



# Hangar Digest

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Rollout of the first KC-135 #55-3118 on July 18, 1956. Photo courtesy of: Steve Larsen, Historian, 22nd Air Refueling Wing, McConnell AFB, Kansas.

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## 50 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH

The 93rd Air Refueling Squadron, Castle Air Force Base, California, received the first KC-135A Stratotanker, a flying boom-type refueler capable of transferring nearly a thousand gallons of fuel per minute. The tanker had a fuel capacity of 31,200 gallons, which was available for transfer or for its own use. The tanker was a modification of Boeing's prototype, referred to as the 370-80, or "Dash Eighty," which with a different configuration became the commercial 707.

*Toward the Air Mobility Command  
1994 Revised.*

### From the Editor

**Operation Hajji Baba was the 1952 Military Air Transport Service's humanitarian airlift of more than 3,700 Muslims from Beirut and Baghdad to Jidda, Saudi Arabia on their pilgrimage to Mecca. In this issue, Ron Love presents the history of the airlift and his interview with one of the airlift's participants, Bill Voigt.**

As a result of running the bio of Bernt Balchen in the last issue, I've had several inquiries about Bluie West 8, the Greenland base that he supervised the construction of and later commanded. The history of Bluie West 8 appears on page ten.

We have had two staff changes since our last issue: Jay Schmukler has passed the management of the museum store on to Jon Rehm and Mike Boyd has assumed the responsibility as membership manager—taking that job over from Deborah Sellars. For Deborah and Jay—thank you both for jobs well done! Jon and Mike—Welcome!

Until the next issue when we take a look at the "first" First Air Commandos, enjoy your AMC Museum.

*Harry E. Heist, Editor*



The Hangar Digest is published quarterly and is dedicated to the preservation of our airlift and tanker heritage. All articles, unless otherwise noted, are written by the editor. All photographs are the courtesy of the Air Mobility Command Museum unless otherwise designated.

**Viewpoints** expressed are those of the contributing authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AMC Museum Foundation or of the Museum's staff.

**Subscriptions** are free and are mailed via nonprofit standard mail to paid-up members of the AMC Museum Foundation, Inc.

**Contributions.** Reader's comments, articles and ideas are solicited for future issues. Mail to: Harry E. Heist c/o The Hangar Digest, P.O. Box 02050, Dover AFB DE 19902-2050; FAX (302) 677-5940 and email: [harry.heist@dover.af.mil](mailto:harry.heist@dover.af.mil).

## Air Mobility Command Museum Mission Statement

The mission of the Air Mobility Command Museum is twofold:

- The primary mission is to present the history and development of military airlift and tanker operations.
- The second closely aligned mission is to portray the rich history of Dover Air Force Base and its predecessor Dover Army Airfield.

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Rear Cover Photo by Mike Leister: Aerial AMC Museum—6 September 2006.

### Museum Store News:

Welcome to our new store manager, Jon Rehm.

Shopping for a friend, yourself or for the kids our store has it all: Desktop mahogany airplane models, leather jackets, baseball caps, T-shirts and loads of other military related items are available by contacting Jon by phone at (302) 677-5992, by FAX at (302) 677-5940 and via email: [jon.rehm@dover.af.mil](mailto:jon.rehm@dover.af.mil).

## From the Director

We have been collecting visitor's surveys for years and the truth is we use them to make sure we are always improving our service to our customers. We can't oblige the folks that want us to get an F-4 or a Spitfire but we do take your comments seriously. That is why when a visitor in September left an anonymous note saying we had not acknowledged the donation of an artifact to the museum, I was perplexed. Our staff does an absolutely fantastic job of properly documenting all artifact donations. I dare say, they are about the best in the business. We also try to acknowledge most other kinds of donations regardless of size, but if we missed you please know we are grateful for all the support we receive. Call me if I can be of assistance, 302-677-5939.

We are now open on Sunday! Yes, you can now come out on a quiet Sunday and visit with your favorite aircraft, or better yet bring those relatives who are in town only for the weekend. We are now open Tuesday through Sunday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The store opens at 11:00 am on Sunday.

Our annual Members Mixer was a big success. There was a great mix of hangar flying, and general story telling along with food and drink and a host of door prizes. Save September 14<sup>th</sup> for next year's event. It's going to be bigger and better. If you are not familiar with the Member Mixer check July's edition for more details.

Harry asked me to relate what our plans are for the coming year. Wow, that's a good question and one that deserves a realistic answer. As for aircraft inbounds, we are never entirely in the pilot's seat when it comes to acquiring new aircraft. We are supposed to receive an A-26 from a museum in North Dakota in 2007. A lot depends on funding availability as to how we proceed to prepare and move it. We are scheduled to receive a KB-50 and a KC-135 sometime in the future but it could be next month or in 5 years. The KB-50 is one of only two in existence and that will give us a tanker even older than the KC-97. To my knowledge there are no KB-29s anywhere in the world so the KB-50 is probably the oldest type of military tanker still extant. I can't wait to turn John Demory and his band of raiders loose on another big old Boeing tanker. I have no reservations in saying our KC-97 is the best in the world. I want to see what they can do next.

We are going to be working on our long delayed Vietnam exhibit in the coming year. Jim Leech & Deborah Sellers had made a good start on a room configured to look like the cargo compartment of the C-7 caribou when other priorities and a museum roof leak derailed the process. 2007 should see that project move to completion.

We were fortunate to get a few of our aircraft painted in 2006. There is one more aircraft left on the current contract and it is the most troublesome. Our Constellation that we are restoring as a C-121C has many coats of nasty paint that must be treated as hazardous waste. We have been working with the proper officials on base but we are still not sure how we will be able to proceed. Once the paint is stripped the job will be easy since the Connie restoration crew has repaired and prepared all the rest of the outside of the plane. Given the fact that the plane had been pretty well abused over the years that is no small feat.

We are still working to have a large and comprehensive History of Airlift exhibit built. Our goal is to have about 1000 square feet of exhibit space that features the aircraft, people and operations that comprise our airlift history placed in relation to world events of the times.

*Mike*

## Cruisin' with the Curator

First, thanks to all of you who "helped" move the C-124. Guess what we get to do this time? Yepper, you got it....we're going to install the vertical stabilizer and rudder. Whoopee! This last large piece of the C-124 puzzle has been in repair for way too long but Murphy was in the house and made sure that he exercised his right to screw up the process. Okay folks, report at 0900 tomorrow, bring your work gloves and plan on staying until the job is finished. No early quitters please.

Dum de dum dum, okay it's 0900. My restoration chief, Rick Veller and I, with the help of the kind folks from

**(Continued on the following page)**

## **Cruisin' with the Curator (Cont.)**

Aerial Port have already transported the assembly over to the museum. He and I have positioned the maintenance stands that we will need and the rest of the equipment has been readied for your arrival. The first course of action is to outfit you with hardhats. Wing Safety personnel just stopped by to remind us of that important fact. I knew I'd forget something.

Hats on, crane hooked up to the vertical fin but first....THE SAFETY BRIEFING. Now that you all know what part you'll play in the next few hours it's time to hoist the stabilizer and get to it! The weather is supposed to be alright with calm winds and mild temperatures.

Yeah right. Murphy shows up! Oh, the temps are good but the wind is far from calm. The fin/rudder piece is hoisted, it is all we can do keep it close to the attach points. There are only two of us at altitude with the assembly, that's for safety reasons and we try for what seems to be an eternity to line up the bolts with the holes. We get close several times but each time; the wind takes over and blows the fin off course. The guys on the ground manning the stabilization ropes have their hands full. I'm just about to call off the job because frankly, this old boy is spent. But remember, I did say earlier, NO EARLY QUITTERS. I didn't eat breakfast this morning but for some reason the thought of Cheerio's and spinach enters my mind. Strange what you think of when you're in precarious situations! Well that was enough to spur anyone on so, with one last attempt, we manage to set the stabilizer in place and secure it with the attachment hardware. Who said we don't have fun.

So, for the most part, all the big pieces of the plane are once again joined together. But you can't believe all the little pieces that still have to be installed. Thank goodness for the volunteers that step forward and make it all happen.

A quick note on some of our other planes: both C-141s have been painted as well as the C-119, T-33 and finally the KC-97. What a difference a coat of paint makes. The interior of the C-121 is still under restoration and will be for a while. We're in the process of having the tires on some of our planes filled with a solution that will harden to solid rubber, hence no more need to service the tires with air.

Okay, I think I worked you hard enough for this issue. Why don't you all take the rest of the day off?

Jim out!

## **Meet Museum Volunteers Sam and Jan Marinucci**

Married couple Sam and Jan Marinucci have been volunteers since 2002 and 2003 respectively. Sam started as a tour guide and Jan in the museum's store. Now both can be found actively working in the store.

Sam enlisted in the Air Force in 1955 with assignments to Germany, Alaska, Vietnam, Illinois and Arizona, retiring at Dover in 1976. He served both as a flight mechanic and flight engineer flying and/or maintaining the C-47, C-54, T-29, C-131, C-133, C-141 and the C-5. Jan and their four children accompanied Sam on all of his assignments except to Vietnam.

After retiring from the Air Force Sam, using his GI Bill, earned bachelor's and master's degrees while working at Playtex. He then became a pilot systems instructor at Flight Safety in New Castle, Delaware. Jan, earning her bachelor's degree, worked as a social worker for Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Delaware. She is currently an adjunct at Delaware Technical and Community College, teaching a reading class each semester.

A born aviation enthusiast, Sam has both private pilot and A&P licenses having flown and maintained a number of tail draggers. His other interests include woodworking, radio control model aircraft, gardening and golf. Jan's interests are reading, sewing, knitting and crocheting. They both enjoy dancing, traveling and spending time with their family, especially their grandchildren. They reside in Dover.



## Operation HAJJI BABA

The USAF Support of the Hajj Pilgrimage  
Interview with Bill Voigt by Ron Love



Pilgrims arriving at Jidda



Bill Voigt

Who could ever imagine that the USAF played a key role in supporting Moslems in the Middle East with airlift for their annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Well, in August 1952 with the help of our own Bill Voigt, it did. Over 3,700 hajjis were airlifted from Beirut, Lebanon; Baghdad, Iraq; and Marfaq, Jordan; to Jidda, Saudi Arabia.

*Make the pilgrimage to Holy Places, you who are able to do so.* The Prophet Mohammed

The origin of the Hajj goes back to pagan times. The Ka'aba (or house of God) in Mecca housed multiple idols before Mohammed came to destroy them. The circling round the Ka'aba which every pilgrim does as part of the ritual is a reminder of the victory of God over idols that had been set up to divert man's mind away from Him.

During August 1952, Moslems from all over the world traveled to Mecca for the Islamic pilgrimage. Commercial airlines at Beirut International Airport could not handle the huge influx of passengers and get them to the holy city before the pilgrimage ended. The Lebanese government appealed to the State Department for an airlift of passengers from Beirut to Jidda which is near Mecca. The Military Air Transport Service's Atlantic Division prepared the plans to fulfill the State Department requirement for humanitarian airlift. Heading up the operation were General Wentworth Goss, Commanding General of the 1602<sup>nd</sup> Air Transport Wing based at Wiesbaden, Germany, and his deputy, Colonel Arthur C. Rush, who was Deputy Commander of the 1603<sup>rd</sup> Wing based at Wheelus Air Base, Libya

Thirteen C-54 Skymaster cargo planes were deployed from the 86<sup>th</sup> Air Transport Squadron at Rhein-Main Air Base and the 41<sup>st</sup> Air Transport Squadron at Wheelus Air Base. Passengers were arranged in groups of 50 and to save time, airport authorities relaxed passport and security restrictions for the Air Force flights. At 8:00 a.m. on August 25, 1952, the first airplane left Beirut for Jidda. To gather additional passengers, three flights went to Baghdad (one of Bill Voigt's trips) and one to Marfaq, Jordan. There was an additional request to airlift passengers from Tehran, Iran; however, it was not possible to fulfill.

The passengers were given food packets provided by the American Friends of the Middle East as they loaded the aircraft. The crews did not waste any time at Jidda. They quickly offloaded the passengers, refueled, checked the engines and rushed back to Beirut. An idea of the pace maintained by the American airmen is indicated by some statistics: Normal flying time was 80-90 hours per month, yet most of the crews put in over half that much time in just four days. Bill Voigt logged 54 hours in eight days from departure at Rhein-Main Air base to return. Operations officers in Beirut were on duty an average of 18 hours per day.

Four days and 75 flights later, the last flight left Beirut at 5:22 a.m. on August 29, which was 38 minutes before the deadline. In all, 3,763 stranded pilgrims were transported. The crews flew day and night over 146,000 miles with some making the nearly 12-hour round trip four times.

**(Continued on the following page)**

## Operation HAJJI BABA (Cont.)

### Operation HAJJI BABA

Dates: August 24-29 1952

Aircraft Employed: C-54 (13)

Airlifted: 3,763 Moslem Pilgrims

Round Trip Flights: 75

Average Flight Length: 2,000 miles

Messages of gratitude for the airlift came from several places. The Grand Mufti of Lebanon, His Eminence Mohammed Alaya, called on the American Ambassador, Harold B. Minor, and described the American air assistance as a turning point in America's relations with the Arab world. The Prime Minister of Lebanon passed similar comments to General Wentworth. Hadrat Ayotollah Kashani, an Iranian Moslem leader, flew from Beirut with 51 other pilgrims. His pilot, Captain Alfred M. Beasley of Atlanta, Georgia, reported that the Moslem leader was highly pleased by the trip during the latter stages of which he visited the crew compartment and extended the traditional token of friendship by kissing the cheeks of both pilots.

*The best deed is to make a believer happy by feeding him, giving him clothes or carrying out his needs.*  
The Prophet Mohammed

### **DISCUSSION WITH BILL VOIGT**

#### **Question: Can you tell us a little about your flying background?**

Bill: In 1939, I enlisted in the Maryland National Guard in Salisbury, Maryland. The Maryland Guard was Federalized in February 1941, and I went to Fort Meade for one year of training. In 1942, I volunteered and was accepted into the Army Air Corps. I became an aviation cadet, started training at Maxwell AFB, and in 1943, I graduated from Craig Field. I stayed on as an instructor for three months. They told me I would be assigned to a "miscellaneous twin engine aircraft - probably a P-38." I was sent to the Air Transport Command, and my first airplane was the C-47 Gooney Bird. I trained at Billy Mitchell Field, Wisconsin, and went on to Roanoke, Virginia and Washington, D.C. Next, I went to Rosecrans Field near St. Louis for B-25 checkout and the UC-78. They sent me to Great Falls, Montana, then to Palm Springs, California, for fighter pilot checkout, so that I could ferry them. I was qualified to fly in 19 aircraft - all with props. I also flew 116 missions during the Berlin Airlift. The last aircraft I flew was the C-124 at Dover AFB. I had over 11,300 flying hours during my career.

#### **Question: Did you need to take the hajjis back?**

Bill: No, they got back to their homes on their own.

#### **Question: How many missions did you fly during the operation and can you tell us about them?**

Bill: I flew two missions from Beirut (August 25 and 26) and one from Baghdad (August 28) to Jidda. We wore civilian clothes and the passengers sat on the floor of the aircraft. No Jewish crew members were allowed, and we were not able to overfly Israel. The routes out of Beirut took us over the mountains toward Damascus, Syria, over Amman and Aqaba, Jordan then along the Red Sea. We had a navigator, but since we flew mostly during the day, there were no stars (only sun lines) to navigate by. Because there were few navigational aids, we flew by dead reckoning. We had 8-channel VHF and HF for communications. The flight legs were about 5 hours, and we had box lunches for meals.

**(Continued on the following page)**

## Operation HAJJI BABA (Cont.)

### **Question: What about maintenance and fuel?**

Bill: We deployed our maintenance crews from Rhein-Main Air Base to Beirut. We had plenty of fuel at all locations.

### **Question: Did you have any trouble with the passengers, e.g. air sickness, etc.?**

Bill: No, there were no major problems, but a few did get sick (not on my flight). There was a story that during a flight, the radio operator went back to check on the passengers only to find that they had started a fire on the cabin floor to cook a meal!

### **Question: Any “war stories”?**

Bill: Upon arriving at Baghdad, the three crews under John Bean, Russ Paulson, and I went downtown to eat at the Ali Babba Restaurant. Departing Baghdad, it was extremely hot and we loaded up about 100 pilgrims each. Bean was first, and when he cleared the runway, he called back saying he had used almost the entire runway. I took off and used most of it, too. On downwind we watched Paulson take off. I am not sure he didn't go past the end because we saw his aircraft kick up quite a cloud of dust!

Bill and other crew members were invited to an appreciation reception hosted by the American Ambassador in Beirut. The squadron commander told Bill, John Bean and Russ Paulson to leave the party early to get the planes ready for the return trip to Rhein-Main Air base the next morning. King Said of Saudi Arabia provided over 50 traditional outfits that evening in appreciation for the airlift support. Bill was one of the proud recipients.

### **Question: What are your thoughts about flying?**

Bill: I never wanted to be anywhere but in the left seat of an airplane. I was pretty good at it, I'll have to admit. I never lost a passenger or a pound of cargo.

Bill Voigt and Rosalie, his wife of 62 years, live in Dover. They have a daughter Deborah, son-in-law Ed and a grandson who live in Magnolia, Delaware. Thank you Bill, for sharing this unique perspective of airlift history.

***Editor's Note:** Colonel Ron Love, USAF (Ret), was the 436th Airlift Wing's Vice Commander from July 1993 to August 1995. Major Bill Voigt, USAF (Ret), is a member of the Museum's volunteer staff and has been an active volunteer since the Museum's inception in 1986. He was instrumental with the restoration of the Museum's C-54M.*

### **Name the Artifact by:** **Deborah Sellars**

This dark green, wool jacket looks modern but was worn during WWII. Do you know what it's called? See page 9 for the answer.



### **Membership Recognition**

*The AMC Museum Foundation expresses its gratitude for the generosity of the following who have contributed \$100.00 or more in support of the AMC Museum through new and/or renewed memberships:*

**CMSgt Paul J. Homlish, USAF (Ret), George W. Pierce, James S. Read and Col Donald Sloan, USAFR (Ret).**

## “Name the Plane”

The airplane that I asked you to identify in October’s issue of the Hangar Digest is the Short Brothers C-23B “Sherpa”

The C-23B, based on the Shorts 330 regional airliner which first flew on 22 August 1974, is a light military transport aircraft designed to operate efficiently even under the most arduous conditions and in a wide range of mission configurations. The large square-section cargo hold offers ready flexibility to perform ordnance movement, troop and vehicle transport, airdrops, aeromedical evacuation and is suitable for conversion to other specialist duties.



The major military consumer was the U.S. Air Force which bought 18 C-23As for its European Distribution System Aircraft (EDSA) requirement, these being used to shuttle spare parts between the USAFE maintenance and distribution centers and the front-line bases. Based in Zweibrucken AB, Germany. The C-23As served from November 1984 until October 1990 when the EDSA program was ended.

Four C-23As remained in USAF hands at Edwards AFB, where they were used for the USAF Test Pilots’ School but these have since been retired. Eight were delivered to the U.S. Forestry Service and six were transferred to the Army National Guard, which also ordered ten more newly built C-23Bs, distinguished from the C-23As only by their cabin windows.

The C-23B meets Army Short Takeoff and Landing (STOL) guidelines, can operate from unpaved runways and is equipped with self-contained ground handling equipment. The Army National Guard has procured 44 C-23Bs to support theatre airlift, airdrop and aeromedical evacuation for both state and federal wartime missions. It has proven its versatility in IRAQ in support of the War on Terrorism.

Of the readers submitting an entry, not all identified the aircraft as the C-23B “Sherpa”. However, distinguished little from the C-23A, I have accepted all entries that identified the aircraft as the C-23. Our randomly selected winner of “**Name the Plane**” contest is Thomas B. Smith of Millersville, Maryland and he will receive a selection from the museum’s store. Congratulations!

This time I ask that you identify the airplane depicted below including the manufacturer, mission, design and series (if applicable); i.e., Boeing B-17G. Please send your entry by letter, email, FAX or post card to any of the addresses listed on page 2. I will designate each correct answer with a number ID from which I will randomly select one winner. Please send your entry as soon as possible and please include a return address. The winner will receive an aviation related selection from the Museum’s gift shop. Good luck and thank you for your participation.

(Museum staff and volunteers are not eligible)



## USAF BLUES—HOW THEY GOT THAT WAY

“Clothes make the man!” True and not true—that oft-repeated statement.

For the Air Force man in uniform, however, it means carrying on a tradition popular since ancient times, identifying himself as a member of a historical unit, a close-knit society, quietly assured of its competence and professionalism.

His uniform helps provide that intangible spirit, that bright flame that has inspired airmen to perform feats of valor and service.

America’s first uniforms came to use in 1779 when General George Washington said dark blue was to be used with varied facings for the several states. Such cloth was in short supply. Uniforms most generally worn by Revolutionary soldiers were overalls and hunting shirt. They helped the Yankee cause considerably because the enemy thought men so dressed were all marksmen.

Insignia designating rank came into use slowly. In 1775, Washington devised colored ribbons and cockades for senior and junior officers. In 1783, one and two stars were prescribed for brigadier and major generals. Epaulettes and fringes of various size and length, positioned in a certain manner, showed other grades. Colonels eagles appeared in 1832. Leaves, double and single silver bars in 1836. The gold bar was introduced in 1917.

Chevrons designating NCO grades were ordered in 1847. Khaki uniforms were first worn during the Spanish-American War and in 1901 the Army adopted the olive drab for service wear. The blues were shelved during World War I. Sam Browne belts were looped over officer’s shoulders.

In January 1946, Brigadier General William E. Hall submitted a proposal for a distinctive USAF uniform to the Air Force Chief of Staff. Agreement was reached on a blue shade uxbridge 1683 (later referred to as Air Force shade 84 blue) to replace olive drab 33, with buttons featuring the Air Force seal.

Congressional hearings were held in February 1948, but appropriations for new uniforms were not forthcoming. Later, they were approved and in April 1951 the uniform was okayed by the Chief of Staff. The “men in blue” were guaranteed “high visibility” to their fellow citizens and other nations as members of the United States Air Force!

Source: Airman Magazine, September 1967.

*Editor’s Note: Based on recent feedbacks received during visits with Airmen throughout today’s Air Force, the Air Force Uniform Board reviewed several concepts that the Airmen suggested regarding the appearance of the current service dress uniform. The Air Force began exploring these ideas and produced several prototypes that are direct descendants of the USAF heritage, rooted in Hap Arnold and Billy Mitchell’s Air Force. There were both pros and cons ranging from, “anything would be an improvement over what is being worn today” to, “perhaps they should look to UPS for whomever designed their functional uniforms.” It’s noted that a more formal survey will provide additional opportunities for Airmen to provide feedback and comments.*



### Name the Artifact

The jacket is a beautiful example of a British custom-made E.T.O. field jacket and was worn by 1Lt. A. Winfield Jones, a pilot with the 436<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group, 80<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron. Like many of the uniforms of WWII, the jackets were made in several versions—some had slashed side pockets like the jacket in the museum’s collection, while others had chest pockets or flapped side pockets.

## **Blue West 8 “Up the Fjord”**

Greenland’s Blue West 8 (BW 8), was founded on October 7, 1941 under the supervision of Colonel Bernt Balchen. Earlier that same year, on April 9th, Greenland’s security was entrusted to the United States as Denmark was under German occupation.

The United States set up a number of military bases and weather stations in Greenland during the Second World War including the military base Blue West 8, which was soon to become one of the most important stopover sites for missions flying between the United States and Europe.

Following the war, the base was handed back to Denmark. However, on April 27, 1951 the base again reverted back to U.S. control when Denmark and the U.S. signed a new defense agreement whereby the Americans opened BW 8 under the name of Sondrestrom Air Base.

During the period between November 15, 1954 and October 1, 1965, SAS (Scandinavian Airline System) also began making use of Sondrestrom for stopovers between Copenhagen and Los Angeles.

The non-stop route linking Copenhagen and Sondrestrom had thus been created and besides being an important American military base, the airport became the gateway to Greenland. In 1960, the civil aspect of the base was established with a transit hotel built as an annex.

During the period following World War II, which saw the onset of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, Distant Early Warning radar stations (DEW Line) were set up by the Americans from early in the 1950s until far into the 1970s. Sondrestrom’s main mission had been to supply the DEW Line stations (now the new minimally crewed North Warning System picket line) with both Greenlandair (Greenland’s commercial carrier) and the USAF collaborating on the supply responsibilities.

As the Cold War ended, the Americans closed down air bases throughout the world and Greenland was no exception. The United States handed Sondrestrom Air Base over to the Danish authority on September 30, 1992. The next day, the Danish authority handed the base over to the Greenland Home Rule. It was re-named Mittarfik Kangerlussuaq (*Mittarfik* is the Greenlandic word for airport).

Until World War II, the Kangerlussuaq area (*Kangerlussuaq* is the Greenlandic word for ‘long fjord’) had never been populated, although the 115 mile long and 38 mile wide fjord had always been the Greenlander’s summer sealing and fishing grounds. Today, it is home to a small Royal Danish Air Force garrison with about 20 scientists who study the icecap and the Arctic atmosphere and with about 300 other people who all work directly or indirectly to maintain the airport.

For fifteen years, until the deactivation of the last squadron in 1969, Dover AFB C-124s were regular suppliers to the base at Sondrestrom. On occasion, a mission would have been extended to resupply the air base at Thule and perhaps even flying farther north in support of the Danish weather station at Nord.



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