

Source: [Military Air Transport Service \(MATS\) History](#)



The Military Air Transport Service was activated 1 June 1948. It was created by consolidating the Air Transport Command and the Naval Air Transport Service under the control of the newly created United States Air Force (USAF).

The first test of the newly created MATS was the Berlin Airlift--"OPERATION VITTLES". The Soviets had blocked all surface transportation in the western part of Berlin. Railroads tracks were destroyed, barges were stopped on the rivers, and highways and roads blocked. The only avenue left was through the air. On June 26, 1948, the airlift began. MATS transports from around the globe began making their way to Germany, including 2 of the U.S. Navy's air transport squadrons assigned to MATS. This operation would continue for some 15 months until the Soviets lifted the blockade. MATS would provide numerous humanitarian airlifts of global proportions.

Within MATS there were other technical services such as Air Weather Service (AWS), Air Rescue Service (ARS), Special Airlift Mission (SAM), Air Photographic and Charting Service (APCS), and the Aeromedical Transport Wing (AMTW). The U.S. Navy was an integral part of MATS, providing 5 transport squadrons to the joint service effort.

In the early days of MATS, there were 3 divisions, Atlantic, Pacific, and Continental. A later reorganization called for just 2 divisions -- Eastern Transport Air Force (EASTAF) and the Western Transport Air Force (WESTAF). To accomplish the global mission required, MATS has used many different aircraft. The C-47 "Gooney Bird", C-46 Curtiss Commado, C-135 Stratolifter, C-141 Starlifter, C-130 Hercules, C-133 Cargomaster, C-124 Globemaster, C-118 Liftmaster, C-121 Super Constellation, C-74 Globemaster I, C-97 Stratofreighter, and the C-131 Samaritan just to name a few. Each of the individual technical MATS services had their own specific aircraft to carry out their mission.

On January 1, 1966 MATS was deactivated and the Military Airlift Command was created to continue the traditions MATS had begun.