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Air National Guard participation in the U.S. Air Force Strategic Airlift Mission to the War in Southeast Asia: 1965–1971



A 151st MAG, Utah ANG C-97G parked at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, South Vietnam, September, 1967. (All photos, except where otherwise noted, are courtesy of the author.)

David P. Anderson

Most research and published accounts of Air National Guard participation in the Vietnam War focus on the F-100 fighter operations in South Vietnam in 1968, and the EC-121 Commando Buzz airborne psychological operations out of Thailand in 1970. Individual Air National Guard airlift units would be highlighted albeit a small mention of their participation in the strategic airlift efforts to Southeast Asia. There has never been a single all-inclusive source ever written about them. This is the first dedicated work to focus strictly on the Air National Guard airlift unit's participation in the US Air Force's Strategic Airlift support to the war in Southeast Asia.

The Vietnam War was the last war the United States Air Force operated heavy piston driven transport aircraft, and by the end of it, airlift operations was performed almost entirely by jet aircraft. Large jet military aircraft like the Lockheed C-141 Starlifter were introduced during the Vietnam War but not until July 1967 would a sufficient number of C-141 aircraft become available for the Air Force to satisfy all of its global airlift requirements including the Vietnam/Southeast Asia routes. Likewise, the Lockheed C-5 Galaxy did not make its maiden flight until 30 June 1968.¹

Between December 1965 and June 1967, the Air Force faced a massive airlift backlog in Vietnam due to the escalating tension in South Vietnam and an increase in airlift demand around the world. A heavy airlift commitment was laid upon the U.S. Air Force Military Air Transport Service. The vast distances involved for logistical support around the world put a great strain on Military Air Transport Service's active duty resources. The Air Force relied heavily on chartered commercial jet aircraft of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet to deliver millions of military personnel into and out of the combat zone, as well as to the other installations in and around the Pacific, and called on the additional airlift capacity provided by the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. A lot of chartered aircraft were CRAF-designated, but the CRAF itself was never formerly activated for the same reasons the Air Reserve Component was never fully mobilized. The Johnson Administration didn't think it was politically viable.²

The Air National Guard's participation in the Vietnam War was direct but certainly limited. Its most consistent involvement was through the airlift units supporting the Air Force Strategic airlift operation to Southeast Asia. They delivered cargo and personnel using piston-driven aircraft like the Lockheed C-121 Constellation, the Boeing C-97 Stratocruiser, and the Douglas C-124 Globemaster. Prior to July 1967, Air National Guard airlift units flew either the C-121 or the C-97. All 25 Air National Guard airlift units participated in helping the Air Force meet its Vietnam airlift requirements with crews flying the missions and maintenance crews servicing the aircraft in a non-mobilized or volunteer status. Conversely, the Air National Guard fighter units which deployed to Vietnam in 1968 were mobilized for roughly 18 months of combat. Air National Guard airlift units flew missions until 1973 when US combat troops withdrew from Vietnam.

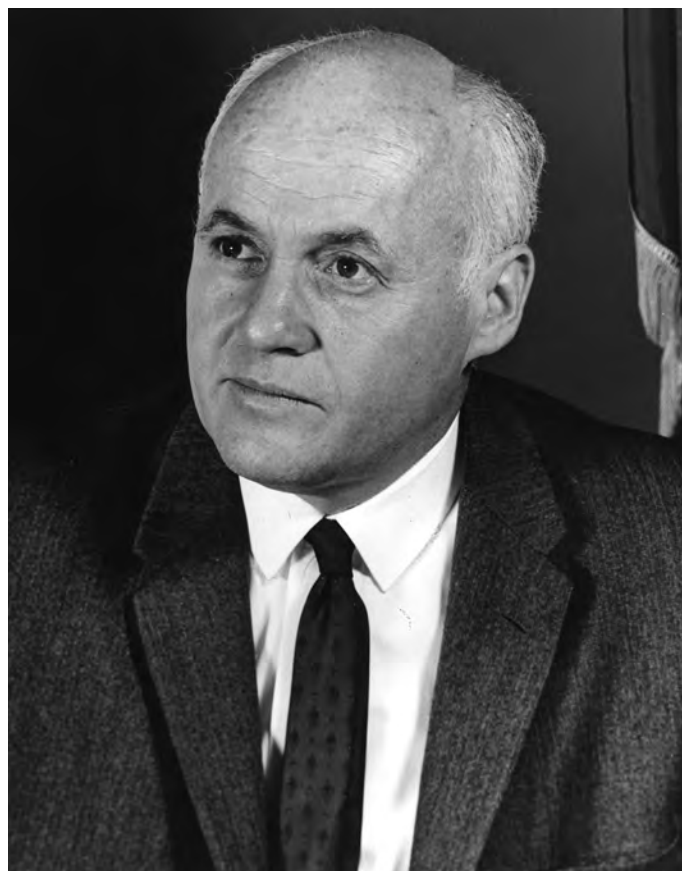
ANG units available to support USAF airlift requirements to Vietnam⁸

106 ATWG (H)	106 ATGP (H)	102 ATS	NY ANG	C-97
	105 ATGP (H)	137 ATS	NY ANG	C-97
	109 ATGP (H)	130 ATS	NY ANG	C-97
116 ATWG (H)	116 ATGP (H)	128 ATS	GA ANG	C-97
	145 ATGP (H)	156 ATS	NC ANG	C-121
	165 ATGP (H)	158 ATS	GA ANG	C-97
	166 ATGP (H)	142 ATS	DE ANG	C-97
133 ATWG (H)	133 ATGP (H)	109 ATS	MN ANG	C-97
	157 ATGP (H)	133 ATS	NH ANG	C-97
	170 ATGP (H)	150 ATS	NJ ANG	C-121
171 ATWG (H)	171 ATGP (H)	147 ATS	PA ANG	C-121
	168 ATGP (H)	168 ATS	PA ANG	C-121
	167 ATGP (H)	167 ATS	WV ANG	C-121
	111 ATGP (H)	103 ATS	PA ANG	C-97
118 ATWG (H)	118 ATGP (H)	105 ATS	TN ANG	C-97
	164 ATGP (H)	155 ATS	TN ANG	C-97
	172 ATGP (H)	183 ATS	TN ANG	C-121
137 ATWG (H)	137 ATGP (H)	185 ATS	OK ANG	C-97
	138 ATGP (H)	125 ATS	OK ANG	C-97
	139 ATGP (H)	180 ATS	MO ANG	C-97
	153 ATGP (H)	187 ATS	WY ANG	C-121
146 ATWG (H)	146 ATGP (H)	115 ATS	CA ANG	C-97
	195 ATGP (H)	195 ATS	CA ANG	C-97
	151 ATGP (H)	191 ATS	UT ANG	C-97
	161 ATGP (H)	197 ATS	AZ ANG	C-97

The Air National Guard began flying airlift missions to Vietnam in June 1962, when a C-97 crew from the Minnesota Air National Guard's 109th Air Transport Squadron (ATS)—already on Federal active duty in response to the Berlin Crisis of 1961—flew communications equipment from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, to Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam. For the 109 ATS, it was an 18,000 mile and 85 hour round trip mission.³

At the time when the 109th arrived in Nha Trang, the US Air Force provided two types of airlift, Strategic and Tactical. Secretary of the Air Force Eugene M. Zuckert considered Strategic airlift as the intercontinental deployment by air of combat troops to and from theaters of operation and the maintenance of an unbroken strategic logistics airlift pipeline. This describes pretty well what strategic airlift meant in regards to supporting US combat operations in

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Secretary of the Air Force Eugene M. Zuckert. Zuckert served as Air Force secretary from January 23, 1961 to September 30, 1965.

Southeast Asia. Tactical airlift, on the other hand involved airlift of supplies, equipment, and personnel within the combat area of operations. This mission was executed primarily by the turbine-propeller powered C-130A Hercules and the C-123 Provider. Air National Guard airlift units participated only in the strategic airlift mission to Vietnam. Although by 1970 Air National Guard airlift units began converting to the C-130 aircraft and the Tactical airlift mission, no Air National Guard airlift units participated in the tactical airlift mission in Vietnam.⁴

On May 6-7, 1965, the Air Reserve Forces Policy Council, comprised of staff personnel from the National Guard Bureau (Air National Guard), the Air Force Reserves, and Headquarters Military Air Transport Service (MATS), met at the Military Air Transport Service Headquarters at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, to discuss using Air Reserve Component airlift units to help MATS fulfill its global airlift requirements. General Howell M. Estes Jr., Commander of the Military Air Transport Service directed the Air Reserve Force Policy Council would have a voice in MATS plans, programs and policy involving the MATS Reserve Forces.⁵

On July 1, 1965, the National Guard Bureau, the Air Force Reserves, and MATS prepared a plan called "FAST FLY," that provided for an immediate sustained increase of airlift capability that employed all available military airlift resources. This plan called for an increased aircraft utilization to improve worldwide airlift obligations and to



156th ATS, NC ANG C-121C aircraft at home station at Charlotte IAP.

meet the expanding airlift requirements in Southeast Asia. On October 1, 1965, the FAST FLY operation plan went into effect. Air National Guard airlift units were already flying overseas missions around the world but in very small numbers. FAST FLY resulted in Air National Guard units flying more overwater missions, hauling more cargo and transporting more passengers than ever before in recorded Air National Guard history.⁶

In 1965, the Air National Guard included seven air transport wings and 25 heavy airlift squadrons that were available to support Air Force global airlift requirements including to Southeast Asia. All the squadrons participated in world-wide Air Force airlift missions however only 18 squadrons actually flew missions to Vietnam. This equated to 72 percent of the Air National Guard airlift force.⁷

ANG airlift units that flew missions to Southeast Asia

109 ATS, MN ANG, Minneapolis, C-97
115 ATS, CA ANG, Van Nuys, C-97

125 ATS, OK ANG, Tulsa, C-97, C-124
128 ATS, GA ANG, Dobbins AFB, C-97, C-124
133 ATS, NH ANG, Pease AFB, C-97
139 ATS, NY ANG, Schenectady, C-97
140 ATS, PA ANG, Olmstead AFB, C-121⁹
142 ATS, DE ANG, New Castle, C-97
147 ATS, PA ANG, Greater Pittsburg, C-121¹⁰
150 ATS, NJ ANG, McGuire, C-121
156 ATS, NC ANG, Charlotte, C-121, C-124
158 ATS, GA ANG, Savannah, C-97, C-124
167 ATS, WV ANG, Martinsburg, C-121
183 ATS, MS ANG, Jackson, C-121, C-124
187 ATS, WY ANG, Cheyenne, C-121
191 ATS, UT ANG, Salt Lake City, C-97, C-124
195 ATS, CA ANG, Van Nuys, C-97
197 ATS, AZ ANG, Phoenix, C-97

Operation Christmas Star

The first time large numbers of Air National Guard airlift units participated in a wartime operation was *Op-*



First load of candy and cookies for US troops in Vietnam received special handling by the 147th Air Transport Squadron, Pennsylvania ANG. Carrying "Operation Christmas star" packages aboard a C-121 aircraft are Capt. Merle Schneekloth (left), navigator and Maj. John Dranko, pilot. The 147th ATS flew three of 75 ANG "Christmas Star" missions to Vietnam.

Operation Christmas Star, the delivery of Christmas presents for US troops deployed to Vietnam. It ran from November 18, 1965 to December 15, 1965. Air National Guard airlift aircraft delivered gifts to Tan Son Nhut Airport outside of Saigon, South Vietnam. These missions marked the first time Air National Guard personnel participated in a federal mission and in a combat zone without the use of mobilization authority. The operation tested the Air National Guard's ability to handle a significant increase of overseas flights in addition to its already heavy overseas airlift schedule.¹¹

Once aircraft landed and parked on the crowded Tan San Nhut ramp, the aircraft and crew remained on the ground just long enough to off-load the cargo and on-load back-logged cargo destined for the United States. For the first time in Air National Guard history, members operated in a non-mobilized Volunteer status while drawing combat pay for hazardous duty. 76 Air National Guard airlift aircrews operating 19 C-121s and 59 C-97s made the 96-hour round trip to South Vietnam from the United States to deliver over 400 tons of Christmas gifts, mail, and other treats to American servicemen during Operation Christmas Star.¹²

One such unit that participated in Operation Christmas Star was the 147th Air Transport Squadron, Pennsylvania ANG, flying the C-121C Constellation. Unit crews flew 90 to 100 hours to Vietnam and back and up to 10 days away from their civilian employment. The 147th flew mis-

sions to Vietnam for about a year before its mission changed to aeromedical evacuation. Never again would the unit visit Vietnam.¹³

Georgia ANG C-97 crews assigned to the 128th Air Transport Squadron, 116th Air Transport Group and the 158th Air Transport Squadron, 165th Air Transport Group also flew Operation Christmas Star missions. These units averaged 95 hours in the 11 days to Vietnam and back. On November 22, 1965, six C-97 aircraft, three from each unit flew to Vietnam, carrying a total of 48,786 pounds of Christmas gifts and mail to South Vietnam, and hauled 97,086 pounds of Air Force cargo to and from the war zone, for a total of 145,872 pounds, an average of 24,312 pounds per aircraft.¹⁴

Operation Christmas Star was the most prominent mission performed by Air National Guard airlift units in its history. They flew 76 missions and airlifted over 409 tons of Christmas packages, gifts and mail to US military forces in Vietnam. The operation involved 59 C-97 and 19 C-121 aircraft. The operation was a success for the Air National Guard. It proved Air National Guard personnel were able to perform the high demanding missions without a loss of aircraft, personnel, or cargo. The outstanding performance of Air National Guard airlift units during Operation Christmas Star was demonstrated by their ability to retain its normal overseas airlift missions of 135 to 145 flights per month. Operation Christmas Star also demonstrated that the Air National Guard could support an Air Force mission without the use of mobilization authority to accomplish the mission. Operation Christmas Star became a model for many follow-on Air Force missions to Vietnam and elsewhere around the world.¹⁵

Airlift surge to Vietnam

From January 1966 to June 1967, the Air Force faced a massive airlift demand to Vietnam. To meet this demand and to abide US policy of not mobilizing Reserve forces for the Vietnam War (prior to 1968), the Air Force authorized 7,500 temporary active duty man-days, called Military Personnel Appropriation (MPA) days for the Air National Guard to have its airlift aircrew personnel fly 75 round-trip missions per month in delivering critical supplies and parts, and personnel to Southeast Asia. These flights were in addition to the Air Guard's normally scheduled overseas flight commitments. Excluding the Vietnam airlift missions, the Air National Guard flew about 80 per cent of its total time to supporting these missions.¹⁶

However, the continuing requirement for ANG airlift support for Southeast Asia curtailed commitments for the movement of Army National Guard units for their annual exercises; then again, the Regular Army's requirements for airlift support in Southeast Asia usually resulted in the cancellation of the majority of the Guard exercises. Despite the side-effect to the Army, Air Force Chief of Staff General John P. McConnell summed up the posture of the Air National Guard in saying, "Our experience in Vietnam so far has shown that our air reserve forces best serve by remaining in an inactive status but performing genuine 'active



185th ATS C-97G 52-0874 "City of Norman" adorned with five Southeast Asia mission markings.

duty' as part of their training program."¹⁷

The steady state performance of Air National Guard airlift missions to Southeast Asia demonstrated the meaning to the term "active reserves." Encountering enemy ground fire on almost each landing and takeoff in Vietnam, many Air National Guard airlift aircrew members experienced their first taste of combat.¹⁸

To prepare for the upcoming surge of airlift missions to Vietnam, the US Air Force on January 8, 1966 changed the name of Military Air Transport Service (MATS) to Military Airlift Command (MAC) as a reflection of the command's function changing from support to an active combat role. The Military Airlift Command became the single Air Force Agency to control all airlift forces engaged in deployment and redeployment operations. This organizational change also forced the redesignation of the transport squadrons from Air Transport Squadron (ATS) to Military Airlift Squadron (MAS). Likewise Air Transport Wings (ATW) and Air Transport Groups (ATG) were redesignated Military Airlift Wings (MAW) or Military Airlift Groups (MAG). Furthermore, Military Airlift Command reorganized its strategic airlift units from EASTAF and WESTAF to 21st Air Force (EASTAF) and 22d Air Force (WESTAF). All of the ANG units assigned to EASTAF and WESTAF were automatically transferred to their respected numbered air force.¹⁹

The command and control structure of the Air National Guard above Wing/Group level was not existent for the type of operation the Air National Guard was supporting. Major General I.G. Brown, Director of the Air National Guard, directed the establishment of an Executive Agency as the Air National Guard Airlift Command Post at the McGhee-Tyson Air National Guard Base, Tennessee, to provide the proper coordination and control of world-wide Air National Guard airlift missions. The successful execution of the ANG Airlift Command Post led to the creation of the Air National Guard Support Center in 1976.

Examples of ANG airlift units participating in the Vietnam Airlift effort included the 146th Military Airlift Wing, California Air National Guard comprised of the 146th Military Airlift Group and the 195th Military Airlift Group at Van Nuys Airport. From 1965 through 1969, these units participated in the strategic airlift mission to Southeast Asia with the Boeing C-97 Stratofreighter. From 1966 through 1971, the 191st MAS/151st MAG, Utah ANG, Salt Lake City Airport, flew missions to Vietnam, initially with the C-97Gs and, after conversion in early 1969, C-124Cs. They flew a total of 96 missions and hauled 1,340 tons of cargo in direct support to the War in Southeast Asia.²⁰

Between the start of Operation Christmas Star in November 1965 and the mid-point of the airlift surge operation to Vietnam in June 1966, Air National Guard airlift



A New York ANG 139th MAS C-97G 53-0201 is unloaded at Tan Son Nhut AB, March 1966.

units flew 687 missions and airlifted over 20,000 tons of cargo and 3,400 passengers into Vietnam. This far exceeded what normally was expected from a part-time force. As a matter of fact, a Tennessee Air National Guard airlift unit flew 1,701 hours in May 1966, establishing an all-time high aircraft utilization rate for a C-97 of 6.9 hours a day. An Air National Guard airlift crew flying missions to and from Vietnam put in as much flying time in one mission as a commercial pilot flew in one month. By the end of 1966, the Air National Guard flew over 800 missions in direct support of military operations in Vietnam. Air National Guard airlift units flew more hours to Vietnam than they did when mobilized during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. Many flights to Vietnam carried cargo and personnel but mostly wounded troops coming out of Vietnam.²¹

During the Air National Guard's Vietnam airlift surge between January 1966 and July 1967, 72 percent of its airlift units flew missions to Vietnam. 54 percent of all Air National overseas airlift missions were in direct support of Vietnam airlift requirements, however, the total Air National Guard airlift contribution to Vietnam airlift surge operation represented about eight percent of all military traffic into Vietnam. The 18 Air National Guard and 16 Air Force Reserve airlift units that flew these missions moved 80,552,705 ton miles. Air National Guard airlift units flew 75 out of the 200 monthly scheduled missions to Vietnam.

This averaged three to four missions per month per unit but there were times when some units flew double that amount in a single month. For instance, in May 1967, the 109th Military Airlift Squadron, Minnesota Air National Guard flew eight missions to Vietnam. This greatly helped Military Airlift Command to free active duty airlift squadrons to accomplish higher priority and longer distance missions elsewhere in the world.²²

No successful air operation can be accomplished without outstanding maintenance support to keep the airplanes serviceable. Air National Guard maintenance units put forth a herculean effort to generate maximum aircraft availability and flying hours. Maintenance support for Air National Guard airlift aircraft at active duty Air Force bases was poor. Since Air National Guard aircraft were considered "fall-out" or out of date aircraft by the Air Force, the active duty did not have the specialized ground support equipment, special tools, or spare parts for aircraft like the C-97 and C-121. Furthermore, the active duty Air Force no longer had personnel with the knowledge and experience to service such aircraft. Thus, Air National Guard aircraft had to bring along maintenance qualified personnel as crew members and spare parts on the missions.²³

From July 10 to September 10, 1966, the DOD initiated Operation COMBAT LEAVE to provide transportation assistance for servicemen on combat leave after



The Boeing C-97G Stratocruiser. The workhorse of the Air National Guard's airlift support to Southeast Asia. This 146 MAG C-97 is prepared by unit maintenance crews for the next mission to Vietnam in 1967.

returning from SEA or prior to leaving for SEA who became stranded due to a strike by employees of five commercial airlines that grounded 735 commercial aircraft. President Lyndon B. Johnson had ordered the Military Airlift Command via the DOD to undertake the mission. It was executed primarily by Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve aircraft and aircrews. Operation COMBAT LEAVE moved 122,863 passengers. With 174 aircraft, the Air National Guard airlifted 25,238 passengers, including 12,926 troops on leave from Southeast Asia and logged about 4,000 flying hours.²⁴

In the first nine months of calendar year 1966, 62 percent of operationally ready crews made flights to Southeast Asia. A typical round trip mission to Vietnam was 10 days and 70 hours of flying. On the way to Vietnam, aircraft stopped at Travis AFB, California to on-load cargo and fuel and rest stops at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, Wake Island or Kwajalein, Guam, Clark AB, Philippines, or Mactan AB, Philippines, then land at either Tan Son Nhut Air Base or Da Nang Air Base in South Vietnam and on-load of return cargo for the homeward bound run. A trip required 10 full days on active duty orders, 61 percent of the missions flown to SEA were flown by part-time Drill Status Guardsmen. This illustrates the dedication of the non-fulltime Guardsmen and the support given by many civilian employers.²⁵

On April 1, 1967, the first two ANG C-124 missions to Vietnam took place by crews from the 128th Military Airlift Squadron (MAS), Georgia Air National Guard and the 156th MAS, North Carolina Air National Guard. In the C-124, both Georgia ANG units (128th MAS & 158 MAS) flew an average of six missions to Vietnam a month during the height of American involvement in Vietnam. The missions took place less than four months after the first C-124 delivery to an ANG unit (128th MAS at Dobbins AFB). On 23 June 1967, a C-124 from Mississippi's 183d Military Airlift Squadron landed at Da Nang Air Base, South Vietnam, to mark the Air National Guard's 1,000th airlift mission to Vietnam. Between July 1966 and February 1967, Air National Guard C-124 crews airlifted nearly 2,500 tons of cargo to Southeast Asia.²⁶

In July 1967, the backlog of cargo to the region had been greatly reduced and the Air Force believed it had enough support from commercial aircraft to handle the airlift requirements to Vietnam without further augmentation from the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve. From January 1966 to July 1967, the Air National Guard had flown 1,340 round-trip missions to Vietnam. At the end of 1967, Military Airlift Command had 271 C-141s on-hand from a total production order of 284 aircraft. In advance of the arrival of MAC's last C-141A in February



A C-124 assigned to the 183d Air Transport Squadron, Mississippi ANG, sits adorned with markings to commemorate the ANG's 1000th mission to Vietnam.

1968, 160 C-124s were transferred to the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserves, generally replacing the now antique C-97Gs as well as other aircraft.²⁷

During the years of airlift surge operations to Vietnam, the Air Force had implemented an awards program to recognize the accomplishments of Air National Guard airlift units contributing to the airlift mission. It was called the "Velvet Tiger" award and was given to Air National Guard airlift units who completed five of the fastest off-load/on-loads at Da Nang Air Base without an accident. Several Air National Guard units earned the award. The 109th MAS of the Minnesota Air National Guard was one such unit to earn the prestigious award.²⁸

Air National Guard aircrew members who flew missions to Vietnam also earned the Vietnam Service Medal, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and were automatically eligible for the National Defense Service Medal. In addition, President Johnson signed PL 89-739 that increased tax exemption amount for Air National Guard personnel operating in the Vietnam combat tax zone. Exemption for Air National Guard officers went from \$200 month to \$500 when flying airlift missions into Viet Nam. The exemption applied against only their pay for the tour, and not against their total monthly wage. Enlisted personnel's pay was totally exempt for each combat tour of duty.²⁹

The valuable assistance lent to the regular Air Force command received personal plaudits from MATS Commander General Howell M. Estes, Jr. ANG airlift units amassed 117,520 flying hours transported 90,732 passengers and 18,427.5 tons of cargo. Included in this effort were

60,840 flying hours, 11,388 cargo-tons and 1,469 overwater flights made in direct support of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS).³⁰

Air Force Secretary Zuckert seconded the Air Force's appreciation for the Air National Guard, stating that even with the delivery of the C-5A, "there will never be enough airlift. We [USAF] need the ANG and its capability to provide augmentation to the MAC effort." Chief of Staff of the Air Force General John P. McConnell said at the 1967 Air Force Association convention, "We have learned to make increasingly effective use of our airlift potential, with extensive participation by the...Air National Guard...During the last six months of calendar year 1966, airlift between the continental United States and Southeast Asia moved almost half a million passengers and nearly 200,000 tons of cargo..."³¹

Despite the end of the airlift surge to Vietnam in July 1967, Air National Guard crews continued to serve on temporary active duty tours. At this point, Air National Guard missions to Vietnam were funded directly by the National Guard Bureau. In conjunction to missions flown to Vietnam, Air National Guard airlift crews continued its commitment to flying missions to Europe, South America and the Caribbean, and other parts of Asia.³²

In response to an urgent Defense Department request to move additional U.S. troops overseas in response to the *Pueblo* crisis and the communists' surprise Tet offensive in South Vietnam in January 1968, several Air National Guard fighter and reconnaissance squadrons, and one aeromedical airlift units were mobilized and deployed to bases in the United States and to bases in Southeast Asia and Japan. The single airlift unit mobilized was the 147th Aeromedical Airlift Squadron out of Greater Pittsburg Airport. Equipped with the C-121C, the unit flew airlift missions wherever the Air Force needed them to go from May 13 to December 12, 1968.

In conjunction with the Air National Guard mobilization, the bulk of its airlift units volunteered to fly 120 additional missions to Vietnam with its C-97, C-121, and C-124 aircraft. The Air Force Reserve volunteered an additional 96 missions to Vietnam with its C-124 and C-119 aircraft. In addition, the Air National Guard saw an increase in its monthly transoceanic airlift missions of 115 round trips (69 in the Pacific and 46 in the Atlantic).³³

By the 1970s, Air National Guard airlift missions to Vietnam became as routine as the missions to Europe. However, the destinations to Vietnam expanded beyond Tan Son Nhut and Da Nang. Air National Guard C-124 crews delivered men and material to Cam Rahn Bay, Phu Cat, and Phu Bai. Still, by late 1972, the Lockheed C-141 Starlifter handled the prominent numbers of missions to Vietnam air bases. As the number of C-141 missions to Vietnam increased, the number of Air National Guard C-124 missions decreased.³⁴

The most important contribution the Air National Guard made to the Air Force's Strategic Airlift operation to Southeast Asia was that the personnel and units participated in the missions in non-mobilized status. They were on temporary active duty orders called Military Personnel



Pennsylvania ANG C-121C 54-0183. The two squadrons of the Pennsylvania ANG, the 140th ATS/MAS, Olmstead AFB, Harrisburg, and the 147th ATS/MAS, Greater Pittsburg Airport, flew the Constellation from 1962 – 1972. (Original photo not available, best obtainable copy used here.)

Appropriation (MPA) days while they continued to hold down a civilian job but flew the missions on a voluntary part-time basis. This may be the first time in Air National Guard history when its personnel and units participated in an overseas combat operation that did not involve mobilization.³⁵

Despite active duty Air Force airlift units converting to jet transport aircraft throughout the late '60s and '70s, the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserves operated piston driven airlift aircraft long after the end of the Vietnam War (April 1975). Not until 1985, would the Air National Guard finally enter the age of jet transport aircraft with the C-5 and C-141.³⁶

The US Air Force learned that it could use its Air Re-

serve Component forces to support heightened operational tempo without the use of mobilization. In 1967 as Air National Guard crews reduced its involvement with the Southeast Asia airlift mission, air refueling crews and aircraft began a 10-year commitment of send KC-97 aircraft, crews, and maintenance personnel to Rhein-Mein Air Base, Germany, to provide air refueling capability for Air Force fighter units in Europe. This mission, dubbed *Operation Creek Party* was conducted and managed by the Air National Guard, and without mobilization. Air National Guard crews and support personnel deployed in Volunteer status on two-week rotations. The Vietnam Airlift mission proved the Air National could sustain operations on a volunteer basis. ■

NOTES

1. HQ MAC/HO, Major Lylburn S. Cagle Jr., USAFR, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up," no date.; The 146th Airlift Wing 50th Anniversary (1924-1974) Commemoration History book; Francillon, ANG of the US, pp 190, 192.

2. HQ MAC/HO, Major Lylburn S. Cagle Jr., USAFR, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up," no date; Crackel, "A History of the Civil Air

Reserve Fleet (AFH&MP, 1998); RAND Study N-2838-AF.

3. Commemoration History, 133d Airlift Wing, 50th Anniversary; News Item (U), "Dover to Vietnam," *The Air Reservist*, December 1962, 13; Francillon, *United States Air National Guard*, p. 149.

4. HQ MAC/HO, Major Lylburn S. Cagle Jr., USAFR, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up," no date; Corona Harvest-Air National

Guard support of US Air Force operations in Southeast Asia, 1954 -31 March 1968: Volume IV, A National Guard Bureau Activity input to Project Corona Harvest on Military Airlift support of USAF operations in Southeast Asia., pp 1-49; Biography, Eugene M. Zuckert, US Air Force, 5 June 2000.

5. General Estes was commander of Military Air Transport Service later known as the Military Airlift Command from July 1964 to August 1969. He was responsible for resupplying US forces in Southeast Asia. In addition, General Estes was responsible for providing global military airlift that included aeromedical evacuation operations, air rescue, air weather, photography and mapping services throughout the world; HQ MAC/HO, Major Lylburn S. Cagle Jr., USAFR, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up," no date; "Air Force general Estes Jr. passes away," *Air Force News*, 6 July 2007.

6. Annual Report, Chief, National Guard Bureau, Fiscal Year 1965, p 48; HQ MAC/HO, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up.,"; News Item (U), "Dover to Vietnam," *The Air Reservist*, December 1962, .13; Francillon, *United States Air National Guard*, p. 149.

7. HQ MAC/HO, Major Lylburn S. Cagle Jr., USAFR, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up," no date; Corona Harvest Report.

8. ATWG: Air Transport Wing; ATGP: Air Transport Group; ATS: Air Transport Squadron. MATS Manual 23-1, 1 Feb 65; HQ MAC/HO, "A Chronology of Strategic Airlift support to Southeast Asia, 1964-1969: The Build-up,"

9. Inactivated in Sep 1967.

10. Converted to aeromedical evacuation mission in Feb 1968

11. Commemoration History, 133d Airlift Wing, 50th Anniversary; 171st Air Refueling Wing, 50 year Commemorative History, p 40; Annual Report, Chief, National Guard Bureau, Fiscal Year 1966, p 19.

12. Gross, *Adapting the Force*, p. 27.

13. 171st Air Refueling Wing, 35 year Commemorative History, pp 110-111;

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