

Brief History of the 434TH Troop Carrier Group

1943 – 1956

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1943 – 1956

The term "troop carrier," as applied to certain organizations of the Army Air Forces during World War II and later, is, in some respects, a misnomer. The term implies that units so named would be employed primarily in transporting troops. And, in fact, in 1940, when the Air Corps began a long over-due expansion of its transport facilities, authorities were concerned chiefly with increasing the troop transport capability of the American air arm. Two years later, the airborne mission was still considered the primary mission of transport units. On 20 June 1942 the Army Air Forces activated the I Troop Carrier Command and in July changed the designation of a sizable number of organizations from "Transport" to Troop Carrier". As evidence of the interest in the airborne mission of troop carrier units, the original directive to the new command stated: "The primary mission of troop carrier units is to provide transportation for parachute troops, airborne infantry, and glider units." The directive added, however, that troop carrier organizations might be temporarily attached to the theater service commander for the "Transportation of materiel within a theater of operations." Yet during the war the secondary task of transporting material within a theater of operations, which had been assigned to the I Troop Carrier command almost as if on a second thought, became a vital and certainly the most time-consuming task of troop carrier units.

Such was the case of the 434th Troop Carrier Group. From the date of its activation on 9 February 1943 until the invasion of France on 6 June 1944, the group's training pointed toward eventual participation in airborne operations. Yet in the European Theater of Operations, where the 434th was destined to serve in world War II, there were only three major airborne operations and these were widely spaced in time: OVERLORD, the invasion of northern France took place in June 1944; MARKET, the airborne drop in Holland, came in September 1944; VARSITY, the drop on the east bank of the Rhine, was executed in March 1945. These airborne operations figured prominently in the ultimate allied victory. Participation in them marked the highlights of the 434th Group's World War II combat record. Nevertheless, these airborne operations served only as dramatic interludes in the Group's other activities; the missions flown in connection with the airborne operations accounted for only a small fraction of the 434th's total effort. Sandwiched between these dramatic episodes were months of monotonous, routine, and laborious freight-haul operations, which, on more than one occasion in World War II, were a vitally important factor in helping to maintain offensive actions. For World War II proved, among other things, the necessity for aerial supply in highly complex, mechanized, fast-moving modern warfare.

The 434th Group spent eight months in the United States before proceeding overseas. The Group, consisting of headquarters and the 71st, 72nd, 73rd, and 74th Squadrons, was activated at Alliance Army Air Base, Nebraska, where the unit received its training. Because of a shortage of aircraft (C-47s, which the unit was equipped throughout its World War II career), and because of frequent demands on the 434th for personnel to man new units, the unit devoted the bulk of its time for four months to assimilating new personnel and to ground training. By the first of June 1943 the personnel picture had stabilized, and aircraft had become more plentiful. From then until the first of September flying

training was emphasized. Crews flew endless hours on practice missions. All aspects of flying were included, but stress was laid on formation flights (both by daylight and darkness) on the pick-up, tow, and release of gliders. The outstanding phases of training, however, was the work done with airborne troops. The Group took part in paratroop-drop and glider-tow exercises with airborne forces in July and August.

Late in August 1943 the Group was alerted for an overseas move. Early in September the unit left Alliance Field for Baer Field, Indiana, where it received its final overseas processing. The move was accomplished in a relatively short time. Between 19 and 26 September the air echelons of the 71st, 72nd, and 73rd Squadrons departed from Baer field and followed the northern ferry route, via Maine, Labrador, Greenland, Iceland, and Ireland, to England. The echelons of the three squadrons must have assembled at some point en route, for according to the Group's records, the planes arrived "en-masse" at Fulbeck, Lincolnshire, England on 7 October 1943. The air echelon of the remaining squadron, the 74th, left Baer Field on 28 September and, following the southern route (via Morrison field, Florida; Puerto Rico; natal; Ascension island; and North Africa, arrived at Fulbeck some time after the arrival of the other squadrons. Meanwhile, on 1 October the ground echelon had departed Baer Field. It staged through Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and sailed from New Your, aboard the Queen Mary on 9 October. The ground echelon arrived at Gurroch, Scotland, on 17 October; but, because of facilities at Fulbeck were not adequate to care for the entire Group, the echelon proceeded to Cottesmore, some 25 miles from Fulbeck. Personnel of the ground echelon moved to Fulbeck as facilities were made available, and by 13 November the Group was reunited. Meanwhile, on 16 October 1943 the Group had been assigned to the Ninth Air Force and the IX Troop Carrier Command. Shortly thereafter the 50th Troop Carrier Wing arrived in England from the United States, and the Group was further assigned to the wing.

From November 1943 through May 1944 the 434th was engaged in an intense training program, which was designed to prepare troop carrier and airborne units for the airborne phase of the Normandy invasion. In November and through most of December, the 434th was the only American troop carrier group in the theater to train with airborne forces, and between mid-November and 24 December the unit flew a sizable number of practice missions, including paratroop drops and glider tows. Probably in order to permit newly arrived units opportunity to train with airborne forces, the 434th Group's training was limited chiefly to flying training in January and February. During the two months the Group emphasized formation-flying training.

On 3 March 1944 the 434th Group was assigned to the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing. The assignment necessitated a move for the Group. The 53rd Wing had been assigned the task of transporting the 101st Airborne division during the assault and had set up headquarters at Greenham Common, close by division headquarters at Greenham Lodge. Consequently, early in March the 434th moved to Aldermaston, in Southern England, some eight miles from the 53rd Wing's headquarters.

Meanwhile plans for the airborne operation had been altered to include use of a greater number of gliders. The 53rd Wing had been selected to specialize in glider operations; in fact, its glider commitments accounted, in part, for the location of the wing's units in southern England, as close to the assault area as possible. The Wing would also have to be ready for possible paratroop commitments.

During March the 53rd Wing put its groups, including the 434th, through a series of paratroop and glider-tow exercises. The 434th took part in a simulated paratroop drop on the night of 12/13 March and participated in a spectacularly good drop (which was witnessed by Generals Eisenhower and Brereton and Prime Minister Churchill) on 23 March. Emphasis, however, was on glider-tow training. The Group flew practice missions, towing gliders, on 15, 17, 20, and 26 March.

The work with paratroops continued into April. By 18 April, however, the 101st Division decided that its troops had jumped enough. The 434th, along with the 53rd Wing's other units, then turned its attention toward perfecting its flying. In March all groups of the 53rd Wing had done some training with gliders, but the 434th and 437th Groups, which had been picked to specialize in glider operations, flew the largest number of practice glider missions. Before the end of March the two groups had reached the point where they could fly glider formations at night. During April the 53rd Wing's units logged 6,965 hours of glider towing. For the first three weeks of May the 434th and the 437th continued to emphasize glider training. According to the 434th Group Historian, glider tows took place in the "morning, afternoon, and night." On 11 and 12 May training for the airborne operation culminated in a full-scale command exercise, EAGLE. For the remainder of the month the 434th continued its glider-tow practice missions with special emphasis being placed on removing several weaknesses, which had become apparent during EAGLE.

Until the Normandy invasion, allied aircraft had never flown into combat a force larger than a reinforced regimental combat team. In the Normandy operation, however, American troop carrier units transported two reinforced airborne divisions. (British transports flew in another division.) In view of its enormity, importance, and difficulties of the task, it is not surprising that so much time was given over to plans, preparations, and training. The 434th Group, being the first of the IX Troop Carrier command units to reach the theater, trained for some seven months for an operation that was over in a matter of hours. The Group's D-Day mission was to tow gliders, which carried reinforcements to the 101st division troops who had been dropped a few hours earlier. At 0119, 6 June 1944, 52 of the Group's planes, each towing a Waco glider, began their take-off from Aldermaston. Cargo consisted of 155 troops, sixteen 57mm anti-tank guns, 25 vehicles, 2.5 tons of ammunition, and 11 tons of miscellaneous freight. Shortly after take-off, one glider broke loose and landed four miles from base. In it was the radio by which the 101st division was to have communicated with higher headquarters. The remainder of the formation reached Cherbourg peninsula, where it encountered sporadic small arms fire, which shot down one plane and glider. One pilot dropped out of formation and released his glider some eight miles from the designated zone. The remaining 49 planes reached the release area, released their gliders at 0354, and turned back toward England. All landed shortly after 0530. The 434th Group had successfully performed the task for which it had been trained.

The airborne troops who were transported to France on the morning of D-Day depended, to a certain extent, on aerial resupply and reinforcement. The 434th Group participated in the follow-up missions. Late in the afternoon of D-Day the Group sent 32 of its planes, each towing a Horsa glider, back to the 101st division area; the payload consisted of 157 troops, 40 vehicles, 6 guns, and about 19 tons of other equipment and supplies. According to one authoritative source, the mission "proved to be an incredibly easy one". The planes encountered no enemy aircraft and virtually no ground fire. Battle damage consisted of a few nicks on one plane. In the early morning hours of D plus one, the Group flew its last mission in conjunction with the Normandy landing; 50 of its planes, each towing a Waco glider, transported reinforcements to the 82nd Division.

For some six weeks after the invasion, the 434th Group had relatively little to do. In July a number of small airborne operations were contemplated, but were shelved before planning was far advanced. The primary mission of troop carriers, however, remained that of transporting airborne forces in operations, and a training program with airborne troops was initiated. According to the 434th's historian, during July the Group was "occupied with training – ground and air – at old familiar subjects: flying, but not on the desired type of mission."

The undesired type of flying consisted of supply missions flown to France. In July, the Group began a regular mail run to the continent, and on 16 days of the month, it flew supply and evacuation missions, which ranged in size from two to 73 sorties. Supplies transported were, for the most part, critically needed items such as communications equipment and special ammunition. Because of the vast quantities of supplies being built up on the beaches and because of the relatively stable front, there was no need for large-scale aerial supply.

The supply situation on the continent changed abruptly, and all aerial supply to the forward divisions became emergency supply. In late July, American forces broke through at St. Lo, and the third Army covered 100 miles a week. Ground forces shortly were from 100 to 200 miles beyond depots. Because of the shattered condition of the French roads and railroads, surface transport was able to supply forward elements with only a minimum of daily requirements. Under the circumstances, troop carrier units were called upon to help supply the advancing ground forces. It was realized that air supply could not provide all of the supplies required, but it was felt that the supplies delivered by air as a supplement to those delivered by surface means might spell the difference between continuing the offensive and stalling. In early August, therefore, higher headquarters over-ruled senior troop carrier commanders, who had raised objections to the diversion of troop carrier units from their primary task (that of working with airborne forces), and gave air supply precedence over training for airborne operations. Consequently, until mid-September, the 434th Troop Carrier Group was fully occupied with flying supply and evacuation missions. The Group flew supply missions on all but seven days in August. In one week (20th – 26th), "loading by night and with maintenance crews working at all hours," the Group transported over 1,000 tons of supplies (chiefly diesel oil, gasoline, and ammunition) to France for the third Army. The Group continued its heavy schedule off supply operations until 13 September. Although the basic doctrine covering the employment of troop carrier organizations was never altered during World War II, from this beginning in August-September 1944 until the end of the war, the largest portion of the 434th's operational effort was devoted to air supply.

While the 434th Group (as well as virtually all of the IX Troop Carrier Command) was busily engaged in its transport activities, plans had been made for a large-scale airborne operation to support the British 21st Army Group's push into Holland. Late in August, as a prelude to further airborne operations, airborne and troop carrier forces were consolidated into the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA). On 26 August 1944, the IX Troop Carrier command was relieved of assignment to the Ninth Air force and became a part of the newly created FAAA. The 434th remained assigned to the IX Troop Carrier Command and the 53rd Troop Carrier Wing. The FAAA was created in the midst of planning for a major airborne operation, which was to take place in August, but was canceled because the Allied armies overran the objective. In the first week of September two more airborne operations were planned only to be rapidly discarded, one because the objective was overrun, and the other because of unexpectedly strong enemy forces in the proposed drop area. On 10 September, however, Allied

leaders agreed upon an airborne operation (given the code name MARKET) in the vicinity of Arnhem, Holland.

Because of the heavy supply commitment, the 434th Group had no time to train for MARKET. Indeed, MARKET was the only large American airborne operation during World War II for which there was no training program, no rehearsal, almost no exercises, and very little tactical training activity. Nevertheless, when airborne troop began to congregate on the airfield, personnel of the 434th realized that a mission was imminent. On the afternoon of 16 September the briefing of crews began for the operation that was to take place the next day. The main drop of airborne forces was to be accomplished on 17 and 18 September, followed by several resupply missions. Unlike the Normandy operation, MARKET was a daylight affair.

For MARKET, the 434th was again paired with elements of the 101st Airborne Division. Its assigned drop zone was near Eindhoven. On D-Day, 90 of the Group's C-47s dropped elements of the 501st parachute Regiment, scoring a generally excellent drop. Five of the Group's aircraft were knocked down by enemy ground fire. On the next day's follow-up mission, 80 of the Group's aircraft towed Waco gliders on which were loaded troops, vehicles, and supplies. Surface fire was again intense and the Group lost two aircraft. A glider-tow reinforcement mission on the 19th was plagued by wretched weather. The 434th dispatched 80 planes, each with a glider in tow; but available records do not state how many of those sent out completed the mission. The Group's historical report states, "several gliders aborted before reaching the LZ due to weather conditions." The 53rd Wing sent out a total of 385 plane-glider combinations, but only 213 of the gliders reached the landing zone. The weather was scarcely any better on the 20th. But the need for supplies was great, and a resupply mission to the airborne forces was flown. The 101st Division had already made contact with Allied ground forces and was in a fairly comfortable condition. The 82nd Division, however, was being hard pressed, and the 53rd Wing (including 53 aircraft from the 434th Group) dropped supplies to the 82nd's troops. The weather remained bad for the next five days, and air supply was reduced to a trickle. The 434th flew its last mission in connection with MARKET on 25 September, when it provided 16 aircraft for a formation of 34 C-47s dispatched by the 53rd Wing to transport supplies to the 101st Division. Largely because of foul weather, which prevented the troop carriers from bringing in the scheduled supplies and reinforcements, the MARKET operation did not achieve its objective.

From the close of the MARKET operation until near the end of December, the 434th was engaged in supply and evacuation missions. Freight for the most part consisted of ammunition, gasoline, aircraft parts, rations, clothing, and almost every kind of air transportable item needed by both air and ground forces on the Continent. The most outstanding supply operations during the period came in late December, when the Group helped to halt the German Ardennes offensive. For about a week after the German drive opened on the 16th, bad weather prevented the allied air forces from offering any appreciable assistance to the ground forces. When the weather finally broke on the 23rd, however, fighters and bombers turned their attention to the battle area, and troop carrier units began to ferry in supplies and reinforcements. In three days, 23, 24, and 26 December, the 434th flew 161 sorties on supply operations to the beleaguered troops at Bastogne.

The German Ardennes offensive caused the Allies to postpone a planned airborne drop to facilitate a crossing of the Rhine River in the Wesel area. By mid-January, however, the Allies had again seized the initiative, and shortly thereafter planning for the airborne operation (code name VARSITY) was

renewed. The 434th Group flew a few supply missions in the first half of January 1945, but beginning in mid-January the troop carrier units began an intense training program for the forthcoming airborne operation. For more than a month the 434th devoted the bulk of its attention to formation flying training, though once during the month (on 8 February) it participated in a large scale supply mission to the Third Army, which had temporarily outrun its supplies.

Early in the planning for VARSITY, it was decided that troops from the American Airborne Division would be flown from bases on the continent and that British paratroops would be flown from bases in England. Since the 53rd wing was to assist in transporting American troops, the Wing and its five Groups were ordered to move to France. The 434th moved an advanced echelon during the last week of February, but because of delays in readying the Group's new field, at Mourmelon-le-Grand, the bulk of the Group did not begin to move until 10 March; on 18 March the Group was considered "combat operational" at its new base. Until the 17th, the unit's C-47s had kept up an almost constant shuttle, transporting personnel and equipment not only of the Group, but also of attending service organizations from the old to the new base.

The other four Groups of the 53rd Wing moved quickly and spent the first half of March training with the airborne forces. Until planes became fully occupied with moving the unit to France, the 434th had continued flying training; but because of the delay in the move, the Group had no opportunity to train with the forces it was to transport on D-Day. The lack of training did not seem to hurt the Group's performance. On D-Day, 24 March 1945, the 434th provided two formations of 45 aircraft each. The first formation, lead by the Group Commander in whose plane rode the 17th Division Commander, gave a "fairly accurate" drop to the 464th field Artillery Battalion. The second formation dropped the 466th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion, which was to support the 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment. The 513th was dropped at some distance from the specified zone and it was mid-afternoon before troops had fought their way to their proper zone. Throughout the morning, leaders of the 513th were perplexed over the whereabouts of the regiment's supporting artillery. The reason for the lack of contact between the two was, as one authoritative source put it, "that the battalion had come down where it was supposed to, on DZ 'X'. The last parachute serial, a formation of 45 C-47s from the 434th Group, had flown accurately to the drop zone and dropped 376 artillerymen and 12 howitzers there at 1023." Within 30 minutes after its jump, the battalion had some howitzers in operation. All of the airborne forces were dropped on the morning of D-Day, and there were no follow-up missions, as had been the case in OVERLORD and MARKET. There were a few resupply missions flown during the day by Eighth Air Force bombers. By nightfall of D-Day, the airborne and ground forces had joined, and the troop carriers were not called upon for a resupply campaign.

Almost immediately after the VARSITY operation the 434th returned to supply and evacuation operations. A notable difference between the operations of late March and earlier supply efforts was that the missions were now flown to advanced airfields in Germany instead of French fields. In April, as Allied armies began to overrun Germany, ground troops again far outstripped their earthbound transport systems and had to look to air transport for the fuel, ammunition, and rations which could keep them moving. According to the Group Historian, "April 1945 was by far the busiest month in the history of this Group." In the first fourteen days of the month, the Group delivered over 1,000,000 gallons of gasoline to airstrips in Germany. The work continued throughout the month. Some crews flew as many as three round trips a day, and before the end of the month many had accumulated as much as 115 hours flying time in a single month. By the end of the war, the strategic and tactical

significance of air supply had been forcefully brought home to both air and ground forces. As one senior air commander in the theater wrote in May 1945, "Supply by air is a permanent adjunct of military operations."

The end of the war in Europe on 8 May 1945 did not bring troop carrier operations to an abrupt halt. Allied forces in Germany continued to depend to some extent on air supply, and throughout the month the 434th Group continued to fly supply missions to German airfields. Cargo consisted primarily of gasoline. Moreover, the fastest way to evacuate the thousands of freed prisoners of war was by air, and during May the Group transported 17, 540 ex-prisoners of war to relocation centers in France and Holland.

In mid-June 1945 the Group received the welcome news that it was to return to the United States. Preparations were quickly made, and the move was completed by early August. The air echelon returned by way of the south Atlantic ferry route and arrived at Charleston Army Air Base, South Carolina, during the first week of July. The ground echelon remained in the various staging areas in France until 23 July, when personnel boarded the E. B. Alexander for the voyage home. The ground echelon arrived at the New York Port of Embarkation on 2 August and proceeded directly to Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana, where the air echelon joined them.

The 434th Group maintained a somewhat precarious existence for a little less than a year after returning to the United States. On 15 September the Group moved to Alliance Army Air Field, Nebraska. The separation personnel eligible for discharge characterized the brief stay at Alliance. Personnel shortages were made up to some extent by the transfer into the Group of personnel from the recently inactivated 436th group.

Around the first of October, the 434th Group moved to George Field, Lawrenceville, Illinois. Shortly after arriving at the new base, the Group became involved in an air evacuation project, coordinated with the School of Aviation Medicine. Between 15 October 1945 and mid-January 1946, the Group's planes transported many wounded veterans from ports of debarkation to general hospitals throughout the United States. Meanwhile, in November the Group had begun the transition from C-47 to C-46 types of aircraft, and a transition training program had been inaugurated.

From the time of its arrival in the United States, the 434th Group had been harassed by a shortage of personnel, particularly enlisted personnel in certain technical specialties. The situation had become so acute by late January 1946 that the 72nd, 73rd, and 74th Squadrons were reduced to a strength of one officer and one enlisted man, the remainder of the personnel of the three squadrons being transferred to the 71st Squadron.

On 2 February 1946 the Group moved to Greenville Army Air Base, South Carolina. After the move the unit began to train with airborne forces at Fort Banning, Georgia. The Group also hauled freight during the railroad strike in 1946, and participated in an eleven-day airborne demonstration at the United States Military Academy during June. Probably because of the Group's heavy commitments, the 72nd Squadron had been remanned and reequipped in April, and it took part in the June demonstration. On 24 June the Group took part in an airborne landing demonstration at Fort Benning for Military Attaches of several governments.

In the early summer of 1946, the Group was selected to conduct for the Third Air Force a school designed to train airplane pilots in glider operations. By the end of June the 434th had made plans to begin the school the following month. However, in mid-July the Group received notice that it was scheduled for early inactivation, and the school plans were dropped. On 31 July 1946, the 434th Troop Carrier Group was inactivated.

The Group remained inactive for less than one year. On 15 March 1947 the Group was activated at Stout field, Indianapolis, Indiana, as an element of the Air Force Reserve. Initially, the Group was composed of only headquarters and the 71st and 74th Squadrons, but the 72nd and 73rd Squadrons were reactivated and assigned to the Group on 1 August. In October the group was assigned to the 323rd Troop Carrier Wing, which was later redesignated 323rd Air Division, Troop Carrier. In July 1948, the 80th and 81st Troop Carrier Squadrons were assigned to the Group. The Group remained at Stout Field for slightly more than two years, during which time it served as a training agency for Air force Reserve personnel.

In mid-1949, as a part of a general overhaul of troop carrier organizations in the United States Air Force, the Group underwent several changes. In May the Group lost the 80th and 81st squadrons, and in June the Group was relieved of assignment to the 323rd Air Division. Shortly thereafter the unit was redesignated 434th Troop Carrier Group, Medium. On 1 July, in simultaneous actions, the Group was transferred, less personnel and equipment, to Atterbury Air force Base, Columbus, Indiana, and was assigned to the 434th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium.

At Atterbury, the Group continued to serve as a training organization for the Air Force Reservists. Most of the training was accomplished on weekends. From early in 1948 until August 1949 the Group was assigned C-47s. In August, however, the unit converted to C-46s, and training for the most part consisted of transition flying training. Before the transition was completed, the Group spent two weeks in the summer of 1950 (8 - 22 July) on active duty in a summer encampment.

On 2 May 1951 the Group was called to active military duty for 21 months. By 1951 the supply function that had been forced on troop carrier organizations by the exigencies of war during World War II had become one of the fixed tasks of troop carrier units. The overall mission of the 434th Group was: **To maintain a state of readiness for and to execute assigned combat missions. To provide air transportation for airborne forces into combat, and to resupply such forces until they are withdrawn or can be supplied by other means. For movement of personnel, equipment, and supplies, including air evacuation within the theater of operations.**

For 21 month, the 434th was engaged in meeting this mission. The first 60 days after being called to active duty, the Group was busy with an intense training program that was designed to put the unit on a combat-ready status. By 1 July, requirements set by higher headquarters had been met, and the Group was ready to participate in all phases of troop carrier operations. Meanwhile, on 1 June all of Tactical Air Command's troop carrier groups had been assigned to the newly activated Eighteenth Air Force, and from 1 July 1951 through January 1953 the 434th Group was occupied in meeting the training requirements and flying missions as directed by TAC and the Eighteenth Air Force. For example, the 60-day training period was scarcely over when, on 21 July, the Group became engaged in Exercise Southern Pine, a major air-ground exercise held in the Fort Bragg-Camp Mackall area of North Carolina. Between 21 July and 31 August the Group transported personnel and equipment of

participating units to and from the exercise area and took part in several airborne operations during the maneuver. September was devoted largely to unit training, but from October through December the Group was heavily committed to cargo and passenger airlifts and to paratroops of the 11th and 82nd Airborne Divisions.

In January 1952 the Group moved to Lawson Air Force Base, Georgia, where it remained for the rest of its active duty tour. Throughout the year 1952 the Group furnished aircraft for the airborne training program being conducted by airborne troops at nearby Fort Benning, and took part in numerous airborne exercise and demonstrations at various points in the United States. It also flew a variety of special supply missions as ordered by higher headquarters. Moreover, in January and February the Group transported airborne personnel from Kentucky to New York for Exercise SNOWFALL, and later in the year it participated in exercise LONGHORN.

In January 1953 the Group's 21 months of active duty were completed, and on 1 February 1953 the 434th was inactivated. On the same day however, the Group was reactivated at Atterbury Air Force Base, Columbus, Indiana. Again allotted to the Air Force Reserve, it resumed its mission of training Air Force reservists.

A. ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS

Constituted

Headquarters, 434th Troop Carrier Group. WD Ltr. AG 320.2 (1-28-43)
OB-I-AF-M, dated 30 January 1943.

Activated

At Alliance Army Air Field, Nebraska, on 9 February 1943. GO 3, HQ., Army Air Base,
Alliance, Nebraska 1943, pursuant to above-cited WD Ltr. Dated 30 January 1943.

Inactivated

At Greenville Army Air Base, South Carolina, on 31 July 1946. GO 77, Hq., Third Air Force,
29 July 1946, pursuant to WD Ltr. AG 322 (9 Jul 46) AO-I-AFCOR (169(e))-M, dated 12 July
1946.

Allotted to the Organized Reserves

On 29 January 1947. WD Ltr. AG AO-I 322 (23 Jan 47) AFCOR (403(e))-M, dated 29 January
1947.

Activated

At Stout Field, Indianapolis, Indiana, on 15 March 1947. GO 8, Hq., Eleventh Air Force,
6 March 1947, pursuant to the above-cited WD Ltr., dated 29 January 1947.

Redesignated

Headquarters 434th Troop Carrier Group. Medium, effective 1 July 1949. GO 49, HQ., Tenth
Air Force, 1 July 1949, pursuant to DAF Ltr. 322 (AFOOR 225f), 1 July 1949.

Ordered to Active Military Duty

Effective 1 May 1951, at Atterbury Air Force Base, Indiana. DAF Ltr. 322 (AFOMO 3g),
2 February 1951.

Relieved from Active Duty

Effective 1 February 1953. DAF Ltr. 322 (AFOMO 266h), 15 December 1952.

Inactivated

At Lawson Air Force Base, Columbus, Georgia, effective 1 February 1953. GO 9, Hq., Eighteenth Air Force, 23 January 1953, pursuant to above-cited DAF Ltr., 15 December 1952.

Allotted to Air Force Reserve

Effective 1 February 1953. By above-cited DAF Ltr., 15 December 1952.

Activated

At Atterbury Air Force Base, Indiana, effective 1 February 1953. GO 4, Hq., Tenth Air Force, 29 January 1953, pursuant to above-cited DAF Ltr., 15 December 1952.

B. COMPOSITION

Headquarters			9 Feb 43 – 31 Jul 46
71 st Troop Carrier Squadron			9 Feb 43 – 31 Jul 46
72 nd Troop Carrier Squadron			9 Feb 43 – 31 Jul 46
73 rd Troop Carrier Squadron			9 Feb 43 – 31 Jul 46
74 th Troop Carrier Squadron			9 Feb 43 – 31 Jul 46
	*	*	*
Headquarters			15 Mar 47 – 1 Feb 53
71 st Troop Carrier Squadron			15 Mar 47 – 1 Feb 53
72 nd Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Aug 47 – 1 Feb 53
73 rd Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Aug 47 – 1 Jul 48 1 Jul 49 – 1 Feb 53
74 th Troop Carrier Squadron			15 Mar 47 – 2 May 51
80 th Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Jul 48 – 6 Jun 49
81 st Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Jul 48 – 6 Jun 49
	*	*	*
Headquarters			1 Feb 53 –
71 st Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Feb 53 –
72 nd Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Feb 53 –
73 rd Troop Carrier Squadron			1 Feb 53 – 24 Mar 54

C. ASSIGNMENTS

I Troop Carrier Command; 50th Troop Carrier Wing: 9 February 1943

I Troop Carrier Command; 53rd Troop Carrier Wing: 9 April 1943

Ninth Air Force; IX Troop Carrier Command: 16 October 1943

Ninth Air force; IX Troop Carrier Command; 50th Troop Carrier Wing: October 1943

United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe; IX Troop Carrier Command; 53rd Troop Carrier Wing:
26 August 1944

Continental Air Forces; I Troop Carrier Command: July 1945

Continental Air Forces; I Troop Carrier Command: 61st Troop Carrier Wing: August 1945

Continental Air Forces; I Troop Carrier Command: 52nd Troop Carrier Wing: 5 October 1945

Continental Air Forces; IX Troop Carrier Command; 52nd Troop Carrier Wing: 5 November 1945

Continental Air Forces; IX Troop Carrier Command; 50th Troop Carrier Wing: 5 February 1946

Tactical Air Command; Third Air Force; 50th Troop Carrier Wing: 1 April – 31 July 1946

* * *

Air Defense Command; Eleventh Air Force: 15 March 1947

Air Defense Command; Eleventh Air Force; 323rd Troop Carrier Wing: 17 October 1947

(323rd Troop Carrier Wing redesignated 323rd Air Division, Troop Carrier, 16 April 1948)

Air Defense Command; Tenth Air Force; 323rd Air Division, Troop Carrier: 1 July 1948

Continental Air Command; Tenth Air Force; 323rd Air Division, Troop Carrier: 1 December 1948

Continental Air Command; Tenth Air Force: 27 June 1949

Continental Air Command; Tenth Air Force; 434th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium: 1 July 1949

Tactical Air Command; 434th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium: 2 May 1951

Tactical Air Command; Eighteenth Air Force; 434th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium: 1 June 1951 –
1 February 1953

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Continental Air Command; Tenth Air Force; 434th Troop Carrier Wing, Medium: 1 February 1953

D. STATION LIST

Alliance Army Air Field, Alliance, Nebraska	9 Feb 43 – 1 Sep 43
Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana	Sep 43 – Oct 43
En route overseas	
Air Echelon	19 Sep 43 – <u>c.</u> 15 Oct 43
Ground Echelon	1 Oct 43 – 17 Oct 43
Fulbeck, England	Oct 43 – 3 Mar 44
Aldermaston, England	3 Mar 44 – Feb-Mar 45
Mourmelon-le-Grand, France	Feb-Mar 45 – Jun 45
En route to United States	Jun 45 – Aug 45
Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana	Aug 45 – 13 Sep 45
Alliance Army Air Field, Alliance, Nebraska	13 Sep – 1 Oct 45
George Field, Lawrenceville, Illinois	1 Oct 45 – 2 Feb 46
Greenville Army Air Base, Greenville, SC	2 Feb 46 – 31 Jul 46
* *	*
Stout Field, Indianapolis, Indiana	15 Mar 47 – 1 Jul 49
Atterbury Air Force Base, Columbus, Indiana	1 Jul 49 – 22 Jan 52
Lawson Air Force Base, Columbus, Georgia	23 Jan 52 – 1 Feb 53
* *	*
Atterbury Air Force Base, Columbus, Indiana (Redesignated Bakalar Air Force Base, 1 November 1954)	1 Feb 53 –

E. COMMANDING OFFICERS

Maj. Edward F. Cullerton	9 Feb 43 - 18 Aug 43
Lt. Col. Fred D. Stevens	18 Aug 43 – 29 Nov 43
Col. William B. Whitacre	29 Nov 43 – 17 Dec 44
Lt. Col. Ben A. Garland	17 Dec 44 – 15 Sep 45
Lt. Col. Frank W. Handsby	15 Sep 45 – 1 Oct 45
Col. Adriel N. Williams	1 Oct 45 – 31 Jul 46
	* * *
Col. Wallace L. Linn	1 May 51 – 20 Feb 52
Lt. Col. Jack F. Linn	20 Feb 52 – 1 Feb 53

F. AIRCRAFT USED

C-47 February 1943 – November 1945
 March 1947 – July 1949

C-46 November 1945 – July 1946
 August 1949 –

G. BATTLE HONORS

Normandy, France	WD GO 102, 1945
Northern France	WD GO 103, 1945
Ardennes	WD GO 114, 1945
Changed to Ardennes-Alsace by WD GO 24, 1947	
Central Europe	WD GO 116, 1945
Rhineland	WD GO 118, 1945

H. DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION

For outstanding performance
of duty, on 5, 6, and 7 June 1944

WD GO 85, 1944

C I T A T I O N

The 434th Troop Carrier Group is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 5, 6, and 7 June 1944. On these dates, members of Group Headquarters, and of the 71st, 72nd, 73rd, and 74th Troop Carrier Squadrons of the 434th Troop Carrier Group completed 132 powered aircraft sorties and 132 glider sorties in the troop carrier spearhead of the Allied invasion of the European Continent. Notwithstanding the fact that all of the unarmed and unarmored aircraft of the 434th Troop Carrier Group were flown at minimum altitudes and air speeds, under unfavorable weather conditions, over water, and into the face of vigorous enemy opposition, with no possibility of employing evasive action, their gliders carrying essential airborne infantrymen and urgent supplies were accurately released over pin-point objectives. The outstanding courage, skill, and fearless initiative demonstrated by all of the personnel of the 434th Troop Carrier Group, both individually and as a closely knit combat team, contributed immeasurably to the success of the European invasion and materially accelerated the collapse of enemy forces on the Normandy coast. The victorious exploits of the 434th Troop Carrier Group are exemplary of the highest tradition of the Army Air Forces.

I. FOREIGN AWARDS

French Fourragere

Normandy, 5 – 6 June 1944

DA GO 43, 1950

France; 6 June, and 20-28 August 1944

DA GO 43, 1950

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This brief history of the 434th Troop Carrier Group is based primarily on the historical records of the unit available in the USAF Historical Division Archives. The unit's records (generally in the form of monthly historical reports) are complete for the period from activation, 9 February 1943 through June 1946, and for the period of its postwar active duty period, May 1951 – January 1953. USAF Reserve units are not required to submit historical reports to the USAF Historical Division, and no records are available for the periods during which the Group was an element of the Air force Reserve. For the reserve periods, chief reliance has been placed on: War Department and Department of the Air Force Adjutant General files; Photostat copy of Unit Record Card maintained by the Director of Statistical Services, Headquarters USAF.

For World War II operations, use has been made of USAF Historical Studies No. 97, "Airborne Operations in World War II, European Theater," and W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, eds., The Army Air Forces in World War II, Volume III (Chicago, 1951).

Prepared by
USAF Historical Division
Research Studies Institute
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama
March 1957