

The Military Air Transport Service anticipates increasingly greater reliance on the Guard and Reserve for dependable backup in the global strategic airlift mission. The command expects combat-ready reserves to play a major role in providing . . .

AIRLIFT for D-Day

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IN MID-January 1960, the first of forty-seven Boeing C-97 Stratofreighters was transferred from the strategic airlift force of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) to the Air National Guard. Within a short time, two ANG wings—six squadrons—had been equipped with C-97s, and the Guard had gone global.

The speed and skill with which Air National Guard aircrews and maintenance technicians made the sudden transition from fighters to those heavy, four-engine strategic airlift aircraft were extremely gratifying.

While the Guard squadrons were beginning transition to the C-97s, MATS, in conjunction with the elite Strategic Army Corps of the US Continental Army Command, conducted a mass strategic airlift exercise—Big Slam/Puerto Pine—in late March. During this airlift of STRAC forces and their combat equipment to Puerto Rico, a Marine Corps quick-erect fuel system was set up at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Puerto Rico. The 50,000-gallon system was fed directly from the base central storage facility by one and a half miles of flexible pipe.

More than 500 aircraft were serviced with 3,000,000 gallons of avgas by this system during the fifteen-day span of the operation. This unit is easily air transportable, requires a minimum of support, is expandable up to several hundred thousand gallons, and dispenses any type of fuel.

My personal experience convinces me that in any future airlift operation, whether test or actual emergency, if the requirement for fueling should be inland

rather than coastal, air tankers could well be the source of supply.

It is unlikely that, in a nonexercise situation, a base central storage facility would be available.

This naturally leads to the concept of using such a refueling system in forward combat zones, with POL (petroleum, oil, and lubricants) resupply accomplished by air. By this means, flexibility of air operations as well as mobility of the ground forces would be greatly enhanced.

Equating this Big Slam/Puerto Pine lesson with the splendid training record of the Air National Guard in the C-97, MATS and USCONARC agreed in a joint report:

"As tanker aircraft become excess to the requirements of the Air Force, they should be assigned to the ANG/Reserve and attached to MATS to
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Left, Maj. Gen. Joe W. Kelly, Jr., who succeeded General Tunner as MATS Commander on May 31. He served previously as the Commander of the Air Proving Ground Center, Eglin AFB, Fla., and as Director of Legislative Liaison in the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force. A West Point graduate, General Kelly served in Europe in World War II and headed the FEAF Bomber Command in Korea.

Right, a California ANG C-97. First of forty-seven of the Boeing transports was transferred from MATS to ANG early this year. Speed with which Guard completed the transition to these planes was extremely gratifying to all.



augment the airlift force and perform this petroleum transport mission."

It should be made very clear that there is much to be gained by having MATS place more and more reliance upon the air reserve forces for dependable backup in the global strategic airlift mission. Such a course would place a part of the augmentation airlift MATS must have for war or emergency operations under positive military control and discipline, assuring unquestioned airlift augmentation response under any emergency condition.

I also envision increasingly greater reliance by MATS upon the Guard and Reserve through reorganization of their air units, and transfer of cargo and tanker aircraft suitable for airlift operations as they phase out of the active Air Force inventory.

The new USAF reserve forces plan, whereby gaining commands will supervise the training and inspection of Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units, is therefore of great interest. A total of 144 units have MATS D-Day assignments, fifty-eight from the Air Force Reserve and eighty-six from the Air National Guard.

These include mobile communications and AACS squadrons, air terminal squadrons, aeromedical transport squadrons, casualty staging units, aeromedical evacuation units, air rescue squadrons, air weather flights, and, of course, the two wings and six squadrons of strategic airlift C-97s. All told, 18,765 specialists of many types—from communicators to flight nurses, GCA operators to airlift pilots—are included in these units, all ready to join the strategic airlift force team in the event of war.

Concern with their training must be a good deal more than academic, and the new management plan was received with enthusiasm by me as Commander of MATS at the time.

The Continental Air Command has done a superb job of training today's reserve forces in their formative years since Korea. But in this age of increasing military specialization, reserve forces units now quite properly will be trained by the command with the responsibility for their wartime employment.

The compressed-time character of modern warfare demands that the reserve forces be thoroughly trained before they are called up to join the active organization, and places a premium on training realism.

The assigned reserve forces should be made a part

of MATS essential war-readiness training, using them to the maximum possible extent in global air logistics operations by which we keep the strategic airlift force ready for any emergency. Also they should be used to the maximum in future mass airlift exercises, such as Big Slam/Puerto Pine.

In addition to this intensive utilization of units already assigned, there is a strong need for additional Air Reserve and Air National Guard squadrons trained for the global strategic airlift mission. Training of these squadrons—dependable and sure in their response for war airlift augmentation, wearing the same uniform, speaking the same language, and motivated by the same considerations of national security—would provide a major asset to the Air Force and the national strategic airlift capability.

I am in full agreement with the subcommittee of the United States House of Representatives which recently declared after an airlift study:

"The subcommittee recommends that, in addition to the six C-97 squadrons which have been established within the Air National Guard, that such additional C-97 units as may be militarily justifiable be established in either the Air National Guard or the Air Force Reserve; that additional KC-97s in their aerial tanker configuration in such number as may be justified by military considerations, be transferred to the Air National Guard or the Air Force Reserve, in order to establish a POL resupply capability in accordance with the lessons learned in the Big Slam/Puerto Pine exercise; that as C-124s become excess to the active inventory they be transferred, in accordance with the requirements then existing, to the Air National Guard or the Air Force Reserve."

In short, I feel very keenly the potentialities and capabilities of the air reserve forces and I am pleased they will be utilized in the execution of the MATS mission.—END

General Tunner, who retired on May 31, is one of the world's top authorities on airlift. He commanded the World War II "Hump" airlift over the Himalayas, the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift, and the Korean Airlift. He served as DCS/Operations, 11q, USAF; USAFE Commander in Chief; and Deputy Commander, AMC, prior to assuming command of MATS in 1958. With his retirement, General Tunner completed thirty-two years of commissioned service.