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THE WESTERN TRANSPORT AIR FORCE

Western Transport Air Force (WESTAF), one of two transport air forces of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) is commanded by Maj Gen George B. Dany. The Vice Commander of WESTAF is Brig Gen William H. Brandon. All of the command's activities are directed by General Dany from the headquarters at Travis Air Force Base which is centrally located between San Francisco and Sacramento. WESTAF has been existence since 1958 and is the result of combining the previously designated Headquarters Continental Division and Pacific Division of MATS.

Headquarters WESTAF supervises four air transport wings, - the 1501st Air Transport Wing (ATW), Travis AFB; 1502nd ATW, Hickam AFB, Hawaii; 62nd ATW, McChord AFB, Wash.; and the Naval Air Transport Wing, Pacific, Moffett Field, Calif. Presently, these wings have a total of 250 long range transport aircraft. The command's C-135 turbo jets are being phased out to make way for the new all-jet C-141 Starlifter. As it stands today, WESTAF's total airlift forces are composed of C-118s, C-121s, C-124s, C-130s, C-135s, and now the C-141. MATS now has its eye cocked toward a still larger transport capability - the C-5A jet aircraft.

WESTAF's geographical area of responsibility is expansive. It covers an area extending from west of the Mississippi across the Pacific Ocean to Japan, on across Southeast Asia to 90 degrees east longitude, east of Calcutta, India. Here, it ties in with air routes of WESTAF's counterpart, the Eastern Transport Air Force headquartered at McGuire AFB, New Jersey.

WESTAF's routes reach through Alaska out across the Aleutians to Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines and into Saigon and Bangkok and through Hawaii to the South Pacific Islands.

Recently Sydney and Avalon, Australia were added to the WESTAF system. Last year the command flew the resupply mission to U. S. Scientists on the Antarctic continent.

WESTAF controls all airlift and mobility exercises in the western part of the United States and in the Pacific. Its 1502nd ATW is committed to support the many operations for the Army's 25th Division in Hawaii. WESTAF aircraft participate extensively in resupply of American forces in Thailand and Viet Nam.

In simple terms, WESTAF's mission provides an air transport capability that is ready to airlift passengers and cargo to any spot in the world. Airlift of passengers and cargo during 1964 by WESTAF are impressive. More than 550,000 passengers, including combat troops

were flown to bases throughout the Pacific area. Air freight surged upwards to a new peace-time high of nearly 117,000 tons, an increase of 40,000 tons over 1963.

WESTAF jets, converted to "flying hospital wards" as necessary, bring back to the U. S. all DOD personnel who become sick or injured or wounded while in WESTAF's area.

During the past year, the command's crews, both air and ground participated in 27 joint armed forces war games. Limited and large scale deployment of combat forces, the airdrop and landings of troops and equipment under combat conditions, have tested WESTAF's responsiveness under warlike conditions.

Included in the years upward sweep of air operations were special mission flights such as air movement of outsize, dangerous and sensitive cargo like the Minuteman Missile, and flights in support of polar early warning stations and scientific expeditions.

Not all of the command's efforts have been directed toward military objectives. WESTAF has moved its airlift force worldwide to relieve the suffering caused by natural disasters. Examples of relief missions flown by WESTAF aircraft are mercy supply flights to the earthquake battered citizens of Alaska, relief to victims of the Montana flood, and the airlift of life-saving cholera serum to Viet Nam.

During national emergencies, WESTAF air transport force can be augmented by 109 aircraft from three Air National Guard wings and two Air Force Reserve wings. These wings are currently assigned to WESTAF as intermediate gaining command and have an airlift force consisting of C-97s, C-121s and C-124s. Air Guard and Air Force Reserve units are located at 21 different locations extending north to McChord AFB, south to Jackson, Mississippi and east to Chicago, Illinois and Nashville, Tennessee.

Wing headquarters and their locations are as follows:

118th ATW (ANG), Berry Field, Tenn.

137th ATW (ANG), Will Rogers Field, Okla.

146th ATW (ANG), Van Nuys, Calif.

442nd Troop Carrier Wing (AFRes), Richards-Gebaur AFB, Mo.

512th Troop Carrier Wing (AFRes), Carswell AFB, Tex.

WESTAF crews have one complication - they must cross the international date line on their flights. As they go west to Japan, they move ahead an entire day. When they return, they lose it again.

When it is 4 PM at Travis, it is 7 AM the next day at Bangkok near the outer limits of the system.

Distance from Travis to Bangkok is 10,030 statute miles. It takes MATS longest range jet 21 flying hours plus four hours on the ground at enroute stations to make the flight.

MATS jets fly between Japan and Travis nonstop, but the propeller aircraft must make two stops.

Some distances and jet flying times in the WESTAF system are:

Travis to Yokota Air Base, Japan (near Tokyo), 5,179 miles, 11 hours and 15 minutes westbound and two hours less to return.

Travis to Christchurch, New Zealand, 7,369 miles, 16 hours and 15 minutes.

Honolulu to Wake Island, 2,311 miles, 4 hours and 40 minutes.