YOU CALL
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—ANYTIME
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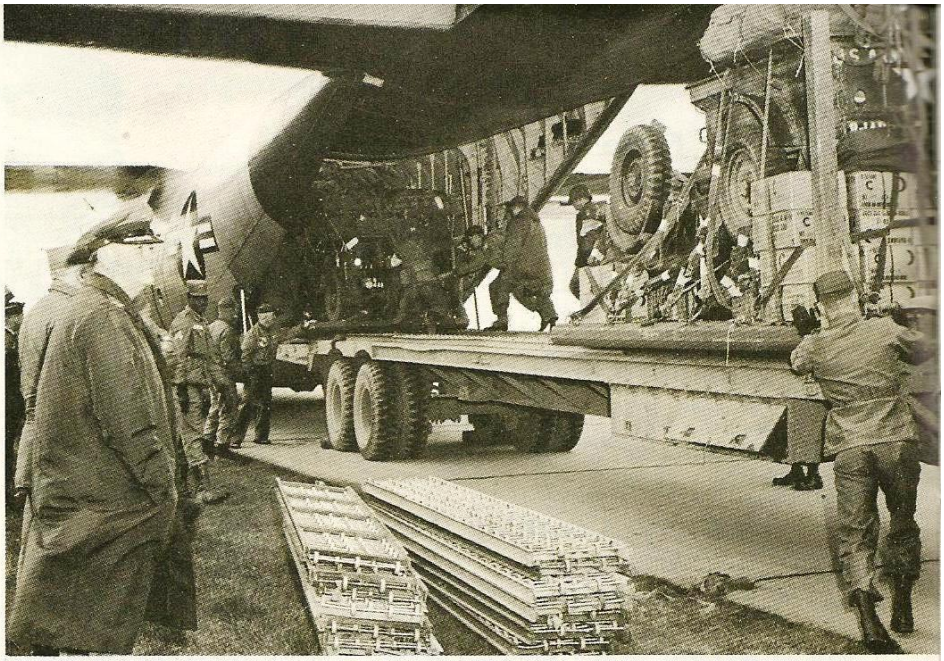


they call it COMBAT CARGO

by Capt. CARROLL S. SHERSHUN

THEY'VE heard the tom-tom telegraph of East Africa beat out the news of their arrival. They've seen poverty, pestilence, and panic—and smelled every stench imaginable. They've felt fatigue of overwork to the point of exhaustion. They have known the rewards that derive from seeing despair give way to hope in the eyes of children touched by catastrophe.

These are the men of the 322d Air Division, the men who cover the 17-million-square-mile territory under operational responsibility of U. S. Air Forces in Europe. The business of the 322d is combat cargo, and since the organization was formed in 1954 the mission can be described as: "You call, we haul—anything."

While its primary mission is airlift support of U. S. and NATO forces, the 322d regularly responds to requests for assistance in disaster areas. These responses have taken them throughout Europe, Africa, the Near and Middle East—from the fjords of Norway and the plains of the Congo to the Himalayan "roof-top" of the world. Their job isn't easy. The cost in terms of frequent discomfort and family separation has been high. Nothing about the work is routine.

The scene was Evreux-Fauville Air Base, 60 miles west of Paris, France. The base serves as headquarters of the 322d, which maintains operational units at Chateauroux AS, France; Rhein-Main AB, Germany; and Tempelhof Airport in West Berlin. The briefing officer was Maj. Bob Dietz, who had just returned to duty after 80 days in the hospital. He had contracted hepatitis on the Iranian earthquake mission.

"There is no typical mission, no set format. It might take 3 or 30 aircraft to do the job. When we go on a mission we pack for 30 days, but we never know how long we might be gone.

"Our crew recall system is unique. None of our people have phones. The men who live on base in trailer courts use their cars to pick up crew members who live in the civilian community. We had 15 crews ready to fly within 45 minutes during a recent alert.

"I've seen them land these C-130s on 2,000-foot dirt runways loaded with 30,000 pounds of cargo. With too much weight to go around, they had to land on the first approach.

"You want an example? Okay! The place was Somalia in East Africa. Tremendous floods followed by famine had swept over the land. The only hope for help was in a 322d airlift. One of our birds was flying 30,000 pounds of corn on the last mission of the day. Dusk had already fallen. Suddenly his *Hercules* lost two engines. The pilot had to land at a dirt strip on the last bit of high ground. Everything else was flooded. We had a forward control team at the strip, but no lights. It looked pretty grim.

"Talk about ingenuity! The airmen on our forward control team, with the help of a British planter who served as their interpreter, rounded up over 1,000 natives. Holding flaming torches, they lined each side of the runway. A bonfire was built for the touchdown site and the headlights on the planter's jeep were used to mark the end of the runway. The landing was successful. When the loadmaster dropped the plane's tailgate the natives with torches and drums chanted a song of welcome."

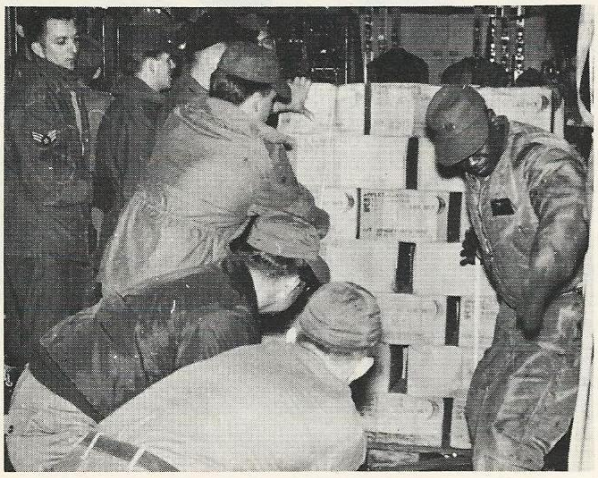
Flights to India

Even as Major Dietz was talking of the 322d's versatility—conveying the drama of his unit's operation with the very intensity of his speech—a flurry of activity was in progress at one of the big hangars. Lt. Col. Ralph E. Bullock, commander of the 41st Troop Carrier Squadron, was readying a flight for departure to India.

"We'll be there for a month," says Colonel Bullock. "Ever since November we've been sending out a C-130 every five days and then rotating at the end of 30. Originally we were supporting Indian troops in the Assam area after the Chinese communists attacked. Now we're operating in the Ladakh area of the Himalaya Mountains. We're needed to airdrop supplies since no roads are passable in that area. We land on pierced steel planking temporary airstrips. They're all at altitudes of 11,000 feet or higher. Approaches get pretty hairy at that elevation."

The 322d has airlifted more than 21 million pounds of food, fuel, and other supplies to Indian troops based in the Himalayas. Only 12 *Hercules* propjet transports have been used in the entire operation.

Perhaps the most heart-warming mission in recent history was the airlift of 104 Tibetan orphans to safety. The children were picked up from a refugee camp at Leh, located in the snow-covered mountains of northern Kashmir. They had come to this tiny caravan post after their homes and families were lost to the invaders.



Relief for Moroccan flood victims. Men of 5th Aerial Port Sq. unload food from first 322d C-130 to arrive.

When airmen of 322d shepherded the children aboard the giant C-130, they did the job so calmly and kindly that not one child seemed afraid. Sampling chewing gum and candy for the first time, the children were all smiles as the planes lifted with a roar from the rough runway to take them over jagged peaks to join the Dalai Lama—spiritual leader of Tibet—in exile and safety.

"You've got to see other people's faces when they're in a jam to realize how useful we are," observes CMSgt. Miles Blansette, a line chief with 21 years' Air Force service. This is his second tour of Europe. He was there during the Berlin airlift. Sergeant Blansette confesses "no love for the C-130A. When it comes to maintenance, it's a hungry bird.

"I'll stack our maintenance men up against any—any place—any time! The Cargo airlift was our biggest operation. Everything we had went. It started at three in the afternoon and by nine next morning everything was launched. This took some doing, believe me!"

New Tape

Still in progress in 1963, Operation *New Tape,* the United Nations airlift to the Congo, has become the longest airlift—in point of miles—in USAF history. In the first two years 1,280 sorties carried 8,665 tons of cargo and 57,714 United Nations passengers. More than 33,000 air hours were logged without a single flying accident.

The 322d's airlift mission is augmented by MATS C-124s stationed at Chateauroux and Rhein-Main, and by a TAC C-130 rotational squadron at Evreux.

Experience in major airlifts dates back to 1954 when the 322d had a role in the airlift of French paratroopers to the beleagured city of Dien Bien Phu in Viet-Nam. In 1956, during the crisis stemming from Egypt's seizure of the Suez Canal, the division evacuated 480 American and allied civilians from the danger area. They then airlifted the United Nations Emergency Forces from Denmark, Finland, and Sweden to Naples, Italy, en route to the Middle East.

Again in July 1958, international attention was gained by their participation in Operation *Bluecoat,* implemented in response to the Lebanon crisis. The president of Lebanon, faced with a communist-inspired revolt, requested military support from the U. S. Almost 8,000 Army troops and over 8,000 tons of equipment were airlifted from central Europe to Beirut.

They've offered a helping hand in virtually every major disaster to hit the area. In February 1962, 15 C-130s carried 220,000 pounds of blankets and 9,525 pounds of clothing to Hamburg, Germany, where a flood left 100,000 people homeless. In September a 100-bed mobile hospital, 10,000 blankets, and 100 tents were airlifted to the earthquake disaster scene in Iran. When the Shah of Iran requested help, it was only 21 hours before the first of 12 aircraft arrived on the scene. The operation was repeated early this year when earthquakes again struck in Libya.

"That Iranian earthquake was pretty rough," recalls A1C Peter Burkett, a crew chief who has been in USAF for six years. "We flew straight to Adana, Turkey, in 12 hours, gassed up, and beelined for Iran. After dropping off our flyaway hospital kits, we slept on the aircraft, and then headed back to Bitburg where we picked up a mobile hospital. There were other stops at Athens and Lebanon. We were on the go constantly for three days after only two hours' notice. Even our C rations tasted good after a while."

Experience—a Quick Teacher

The enthusiasm and high morale shown by 1st Lt. Robert Stanwood is typical of the attitude of the men in the 322d. He came here three years ago directly from flying school and is now a qualified aircrew commander. He recalls his earliest experiences:

"After a while the unusual becomes the usual. I had just reported in when the Congo crisis struck. There I was, a second lieutenant with next to no experience. The next thing I knew I was sitting at the operations desk, and for 45 minutes I was squadron commander. It was sort of a hell-fire experience.

"My first trip to the Congo proved to be a long, long pull. We went from here to Tunisia where we picked up 90 United Nations troops. We left here at 3:00 p.m., arrived in Tunisia at midnight, and were in the Congo at 10 a.m., where we sacked out on the plane. That night we turned around and headed for Accra, Ghana, and Dakar, Senegal, where we ran into violent tropical storms. Saint Elmo's fire came at us from all directions and our radios let loose with a spine-chilling sound. The only man I could raise at 4 a.m. when I first operated our radios was the tower at MacDill AFB, Fla. We finally ate our first hot meal in three days at Moron AB, Spain. It was quite an introduction to the 322d.

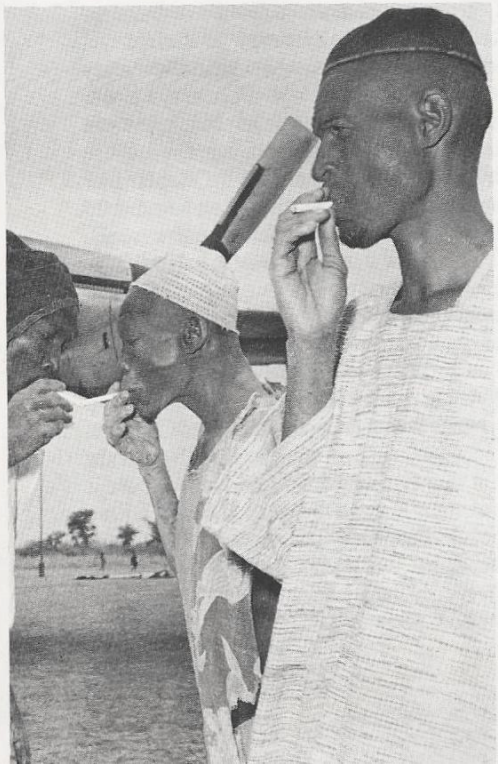
"I've seen a lot of flying since. I've logged over 1,500 hours in the C-130 here in less than three years; it's slightly more than our four-hour-a-month minimum requirement. We do a lot of truck-driver 'you call, we haul' flying. Going from one flap to another is routine.

"I've been with the unit close to three years now, but I still get a kick out of seeing something accomplished, even if it's a grind. This tactical work is inspiring, too. It's our primary mission, but flying formation at 130 knots with troopers jumping still offers quite a sensation."

The average crew might be on actual alert for 15 or 20 days, but they're almost always committed to some degree of alert. Most missions run three to seven days and the people average 20 to 25 days a month away from home.

SSgt. Clifford Naslund, a quiet-spoken mechanic, pinpoints one of the biggest frustrations of constant travel. "There's no such thing as a weekend. We're only 60 miles from Paris, but might as well be over a

Orphan children of Tibet who lost homes and families in Chinese invasion made the journey over the Himalayas to safety in C-130 *Hercules* craft of the 322d Air Division.



At airstrip in Africa, local citizens critically evaluate smokes presented by 322d aircrew.

Iranian villager salvages possessions after earthquake which brought 322d Air Division aircrews to the rescue.

thousand. I haven't seen it yet, except from the sky."

Cliff's comments are reinforced by SSgt. Anthony Rezendes, an ex-Marine who has been in the USAF for four years: "Coming out of MATS into the 322d is rough. We had nine-day missions in MATS and then three days off. But here it's not like that. We're always on call."

"Sure it's rough work," admits TSgt. Bob McAfee, a 31-year-old crew chief. "You're out there three hours before takeoff, if you have that much notice, to check the plane. That means 2 a.m. on the day of a flight. We need to carry our own spare parts, forms, hydraulic fuel, flyaway kits, light bulbs, screws—you name it. They don't have a thing at a lot of the places we go. You don't specialize. You can't. After a flight you might have to work all night. The hours are long, but there are slack times, too.

"It's downright discouraging at times. You think you have everything done only to find something else needs fixing. But I wouldn't have any other job. There's a special sense of satisfaction when you see that bird leap off."

Many of the men, like TSgt. Hal Medlin, live on the economy. The Medlins and their four children live in a town called Heudevboubille. When Hal leaves the house Mrs. Medlin never knows if he'll be home for dinner. She has long since given up keeping his plate warm. Thirty days can be a long time. But like their husbands, the wives have learned the importance of cooperating and taking things in stride.

Variety for Spice

Cargo airlift and mercy missions do not make up the full scope of the 322d's operations. They provide regularly scheduled "bread and butter" air transport of cargo and passengers between USAFE's network of bases. Their tactical airlift capability has given "seven-league boots" to USAFE's tactical squadrons. International exercises, like SHAPE's Operation *Checkmate* last year, are a normal part of their NATO contribution. Each week 17 regular "hospital in the sky" aeromedical evacuation flights link USAFE medical facilities with MATS jet ambulance service from Rhein-Main to the United States.

There are special missions. These might include carrying personnel, supplies, equipment, and helicopters to the Libyan Desert to search for remains of the crew of the *Lady Be Good,* the U. S. World War II bomber that was found intact 16 years after its disappearance. Or it might mean a flight deep into Africa with supplies donated for use by Dr. Albert Schweitzer at his famous medical mission.

More recently, when Maj. L. Gordon Cooper completed his 22-orbit space flight, aerial support was spread beneath his path over Africa and the adjoining oceans. Five C-130 *Hercules* of the 322d were in position in Nigeria, Morocco, Kenya, Southern Rhodesia and on Mauritius Island in the Indian Ocean. Aboard each was an Army H13 helicopter and special crews of pararescue men and medical technicians. If it had been necessary for the *Mercury* capsule to land in their area, they would have been off the ground and on their way within minutes.

No story of the 322d would be complete without mention of the 5th Aerial Port Squadron. One of only six units of its kind in the Air Force, the 5th Aerial Port at Evreux operates air terminals, provides combat control and tactical support for the 322d throughout USAFE. The squadron has 60 loadmasters, specialists in aerial delivery techniques, who augment the 322d's regular crews during other than routine operations.

The 5th's combat control men, formerly called "Pathfinders," are qualified parachutists who are

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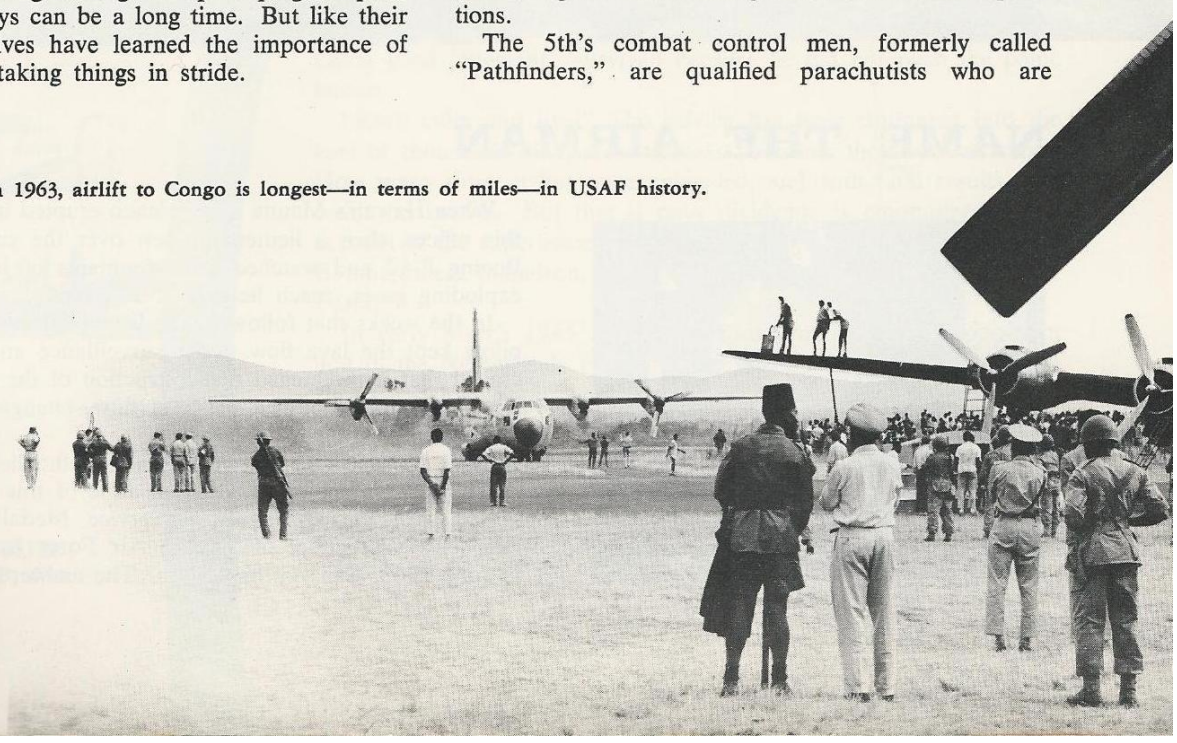

TSgt. Frank L. Chambers, loadmaster with the 5th Aerial Port Squadron, inspects cargo on C-130.

charged specifically with providing air traffic control during all phases of an airborne mission. Each man is a volunteer.

TSgt. Frank Chambers is NCOIC of the 5th's consolidated training section. Among his unusual experiences during 20 years' service was a C-46 flight into Nazi-occupied Norway at the end of World War II.

"We flew in the British officers who were to accept the Nazi surrender of Staenger Field in Norway. As we approached the strip three Junkers and three squadrons of fighters came in on us at a tangent. It looked for all the world like they were going to attack. When we landed an "honor guard" of German soldiers aimed burp guns at us as we made our way to where their commander stood. The surrender was orderly and without incident, but it provided some harrowing moments."

Whether the mission is tactical support of NATO forces, disaster relief in a sudden emergency, or a load of fish to be flown from Norway to the Congo, the men of the 322d live up to their motto, "you call, we haul—anything—anytime—anywhere."

Troops of U. S. 8th Airborne Infantry on combat maneuver with 322d airlift support.