

to an average of 5.5 hours, about half the time normally given to a C-54 in the United States during that period. (41)

From the outset, Berlin airlift maintenance personnel saw the necessity of placing back into operation a major maintenance depot at Burtonwood, England. Such a depot had been located there during World War II, and it seemed logical to restart it for the extensive 200 hour inspections required for the C-54. Turner made this an item of emphasis when he first met with General LeMay and the USAFE staff and received their support for the move. Unfortunately, the depot could not be readied immediately, so he had to make other arrangements. Turner described what he did to solve the 200-hour inspection problem in a 3 August 1948 letter to General Kuter, MATS commander: "I am putting a maintenance detachment in the USAFE Depot at Oberpfaffenhofen, near Munich, at least temporarily. this will relieve the operating bases considerably, as they will only do intermediate and pre flights. Oberpfaffenhofen will do four 200 hour inspections on each C-54, after which they will return to Oklahoma city for 1000 hours." (42)

This was, at best, a short-term solution, for Oberpfaffenhofen had neither the space nor the facilities to support the additional maintenance activities of the large and ever growing C-54 fleet. (43) Stuart Symington, Secretary of the Air Force, and General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, visited the theater in mid-August 1948. Turner took the opportunity to discuss with them the maintenance snag. They "inspected Burtonwood," he wrote to Kuter in a back channel communication on 16 August, and agreed that it had "the potential required for a long-term operation." He asked and received their support to press for the outfitting of Burtonwood by 1 October 1948. (44)

They fell a bit short of that schedule. Only on 2 November 1948 was Turner finally able to activate the maintenance facility at Burtonwood. (45) Maj.Gen. Fredrick Bosum, a logistics officer with Air Materiel Command, promised to complete seven 200 hour inspections per day. Using the production line maintenance (PLM) procedures that Turner had pioneered for the Hump, each 654 was towed through a series of checkpoints where experts in specific components worked on the aircraft. (46)

A Pattern of Operations

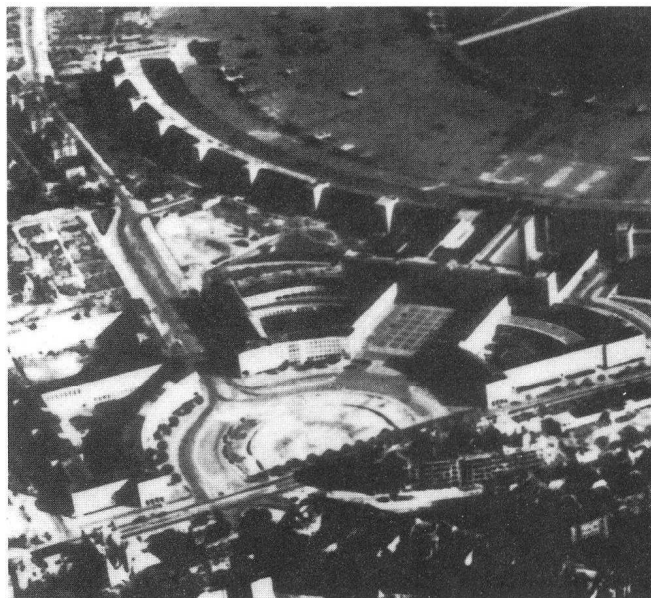
By the fall of 1948 two airfields in Germany fed American planes into the air corridors to Berlin: Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden. Immediately, Turner recognized that limiting operations to these bases hampered efficiency. He urged expansion of American operations into bases in other zones because of their closer proximity to Berlin, the relatively easy terrain they overflew, and the opportunity to maximize the number of aircraft inbound at any given time. Preliminary planning to expand American operations to RAF Fassberg, in the British sector, therefore, began on 4 August 1948. This base was chosen for three reasons: it was close to the Bremen Port of Embarkation; the flying time was 55 minutes instead of the two hours from Wiesbaden and Rhein-Main; and the weather and terrain were somewhat more attractive. An agreement was reached on the use of this base early in August, and on 21 August 1948 C-54s from the American contingent began to use Fassberg for airlift operations. Later the Americans expanded operations to nearby RAF Celle. Both actions materially increased the ability of the task

force to resupply Berlin. (47)

The increased flow of aircraft into Berlin necessitated expansion of the Airlift Task Force's operations in Berlin as well. In August 1948, Turner's airlift aircraft began to use the RAF field at Gatow in the British sector of Berlin in addition to Tempelhof. On 2 August 1948 the Airlift Task Force's Operations and Communications Section began to develop procedures whereby cargo aircraft coming into Berlin could be directed either to Tempelhof or Gatow, depending on which base had less traffic at the time. (48) About 20 August active flights into Gatow began. Later, the airlift began using a third airfield in Berlin, the hastily constructed Tegel Airport in the French sector.

The aircraft flow was set up to operate initially at five different altitudes, starting at 5,000 feet. All of the transports at the same altitude were 15 minutes apart. The next layer of aircraft was 500 feet above them and this form was repeated until reaching the fifth level at 7,000 feet. Later the stacks of aircraft were reduced to three for the sake of simplicity; however, the frequency of the flights remained the same with the intervals reduced to mere minutes. The airplanes at all levels then converged on Berlin at a rate of one every three minutes, the optimal working rhythm of the airlift, provided that the takeoff and landing times of all aircraft were precise. (49)

To ensure that everything from takeoff to landing in Berlin went smoothly, Turner had instituted by 7 August a rigid set



Tempelhof in the middle of Berlin was convenient for distributing the arriving supplies, but a tough approach for the pilots. It is a US Army airfield now.

of procedures through the Airlift Task Force Operations Monitoring Control Center. For aircraft flying from Wiesbaden or Rhein-Main in the American Zone of Germany, air traffic control originated at Rhein-Main. The southernmost air corridor was used only for inbound traffic, necessitating that aircraft be dispatched through Rhein-Main air traffic control at regular intervals and put into a stack through the corridor. At takeoff, the pilot was given the numbers of the three airplanes ahead of him and the two that followed. Each pilot knew his exact location in the flow.

Every takeoff commenced at a precise time and flew a precise