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TRAVIS AFB, Calif (WIO) - An aircraft which will add a new dimension of military cargo capability will join the operational aircraft force of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) Friday, April 23, at Travis Air Force Base. The aircraft is the Lockheed C-141 StarLifter, the first jet aircraft ever designed specifically for cargo operations.

At the controls of the four-jet 150-ton airlifter when it arrives for the turnover ceremonies will be the commander of MATS, General Howell M. Estes Jr. General Estes will fly the aircraft from the Lockheed Assembly Plant at Marietta, Ga.

The aircraft arrival at Travis, headquarters for the Western Transport Air Force of MATS, will mark the activation of the Air Force's first C-141 squadron. Appropriately, the first aircraft will be named "The Golden Bear," honoring the state in which it will commence world-wide transport duty for MATS.

The unit to receive the new StarLifter will be the 44th Air Transport Squadron, scheduled to receive 16 in all. The aircraft will replace older Boeing C-135 Stratolifters which will be reassigned to other bases.

Later this year another Travis squadron will begin receiving the StarLifter, as well as other MATS wings at Dover Air Force Base, Del., and Charleston Air Force Base, S. C. To date, 132 StarLifters have been ordered for MATS from the Lockheed Company, including a squadron for Norton Air Force Base in Southern California.

Attending the arrival and turnover ceremonies on Friday will be local, state, and national government officials, key industrial and Air Force representatives, and local and national newsmen. Among those invited to the afternoon activities are Gov. Edmund G. (Pat) Brown, State Sen. Luther E. Gibson, Assemblyman Pearce Young, California Aeronautics Director Clyde P. Barnett, a number of Northern California

military commanders, and county officials. Mayors and leading citizens of Vallejo, Napa, Fairfield, Suisun, Vacaville, Dixon and Rio Vista also are expected to attend.

At the conclusion of the ceremony a demonstration of the unique 463L automated cargo loading system will be held. The system, integral to jet cargo operations, is capable of loading the C-141 with 72,000 pounds of cargo in 30 minutes - less time than it takes to refuel and service the aircraft.

Following the cargo loading demonstration, General Estes will discuss with newsmen what the C-141 will mean to the future airlift capability of MATS.

The delivery of the first C-141 to Travis culminates one of the most extensive testing and training programs in Air Force history. Test programs at the Flight Testing Center at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., and other bases qualified the aircraft for both Air Force and Federal Aviation Agency certification. Additionally, Travis based flying and ground support personnel have undergone extensive training in preparation for the C-141's arrival.

Last October the 1707th Air Transport Wing at Tinker AFB took delivery of the first of ten C-141s in MATS and it was on these aircraft that much of the testing and training was accomplished.

The StarLifter has been earmarked to become the backbone of the MATS airlift force. At average cruising speeds of more than 500 m.p.h., it has a range of nearly 4,000 statute miles with 63,000 pounds of cargo. At reduced speeds and payloads, its range exceeds 5,200 miles - the distance from San Francisco to Tokyo. On over-ocean missions it can airlift 120 fully equipped combat troops, while for shorter distances it will carry 154 troops or 123 paratroops.

The aircraft's short take-off and landing characteristic makes it usable at 1,850 airports around the world. Rear clamshell doors can be opened in flight for para-dropping men and equipment. Its four Pratt and Whitney engines, with 21,000 pounds of thrust, are among aviation's most powerful.