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IN THE KOREAN CONFLICT

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

Chapter 7

RECONNAISSANCE, AIR TRANSPORT, RESCUE, AND WEATHER

FOUR OTHER aspects of USAF action in Korea—strategic and tactical reconnaissance, troop and cargo air transport, air rescue and evacuation, and weather services—were so identified both with the tactical and strategic air war as to constitute problem studies in themselves

Their story is much the same as that recounted in the preceding pages: initial shortages, hurried expansion, and adaptation to the Korean situation. Of the four aspects of air activity, reconnaissance was slowest to meet the needs of the war emergency.

RECONNAISSANCE

Prior to the Korean hostilities the FEAF reconnaissance mission had been to complete the Asiatic-Pacific portion of the USAF post-hostilities mapping program. This mission was apportioned to the following units: (1) the 31st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, a SAC unit with RB-29's stationed at Kadena and charged with multiplex photo mapping of the Ryukyus and Bonins; (2) the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (RF-80), assigned to the Fifth Air Force and based at Yokota, with a mission of beach, cultural, airfield, and intelligence photography of the Japanese home islands; (3) the 6204th Photo Mapping Flight, a table-of-distribution organization possessing two RB-17's and four RC-45's, assigned to the Thirteenth Air Force and based at Clark Air Force Base, where it was completing aerial photography of the Philippines; (4) the 548th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, based at Yokota with detachments at Kadena and Clark. The 548th was assigned directly to FEAF, with operational control vested in the Director of Reconnaissance, Deputy for Operations. Its mission was to furnish quantitative photographic processing, lithographic reproduction, photographic interpretation, and a theater depository for photographic film. The 31st and 6204th had no authorization for per-

sonnel or equipment to process the aerial photography which they accomplished.¹ The reconnaissance units, badly understrength and with old equipment, were therefore a "series of dangling and disconnected minorities,"² and, for want of a common parent organization, FEAF had to perform the normal wing functions of formulating policy, drawing up specifications, and controlling the supply of specialized equipment.³ Overnight, the occupational reconnaissance establishment had to be converted to that required for war. No other type of FEAF aviation was less well prepared for the sudden transition.

The paucity of reconnaissance was also USAF-wide, for concurrent with the economy drive during the spring of 1949, all tactical reconnaissance units except the equivalent of one group (two squadrons in the Zone of Interior and one in FEAF) had been inactivated. Highly skilled personnel of inactivated units had either returned to civilian status or had been scattered throughout the Air Force into whatever duties were available to them. Several months prior to the Korean hostilities Col Jacob W. Dixon, commander of the 8th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, had perceived the danger of reconnaissance "being caught with its pants down"

Table 4
AIRCRAFT TABLE, PACIFIC AIR LIFT
(4-Engine Transports)

	Aircraft used 25 Jun 50		Average daily utili- zation	Aircraft used 10 Sep 50		Average daily utili- zation
M I L I T A R Y	No	Type		No	Type	
MATS-----	39	C-54	----	41	C-54	----
	9	R5D	----	14	R5D	----
	8	C-97	----	11	C-97	----
	4	C-74	----	9	C-74	----
Total MATS-----	60 (78)		3.2	75 (111)		4.75
Troop Carrier-----				57	C-54	3.6
RCAF-----				8	C-54	3.0
Total Military-----	60 (78)			140 (176)		
CIVIL, all carriers-----				66 (68)		
GRAND TOTAL-----	60 (78)			206 (244)		

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate C-54 equivalents, that is, the different capacities of the C-97/Stratocruiser and C-74/Globemaster each translated into C-54 capacity.

In addition to its transport activities, MATS helped move unit aircraft to the Far East, the

largest of these projects being the shipment of 314th Troop Carrier Group C-119's to Japan at the rate of 12 a day. Scheduled to begin on 1 September, the first 64 aircraft were supposed to reach Japan by 10 September, the remainder by 21 September. By 8 September 75 of the C-119's had been processed through Hickam at an average maintenance of 52 man-hours per aircraft. Although 2 of the planes had to be held there for engine change, another made an emergency landing at Kwajalein with a sheared pump shaft, and another was delayed by a landing gear collapse. By 15 September 90 planes had been processed through Hickam. The movement of such mass numbers of aircraft was considered an outstanding success, from a logistic as well as an operational standpoint.

The trans-Pacific MATS airlift, however, had achieved its large capacity by channeling its total effort into a single theater of operations, in a war of global proportions such support for one theater would obviously be impossible.

AIR EVACUATION AND RESCUE

The evacuation of casualties from Korea was a joint function of FEAF's air transport services, which brought the patients to Japan, and of MATS, which in September 1949 had been charged with all transoceanic air evacuation. Although there had been evacuation of sick and wounded by air during World War II, it had never been more than supplemental to hospital ships overseas and hospital trains in the United States. There were many advantages to air evacuation: (1) the wounded arrived in the United States in much better condition; (2) patients were moved to centrally located specialists with such speed that the medical personnel shortage and crowded installations were relieved; (3) field commanders were relieved of the responsibility for protecting a backlog of patients awaiting surface transportation, a burden which sometimes threatened support of combat troops; (4) patients flown to hospitals near their homes thus received a morale boost without parallel; and (5) air evacuation could economically utilize the space on cargo planes which had previously been returning empty after delivering supplies to the combat areas. Properly coordinated air evacuation was thus not only beneficial to the patients and the commanders,

but the most economical method of doing the job.⁴¹

Under the management of the Fifth Air Force, the 801st Medical Air Evacuation Squadron, using mostly 374th Wing transports, flew 1,159 patients from Korea to Japan between the beginning of hostilities and 18 August.⁴² Yet when the Combat Cargo Command assumed direction of FEAF transport activity, it judged that air evacuation from Korea had "a rather spotty history." For one thing the air capability was not being fully utilized. At Taegu the airfield was eight miles from town by a very poor road, and the Eighth Army, with a shortage of ambulances, preferred to place its patients on the tram at Taegu and move them to Pusan, where they overtaxed the limited hospital space while awaiting surface transportation. Some of the patients were taken to Pusan's east airfield (K-9) for air transport, but they often had to be held there for excessive lengths of time. A trip by Col Clyde L. Brothers (FEAF Surgeon), Lt Col F. C. Kelley (Fifth Air Force Surgeon), and Major George Hewitt (Cargo Command's Assistant Director of Traffic) soon brought about more orderly procedures. They planned to establish a steady flow of 450 evacuees daily out of Korea, as

follows patients were to be delivered by train to Pusan, where they would be moved by ambulance to waiting planes (routed back through Pusan from other Korean missions or sent over empty from Ashiya) and airlifted to Itazuke for temporary hospitalization at the 118th Station Hospital; from there other aircraft, principally C-46's, were to move patients on to the Tokyo area. In order to care for the more serious cases a special C-54 lift was provided directly from Pusan to Tokyo. Some patients were also flown to Itazuke from Taegu and Pohang.⁴⁵

To care for these patients the 801st Medical Air Evacuation Squadron was attached to Cargo Command for temporary duty, permitting it to assign 6 flight nurses and 6 medical technicians to the Korea runs, and 12 of each to the Tokyo flights. Although the number of patients on each run was practically equal, the flight to Tokyo was three times as long as that from Pusan. The squadron's remaining seven nurses and seven technicians were used on emergency assignments pending the institution of evacuation flights to Inchon-Kimpo. A further decision was to avoid committing any special transport crews to air evacuation, but to brief all crews on the standard procedures. For the trip out of Pusan C-46's and C-47's were to be used, from Inchon C-54's, C-119's were not to be used for such work because their greater capacity was needed for cargo. The Combat Cargo Command, in short retrospect, believed it would have been best to designate and equip certain aircraft for daily air evacuation missions since aircraft repeatedly reported for patients with inadequate litter and heating facilities. By "equip" was meant to obtain a clean, heated aircraft, with litter and emergency equipment.⁴⁶

When Kimpo airfield had been secured, the Cargo Command instituted an immediate flight evacuation plan, including a minimum of three C-54 flights spaced periodically throughout the day. This lift was supplemented as requirements dictated. With the capture of the airfield at Wonsan, Combat Cargo Command made Marine Squadron VMR-152 responsible for evacuation directly to Osaka. On 17 October, when the airfield at Sinmak (K-20) was opened, C-54's began removing patients to Kimpo, where they were turned

over to the 805th Mobile Army Surgical Hospital. On 21 October evacuation began from the airfield at Pyongyang (K-23), but here the process met difficulties because the location of the taxi-strip was such that one delayed airplane could block those behind it. Considerable time was required to load patients, and with the urgent requests for air supply, the traffic control officers hesitated to release a plane from the cargo shuttle for air evacuation early in the day. Fortunately VMR-152 found the solution in a fairly regular schedule from Pyongyang to Osaka, and on 29 October the situation was eased further as evacuation began by C-47 from Sinanju (K-29) to Kimpo. Thus, other than excessive waiting time at Pyongyang and Kimpo, the air evacuation problem was well managed during the attacking phase of U. N. ground operations.⁴⁷ During October 2,840 patients were moved by airlift within Korea, 3,025 were evacuated from Korea to Japan, and 2,590 were moved by airlift within Japan, making a total of 8,455 patients handled by air during the month. From the outbreak of Korean hostilities to 31 October, a total of 24,496 patients had been air evacuated within the Far East theater.⁴⁸

Military Air Transport Service air evacuation began where the Combat Cargo Command left off in the Tokyo area. At the outbreak of the war the Pacific air evacuation operation, under control of the 1453d Medical Air Evacuation Squadron, was moving about 350 patients a month. The first 26 war casualties did not leave Tokyo by C-54 until 20 July, but a total of 535 patients was evacuated during the remainder of the month and the number increased to 3,645 patients in September. The MATS evacuation operation soon employed the routes, facilities, and aircraft regularly assigned to the Pacific airlift, and planes which transported cargoes and personnel to Japan became air evacuation ships on their return. Because of the time which would have been needed to convert civilian airliners, however, they initially carried none but ambulatory patients. The evacuation aircraft, carrying their regular crew plus flight nurses and medical technicians, normally flew eastward from Tokyo, through Guam and Kwajalein (or Wake or Midway) to Hickam, and finally left their patients at Travis. On 29 July the first C-97 inbound flight brought 63

litter patients from Tokyo to Travis in 23 hours, having stopped only at Wake and Hickam. On later flights, because of the great range of the C-97, it was possible to eliminate the stop at Wake and thus cut some 500-odd miles from the trip. With such schedules, the wounded in Korea knew that there would be no wearisome voyages in ships and no exhausting train rides, the hospitals at which they would be treated would be no more than 72 hours from the war zone and home would be nearby.⁴⁹

The function of air rescue, like that of air evacuation, was not new in the Korean war, but its performance was aided by new plane types and efficient management. The 2d and 3d Air Rescue Squadrons had been assigned to FEAF during World War II, but on 1 May 1949 they had been transferred to the world-wide Air Rescue Service, a subordinate to MATS.⁵⁰ During the Korean conflict the 2d Squadron's flights remained at Clark, Kadena, and Anderson, but the 3d Squadron, participated more directly in the war. The latter was initially divided into four flights—based at Johnson, Yokota, Misawa, and Ashiya—to which another was added when part of the 5th Air Rescue Squadron, at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, was dispatched to the Far East on 7 July.⁵¹ A sixth flight, called Detachment "F," was organized with H-5 helicopters during August. In Korea, this detachment provided normal air rescue service and also transported badly wounded ground troops from the front lines to base hospitals at Pusan.⁵² Assignment of additional personnel almost doubled the size of the 3d Squadron between July and November 1950. In its work the 3d Squadron employed SB-17, SB-29, SA-16, C-47, H-5, and L-5 type aircraft. So many different types caused maintenance difficulties, and the newly arrived SA-16's (the first four reached Misawa on 28 July) suffered from supply problems as well. At one time all four of the amphibians were grounded for want of parts, but improved supplies lowered the SA-16 AOCP rate from 60 percent in September to 25 percent during October.

Nevertheless, the 3d Squadron was most successful, as the following performance record, covering 25 June through 30 November 1950, indicates

Operation	Total
Helicopter evacuation from front lines.....	585
Helicopter evacuation from behind front lines.....	9
SA-16 rescues.....	10
Rescues by all types of aircraft.....	674
Sorties by all ARS aircraft.....	2,498
Number of hours flown.....	6,339

A few examples, however, will serve better than statistics to illustrate the success of the 3d Squadron. Seven days after arriving in Japan, an SA-16 on orbit picked up a Navy pilot who had been in the water off Korea less than two hours. On 15 August an SA-16 picked up an F-51 pilot only 5 minutes after he had parachuted into the water. A helicopter picked up another F-51 pilot behind North Korean lines on 5 September, and on 11 October another H-5 crew made a 125-mile round trip to snatch up a severely wounded British carrier pilot from under hostile fire and return him to Kampo.⁵³

Helicopter evacuation of wounded personnel from front lines was a new development in rescue. Since ambulance travel over rough Korean roads was slow and possibly fatal to badly wounded patients, the EUSAK surgeon requested air assistance and FEAF secured additional H-5 helicopters for the purpose. Able to carry two patients and a medical technician, the helicopters shuttled between medical clearing stations and the hospitals; when a patient required treatment in Japan, he was flown to an airstrip for regular evacuation. The new procedure saved time and lives: wounded personnel were transported from clearing stations to hospitals in less than an hour whereas the overland trip had been taking over 10 hours; a medical officer at a Korean field hospital who examined six wounded soldiers flown in by H-5 estimated that five of the six would have died had they been moved overland. Although the helicopters were not equipped for night flying, one pilot answered a call to a clearing station late one night, and by using a flashlight to see his instruments landed in a circle illuminated by jeep headlights. Helicopter pilots also provided medical evacuation for the paratroop drops north of Pyongyang on 20-22 October, and when the task proved too large for the four H-5's, other liaison planes were called in to help. During these 2 days, 47 casualties were evacuated by the rescue aircraft.⁵⁴

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AFMSP.....	Supply Division, Directorate of Maintenance, USAF.	FECOM.....	Far East Command
AFOOP.....	Operations Division, Directorate of Operations, USAF	FSO.....	Foreign Service Officer
AFOPR.....	Resources Division, Directorate of Operations, USAF	GCA.....	Ground Controlled Approach
AFPMP.....	Director of Military Personnel, USAF	GCI.....	Ground Controlled Interception.
AOCP.....	Aircraft Out of Commission Parts.	HVAR.....	High Velocity Aerial Rocket
ATAR.....	Anti-Tank Aerial Rocket	IFR.....	Instrument Flight Rules
ATIS.....	Allied Translator and Interpreter Service, FEC	JSPOG.....	Joint Strategic Plans and Operations Group, FEC
AW.....	All Weather.	KMAG.....	Korea Military Advisory Group.
CAP.....	Combat Air Patrol	NK.....	North Korean
CCF.....	Chinese Communist Forces	NKAF.....	North Korean Air Force
CIA.....	Central Intelligence Agency	NKPA.....	North Korean People's Army.
CONAC.....	Continental Air Command, USAF	NSC.....	National Security Council.
CS, USAF.....	Chief of Staff, United States Air Force	OI.....	Operations Instructions
CS, USA.....	Chief of Staff, United States Army	OSI.....	Office of Special Investigations
CTF.....	Commander, Task Force	POL.....	Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants
DA.....	Department of Army	ROKAF.....	Republic of Korea Air Force
DEPTAR.....	Department of Army	SCAP.....	Supreme Commander Allied Powers
D/I.....	Deputy for Intelligence.	TACC.....	Tactical Air Control Center
D/O.....	Deputy for Operations	TADC.....	Tactical Air Direction Center
D/M.....	Deputy for Matériel	TC.....	Troop Carrier
D/P&O.....	Directorate of Plans and Operations, USAF	TD.....	Table of Distribution
FAF.....	Fifth Air Force	T/O&E.....	Table of Organization and Equipment
FAFIK.....	Fifth Air Force in Korea.	UE.....	Unit Equipment
		USAFIK.....	United States Armed Forces in Korea.
		USAIRA.....	United States Air Attaché
		USMILAT.....	United States Military Attaché
		VFR.....	Visual Flight Rules

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

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