

make three round trips to Berlin daily. Third, he established the "block" system of dispatching C-54 and C-47 aircraft in groups at specified times so that like aircraft with the same cruising speeds could travel together. Finally, he implemented a centrally controlled Air Traffic Center in Frankfurt to schedule airlift flights. (25)

General Smith also organized his resources as best he could; developing an organization divided into two main sections: Operations and Supply and Maintenance. He relied directly upon Headquarters USAFF for all other support he might need. The operating units under Brig. Gen. Smith were stationed solely at Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden ABs. The 60th Troop Carrier Group, under the command of Colonel Bertron C. Harrison, flew its C-47s out of Wiesbaden AB. The 61st Troop Carrier Group, commanded by Colonel Walter S Lee, operated C-47s from Rhein-Main AB. All of these units flew strictly to Berlin's Tempelhof Airport. Later these resources were expanded and reorganized for more efficient operations. (26)

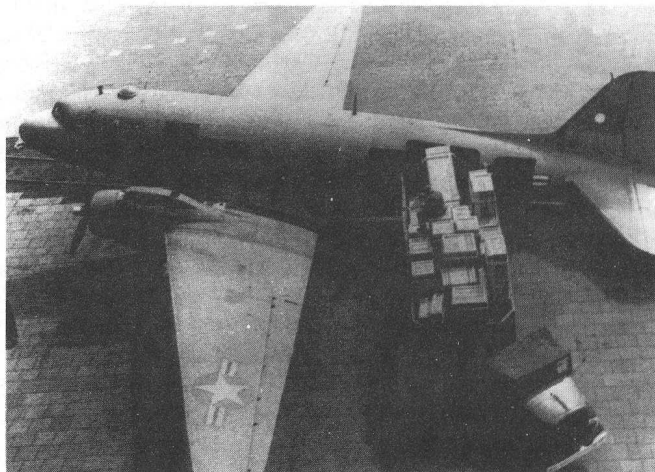
The MATS Connection The Military Air Transport Service (MATS) had been created only a few weeks prior to the beginning of the Berlin airlift, but its leaders were anxious to become involved in Operation Vittles. Their entrance came early in the operation; on 30 June 1948, 35 of MATS' C-54s arrived with augmented crews at Wiesbaden to assist the airlift. Maj. Gen. William H. Turner, MATS deputy commander for operations and architect of the World War II Hump airlift, wanted to go, too. Turner marched into then Maj. Gen. Lawrence S. Kuter's office at MATS headquarters and told his commander that MATS should take over Operation Vittles and that he would be happy to command it. Kuter, more politically savvy than the brilliant but volatile Turner, responded, "that's not the way to do it, Bill, ... Let's just sit tight and see what happens." (27)

The MATS leadership did not have to wait long. On 23 July 1948 Headquarters USAF directed MATS to take over the provisional Airlift Task Force Headquarters at Wiesbaden, plus maintenance facilities, air traffic control equipment, and personnel to support an expanding airlift operation. (28) Operating under the operational control of Headquarters USAF, Maj. Gen. Turner was placed in command of this headquarters and given authority to recast the airlift for more efficient operations. He arrived at Wiesbaden with his staff and a well-thought-out approach to the airlift on 29 July.



From the Rhein Main control tower, a mixture of C-47s and C-54s stand on the ramp. Trucks are from 67th Truck Co. Giessen.

The letter appointing Maj. Gen. Turner as commander of the Airlift Task Force mandated his personal direction of Airlift personnel and equipment at the three bases where Brig. Gen. Smith had centered his activities: Rhein-Main, Wiesbaden, and



Closer view of C-47 (above) unloading at Tempelhof AB, Berlin. Arrival of C-54s in quantity meant more cargo per sortie and more efficient use of ramp space. (USAF photo)

Tempelhof. (29) He was also told to assume control of these elements:

1. Oberpfaffenhofen, a maintenance depot in Germany, and any other depots which might be engaged in heavy maintenance of airlift planes.

2. The Frankfurt Air Traffic Control Center and other such centers which might facilitate the mission of the Airlift Task Force Headquarters.

3. All aircraft operations in the air corridor between Berlin and Frankfurt. (30)

These forces were expanded as he began to build the airlift toward greater efficiency in the fall of 1948.

Turner's approach, therefore, was to coordinate carefully each aspect of the airlift, develop detailed sets of procedures, and execute each flight from onload to return in exactly the same way. Aircraft, maintenance teams, aircrews, and supply personnel, as well as all the thousands of lesser-known activities involved in any flight were regimented, all jobs being conducted strictly according to predetermined directives, and tracked on statistical charts and tables. Turner referred to it as a rhythmical cadence to the airlift that allowed no excess or unplanned action. "This steady rhythm," he wrote, "constant as the jungle drums, became the trade-mark of the Berlin Airlift, or any airlift I have operated." He added, "I don't have much of a natural sense of rhythm, incidentally. I'm certainly no threat to Fred Astaire, and a drumstick to me is something that grows on a chicken. But when it comes to airlifts, I want rhythm." (31)

General Turner also approached the airlift with an emphasis on how to get more tonnage to Berlin in a single day consistent with safety and resources. (32) He calculated that there were 1,440 minutes in a day, and his ultimate goal was to have an aircraft land every minute. That would have been an impossible rate in 1948, but he still emphasized operations at three minute intervals almost every day. Perhaps the best analogy to Turner's approach toward airlift would be a conveyer belt. A belt, the corridor between western Germany and Berlin, had equally spaced along it carriers for the commodity, aircraft transporting