

# **317<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing**

## **1942 – Present**



**Brian P. Smith**  
**317 AW History Office**

Current as of 23 July 2024

## **317<sup>th</sup> Lineage**

Established as 317th Troop Carrier Wing (Heavy) on 10 Aug 1948. Activated on 18 Aug 1948. Inactivated on 14 Sep 1949. Redesignated as 317th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium, on 3 Jul 1952. Activated on 14 Jul 1952. Inactivated on 25 Sep 1958. Activated on 13 Mar 1963. Organized on 15 Apr 1963. Redesignated as: 317th Troop Carrier Wing on 1 Mar 1966; 317 Tactical Airlift Wing on 1 May 1967; 317th Airlift Wing on 1 Jan 1992. Inactivated on 18 Aug 1993. Redesignated as 317th Airlift Group on 31 Mar 1997. Activated on 1 Apr 1997. Redesignated as 317th Airlift Wing on 1 Jul 2017. Activated on 6 Jul 2017.

Note: The 317th Airlift Wing is authorized to display honors earned by the 317th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) prior to 18 Aug 1948. Thus, this heritage pamphlet will include coverage of the 317 TCG from its February 1942 activation through activation of the 317th Troop Carrier Wing on 10 Aug 1948.

## **Stations**

Duncan Field, San Antonio, Texas 22 Feb 1942; Bowman Field, Louisville, Kentucky, 17 Jun 1942; Lawson Field, Fort Benning, Georgia, 9 Oct 1942; Maxton, North Carolina, 7 Nov-5 Dec 1942; Camp Stoneman, Pittsburg, California 18-31 Dec 1942; Townsville and Brisbane Australia, 15 Jan 1943; Papua New Guinea, Sep 1943; Leyte, the Philippines, Nov 1944; Clark Field, the Philippines, 5 Mar 1945; Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, 24 Aug 1945; Tachikawa Air Base, Japan, 6 Jan 1946; Celle RAF Station, Germany, 9 Jan-14 Sep 1949. Rhein-Main Air Base, Germany, 14 Jul 1952; Neubiberg Air Base, Germany, 17 Mar 1953; Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France, 17 Apr 1957-25 Sep 1958. Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France, 15 Apr 1963-20 Jun 1964; Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio, 20 Jun 1964; Pope Air Force Base, North Carolina, 31 Aug 1971-18 Aug 1993. Dyess Air Force Base, Texas, 1 Apr 1997-present.

Note: During its history, the 317th has experienced three periods of inactive service; 1949-1952, 1958-1963, and 1993-1997. For the first period, the 317th Troop Carrier Wing and all its squadrons were inactive. For the last two periods the flying squadrons and their associated imbedded maintaince continued on active service as part of another organization. From 1958-1963 the flying squadrons continued to fly from Evreux, France under the 322nd Air Division. From 1993-1997, the 39th and 40th Airlift Squadrons and their Aircraft Maintenance Units operated from Dyess AFB and became a part of the combined 7th Wing (C-130s and B-1s) under the Chief of Staff of the Air Force's "one base, one wing" policy.

## **Aircraft Flown**

C-47 “Skytrain”, 1942-1948

C-46 “Commando”, 1946-1948

C-54 “Skymaster”, 1947-1949

C-119 “Flying Boxcar”, 1952-1958

C-130 “Hercules”, 1957-present

C-124 “Globemaster II”, 1963-1964

C-123 “Provider”, 1969-1971

## **Commanders**

Capt Samuel V. Payne, 22 Feb 1942

Lt Col Robert L. Olinger, 21 Jun 1944

Lt Col John H. Lackey Jr., 2 Oct 1944

Lt Col Robert I. Choate, 31 Aug 1945

Col Dwight B. Schannep, Oct 1945

Col Marshall S. Roth, Jan 1946

Col Othel R. Deering, Jan 1947

Col Thomas K. Hampton, 18 Aug 1948

Col William A. Ross, 15 Aug-14 Sep 1949

Inactive 14 Sep 1949 to 13 Jul 1952

Col Donald J. French, 14 Jul 1952

Col Harry M. Pike, 23 Jul 1954

Col Clarence B. Hammerle Jr., 29 Jul 1954

Col Joseph A. Cunningham, 9 Sep 1954

Col Robert D. Forman, 8 Jul 1957

Col John B. Wallace, 11 Sep-25 Sep 1958

Inactive 25 Sep 1958 to 12 Mar 1963

Col Arthur C. Rush, 15 Apr 1963

Col George W. Kinney, 20 Jun 1963  
Col Harry S. Dennis Jr., 27 Dec 1965  
Col Robert M. Levy, 29 Jul 1966  
Col Jack J. Schneider, 13 Sep 1967  
Col James A. Giles, 28 Sep 1967  
Col Bill M. Richardson, 18 Dec 1967  
Col James A. Giles, 20 May 1968  
Col Bill M. Richardson, 19 Jun 1968  
Col Richard J. Downs, 2 Jan 1970  
Col Thomas G. Cline, 14 Jul 1971  
Col Billie J. Norwood, 31 Aug 1971  
Col Edwin F. Rumsey, 13 Apr 1973  
Col Stewart Young, 14 Sep 1973  
Brig Gen Robert F. Coverdale, 6 Jun 1975  
Col Benjamin Kraljev Jr., 8 Aug 1977  
Brig Gen Duane H. Erickson, 28 Feb 1979  
Col Robert B. Patterson, 29 Mar 1980  
Col Edsel R. Field, 27 Feb 1981  
Col Frank E. Willis, 18 Feb 1983  
Col Rolland F. Clarkson Jr., 29 Feb 1984  
Col Ronnie C. Peoples, 23 Sep 1985  
Col Edward N. Brya, 26 Mar 1987  
Col Frederick N. Buckingham, 19 Apr 1988  
Col Daniel E. Sowada, 20 Jun 1989  
Col Maxwell C. Bailey, 18 Jun 1990  
Col George N. Williams, 20 Jul 1992  
Col Thomas A. Samples, 29 Mar-18 Aug 1993  
Inactive 18 Aug 1993 to 31 Mar 1997  
Col Jimmie C. Jackson Jr., 1 Apr 1997  
Col Douglas L. Miller, 26 Aug 1998  
Col John A. Tappan, 10 May 2000  
Col Richard C. Johnston, 9 Jul 2002  
Col Paul J. Montgomery, 15 Mar 2004  
Col Kevin E. Jackson, 10 Jan 2006  
Col Bernard E. Mater, 16 Jan 2008  
Col Dan P. Dagher, 21 Dec 2009

Col Walter H. Ward Jr., 5 Dec 2011  
Col Jeffrey S. Brown, 5 Aug 2013  
Col Stephen L. Hodge, 18 Aug 2015  
Col David L. Owens, 6 Jul 2017  
Col Rhett C. Boldenow, 16 May 2018  
Col Jeffrey T. Menasco, 3 Aug 2018  
Col James G. Young, 24 Jul 2020  
Col Thomas S. Lankford, 7 Jul 2022  
Col Justin L. Diehl, 23 Jul 2024

## **Senior Enlisted Advisors, Command Chiefs, Superintendents**

CMSgt Grady N. Elliott, 1 May 1973  
CMSgt Dean L. Gordon, 1 May 1979  
CMSgt R.C. Miller, 20 Jun 1981  
CMSgt Ronald P. Ringler, 26 Nov 1985  
CMSgt James R. Robertson, 5 May 1988  
CMSgt Norman G. Brander, 1 Feb 1990  
CMSgt William R. Hammet, 1 May 1992  
Inactive 18 Aug 1993 to 31 Mar 1997  
CMSgt William A. Smith, 2 Nov 1998  
CMSgt Randy W. Auld, 1 May 2000  
CMSgt Dwayne F. Hopkins, 1 Jun 2002  
CMSgt Kenneth Angel, 1 Oct 2003  
CMSgt Michael Williams, 1 Aug 2004  
CMSgt Debra Huntley, 6 Jul 2006  
CMSgt Michael J. Mildenberg, 12 Jan 2008  
CMSgt Philip L. Oliver, 1 Dec 2010  
CMSgt Wayne R. Stenger, 1 May 2014  
CMSgt Michael W. Menard, 15 Jan 2016  
CMSgt John A. Hammonds, 1 Jun 2016  
CMSgt Joshua W. Swanger, 5 Jun 2017  
CMSgt John A. Palmer, 5 Sep 2018  
CMSgt Mark A. Umfleet, 22 Jun 2020  
CMSgt Arthur J. Williams IV, 7 Jul 2022

## World War Two

The traditions of the 317th Airlift Wing were forged in the crucible of World War II when, on 22 February 1942, the 317th Troop Carrier Group (TCG) was formed at Duncan Field, San Antonio, Texas, with 83 personnel led by Captain Samuel Payne.

The 317 TCG spent the remainder of 1942 moving to different training locations in the United States, growing in size and experience as it prepared to join in the battle to defeat the Axis Powers. In July 1942, the 317th moved to Bowman Field, Louisville, Kentucky, where it increased in size to 950 personnel and began instrument flying training. While at Bowman Field, the 317 TCG's original orders to Europe were changed to the Pacific. In October 1942, the Group moved to Fort Benning, Georgia, where it began intensive airdrop training and increased in size to its wartime strength of 1,280 personnel assigned to four C-47 flying squadrons, the 39th, 40th, 41st, and 46th Troop Carrier Squadrons, and a headquarters squadron.

In November 1942, the 317 TCG moved to Maxton, North Carolina, where it was to begin glider towing training; however, due to an Atlantic storm the gliders were damaged beyond repair. After less than a month in Maxton the flying squadrons departed for Mobile, Alabama, in early December, to pick up brand new C-47s. The 317 TCG suffered its first fatal aircraft loss on 5 December 1942, when one of six C-47s headed for Mobile from Maxton crashed in bad weather trying to land at Maxwell Field, Alabama, with the loss of all twelve Group personnel aboard the aircraft.

The new C-47s in Mobile were each fitted with eight internal 100 gallon auxiliary fuel tanks for the upcoming long flights across the Pacific Ocean. While the flying squadrons were taking a southern route across the country the 1,000+ person ground element of the 317 TCG took troop trains across the central U.S. on their way to Camp Stoneman, Pittsburg, California in the East Bay area near Oakland. Air and ground elements of the 317 TCG met up at Camp Stoneman in mid-December. While at Camp Stoneman, gyro compasses were installed in the new C-47s, followed by intensive navigation training flights along the Pacific coast. On one of these training flights a C-47 crashed into a mountain in Northern California with the loss of five personnel.

On 31 December 1942, 1,108 317 TCG personnel boarded the *USS Maui* and departed San Francisco with "destination unknown" orders, arriving 24 days later in Townsville, Australia. On 5 January 1943, the four flying squadrons started the long journey to Australia beginning with a fifteen hour flight from California to Hawaii. 317 TCG C-47s began arriving in

Townsville and Brisbane, Australia, on 15 January and were quickly committed to the battle against the advancing Japanese forces in Papua New Guinea. Within two weeks of their arrival in Australia, the 317 TCG took part in the 29-31 January 1943 Battle of Wau, air-landing critically needed Australian Army infantry troops who proved the decisive factor in turning the tide of battle against advancing Japanese forces. The close-in fighting had exiting soldiers firing their weapons as they disembarked from the 317 TCG C-47s, inspiring the squadron emblem for the 40th Troop Carrier Squadron (now the 40th Airlift Squadron). The 317 TCG earned its first of two Distinguished Unit Citations for the key role it played in winning the Battle of Wau and stemming the Japanese advance towards Australia.



In September 1943, the 317 TCG began the long journey towards victory over Japan, moving from its Australian bases to a series of bases in Papua New Guinea. In September, the 317 TCG contributed 53 aircraft as part of the 250 aircraft airdrop mission to Nadzab, Papua New Guinea. This was the first large scale airdrop of the Pacific War.



**317 TCG C-47 airdrop formation over Nadzab, Papua New Guinea**

In 1944, as part of Gen MacArthur's Pacific Island hopping campaign, the 317 TCG moved north to the Philippines, supplying Allied forces via both air-land and airdrop missions. The 317 TCG earned its second Distinguished Unit Citation as the sole airlift force inserting the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment into the island fortress of Corregidor on 16 and 17 February, 1945. Fifty-one 317 TCG C-47s made a total of 600 airdrop passes over the two day operation, onto two extremely small drop zones which abutted a 500 foot cliff leading to the Pacific Ocean. The precision and skill of the "Jungle Skippers" led to a 95 percent airdrop effectiveness rate despite over half of the aircraft receiving battle damage from anti-aircraft fire.



### **317 TCG C-47s dropping paratroopers during the retaking of Corregidor**

During World War Two the 317 TCG took part in every major airborne operation in the Pacific Theater from the beginning of 1943 until the end of hostilities in August 1945. The 317 TCG has the unique distinction as the being the first of the conquering Allied forces to set foot on Japanese soil. On 28 August 1945, a 16-aircraft formation of 12 317 TCG C-47s and four other C-47s, one each from the four other troop carrier groups, landed at Atsugi Air Field, Tokyo, Japan, delivering Gen MacArthur's advance party in preparation for the 2 September unconditional surrender ceremony aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay.

After the end of the war the 317 TCG settled into occupation duty at Tachikawa Air Base, Japan, flying missions throughout Japan and Korea. In 1947, the group converted to the larger four-engine C-54 "Skymaster" transport. On 18 August 1948, the 317th Troop Carrier Group came under direct assignment to the newly activated 317th Troop Carrier Wing (Heavy). A month after activation the entire wing deployed to Germany to support the increasing demands of the ongoing Berlin Airlift.



## **The Berlin Airlift**

When the fledgling Cold War heated up and the Soviet Union blockaded vehicle and train access to West Berlin, the United States and its Allied partners reacted with a massive airlift, which lasted 15 months and ultimately delivered 2,326,406 tons of food and supplies on 278,228 flights. The 317 TCW was transferred from Japan to Germany in September 1948 and participated in the airlift until July of 1949. A typical Berlin Airlift day for the 317 TCW's 36 C-54s was 100 round trip missions to Berlin delivering 1,000 tons of supplies (mainly coal) to the 2,500,000 isolated Berliners. The 317 TCW was placed in inactive status following the Berlin Airlift in 1949 then reactivated in 1952 in Germany as the Cold War increased tensions between NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries.



**USAF C-54 Landing in Berlin during the Berlin Airlift**

## **The Germany/France Years**

From 1952-1957, the 317 TCW served the fledgling North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) from various bases in Germany. In 1957, the Wing moved to Evreux-Fauville Air Base, France, where it participated in numerous humanitarian and training missions. After arriving in France with its C-119 "Flying Boxcar" aircraft the 317th transitioned to the C-130A "Hercules" in April 1958.



**40 TCS C-119 in foreground, 41 TCS (black/yellow) in background**

The always evolving restructuring of the United States Air Force led to the inactivation of the 317 TCW once again in September 1958 as the Wing's flying and maintenance squadrons were placed under the 322nd Air Division and 317th Air Base Group. Under this command structure the squadrons continued to fly their C-130s from Evreux-Fauville until the reactivation of the 317 TCW in March 1963. The wing continued to operate from Evreux-Fauville until June 1964, when it was reassigned to Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio.



**317 TCW C-130A in France**

## **Ohio**

In the early 1960s, as France moved to distance itself from the NATO military structure by pursuing an independent defense system, the number of US military personnel based in France began to decrease. As part of this drawdown the 317 TCW relocated to Lockbourne AFB, Ohio, in June 1964 where it operated until August 1971. On 1 March 1966, the 317th Troop Carrier Wing (Medium) was redesignated as the 317th Troop Carrier Wing (dropping the Medium designation) and a year later on 1 May 1967 the 317 TCW was again redesignated as the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing (317 TAW).

From Ohio, the 317 TAW maintained a busy operational schedule which included unit deployments to Europe and Central/South America and responding to domestic and international crises. Additionally the 317 TAW, amongst other wings, served as a replacement training unit (RTU) for USAF C-130 aircrew before the C-130 RTU mission was consolidated at Little Rock AFB, AR, in 1970. From 1969 to 1971 the wing trained crews in the C-123 transport aircraft including Vietnamese Air Force crews from late 1970 through mid-1971.

On 29 April 1965, the 317 TCW took part in the largest airlift formation mission since WWII, when a 150-aircraft formation of C-130s and C-124s departed Pope AFB, North Carolina with 12,000 82nd Airborne Division paratroopers and 7,500 tons of equipment for the Dominican Republic to support government forces as they battled rebel forces. President Johnson ordered Operation POWER PACK to “avoid a second Cuba.”

The 1960s and early 1970s was a period of social unrest across America that, at times, developed into large protests and riots. Between 1967 and 1971 the 317 TAW took part in six Operation GARDEN PLOT mobilizations that on short notice rapidly moved large numbers of National Guard and active duty troops to Selfridge AFB, MI and Andrews AFB, MD to protect civil order in the cities of Detroit and Washington D.C. During the 1967 Detroit riots the 317 TAW was re-routed from a fly-away no-notice Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) to take Fort Bragg, NC, and Fort Campbell, KY, soldiers to Selfridge AFB. The wing successfully passed the ORI rescheduled a month later. Following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in May 1968, the wing deployed thousands troops to Andrews AFB in anticipation of protests in the nation’s capital. During this operation the wing flew 458 hours and moved 451 tons of equipment.



**C-123 “Provider”**

## **North Carolina**

With the move to Pope Air Force Base in 1971, the 317 TAW shed its primary role as a replacement training unit and added regularly scheduled rotations to Southeast Asia to support the Vietnam War along with on-going European and Panama rotations. Soon after arriving at Pope AFB, the Wing became the test bed unit for the Adverse Weather Aerial Delivery System (AWADS) which allowed for all-weather formation precision airdrops without reference to any ground aids. The AWAD System was pressed into service during the April/May 1972 Battle for An Loc, Vietnam, to ensure delivery of critical supplies to the besieged defenders.

On 4 March 1973 a 317 TAW aircraft, flown by Lt Col Edwin Jackson, flew from U-Tapao, Thailand to Tan Son Nhut airport in Saigon and then on to Gia Lam Airport in Hanoi to transport the members of the International Commission for Control and Supervision of the prisoner-of-war (POW) exchange. It was an emotional time as the 317 TAW crew watched each of the American POWs being welcomed to their awaiting C-141 transport. The 317 TAW was proud to be a part of the POW return operation and to have been in the vanguard of USAF aircraft to fly into Hanoi following the cession of hostilities between the United States and Peoples Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

## **Grenada to Bosnia**

The 1980s and 1990s were a busy period for the 317th Tactical Airlift Wing, as normal rotations to South America and Europe were punctuated by contingency operations from Grenada to Bosnia. 317 TAW C-130Es flew 82nd Airborne Division troops for the initial airborne assault of Point Salines Airport, Grenada, during Operation URGENT FURY to rescue American medical students endangered by civil unrest. 317 TAW C-130s delivered troops and supplies for the operation and airlifted out captured Cuban soldiers.

The 317 TAW was called upon once again to support combat operations in 1989 during Operation JUST CAUSE, the invasion of Panama to remove President Noriega from power following his failure to relinquish power after elections. Fifteen C-130Es loaded with Army Rangers performed a night assault on Rio Hato Airport, Panama on 19 December. The first few aircraft flew unscathed across the drop zone, but Panamanian soldiers quickly found their range and poured withering anti-aircraft fire into the formation damaging several aircraft. Despite this intensive ground fire the formation did not waiver, delivering the Rangers on target. The formation flew to Howard Air Force Base, Panama for refueling and hasty repairs before launching back to the United States. Notably, several of the returning C-130s diverted to commercial airfields in Florida due to complications from their battle damage.

Following the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the 317 TAW was the first airlift force to arrive in the Middle East for Operation DESERT SHIELD. During the Wing's eight-month-long deployment it provided airlift throughout the region during the massive buildup to Operation DESERT STORM, the liberation of Kuwait. In January 1991, the 317 TAW was a major force in General Schwarzkopf's, Commander, U.S. Central Command, "Hail Mary" surprise flanking attack by the 82nd Airborne Division as part of the invasion of Iraq. This massive movement of troops and supplies to the western border region between Saudi Arabia and Iraq was carried out under strict radio silence and without ground navigation aids.

The end of the Cold War led to the reawakening of historical ethnic and border conflicts through central Europe in the early 1990s. In early 1992, the 317 AW provided airlift assistance to the

newly independent republics of Latvia and Lithuania. In 1992 and 1993, the Wing flew airdrop missions to United Nations safe areas during the Bosnia crisis. Intense fighting led to the reintroduction of high altitude airdrops using the AWAD System initiated by the 317th at the end of the Vietnam War.

In 1993, the 317th Airlift Wing was inactivated at Pope AFB, with the 39th and 40th Airlift Squadrons moving to Dyess AFB, Texas to become part of the combined B-1B/C-130 7th Wing.

## **Return to Texas**

On 1 April 1997 the 317th, now designated the 317th Airlift Group, returned to its state of origin when it was reactivated at Dyess Air Force Base, in Abilene, Texas. In April 2010, the 317 AG began a 40-month long transition from 33 1974 C-130H1 models to 28 brand new C-130J-30 “Super Hercules,” which are 15 feet longer than the outgoing H models with eight pallet positions to the H’s six pallet capacity. This 40-month long transition was completed in July 2013. On 6 July 2017, the 317 AG once again returned to its wing designation as the 317th Airlift Wing.

Col Diehl commands a wing consisting of the 317th Operations Group and its subordinate squadrons; the 39th Airlift Squadron, the 40th Airlift Squadron, the 317th Operations Support Squadron, and the 317th Maintenance Group with its two squadrons; the 317th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, and the 317th Maintenance Squadron. The wing works to maintain and operate both at home and overseas supporting the United States and its allies while maintaining its readiness and supporting the people of the United States in humanitarian efforts.

Continuing its long tradition; the twenty-first century finds the 317 AW operating in harmony with its long heritage. The 317 AW combines the heritage and lessons of the past with the tools of the present and future, coupled with a dedication to deliver anything, anytime, anywhere. The 317 AW is actively supporting the people of the United States in every theatre of military operations as well as through humanitarian efforts in natural disasters. The men and women who fly and support “Hazard” Hercules understand their heritage and the responsibilities placed upon them. They gladly serve and in so doing bring greater honor to an airlift wing deeply steeped in the traditions of the United States Air Force and Air Mobility Command.



**317th Airlift Wing C-130J-30 “Super Hercules”**