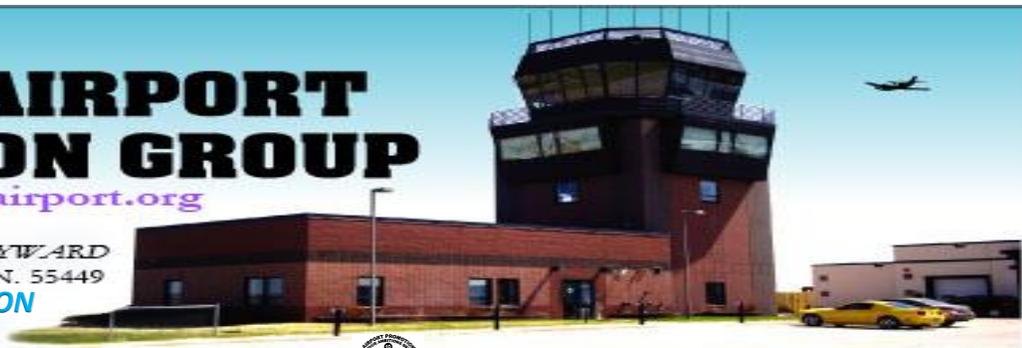


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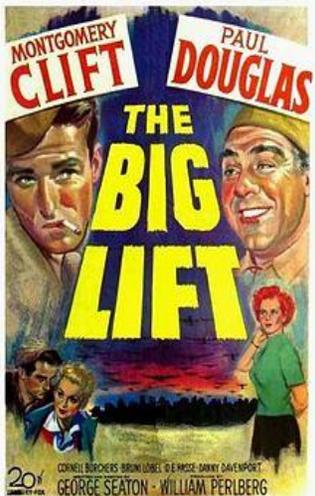
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More than 300 Air Force C-54 and Navy R-5D aircraft formed the backbone of the U.S. contribution to the Berlin Airlift in 1948. The airlift effort was a 24 hour a day support of the city of Berlin with supplies requiring development of a Global, International supply line keeping the flow of food and commodities continually reaching Berlin.



"The Big Lift" is a 1950 drama film shot in black and white on location in the city of Berlin, Germany using actual footage of the airlift to tell the story of "Operation Vittles", the 1948-1949 Berlin Airlift; a post-war glimpse of Berlin.

The Parts For "Vittles" Planes Drained All Supply Sources



C-54s in the Berlin Cold Weather

Majority of the available aircraft in Europe consisted of mostly small C-47s that were not suitable to fill the needs for the mass transportation required to keep Berlin supplied. During July, 1948

50 C-54s were flown in from several bases and became the standard aircraft used for the airlift. It became apparent that there weren't enough C-54 engines in all of Europe to keep the planes flying. During the first two weeks of November, 1948 two Navy transport squadrons at Moffett Naval Air Station at San Francisco Bay winterized 26 R-5Ds for the severe weather conditions they would encounter during their flight through the restricted corridors into Berlin. As the demand increased for more planes so did the demand for development of a system to obtain a flow of accessories and components for cycle reconditioning of the C-54s to keep the airlift operating.

International Supply System Established for "Vittles"

Rhein-Main Air Force Base, Germany became the gateway to Berlin and was the European terminal for Military Air Transport Service (MATS) as well as 10 major commercial airlines that provided auxiliary logistical support for delivery of engines and critical parts between the United States and Frankfurt, Germany. Airplane engines also were cargo aboard luxury liners such as the Queen Mary.

A complete engine build-up organization was created at Rhein-Main that established an assembly line with six stations for build-up of new and rebuilt engines that were shipped from the United States and six stations for tear-down of engines that were removed from the Airlift for reconditioning and inspection. Stripped down engines were created and returned to the United States for cycle reconditioning before being returned to Rhein-Main. The average tear-down time was about two hours. The parts would be inspected and graded. Repairable parts were then routed to the repair shop that was equipped for machining, sheet metal, electrical, woodworking and accessories. Parts were then returned to the build-up assembly line sequence. The build-up assembly of an engine took about 19 hours.

The establishment of a Trans-Atlantic shipping network made it possible to move large numbers of engines and replacement parts and to warehouse these as stock items to build up supply at Rhein-Main.

C-54s meeting overhaul requirements were routed to Burtonwood, England as well as Majors Field, Greenville, Texas where the Air Force had a contract with Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Co. (TEMCO). Navy R-5Ds routed to Moffett Naval Air Base, California were overhauled by Squadron VR-44.

The Kelly Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas, Air Material Command fully restored the C-54 Skymaster's Pratt & Whitney R-2000-9 and R-2000-11 engines that were in the cycle reconditioning program. The Air Depot overhauled 500 engines per month for the Airlift.

The success of Operation "Vittles" began in the United States. The continued success however rested on an unbroken flow of reconditioned aircraft from the civilian contractor plants; of aircraft parts and electronic equipment, of trained replacement personnel to fly the aircraft and provide maintenance, to man the air traffic control centers and weather stations. This long range support of the airlift accounted for the daily tonnage of supply to feed Berlin.



Westover Base Aircraft Shop

An endless stream of supplies from all over the U.S. was funneled through the MATS headquarters at Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts and was the complete Global air route support organization available to all U.S. military services.



Alameda Cylinder Overhaul Shop

The Alameda Naval Air Station provided overhaul and conversion work on "Vittles" Navy R-5D engines (Pratt & Whitney, R-2000-9 and R-2000-9A). Engine disassembly, repair, and reassembly production lines handled 180 '9's and '9A's every 90 days. In addition R-2000-7 and R-2000-11 engines were being converted to R-2000-9's. The '7' and '11' parts were shipped to San Antonio's Air Material Command as supply for use in C-54 engines.



Kelly R-2000 Engine Assembly

Kelly Air Force Base at San Antonio, Texas provided storage maintenance, aircraft reconditioning and training for maintenance personnel that manned the repair base at Burtwood, England, where C-54s received the required 200 hour inspections.



Overhaul of C-54s at TEMCO

The four-engine C-54s were routed through Westover and flown to Greenville, Texas after 1,000 to 8,000 flight hours in the "Vittles" Airlift. Reconditioning of 25 C-54s per month of aircraft that were battered and choked with coal and flower dust became the responsibility of Texas Engineering and Manufacturing Company (TEMCO). The reconditioning included extra equipment for blind flying, items for fire prevention, short-cord deicer boots, winterizing, seal changes in all hydraulics, fuel changes, oil and hydraulic hoses, and rework on landing gears.

What is an airport? An airport is an assemblage of all the components that provided success to the airlift of 1948



A new look at the National Transportation System will show many roles General Aviation Airports play as a National Asset. A 2012 report stated: "tens of thousands of general aviation aircraft, including corporate jets, medical evacuation helicopters, and airplanes owned by individuals for business and personal use are flown in the United States. Three out of four takeoffs and landings at U.S. airports are conducted by general aviation aircraft, and most of these flights occur at general aviation airports".

2,952 general aviation airports form a network to make an important economic contribution to society. Many functions cannot be economically supported at primary commercial airports such as forest fire service or other functions too dangerous to be performed at commercial airports.

General Aviation Serving Public Interest

Many general aviation airports in the U.S. started as simple landing strips and some ultimately developed into a large hub for aviation activity. Other airports, heliports and seaplane bases were established and continue to operate for accessing remote areas and some large military airfields such as Majors Field at Greenville, Texas were converted to general aviation use.

General aviation airports provide connections to the larger commercial aviation system. Having a well-developed system throughout the country supports commerce and supports emergency diversions when necessary such as medical emergencies, weather related conditions or mechanical problems. Some serve as the base for local, state, or national programs of law enforcement as well as disaster relief and search and rescue. In some areas general aviation airports provide the only means of transportation. General aviation airports assist communities and their residents in meeting the needs that would otherwise be too costly or impossible to provide during a time of need.