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P-501D

MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE COMMAND

AIR TRANSPORT SQUADRON SIX

VR-6/A7-1/A9-3

513th TROOP CARRIER GROUP (SP)

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From: Commanding Officer, Air Transport Squadron SIX.
To : The Chief of Naval Operations (Op-50).

Subject: Historical Report of Air Transport Squadron Six for period 30 October 1948 to 31 January 1949.

Reference: (a) Aviation C/L 22-46.

Enclosure: (A) History of Air Transport Squadron Six for period 30 October 1948 to 31 January 1949.

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (A) is transmitted herewith.


H. P. BADGER.

cc:

ComMATS

H-I-S-T-O-R-Y

for the

MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SQUADRON SIX

CHAIN OF COMMAND

USAFE

CALIF

7497th AIRLIFT TASK FORCE WING

513th TROOP CARRIER GROUP

MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SQUADRON SIX

from

30 October 1948 to 31 January 1949.

by

Lieutenant Maurice B. Jackson, U.S. Navy, Public Information Officer

**MILITARY AIR TRANSPORT SQUADRON SIX
APO 57 U.S. NAVY**

31 January 1949.


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FOREWORD

The primary purpose of this history is to provide a factual account of the problems met by Military Air Transport Squadron Six, their solutions, and the lessons learned from them. Secondly, it is a source of documented material for historical writers and a prime factor for the analysis of the varied tribulations of a military occupation.

Sources have been verified wherever possible and stated in text of footnotes. Generally, these sources have been official orders, Strength Reports, and personal interviews.


Maurice B. Jackson,
Lieutenant, U. S. Navy,
Squadron Public Information Officer.

Headquarters Military Air Transport Squadron Six,
31 January 1949.

I. ORGANIZATION

A. PAST DATA

1. Naval Air Transport Squadron Six was the original designation of unit. It was redesignated Military Air Transport Squadron Six on 1 July 1948 when the Unit reported to the Pacific Division of the Military Air Transport Service for duty.
2. Military Air Transport Squadron Six was on duty at Naval Air Station, Agana, Guam when it reported to MATS.
3. The original personnel in Military Air Transport Squadron Six came from Naval Air Transport Squadrons Six and Seven.
4. Resume of movements and accomplishments from date of activation to present time.

30 October 1948 - Squadron VR-6 received orders at Naval Air Station, Agana, Guam to move to Rhein/Main Air Force Base for 180 days Temporary Additional Duty with Combined Airlift Task Force.

1 November 1948 - The Squadron's first contingent of four aircraft departed Guam for Rhein/Main.

2 November 1948 - The Squadron's second contingent of four aircraft departed Guam for Rhein/Main.

3 & 4 November 1948 - Aircraft assembled at Moffett Field for winterizing.

8 to 11 November 1948 - Squadron's R5D aircraft departed Westover Field, Massachusetts for Rhein/Main via Argentinia, Lagens, and Paris.

10 November 1948 - The first VR-6 R5D piloted by Lieutenant Commander David H. Minton arrived at Rhein/Main.

12 November 1948 - The first VR-6 R5D, piloted by plane commanders Lieutenant Joseph L. Norris and Lieutenant (jg) Wayne L. Brooks, made a round trip to Tempelhof Airport, Berlin.

15 November 1948 - Plane number 56545, piloted by Lieutenant Commander Stephen Lukacik, USN, over-ran the runway at Tempelhof, crashed, and burned.

22 November 1948 - The last of twelve VR-6 R5Ds arrived at Rhein/Main. Piloted by Lieutenant V.L. Brown, the aircraft had been delayed at Lyon, France with an engine change. VR-6 was assigned to the 1422nd Air Transport Group. About the 1st of December this Group was redesignated the 513th Troop Carrier Group.

11 December 1948 - VR-6 lost its second plane when Buno 56507 flew into the ground approximately 15 miles from Frankfurt upon returning from Berlin. Pilots Lieutenant Joseph L. Norris and Ensign George H. Blackwood were seriously injured and plane captain Harry R. Crites, ADS, was killed.

19 December 1948 - Lieutenant Ormond C. Fowler, USN, through a mistake in loading, carried a load of 26,730 pounds to Berlin instead of his normal 21,000 pound load. Excessive power was required to effect takeoff at Rhein/Main, maintain position on the corridor, and landing at Tempelhof.

22 December 1948 - Squadrons VR-6 and VR-8 held a Christmas party for the Steinheim Orphanage near Frankfurt. Representatives from both squadrons delivered a truck of toys and food and were audience to a Christmas play presented by the 70 children in the orphanage.

24 December 1948 - The Squadron sent its last aircraft to Burtonwood, England for overhaul. Two-hundred-hour checks will be made at Rhein/Main hereafter.

3 January 1949 - Commander Charles J. Eastman, USN, former Squadron Executive Officer and C.O., reported for duty with Combined Air Lift Task Force staff at Weisbaden. Commander Eastman came to Germany from the staff of PacDiv MATS in Honolulu.

12 January 1949 - Commander Harry P. Badger, USN, relieved Commander Charles C. Howerton, USN, of command of Air Transport Squadron Six.

28 January 1949 - Four members of VR-6 were honored at ceremonies presided over by Rear Admiral John Wilkes, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Germany. Those honored were: Lieutenant Commander Robert G. Lowrie, distinguished flying cross; Lieutenant Commander Elmer F. Williamson, who received eight stars in lieu of his second through ninth air

medals; ADC Hewitt P. LeBlanc, who received the Air Medal, and ADC Sidney D. Pointer, who received a letter of commendation written by General Lucius D. Clay, for his rescue work in saving the life of Air Force Captain Armand I. Grenadier in the VR-6 crash at Tempelhof, 15 November.

B. PRESENT DATA

1. The full name of this organization is Military Air Transport Squadron Six.
2. Commander Harry P. Badger, USN, Commanding.
3. Staff:
 - a. Lieutenant Commander Lawrence H. Reagan, USN, Administrative Officer.
 - b. Lieutenant Commander James B. Cannon, Operations Officer.
 - c. Lieutenant Robert G. Wissman, USN, Personnel Officer.
 - d. Lieutenant Russell I. Haag, SC, USN, Supply Officer.
 - e. Lieutenant (jg) Richard D. Nauman, MC, USN, Medical Officer.
 - f. Lieutenant William H. Jones, USN, Engineering Officer.
4. This Unit is at present stationed at Rhein/Main Air Force Base, Frankfurt, Germany.
5. At the present time, this unit is served by APO 57, U.S. Army.
6. Statement of Mission:

The mission of Military Air Transport Squadron Six while on duty with Combined Air Lift Task Force is to establish and maintain the highest possible efficiency of personnel and equipment to allow a maximum lift of supplies to the blockaded city of Berlin, Germany.

II. STRENGTH REPORT 1

: JANUARY : 1949	Authorized					Actual				
	: EM	: OFF	: CIV	: OTHER	: TOTAL	: EM	: OFF	: CIV	: OTHER	: TOTAL
: Beginning	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
: of month	:	:	:	:	:	311	88	:	:	399
: End of	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:
: month	:	:	:	:	:	314	88	:	:	402
: Gains	:	:	:	:	:	3	0	:	:	3
: Losses	:	:	:	:	:	0	0	:	:	0

III LOSSES BY ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS DURING PERIOD

- A. Harry R. Crites, ADS, USN, was killed when plane No. 56502 crashed at approximately 0001 on 11 December 1948 near Konigstein, Germany. The Aircraft, piloted by Lieutenant J.L. Norris, USN, plane Commander and Ensign George H. Blackwood, USN, co-pilot, was making an instrument approach to Rhein/Main Airfield when it struck terrain extending above 1000 feet.

IV AWARDS AND DECORATIONS DURING PERIOD

- A. Lieutenant Commander Robert G. Lowrie, USN, Distinguished Flying Cross, 28 January 1949, awarded by Rear Admiral John Wilkes, USN, Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Germany.
- B. Lieutenant Commander Elmer F. Williamson, USN, eight stars in lieu of his second through ninth Air Medals, 28 January 1949, awarded by Admiral Wilkes.
- C. ADC Hewitt P. LeBlanc, USN, Air Medal, 28 January 1949, awarded by Admiral Wilkes.
- D. ADC Sidney D. Pointer, USN, personal letter of commendation from General Lucius D. Clay, Commanding Officer, European Command, 28 January 1949, presented by Admiral Wilkes.

V. NARRATIVE OF VR-6 HISTORY FROM 30 OCTOBER 1948 TO 31 JANUARY 1949

On the 30th of October 1948 the Commanding Officer of Military Air Transport Squadron Six, Commander Charles C. Howerton, USN, received orders from COMMATS, Washington, D.C. to move the Squadron's Aircraft and personnel necessary to operate and maintain them to Rhein/Main Air Force Base, Frankfurt, Germany for approximately 180 days of temporary additional duty with Combined Air Lift Task Force.

1. Squadron Strength Reports for 1 January to 31 January 1949.

These orders stated that the squadron was to effect its departure as soon as possible necessitating the recall of crews from Shanghai, Tokyo, and Manila.

The Squadron's first contingent of four aircraft departed Guam for Moffett Field, California via Kwajalein, Johnston, and Honolulu on 1 November 1948. Lieutenant Commander Wilmer M. Thomas piloted 56505, Lieutenant Ormond C. Fowler 56502, Lieutenant Murphy R. Cooper 56524, and Lieutenant Commander David H. Minton 50843.

The second group consisted of Lieutenant Commander Harold R. Thompson in 56547, Lieutenant Commander Edward N. Roberts in 56537, Lieutenant Commander Elmer F. Williamson in 90389, and Lieutenant William O. Kuencer in 56492.

In addition to acquiring four more aircraft at Moffett, the Squadron received seventeen officers TAD from Squadron VR-8. The magnificent efforts of the Fleet Logistic Support Wing at Moffett made possible the speedy and successful dispatch of the Squadron's aircraft after winterization and correction of discrepancies.

From Moffett the Squadron's planes proceeded individually to Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Florida via Kelly Field near San Antonio. At Jax the planes acquired some special electronics gear and crews received liberty and winter gear which they had been unable to obtain at Guam and Moffett.

From Jax the route to Rhein/Main took the Squadrons twelve aircraft and four hundred officers and men through Westover, Massachusetts Air Force Base, Argentia, Newfoundland, Lagens Field in the Azores and because of the bad weather prevailing at Rhein/Main, to a variety of spots in Europe.

VR-6 crews and planes were diverted to Marseilles, Vienna, Paris, Lyon, Munich, and Lyneham RAF Base in England before they all reached Rhein/Main on 22 November. The first VR-6 plane, piloted by Lieutenant Commander David H. Minton, arrived on 10 November.

Almost as soon as they arrived crews and aircraft were pressed into the Vittles Run to Berlin, and the bad weather that plagued Rhein/Main made VR-6 crews glad that they had been required to make every approach on GCA during their NATS duty.

The Squadron was assigned to the 1422nd Air Transport Group, but shortly after arrival this was redesignated the 513th Troop Carrier Group. VR-6 was placed at the extreme western end of the North side of the Rhein/Main strip. Perforated steel plating hard stands became the squadron's parking ramps, and Operations, Engineering, and Administration were housed in a quonset hut alongside the operations area. Supply was given a hut of its own nearby.

On the 15th of November plane No. 56545, piloted by Lieutenant Commander Stephen Lukacik, USN, overran the runway at Tempelhof, crashed, and burned. Captain Armand I. Grenadier, USAF, a check pilot on the run, was seriously burned and Lieutenant William O. Kueneer, acting as co-pilot, received a broken hand and burns. The efforts of plane captain ADC Sydney D. Pointer, USN, and Lieutenant Commander Lukacik in rescuing Captain Grenadier were greatly responsible for his survival. 1

1 December 1948 to 31 December 1948

In the early morning hours of 11 December VR-6 lost its second aircraft. Plane No. 56502 crashed 1 mile south of Konigstein near Frankfurt. Co-pilot Ensign George H. Blackwood was at the controls and plane commander Lieutenant Joseph L. Norris, USN, was flying as co-pilot.

The aircraft was returning from a trip to Berlin when it struck terrain above 1000' elevation, and slid approximately 1100' along a gradual upslope containing scattered apple trees. The trees bashed in the nose and ripped off portions of the wings and horizontal stabilizers. The plane broke in two just aft of the rear cargo compartment. Fire broke out in the right wing section.

Major injuries were suffered by Ensign Blackwood, Lieutenant Norris and passenger 1st Lieutenant Kenneth Sanger, USAF. ADC Harry R. Crites, plane captain, was killed instantly. Other passengers, 1st Lieutenant Frank J. Heffernan, USAF, and Dianna D. Day, Army Hostess, were uninjured. Lieutenant Heffernan's rescue efforts did considerable to relieve the pain and suffering of the injured survivors. 2

On the 19th of December, Lieutenant Ormond C. Fowler, USN, tried to relieve the food shortage in Berlin all by himself. When Fowler boarded his R5D for a hop to Berlin, he found that his cargo of flour had not been tied down. The reason, he discovered, was that the flight clerk had gone for fifty more bags of flour. Apparently he had found the load short. Fowler reported that the plane not only took excessive power for take-off and landing, but also to maintain position along the corridor.

Strongly suspecting an overload he noted the count of bags as they were unloaded at Tempelhof. The count revealed that instead of the normal 21,000 pound load he had delivered 297 bags of flour to the beleaguered city weighing a total of 26,750 pounds. He had taken nearly three tons more than his normal load to Berlin. 3

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1. USAF accident report dated 16 November 1948.
 2. USAF accident report dated 11 December 1948.
 3. Lieutenant Fowler's report dated 19 Dec. 1948.

On 22 December Squadrons VR-6 and VR-8 held a Christmas party for the 70 children in the Steinheim Orphanage near Frankfurt. Representatives from both squadrons delivered a truck load of toys and food and watched a Christmas play presented by the children in the Orphanage. After the play Lieutenant Donald Allison, USN, and ADC W. H. Stevens, USN, passed out toys to each of the children. Bedlam broke loose momentarily when the children received their toys, for to many of them it was their first such Christmas.

Lieutenant Vernon L. Brown, USN, Ensign Louis L. Noell, USNR, and ADAA Gene D. Arnold, USN, made a block to block round trip to Berlin in three hours and fifty-nine minutes on 26 December.

The last VR-6 planes to go to Burtonwood, England for overhaul were 56507 on 18 December, 56492 on the 20th, and 50855 on the 24th. Hereafter all 200 hour checks will be made at Rhein/Main and all VR-6 planes will be flown to Moffett Field for heavy maintenance.

1 January 1949 to 31 January 1949

Commander Charles J. Eastman, USN, who had been executive officer and C.O. of the Squadron on Guam, reported for duty with Combined Air Lift Task Force staff from the staff of PacDivMATS, on 3 January 1949.

On 4 January 1949 the Squadron sent its first plane to the states for heavy maintenance. The lucky crew consisting of Lieutenant Robert C. Haggerton, Ensign J. Richard Eaton, Ensign Howard A. Shaw, ALC Leslie J. Gall, AL2 H.J. Brackett, and ADS Louis Marconi went as far as Westover, Massachusetts Air Force Base to pick up our new plane.

Commander Harry P. Badger, USN, relieved Commander Charles C. Howerton, USN, of command of the Squadron on 12 January 1949. Commander Howerton had been with the squadron since 1 July 1948 when VR-6 and VR-7 were merged into one unit.

Commander Badger took over without formal ceremony due to the urgency of flight operations. He came to VR-6 from the staff of the Commander Battleship-Cruiser Force, Pacific Fleet where he was Commander Observation Wing. Previous to that he was with the Photographic Section of CNO and in the Bureau of Aeronautics. During the War he saw duty with Utility Squadron One, CincPac Staff, and the Photographic Reconnaissance and Interpretation Section of the Intelligence Center at Pearl Harbor.

On 28 January four members of VR-6 were honored at special

ceremonies presided over by Rear Admiral John Wilkes, Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Germany. The ceremonies were held in zero-zero weather in front of the Rhein/Main terminal building with special guests and members of Squadron VR-6 not on duty present. The special guests included Captain Noble W. Abrahams, Senior Naval Liaison Officer, EUCOM; Colonel Walter S. Lee, Commander Rhein/Main Air Force Base, Colonel Stanley T. Wray, Commander 7497th Air Lift Task Force Wing; Commander Harry P. Badger, C.O. VR-6, and Commander James O. Vosseller, C.O. VR-8.

The men honored included: Lieutenant Commander Robert G. Lowrie, USN, who received the Distinguished Flying Cross "for heroism and extraordinary achievement in aerial flight during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific War"; Lieutenant Commander Elmer F. Williamson, USN, who received eight stars in lieu of his second through ninth Air Medals, for completing 40 missions against the Japanese in the Pacific; and ADC Hewitt P. LeBlanc, USN, received the Air Medal "for meritorious achievement in aerial flight as an aircrewman of a patrol plane in Patrol Squadron No. 12 during the operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Pacific".

ADC Sydney D. Pointer, USN, received a special letter of commendation from General Lucius D. Clay for his rescue work in saving the life of Air Force Captain Armand I. Grenadier, a check pilot, following the crash of an airplane in Berlin on 15 November 1948. The commendation cited Pointer for "your alertness, presence of mind and prompt action, although you were seriously burned, injured and suffering from shock, and your disregard for your personal safety were instrumental in saving the life of Captain Grenadier. I commend your admirable display of courage, cooperation and teamwork in helping to rescue a shipmate under such hazardous and trying conditions", General Clay stated in his letter. Lieutenant Commander Stephen F. Lukacik, USN, who was transferred from VR-6 to VR-44 on 18 January, received a similar letter.



H. P. BADGER,
Commander, U.S. Navy,
Commanding Air Transport Squadron SIX.