 1969-1971

Commanders

Capt Samuel V. Payne, 22 Feb 1942

Lt Col Robert L. Olinger, 21 Jun 1944

Lt Col John H. Lackey Jr., 2 Oct 1944

Lt Col Robert I. Choate, 31 Aug 1945

Col Dwight B. Schannep, Oct 1945

Col Marshall S. Roth, Jan 1946

Col Othel R. Deering, Jan 1947

Col Thomas K. Hampton, 18 Aug 1948

Col William A. Ross, 15 Aug-14 Sep 1949

Inactive 14 Sep 1949 to 13 Jul 1952

Col Donald J. French, 14 Jul 1952

Col Harry M. Pike, 23 Jul 1954

Col Clarence B. Hammerle Jr., 29 Jul 1954

Col Joseph A. Cunningham, 9 Sep 1954

Col Robert D. Forman, 8 Jul 1957

Col John B. Wallace, 11 Sep-25 Sep 1958

Inactive 25 Sep 1958 to 12 Mar 1963

Col Arthur C. Rush, 15 Apr 1963

Col George W. Kinney, 20 Jun 1963

Col Harry S. Dennis Jr., 27 Dec 1965

Col Robert M. Levy, 29 Jul 1966
Col Jack J. Schneider, 13 Sep 1967
Col James A. Giles, 28 Sep 1967
Col Bill M. Richardson, 18 Dec 1967
Col James A. Giles, 20 May 1968
Col Bill M. Richardson, 19 Jun 1968
Col Richard J. Downs, 2 Jan 1970
Col Thomas G. Cline, 14 Jul 1971
Col Billie J. Norwood, 31 Aug 1971
Col Edwin F. Rumsey, 13 Apr 1973
Col Stewart Young, 14 Sep 1973
Brig Gen Robert F. Coverdale, 6 Jun 1975
Col Benjamin Kraljev Jr., 8 Aug 1977
Brig Gen Duane H. Erickson, 28 Feb 1979
Col Robert B. Patterson, 29 Mar 1980
Col Edsel R. Field, 27 Feb 1981
Col Frank E. Willis, 18 Feb 1983
Col Rolland F. Clarkson Jr., 29 Feb 1984
Col Ronnie C. Peoples, 23 Sep 1985
Col Edward N. Brya, 26 Mar 1987
Col Frederick N. Buckingham, 19 Apr 1988
Col Daniel E. Sowada, 20 Jun 1989
Col Maxwell C. Bailey, 18 Jun 1990
Col George N. Williams, 20 Jul 1992
Col Thomas A. Samples, 29 Mar-18 Aug 1993
 Inactive 18 Aug 1993 to 31 Mar 1997
Col Jimmie C. Jackson Jr., 1 Apr 1997
Col Douglas L. Miller, 26 Aug 1998
Col John A. Tappan, 10 May 2000
Col Richard C. Johnston, 9 Jul 2002
Col Paul J. Montgomery, 15 Mar 2004
Col Kevin E. Jackson, 10 Jan 2006
Col Bernard E. Mater, 16 Jan 2008
Col Dan P. Dagher, 21 Dec 2009
Col Walter H. Ward Jr., 5 Dec 2011

Senior Enlisted Advisors, Command Chiefs, Superintendents

CMSgt Grady N. Elliott, 1 May 1973

CMSgt Dean L. Gordon, 1 May 1979

CMSgt R.C. Miller, 20 Jun 1981

CMSgt Ronald P. Ringler, 26 Nov 1985

CMSgt James R. Robertson, 5 May 1988

CMSgt Norman G. Brander, 1 Feb 1990

CMSgt William R. Hammet, 1 May 1992

Inactive 18 Aug 1993 to 31 Mar 1997

CMSgt William A. Smith, 2 Nov 1998

CMSgt Randy W. Auld, 1 May 2000

CMSgt Dwayne F. Hopkins, 1 Jun 2002

CMSgt Kenneth Angel, 1 Oct 2003

CMSgt Michael Williams, 1 Aug 2004

CMSgt Debra Huntley, 6 Jul 2006

CMSgt Michael J. Mildenberg, 12 Jan 2008

CMSgt Philip L. Oliver, 1 Dec 2010

World War Two

The traditions of the 317th Airlift Group were forged in the crucible of World War II when, on 22 February 1942, the 317th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) was formed at Duncan Field, San Antonio, Texas, with 83 personnel led by Captain Samuel Payne.

The 317 TCG spent the remainder of 1942 moving to different training locations in the United States, growing in size and experience as it prepared to join in the battle to defeat the Axis Powers. In July 1942, the 317th moved to Bowman Field, Louisville, Kentucky, where it increased in size to 950 personnel and began instrument flying training. While at Bowman Field, the 317 TCG's original orders to Europe were changed to the Pacific. In October 1942, the Group moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, where it began intensive airdrop training and increased in size to its wartime strength of 1,280 personnel assigned to four C-47 flying squadrons, the 39th, 40th, 41st, and 46th Troop Carrier Squadrons, and a headquarters squadron.

In November 1942, the 317 TCG moved to Maxton, North Carolina, where it was to begin glider towing training; however, due to an Atlantic storm the gliders were damaged beyond repair. After less than a month in Maxton the flying squadrons departed for Mobile, Alabama, in early

December, to pick up brand new C-47s. The 317 TCG suffered its first fatal aircraft loss on 5 December 1942, when one of six C-47s headed for Mobile from Maxton crashed in bad weather trying to land at Maxwell Field, Alabama, with the loss of all twelve Group personnel aboard the aircraft.

The new C-47s in Mobile were each fitted with eight internal 100 gallon auxiliary fuel tanks for the upcoming long flights across the Pacific Ocean. While the flying squadrons were taking a southern route across the country the 1,000+ person ground element of the 317 TCG took troop trains across the central U.S. on their way to Camp Stoneman, Pittsburg, California in the East Bay area near Oakland. Air and ground elements of the 317 TCG met up at Camp Stoneman in mid-December. While at Camp Stoneman, gyro compasses were installed in the new C-47s, followed by intensive navigation training flights along the Pacific coast. On one of these training flights a C-47 crashed into a mountain in Northern California with the loss of five personnel.

On 31 December 1942, 1,108 317 TCG personnel boarded the *USS Maui* and departed San Francisco with “destination unknown” orders, arriving 24 days later in Townsville, Australia. On 5 January 1943, the four flying squadrons started the long journey to Australia, beginning with a fifteen hour flight from California to Hawaii. 317 TCG C-47s began arriving in Townsville and Brisbane, Australia, on 15 January and were quickly committed to the battle against the advancing Japanese forces in Papua New Guinea. Within two weeks of their arrival in Australia, the 317 TCG took part in the 29-31 January 1943 Battle of Wau, air-landing critically needed Australian Army infantry troops who proved the decisive factor in turning the tide of battle against advancing Japanese forces. The close-in fighting had exiting soldiers firing their weapons as they disembarked from the 317 TCG C-47s, inspiring the squadron emblem for the 40th Troop Carrier Squadron (now the 40th Airlift Squadron). The 317 TCG earned its first of two Distinguished Unit Citations for the key role it played in winning the Battle of Wau and stemming the Japanese advance towards Australia.



In September 1943, the 317 TCG began the long march towards victory over Japan, moving from its Australian bases to a series of bases in Papua New Guinea. In September, the 317 TCG contributed 53 aircraft as part of the 250 aircraft airdrop mission to Nadzab, Papua New Guinea. This was the first large scale airdrop of the Pacific War.



317 TCG C-47 airdrop formation over Nadzab, Papua New Guinea

In 1944, as part of Gen MacArthur's Pacific Island hopping campaign, the 317 TCG moved north to the Philippines, supplying Allied forces via both air-land and airdrop missions. The 317 TCG earned its second Distinguished Unit Citation as the sole airlift force inserting the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment into the island fortress of Corregidor on 16 and 17 February, 1945. Fifty-one 317 TCG C-47s made a total of 600 airdrop passes over the two day operation, onto two extremely small drop zones which abutted a 500 foot cliff leading to the Pacific Ocean. The precision and skill of the "Jungle Skippers" led to a 95 percent airdrop effectiveness rate despite over half of the aircraft receiving battle damage from anti-aircraft fire.



317 TCG C-47s dropping paratroopers during the retaking of Corregidor

During World War Two the 317 TCG took part in every major operation in the Pacific Theater from the beginning of 1943 until the end of hostilities in August 1945. The 317 TCG has the unique distinction as the being the first of the conquering Allied forces to set foot on Japanese soil. On 28 August 1945, a 16 aircraft formation of 12 317 TCG C-47s and four other C-47s, one each from the four other troop carrier groups, landed at Atsugi Air Field, Tokyo, Japan, delivering Gen MacArthur's advance party in preparation for the 2 September unconditional surrender ceremony aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

After the end of the war the 317 TCG settled into occupation duty at Tachikawa Air Base, Japan, flying missions throughout Japan and Korea. In 1947 the Group converted to the larger four-engine C-54 transport. On 18 August 1948, the 317th Troop Carrier Group came under direct assignment to the newly activated 317th Troop Carrier Wing (Heavy). A month after activation the Wing deployed to Germany to support the increasing demands of the ongoing Berlin Airlift.

The Berlin Airlift

When the fledgling Cold War heated up and the Soviet Union blockaded vehicle and train access to West Berlin, the United States and its Allied partners reacted with a massive airlift, which lasted 15 months and ultimately delivered 2,326,406 tons of food and supplies on 278,228 flights. The 317 Troop Carrier Wing (TCW) was transferred from Japan to Germany in September 1948 and participated in the airlift until July of 1949, flying the C-54 "Skymaster" aircraft. A typical Berlin Airlift day for the 317 TCW's 36 C-54s was 100 round trip missions to Berlin delivering 1,000 tons of supplies (mainly coal) to the 2,500,000 isolated Berliners. The 317 TCW was placed in inactive status following the Berlin Airlift in 1949 then reactivated in 1952 in Germany as the Cold War increased tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries.



USAF C-54 Landing in Berlin during the Berlin Airlift

The Germany/France Years

From 1952-1957, the 317 TCW served the fledgling NATO from various bases in Germany. In 1957, the Wing moved to Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France, where it participated in numerous humanitarian and training missions. After arriving in France with its C-119 “Flying Boxcar” aircraft the 317th transitioned to the C-130A “Hercules” in April 1958.



40 TCS C-119 in foreground, 41 TCS (black/yellow) in background

The always evolving restructuring of the United States Air Force led to the inactivation of the 317 TCW once again in September 1958 as the Wing’s flying and maintenance squadrons were placed under the 322nd Air Division and 317th Air Base Group-. Under this command structure the squadrons continued to fly their C-130s from Evreux-Fauville until the reactivation of the 317th TCW in March 1963. The 317 TCW continued to operate from Evreux-Fauville until June 1964, when it was reassigned to Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio. For several years after moving to Ohio, the Wing regularly deployed to Evreux-Fauville to support Europe/Africa/Middle East airlift requirements. The almost 20-year association of the 317 TCW with Europe came to an end in the late 1960s, as the Wing focused its support on the escalating war in Southeast Asia.



317 TCW C-130A in France

The Vietnam Era

Returning to the United States in June of 1964 the 317th - now the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing (TAW) - was stationed at Lockbourne Air Force Base. As part of Tactical Air Command's worldwide airlift operations, the Wing provided C-130 crew replacement training support for the Air Force from 1965 to 1971, when C-130 training moved to Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas. From 1969 to 1971 the Wing also trained U.S. and Republic of Vietnam aircrews in the C-123 "Provider."



C-123 "Provider"

With the move to Pope Air Force Base in 1971, the 317 TAW shed its primary role as a replacement training unit and added regularly scheduled rotations to Southeast Asia to support the Vietnam War along with on-going European and Panama rotations. Soon after arriving at Pope AFB, the Wing became the test bed unit for the Adverse Weather Aerial Delivery System (AWADS) which allowed for all-weather formation precision airdrops without reference to any ground aids. The AWAD System was pressed into service during the April/May 1972 Battle for An Loc, Vietnam, to ensure delivery of critical supplies to the besieged defenders.

On 4 March 1973 a 317 TAW aircraft, flown by Lt Col Edwin Jackson, flew from U-Tapao, Thailand to Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon and then on to Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi to transport the members of the International Commission for Control and Supervision of the prisoner-of-war (POW) exchange. It was an emotional time as the 317 TAW crew watched each of the American POWs being welcomed to their awaiting C-141 transport. The 317 TAW was proud to be a part of the POW return operation and to have been in the vanguard of USAF aircraft to fly into Hanoi following the cession of hostilities between the United States and Peoples Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Grenada to Bosnia

The 1980s and 1990s were a busy period for the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing, as normal rotations to South America and Europe were punctuated by contingency operations from Grenada to Bosnia. 317 TAW C-130Es flew ~~82nd Airborne Division~~ **US Army Ranger** troops for the initial airborne assault of Point Salines Airport, Grenada, during Operation URGENT FURY to rescue American medical students endangered by civil unrest. 317 TAW C-130s delivered troops and supplies for the operation and airlifted out captured Cuban soldiers.

The 317 TAW was called upon once again to support combat operations in 1989 during Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion of Panama to remove President Noriega from power following his failure to relinquish power after elections. Fifteen C-130Es loaded with Army Rangers performed a night assault on Rio Hato Airport, Panama on 19 December. The first few aircraft flew unscathed across the drop zone, but Panamanian soldiers quickly found their range and poured withering anti-aircraft fire into the formation damaging several aircraft. Despite this intensive ground fire the formation did not waiver, delivering the Rangers on target. The formation flew to Howard Air Force Base, Panama for refueling and hasty repairs before launching back to the United States. Notably, several of the returning C-130s diverted to commercial airfields in Florida due to complications from their battle damage.

Following the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the 317 TAW was the first airlift force to arrive in the Middle East for Operation DESERT SHIELD. During the Wing's eight-month-long deployment it provided airlift throughout the region during the massive buildup to Operation DESERT STORM, the liberation of Kuwait. In January 1991, the 317 TAW was a major force in General Schwarzkopf's, Commander, U.S. Central Command, "Hail Mary" surprise flanking attack by the 82nd Airborne Division as part of the invasion of Iraq. This massive movement of troops and supplies to the western border region between Saudi Arabia and Iraq was carried out under strict radio silence and without ground navigation aids.

The end of the Cold War led to the reawakening of historical ethnic and border conflicts through central Europe in the early 1990s. In early 1992, the 317 AW provided airlift assistance to the newly independent republics of Latvia and Lithuania. In 1992 and 1993, the Wing flew airdrop missions to United Nations safe areas during the Bosnia crisis. Intense fighting led to the reintroduction of high altitude airdrops using the AWAD System initiated by the 317th at the end of the Vietnam War.

In 1993, the 317th Airlift Wing was inactivated at Pope AFB, with the 39th and 40th Airlift Squadrons moving to Dyess AFB, Texas to become part of the combined B-1B/C-130 7th Wing.

Return to Texas

On 1 April 1997 the 317th, now designated the 317th Airlift Group, returned to its state of origin when it was reactivated at Dyess Air Force Base, in Abilene, Texas. In April 2010, the 317 AG began a 30 41 month long transition from 33 1974 C-130H1 models to 28 brand new C-130J-30 “Super Hercules,” which are 15 feet longer than the outgoing H models with eight pallet positions to the H’s six pallet capacity.

Col Walter H. Ward, Jr., commands a group of six squadrons consisting of the 39th Airlift Squadron, the 40th Airlift Squadron, the 317th Operations Support Squadron, the 317th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, the 317th Maintenance Squadron, and the 317th Maintenance Operations Squadron. The group works to maintain and operate both at home and overseas supporting the United States and its allies while maintaining its readiness and supporting the people of the United States in humanitarian efforts. ~~By~~ **On** the 7 March 2012 the 317 AG ~~will~~ **surpassed** 3,000 days of continuous CENTCOM C-130 deployments.

Continuing is long tradition; the twenty-first century finds the 317 AG operating in harmony with its long heritage. The Fightin’ 3 – 1 – 7 combines the heritage and lessons of the past with the tools of the present and future, coupled with a dedication to deliver anything, anytime, anywhere. Continuously deployed for the past eight+ years, the 317 AG is actively supporting the people of the United States in every theatre of military operations as well as through humanitarian efforts in natural disasters. The men and women who fly and support “Hazard” Hercules understand their heritage and the responsibilities placed upon them. They gladly serve and in so doing bring greater honor to an airlift group deeply steeped in the traditions of the United States Air Force and Air Mobility Command.



317th Airlift Group C-130J-30 “Super Hercules”