

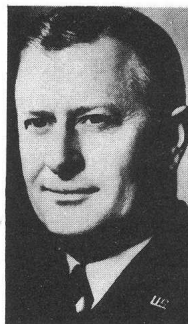
materials for the city. As on the conveyor belt, all carriers (the aircraft) moved at equal speeds, executed whatever actions were preplanned at specific locations, and never deviated from the predetermined method of operation. The conveyor could be slowed or sped up as necessary, but it was absolutely inerrant in its regimentation. This approach, Turner discovered, brought the most efficient type of operation. Such an approach, it should be added, earned him the nickname of "Willie the Whip," for he demanded unerring precision. (33)

Turner also emphasized the intangibles that he believed would increase airlift efficiency. For instance, he encouraged competition between organizations involved in Operation Vittles. He maintained a huge board in the Airlift Task Force Headquarters that tracked the tonnage of every unit, sponsored a newsletter that listed efficiency of units and sent kudos to those with the greatest records of achievement. He was also quick to prod officials who seemed pleased with their units' accomplishments by pointing out greater efficiencies elsewhere. For example, during a push to deliver a record amount of tonnage on Easter Sunday 1949, known as the Easter Parade, the airlift made a record 1,398 flights and hauled an unprecedented 12,941 tons of cargo to Berlin in one twenty-four hour period. During this drive Turner visited a unit at Fassberg where the commander told him he was running ten percent ahead of his quota. Turner was unflappable and always prodding for greater effort. "That's fine," he replied, "but of course it's not up to what they're doing over at Celle [another airlift base]. They're really on the ball over there." Those were just the right words to foster more effort. Turner remarked that the commander immediately returned to his "flight line and cracked his whip." (34)

### The Headquarters Element

The Berlin Airlift's ability to function with anything approaching full capacity required a well-developed and efficient airlift headquarters. Turner established his headquarters at Wiesbaden, Germany--after meeting with General LeMay and receiving his directive, "we expect you to produce"--which coordinated the many specialized military and civilian services that kept the airlift operating smoothly. His headquarters was officially established through General Order 61, Headquarters USAFE, on 29 July 1948, as the 7499th Air Division. This task force was a special unit reporting directly to Headquarters USAFE. (35) The Airlift Task Force broke down functionally into eight major divisions: personnel, communications, airfields, plans, supply, maintenance, cargo handling, and operations. Under the operations function were two critical specialties, weather and navigation. (36)

Each of the functional parts of the headquarters was handled by one of Turner's hand-picked officers whose duty required both execution of his function and liaison with the unit of the Air Force that provided the service to the airlift. In so doing the airlift headquarters functional head worked closely on both plans and expansion projects. For example, the Air Field officer was required to keep abreast of conditions at all airlift installations and ensure that the proper authorities at the Pentagon were aware of the requirements for runway repair or any other work that needed to be done. In the same way, the maintenance functional manager thoroughly monitored field level maintenance, depot maintenance in theater and in the United



States, and worked closely with officials at the Air Materiel Command, the predecessor of Air Force Logistics Command, to ensure proper support in terms of both spare parts availability

**Maj. Gen. William H. Turner (left) "Willie the Whip" who applied and refined his techniques to turn the Berlin Airlift into a smooth machine.**

and services provided. (37) In addition to the functional managers for the American airlift effort, there was a close working relationship from the start with the British. Early on, three Royal Air Force (RAF) representatives were permanently attached to the task force headquarters to act as a liaison with the RAF and they coordinated carefully the efforts of the two nations. Later, on 14 October 1948, the RAF was brought more directly into the airlift headquarters when the United States and the United Kingdom created the Combined Airlift Task Force (CATF). This merged the efforts of the two nations and placed the CATF under a single commander, Turner, with RAF Air Commodore J.W.F. Mereer acting as the Deputy Commander. (38)

The provisional and the Combined Airlift Task Force Headquarters documented carefully, with statistics, the performance of the airlift. Turner used the statistics extensively to determine required goals and whether the objectives were being met for virtually every aspect of the operation. An entire room in the airlift headquarters was set aside for the purpose of displaying charts and statistical information, so that performance for every function could be displayed, analyzed, and compared. Not satisfied only with tonnage figures, airmen used a complex array of statistical measurements to show at a glance assigned aircraft; daily missions flown; utilization rates of aircraft; flying hours by type of aircraft, by unit, and by several other breakdowns; trips per assigned aircraft; aircrew status; flying times; unloading times in Berlin; ground time in Berlin; block time in Berlin; percent of aircraft in 200-hour inspection; locations of aircraft at all times; and daily tons airlifted. (39)

One of the most important aspects of operating a successful airlift, the airlift managers believed, was establishing a series of effective maintenance and supply facilities. He made this a matter of highest priority when he took over command of the Airlift Task Force. The airlift fleet required constant maintenance on an "as needed" basis. There were also periodic checks every 25 hours of flight up to 200 hours, after which aircraft were sent to a depot for a major inspection. At 1,000 hours, an airplane was returned to the United States for a comprehensive overhaul. (40) All of these maintenance activities were painstakingly planned, executed, recorded, and controlled at the airlift Task Force Headquarters. Whether a transport was in the air or on the ground, there was constant information flowing between the headquarters and the field on its maintenance status.

The majority of maintenance for the airlift occurred at squadron level. Turner directed the equal distribution of maintenance technicians to the various bases used for the Berlin Flights. There were 148 maintenance personnel attached to each squadron. They worked in three shifts, 12 hours on and 24 hours off duty. As much as possible the airlift concentrated expertise for similar types of aircraft at the same base. This was so successful, for instance, that the 50 and 150 hour checks were reduced