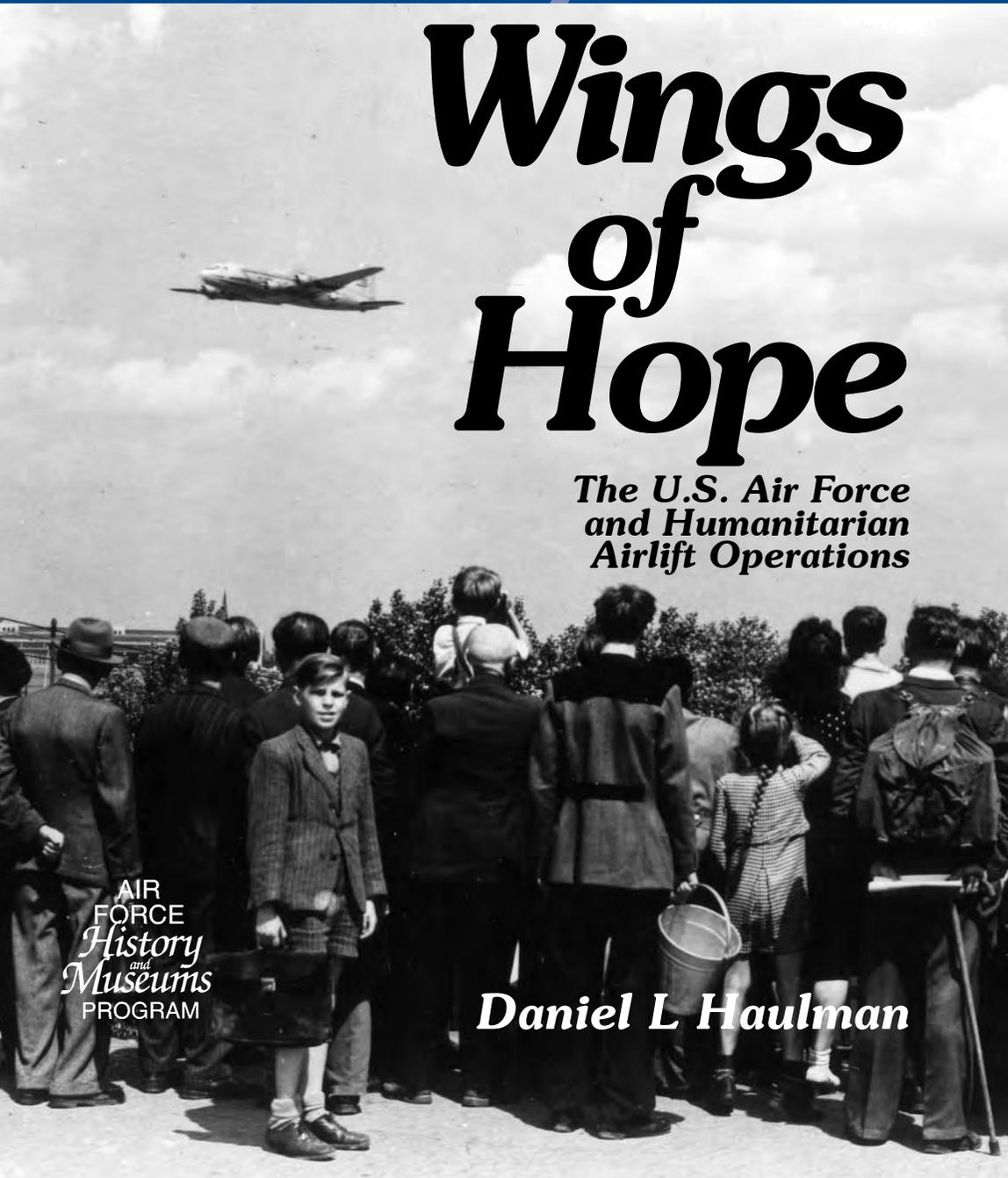




**Air Force**  
**Sixtieth Anniversary**  
Commemorative Edition



**Wings  
of  
Hope**

**The U.S. Air Force  
and Humanitarian  
Airlift Operations**

AIR  
FORCE  
*History  
and  
Museums*  
PROGRAM

**Daniel L Haulman**

# **Wings of Hope**

**The U.S. Air Force  
and  
Humanitarian Airlift Operations**

**Daniel L. Haulman**

**Air Force History and Museums Program**

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**Cover Photograph:** German citizens observe airlift operations in Berlin.

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C-47s unloading on the ramp at Templehof Airport.

## **WINGS OF HOPE**

### **The U.S. Air Force and Humanitarian Airlift Operations**

The victims of recent wars and atrocities in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and northern Iraq have captured the world's attention. The United States has responded to their cries for help by carrying out humanitarian relief operations to these and other areas devastated by natural or man-made disasters. The compassionate codenames chosen by U.S. policymakers for these operations—Provide Comfort, Provide Hope, Provide Promise, Provide Relief, and Restore Hope—signify the nation's determination to alleviate the suffering of those less fortunate than itself. On the heels of its spectacular and decisive role in the Gulf War, the United States Air Force has demonstrated its immense capability to airlift tons of supplies and personnel in a wide variety of highly significant relief efforts.



Operation Provide Comfort delivered relief supplies to Kurdish refugees.

### **The Beginnings of Humanitarian Airlift**

The Air Force's humanitarian operations received wide attention during the 1990s, as they will for years to come. They are part of a well-established tradition dating back three-quarters of a century to the early days of military flight.

The nation's first airmen recognized early on aviation's potential for alleviating the effects of natural disasters. As early as September 1919,



Military Airlift Command's C-5s helped deliver relief supplies to Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq in Operation Provide Comfort in mid-1991.

Army Air Service planes from Kelly Field, Texas, dropped food supplies to marooned flood victims along the Rio Grande. On a few occasions during the 1920s, American aviators bombed their own country—for good cause. They delivered ordnance against ice jams in the Delaware, Platte, and Susquehanna rivers to prevent flooding, save bridges, and restore navigation.<sup>1</sup> In March 1929 at least twenty-one airplanes from Maxwell Field, Alabama, delivered twenty-seven tons of food and other supplies to flood victims in the southern part of the state.<sup>2</sup>

The Army flew several dramatic relief missions during the 1930s. In 1932 bombers dropped supplies to Navajo Indians who had become snow-bound by severe blizzards in Arizona.<sup>3</sup> In December 1935 the 5th Bombardment Group bombed the Mauna Loa volcano, diverting its lava flow away from Hilo, Hawaii.<sup>4</sup> In 1936 Air Corps squadrons flew food and other supplies to flood victims in Pennsylvania and the following year to southern Illinois.<sup>5</sup> During February 1939 the Army air-delivered medical aid in the wake of an earthquake in Chile.<sup>6</sup>

World War II proved the most costly conflict in history. It has been estimated that during the six years of warfare, about 85 million people were killed and another 60 million rendered homeless.<sup>7</sup> Around the globe, staggering numbers of unfortunates needed food and medical relief.

The Army Air Forces, while contributing to the Allied victory in every theater of the war, also flew vital humanitarian missions. In September 1944 the AAF began flying food into France, a country whose national transportation system had become virtually unusable and whose gross national product by 1945 had dropped to less than half of its prewar level.<sup>8</sup> The Netherlands had been one of the world's most prosperous countries

since the seventeenth century, but the war inflicted terrible hardships on this small land. Occupying German forces opened the sluice gates of dikes and caused huge floods. In “Operation Chowhound,” flown during the last month of the war in Europe, Army aviators brought food to Dutch civilians.<sup>9</sup>

### **Post-World War II through the Korean War, 1945-1953**

Soon after the defeat of the Axis powers, fundamental differences between the United States and the Soviet Union in ideology, economics, and foreign policy—which had been muted by the two allies during the war—came into sharp relief. The two powers entered a period of international tension that came to be known as the Cold War.

In 1947 communists fomented a civil war in Greece and President Harry Truman sent several hundred million dollars in aid to that nation and Turkey. The United States offered far greater assistance in the Marshall Plan, announced the following year. This economic effort helped Western Europe recover from its wartime devastation and build a prosperity that blunted the appeal of communism. The United States also responded to the challenges posed by the Soviet Union during the late 1940s by extensively reorganizing the Defense Department. It was during this period, in September 1947, that the United States Air Force emerged as an independent service, separate from the Army.<sup>10</sup>

In February 1948 the communists seized power in Czechoslovakia by a coup and in June of that year the Soviet Union tried to sever Berlin from the Western powers. At the end of World War II, the victorious allies had reached an agreement about the division of Germany, under which the United States, Great Britain, and France occupied three western zones, which eventually became the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany, and the Soviet Union occupied an eastern zone, which eventually became the Peoples Democratic Republic of Germany, or East Germany. Berlin lay within the Soviet zone and was similarly divided into zones of occupation by the same four powers. The agreement assured the three Western nations access to the city along the autobahns which ran through the Soviet zone.

The Soviets reneged on this agreement and in June 1948 closed the overland routes into Berlin. Communist demonstrators drove out the elected members of the city assembly. For the next few months, the various functions of the local government were divided between east and west.

These developments led to the first humanitarian airlift of the Cold War, and the largest in history. On June 28 President Truman decided, as Secretary of Defense James Forrestal recalled his words: “We [are] going to stay[,] period.” The United States Air Force began flying Operation Vittles, which became known as the Berlin Airlift. More than 300



A Berlin Airlift C-54 flies over a group of interested German bystanders.

American aircraft shuttled over 1,500,000 tons of food, medicine, coal, and other supplies into the Western sector of the capital city. The Royal Air Force contributed 101 airplanes and other support to this massive effort. The Western allies sustained the Berlin Airlift for 462 days, making almost 190,000 flights. In September 1949 the Soviet Union finally conceded that its blockade had failed, and lifted it.<sup>11</sup>

The significance of the Berlin Airlift in international politics can hardly be exaggerated. Operation Vittles preserved West Berlin, a thorn in the side of East Germany, and contributed to German reunification under a democratic government in 1990. This historic effort proved that an airlift alone could sustain a large population which was completely surrounded by hostile forces. Operation Vittles also demonstrated America's commitment to defend the "free world" from communist expansion. Finally, the Air Force sustained the Berlin Airlift at the same time that negotiations were underway to create the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the successful operation provided a compelling example of the ability of the Western allies to work together.



This C-54 commemorated the achievements of the Berlin Airlift.

After this wrenching crisis over Berlin, Cold War tensions extended into the early 1950s, as the Soviet Union continued to pursue a belligerent foreign policy. On September 22, 1949, President Truman announced that the Soviets had tested an atomic bomb. Few American officials had expected the Soviets to develop this weapon so quickly. After learning of the test, Senator Arthur Vandenberg declared: "This is now a different world."<sup>12</sup>

Ominous developments took place in China as well. The civil war there ended in 1949 in a communist victory, and the new government soon joined the Soviets in stirring up trouble for the United States around the globe. The Cold War turned hot in June 1950 when North Korea, supplied with arms and encouraged by the Soviets, invaded South Korea. President Truman sent United States forces to defend the South, and the United Nations also called on its members to help repel the communist attack. The UN command drove back the North Koreans, but the Chinese came to their aid and the fighting seesawed down and up the Korean peninsula. After three years of bloody conflict and two years of frustrating negotiations, the communists agreed to a truce and recognized an armistice line similar to the prewar one. The intervention of the United States and the UN had saved South Korea from its neighbor's aggression.<sup>13</sup>

The armistice that ended hostilities included provisions for exchanging prisoners of war. In the course of "Little Switch," between April 20 and May 3, 1953, the UN released 6,670 prisoners of war in return for 684 held by the North Koreans. During "Big Switch," which began late that July, the allies exchanged 75,823 POWs for 12,773. A host of four-engined C-124s, C-54s, and C-97s, as well as two-engined C-46s and C-47s, brought these POWs home.<sup>14</sup>



Repatriated South Korean soldiers arrive at Freedom Village in August 1953.

During the Korean War, the U.S. carried out a dramatic humanitarian airlift in the Middle East that was necessitated by a breakdown of transportation arrangements, rather than by war or natural catastrophe. In 1952 about 3,700 Islamic pilgrims en route to Mecca became stranded in Beirut, Lebanon. Thirteen Air Force C-54s flew them to the holy city in time for their religious observances and won America considerable goodwill among Arabs.<sup>15</sup>



Islamic pilgrims traveling to Mecca on an Air Force C-54 in 1952.

Natural disasters the following year led to some of the largest airlifts ever flown on the Pacific Rim. In June and July 1953 floods struck Kyushu and southern Honshu, Japan, leaving more than 600 people dead, over 1,100 injured, and in excess of a million homeless. At least twenty-eight American C-119s, C-46s, and C-47s from Ashiya and Itami air bases airlifted more than 157 tons of relief cargo—including helicopters, water purification equipment, electric generators, bedding, food, clothing, and medicine—to the stricken islands. This airlift relieved the suffering of the flood victims, and also demonstrated the commitment of the United States to the welfare of Japan, which for four years had provided bases for America's Korean War operations.<sup>16</sup>

The humanitarian missions flown during this period did not all take place overseas. The Air Force mounted Operation Hayride, the second



Operation Hayride supplied western states snowed under in early 1949.

largest domestic airlift, in early 1949, after blizzards hit eight western states. Cargo aircraft made more than 200 flights and transported more than 4,700 tons of supplies and equipment to areas hit by the storms.<sup>17</sup>

### **From the Korean War to the Vietnam War, 1953-1965**

Between the Korean and Vietnam wars, the United States Air Force flew a large number of humanitarian airlift missions. The majority were prompted by natural disasters—largely floods and earthquakes—but a few were precipitated by political crises. As during the early years of the Cold War, the Air Force mounted most of these operations overseas, although in some cases its help was called for at home.

Natural disasters and human conflicts generated several missions in 1954. That year a flood devastated India and East Pakistan, and at least twenty-seven American cargo planes transported more than 150 tons of medical supplies, bedding, food, clothing, and other items to the stricken region.<sup>18</sup> After the communist victory at Dien Bien Phu in the spring of 1953, the French began withdrawing their forces from Southeast Asia. During the following year twenty C-124s, C-97s, and C-118s helped airlift more than 500 wounded French soldiers from Indochina to France or to North Africa.<sup>19</sup>

Diplomatic events motivated other airlift operations during the mid-1950s. In May 1955 the Air Force conducted one of its most unusual humanitarian missions when it flew twenty-five Japanese women, victims of the bombing of Hiroshima, to New York for plastic surgery. This goodwill gesture contributed to the strong friendship which developed between the United States and Japan after World War II.<sup>20</sup>

Two major Cold War events put Air Force cargo planes into the air in 1956. In late July Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the British-controlled Universal Suez Canal Company, precipitating an international crisis that lasted through the end of the year. Twenty-four aircraft evacuated hundreds of Americans from the Middle East during this exigency.<sup>21</sup> In October, Hungarians rebelled against the communist regime the Soviet Union had installed in their country. Soviet tanks crushed the rebellion, driving thousands of refugees into West Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. In November and December, Air Force cargo planes brought 189 tons of food and supplies to the camps housing these fugitives.<sup>22</sup> By the end of June 1957, airlifts Safe Haven I and II had transported more than 10,000 refugees from Europe to new homes in the United States.<sup>23</sup>



Hungarian refugees arrive in the U.S. during Operation Safe Haven.

Natural disasters prompted several USAF humanitarian missions during the early 1960s. A particularly prominent example came in response to a series of earthquakes that struck Chile on May 21 and 22, 1960. The tremors, some registering more than seven on the Richter scale, produced avalanches, landslides, tidal waves, and even volcanic eruptions. Eight thousand people were left dead or missing, 5,500 were injured, and more

than 240,000 were left homeless. Chile requested American assistance, and the State Department solicited a military airlift.<sup>24</sup> Between May 23 and June 23 Air Force transporters brought more than 1,000 tons of disaster relief equipment and supplies to the beleaguered country, in an operation called the “Amigos Airlift.” The cargo included two Army field hospitals, ten Army helicopters, tents, cots, blankets, clothing, and food. Four Air Force wings based in the United States participated in the airlift, as did the service’s Caribbean Command in the Panama Canal Zone. They flew a variety of transport aircraft, including two-engine C-47s and four-engine C-118s, C-124s, and C-54s, and H-19 helicopters as well. In addition to the relief cargo, the airplanes carried more than 2,400 passengers, including refugees, medical personnel, and communications specialists. Most of the flights followed a 4,500-mile, 25-hour route from various terminals in the United States to Santiago, Chile, with refueling stops in Panama and Peru.<sup>25</sup>



The Amigos Airlift in mid-1960 supplied food to Chilean earthquake victims.

In the autumn of 1960 a cyclone struck East Pakistan and seven C-130s and C-124s delivered eighty-nine tons of relief cargo.<sup>26</sup> In October 1961 two C-130s and seven C-124s transported more than 260 tons of construction equipment, sand bags, and water purification equipment to help flood victims in Cambodia.<sup>27</sup> Forty-seven planes delivered

more than 900 tons of relief cargo to Iran after an earthquake in 1962.<sup>28</sup> Shortly after Typhoon Karen struck Guam the same year, that island's Andersen Air Force Base became the target of another major humanitarian airlift. Fifty transports delivered 970 tons of relief supplies and evacuated 760 people.<sup>29</sup> The presence of an American air force base on Guam facilitated a quick response to the devastation.

Floods prompted two significant airlifts in 1964. In the first, seven C-130s ferried 946 tons of supplies to Pakistan after a late-summer Indus River disaster brought widespread damage to the provinces of Punjab and Sind.<sup>30</sup> Later in the year, a fleet of helicopters, C-123s, and C-124s, as well as C-130s responded to a flood in South Vietnam. These airlifters delivered more than 2,000 tons of food, clothing, medicine, boats, and fuel, and carried over 1,500 evacuees to higher ground.<sup>31</sup>

During this period the Air Force flew important domestic, as well as foreign, missions. In March and April 1964 Operation Helping Hand aided victims of an earthquake in Anchorage, Alaska. At least 105 cargo planes and helicopters delivered 1,850 tons of generators, water purification facilities, construction equipment, food, medicine, bedding, clothing, and other cargo to the disaster zone. They also airlifted 850 personnel, including emergency rescue workers and evacuees.<sup>32</sup> Operation Biglift of December 1964 and January 1965 offered a final notable example during this period. After flooding in California and Oregon, transporters mounted 245 flights and delivered 1,598 tons of relief equipment and supplies.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Vietnam War Era, 1965-1973**

During the early 1960s the United States gradually became engaged in an undeclared war in Southeast Asia. After President John Kennedy's assassination in November 1963, Vice President Lyndon Johnson succeeded him and further expanded America's military commitment to South Vietnam. As the war against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese dragged on through the remainder of the 1960s, casualties mounted and the public became increasingly frustrated by the conflict. Domestic dissent climbed to unprecedented heights. In 1969 Richard Nixon succeeded Johnson as president and tried to address the country's frustration by "Vietnamizing" the war, shifting the burden of the combat to the South Vietnamese while withdrawing American forces. The last American units left Southeast Asia in 1973 and the tragedy culminated when the North Vietnamese overran South Vietnam during the spring of 1975.<sup>34</sup>

During this period the Air Force undertook not only extensive combat air operations in Southeast Asia, but also many humanitarian airlift missions. It was not surprising that the first of these involved South Vietnam. As the conflict there intensified in 1965, the number of refugees increased, and during October and November seventeen C-130s airlifted 157 tons of clothing to displaced South Vietnamese peasants.<sup>35</sup>



Schoolchildren of South Vietnam receive school supplies donated by citizens of Huber Heights, Ohio.

The Air Force directed several of its Vietnam-era airlift operations to Pakistan. In November and December 1970, at least seventeen C-141s and C-130s delivered over 140 tons of equipment and supplies to East Pakistan to relieve cyclone victims.<sup>36</sup> The following summer the airlifters were active again in the same region. Hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to India from a civil war in East Pakistan, and thirteen C-130s and C-141s brought over 2,000 tons of food, medicine, and other supplies to them. These aircraft also evacuated more than 23,000 refugees from overcrowded camps.<sup>37</sup> In 1973 Pakistan became the focus of the largest airlift, in tonnage, ever staged in west Asia. Two C-5s and twelve C-141s transported a record 2,400 tons of relief supplies and equipment to help flood victims.<sup>38</sup>

Hundreds of miles to the east, the Vietnam War came to a tragic end during the spring of 1975. When the Saigon regime collapsed, airlifters rescued tens of thousands of refugees. The mass evacuation of South Vietnam was accomplished by a complex of four overlapping operations:

Babylift, New Life, Frequent Wind, and New Arrivals. Most of the Vietnamese evacuees eventually settled in the United States. At least forty aircraft participated in the emergency missions at the end of the war. Air Force planes also delivered more than 8,000 tons of supplies to temporary refugee camps in the Philippines and on Guam and Wake islands.<sup>39</sup>



Refugees from South Vietnam being evacuated from Saigon to Guam aboard an Air Force C-141.

### **From the Vietnam War through the Gulf War, 1973-1991**

Since the Vietnam War, humanitarian airlift operations have required more special equipment and increasingly skilled operators. Using modified cargo planes in a series of domestic shuttle flights, the Air Force sprayed more than 2,000 tons of fire suppressant chemicals over each of three western forest fires during the summers of 1977, 1979, and 1987.<sup>40</sup> The service's fire-fighting aircraft also sprayed more than 1,000 tons of chemicals over forest fires in California in August 1975 and in North Carolina in May 1986.<sup>41</sup>

Throughout this period, Africa remained a continent in much need of assistance. Drought and famine drew American airlifters to the Sahel region, just south of the Sahara, during the 1970s and 1980s. U.S. Air Force planes delivered large quantities of food to millions of hungry

Africans, whose plight was publicized worldwide by rock musicians who performed at fund-raising concerts.

Two of the largest Air Force humanitarian airlift operations to Africa were Authentic Assistance in 1973 and King Grain in 1974. In each instance, transporters delivered more than 9,000 tons of food to Mali, Chad, and Mauritania after a severe drought and famine. Fleets of four-engine C-130s distributed rice, wheat, flour, and powdered milk to villages in the Sahel region. The African climate prevented the planes from storing liquid oxygen for high-altitude flights, and a combination of heat, dust, poor fuel, and rocky runways multiplied aircraft maintenance problems. Yet the cargo carriers were able to deliver more than 18,000 tons of food to famine victims in less than two years.<sup>42</sup> In an October 1989 operation called Africa-2, an Air Force C-5 brought 250 tons of food, clothing, washing machines, and refrigerators to Chad and neighboring countries.<sup>43</sup>



Rollers are dragged to an Air Force C-5 in Operation Africa-2.

Asia rivaled Africa in receiving the attention of USAF airlifters after the Vietnam War. An earthquake in Turkey triggered an operation of 606 tons, carried by forty cargo planes.<sup>44</sup> During the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979, more than 100 C-5 and C-141 flights evacuated 5,800 Americans from that nation.<sup>45</sup> A much longer airlift, lasting from 1986 to beyond 1991, aided Afghan refugees who had fled to Pakistan after the Soviet Union invaded their country. During its first two years, this operation delivered more than 400 tons of relief supplies and transported over 400 injured war victims to other nations for medical treatment. By the end of 1991, the Military Airlift Command had flown over 100 missions for the Afghan refugees in Pakistan.<sup>46</sup> A severe earthquake struck Armenia at



An injured Afghan refugee receives assistance upon his arrival from Pakistan.

the end of 1988, and between that December and a year later, five C-5s, fourteen C-141s, and one C-9 airlifted 547 tons of tents, blankets, medicine, food, clothing, and trucks to the victims of the disaster.<sup>47</sup>

Much closer to home, Hurricane Hugo tore through the Caribbean in September 1989 before hitting South Carolina. In the wake of this storm, a fleet of C-5s, C-141s, C-130s, and a KC-10 made 128 flights and delivered more than 3,900 tons of relief supplies to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Early Nineties, 1991-1994**

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, its small neighbor to the south. Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein occupied this oil-rich nation with infantry and armored units and declared it his country's nineteenth province. With Saddam's forces threatening Saudi Arabia, the USAF moved quickly. Along with the other military services, it conducted Operation Desert Shield, an enormous deployment to defend the Saudi kingdom, and President George Bush mobilized an international coalition against Saddam Hussein. The United Nations set January 15, 1991, as the deadline for the Iraqi dictator to end the illegal occupation of Kuwait. After Saddam defied this warning, almost forty nations participated in Desert Storm, the military operation which liberated Kuwait. U.S. Air Force and other coalition pilots flew a remarkably successful forty-three

day air campaign, the centerpiece of the coalition's victory over Iraq in the Gulf War.<sup>49</sup>

In the wake of the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein brutally crushed a rebellion of the Kurds within his own country. During Provide Comfort, flown between April and July 1991, the USAF airlifted nearly 40,000 tons of relief supplies to Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. The operation's 1,100 missions also moved more than 14,000 of these displaced people.<sup>50</sup>



In northern Iraq, a C-130 flies over a hastily-prepared airstrip during a Provide Comfort airlift mission.

During the Gulf War the Soviet Union offered no obstacles to American actions, because the once-dangerous superpower was now beset with severe problems of its own. In November 1989 the East German government had dismantled the Berlin Wall and accepted free travel across the city and elsewhere within East Germany. Throughout Eastern Europe, democratic governments began to replace communist dictatorships which had held power for more than a generation. Within the Soviet Union itself, an August 1991 coup by communist hardliners briefly threatened President Mikhail Gorbachev. After his reinstatement, further democratic reforms led by Boris Yeltsin spawned the dissolution of the Soviet Union and replaced it with the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Cold War ended and a new era opened in international relations.<sup>51</sup>

These momentous events during the early 1990s created a need for massive humanitarian operations. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, economic distress threatened its citizens with malnutrition and disease, and in February 1992 the United States mounted a humanitarian airlift to help the people of this enormous nation. The first phase of this operation, called Provide Hope, delivered 2,274 tons of food and medical sup-

plies to the former Soviet republics, with nineteen C-5 and forty-six C-141 missions flown within seventeen days. A second phase, of 182 missions, followed from late February 1992 to September 1993.<sup>52</sup>



Soldiers from the former Soviet republics unload medicine and supplies from an Air National Guard C-141.

An even greater tragedy befell Yugoslavia, where the collapse of the decades-old communist regime resulted in the disintegration of the country. Conflict within Bosnia-Herzegovina among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims disrupted the economy and threatened the people of Sarajevo with starvation. In response, the United States airlifted food and medicine into the Bosnian capital in an operation called Provide Promise, which began in July 1992 and exceeded the duration of the Berlin Airlift.<sup>53</sup> By February 17, 1993, 450 C-130 flights had brought almost 10,000 tons of relief to Bosnia.<sup>54</sup>



On the ground in Zagreb, Croatia, during Operation Provide Promise.

The USAF delivered large amounts of aid elsewhere around the globe. Operation Provide Relief, which took place between August and December 1992, transported thousands of tons of food to Somalia and Kenya in 1,400 C-141 and C-130 missions. This effort helped the victims of a famine caused by drought and civil war.<sup>55</sup> After a storm in Bangladesh in the spring of 1991, Air Force C-5s and C-141s airlifted 832 tons of relief supplies to flood victims in Operation Sea Angel.<sup>56</sup> After the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines in June 1991, the USAF undertook Operation Fiery Vigil, the largest air evacuation since the end of the Vietnam War. A combination of Military Airlift Command transports and civilian airliners ferried more than 50,000 uniformed personnel and civilians from Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Station to the United States.<sup>57</sup>

The early 1990s also offered two major examples of domestic humanitarian operations. After Hurricane Andrew hit southern Florida in late August 1992, Air Force C-5s, C-130s, and HH-60 helicopters helped bring aid to the Miami area. By September 4 they had flown more than 500 missions to the region, delivered 11,000 tons of cargo, and transported over 7,000 passengers, including military relief workers.<sup>58</sup> When the Mississippi River and its tributaries flooded much of the Midwest during the summer of 1993, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Forces Command requested airlift assistance from the Air Mobility Command. AMC employed C-5s and C-141s in more than thirty missions to deliver more than a million empty sandbags and fourteen water purification systems to Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. The airlift helped workers contain some of the flooding and prevent the spread of disease.<sup>59</sup>

### **The End of the Twentieth Century, 1994-2000**

Between 1994 and the end of the twentieth century in 2000, the Department of Defense and the United States Air Force continued the tradition of providing humanitarian aid all over the world. Despite the end of more than forty years of Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, political crises persisted in southwestern Asia, in southeastern Europe, and in eastern Africa. The United States enforced no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq to discourage Saddam Hussein from threatening the Kurds in the north and Kuwait in the south. The peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union into fifteen republics and Czechoslovakia into two was not repeated in the former Yugoslavia, where a civil war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and where genocide threatened ethnic Albanians in Serbia's Kosovo province. Somalia in eastern Africa also suffered from a civil war that elicited, like the former Yugoslavia, American military intervention. Against this background of conflict, humanitarian airlifts provided aid to the victims of both political and natural disasters.

Many of the humanitarian airlifts of the 1990s aided refugees from

political upheavals in Africa. In 1994, civil war between the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda forced thousands of refugees into neighboring countries. In an Operation called Support Hope, USAF C-5 and C-141 transports airlifted equipment and supplies from Germany to Zaire, Uganda, and Kenya. By 12 September, the Air Mobility Command had flown 700 missions to airlift more than 11,000 passengers and 23,000 tons of relief cargo. Almost 400 KC-135 missions refueled the C-5s and C-141s in the air during their Support Hope flights. Several dozen KC-10 missions also delivered fuel from Zimbabwe to Entebbe, Uganda, the hub of the operation. USAF C-130s carried some of the cargo from Kenya and Uganda to refugee camps in Zaire. By November 15, C-130s from nine units of the Air National Guard, on rotation to Europe, had flown 915 sorties and airlifted more than 4,000 passengers and 4,500 tons of cargo for the Rwandan refugees.<sup>60</sup>

In April 1996, civil unrest in Liberia resulted in the evacuation by air of more than 2,000 noncombatants in an operation called Assured Response. USAF aircraft taking part, in the course of 94 missions, included MH-53 Pave Low helicopters, MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft, AC-130 gunships, KC-135 Stratotankers, and C-130 cargo aircraft. Air Mobility Command aircraft took many of the evacuees from Freetown, Sierra Leone, to Dakar, Senegal, where they were assisted in traveling to other destinations. By May 6, the command had flown 103 missions, moving 2,153 passengers and 2,148 tons of cargo.<sup>61</sup>

The next year, Zaire experienced similar civil unrest. Operation Guardian Retrieval, which lasted from March to June, involved aircrews of a large variety of USAF airplanes, including MH-53s, MC-130s, C-5s, C-17s, C-141s, and KC-135s. In the first month alone, they evacuated more than 500 U.S. citizens and other third-country nationals from Zaire on 57 missions.<sup>62</sup>

In 1998, USAF KC-135 tanker-transports and MC-130s from the 352d Special Operations Group evacuated noncombatants from Guinea-Bissau in an operation called Shepherd Venture. Noncombatant evacuations from African nations experiencing civil war was very common during the last decade of the twentieth century.<sup>63</sup>

But Africa was not the only area where political crises required the movement of people or relief equipment between 1994 and 2000. Attacks by Saddam Hussein's army against Kurds in the northern part of Iraq forced thousands to flee. In operations called Pacific Haven and Quick Transit in 1996, USAF aircraft helped transport thousands of Kurdish refugees to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, where they were processed for resettlement within the United States.<sup>64</sup>

Europe was not immune from similar crises. In 1996, Operation Provide Promise concluded as the longest sustained humanitarian airlift operation in history. In less than four years, USAF aircraft flew more than 4,500 sorties to deliver some 62,800 tons of cargo to Sarajevo and other

parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had endured a terrible civil war between Serbs, Bosnians, and Croatians.<sup>65</sup>

In April 1999, USAF C-5, C-17, and C-130 transports delivered food, medicine, tents, bedding, and other relief cargo to ethnic Albanians who had fled Serbia's Kosovo province to refugee camps in Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro. By July, the operation, called Shining Hope, had airlifted almost 6,000 tons of relief supplies and 913 passengers.<sup>66</sup>

Humanitarian airlifts between 1994 and 2000 did not respond only to the victims of political crises. Natural disasters such as floods continued to victimize thousands of people around the world. In July 1995, three C-130s from the 37th Airlift Squadron at Ramstein Air Base in Germany airlifted relief supplies to flood victims around Kharkov in Ukraine.<sup>67</sup>

In the United States itself, during 1997, flooding of the Red River of the North resulted in an airlift of 50 generators, 900 sleeping bags, 4,000 blankets, and 90 pallets of Red Cross supplies from the states of Washington and California to Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, from which they were carried to flood victims. For the domestic flood relief operation, Air Mobility Command flew 13 missions and airlifted 146 tons of cargo and 143 passengers.<sup>68</sup>

In May 1998, Ecuador also experienced disastrous flooding as a result of torrential rains. In response, the 24th Operations Group, then based at Howard Air Force Base in the Canal Zone of Panama, airlifted medicine, mattresses, wheelbarrows, plastic sheeting, and food from Quayaquil and Quito to the Menabi area. The group flew seven C-27 cargo aircraft that were small enough to land on the tiny airfields available in the region.<sup>69</sup>

Another flood in Vietnam during November of the next year resulted in an airlift of nearly 22,000 pounds of plastic sheeting, 3,600 blankets, and 5,000 water containers from Guam to Hue. Two C-130s from the 353d Special Operations Group, based in Japan, performed the missions.<sup>70</sup>

In December of 1999, another serious flood struck Venezuela, resulting in relief missions that lasted until March 2000. Among the aircraft taking part were transports such as C-130s, C-5s, C-17s, and MH-60 helicopters. The 2000 part of the operation, named Fundamental Response, included eleven C-17 and five C-5 missions, which airlifted 189 passengers and 527 tons of cargo to Caracas.<sup>71</sup>

Other flooding in southeastern Africa during March of 2000 resulted in a massive humanitarian airlift during Operation Atlas Response. USAF C-5s and C-17s carried relief cargo 4,600 miles from Germany to South Africa. Other USAF aircraft, including C-130s and MH-53 and HH-60 helicopters, took the equipment and supplies, including food, water, medicine, and tents, on to the flood victims in Mozambique and Madagascar. By the end of the operation in April, Air Mobility Command C-5s and C-17s had airlifted 720 passengers and 910 tons of cargo.<sup>72</sup>

Hurricanes and typhoons also victimized thousands of people between 1994 and 2000. In 1995, after Hurricane Marilyn devastated

islands in the eastern Caribbean Sea, USAF cargo aircraft and commercial aircraft under contract airlifted 2,348 passengers and 3,617 tons of cargo on 212 missions to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in an operation called Caribbean Express. This was the first disaster-relief operation in which C-17s took part. Other USAF transports included C-5s, C-141s, and C-130s.<sup>73</sup>

Typhoon Paka hit Guam on December 15, 1997 with record-breaking 236 mile-per-hour winds, leaving 1,700 people homeless. By January 4, 1998, Air Force airplanes had delivered more than 2.7 million pounds of relief supplies on 45 relief flights, many of them across the Pacific Ocean. The cargo included generators, tents, medical supplies, telephone poles, bottled water, and cots. The 60th, 62d, 349th, and 436th Airlift Wings took part, flying C-5s, C-141s, C-130s, KC-135s, and KC-10s. A civilian-contracted Boeing 747 transported additional relief supplies.<sup>74</sup>

In 1998, two powerful hurricanes struck the Caribbean. In September and October, at least 190 Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard flights from all over the United States airlifted medical teams, water, ice, generators, plastic sheeting, refrigeration units, construction equipment, and relief supplies to the victims of Hurricane Georges in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and southern Mississippi. The airlift moved 450 passengers and 8,500 tons of cargo. In November, Hurricane Mitch struck Honduras, Nicaragua, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and southern Mexico. In an operation called Strong Support, USAF aircraft from at least ten states flew some 7.4 million pounds of relief cargo to Central America. Most of the C-130 aircrews came from the Air Force Reserve or the Air National Guard. They delivered such items as rice, flour, medical supplies, clothing, and building materials.<sup>75</sup>

Winter storms also called for USAF humanitarian airlifts. At the end of 1997 and the beginning of 1998, they struck New Mexico and the Northeast. In response to a blizzard in New Mexico in December, Air National Guard C-130s from Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, Minnesota, and Iowa airlifted nearly 465 tons of hay to snowbound livestock in an operation called Haydrop. In another operation called Recuperation, C-17s from the 437th Airlift Wing flew four missions to transport emergency workers, 181 tons of vehicles, generators, water purification equipment, field kitchens, and relief supplies from Edmonton, Alberta, to Montreal Quebec. During the same month, January 1998, thirteen C-5s and five C-17s transported utility workers, trucks, chain saws, and other emergency cargo from North Carolina to Maine and New York because of an ice storm. The 106th Rescue Wing of the Air National Guard also flew an MH-60 for the relief operation.<sup>76</sup>

Not only storms but also earthquakes all over the world elicited USAF humanitarian airlift operations in the period 1994-2000. In January 1994, after an earthquake in southern California, six C-5 and four C-141 mis-

sions airlifted 270 disaster specialists and 340,000 pounds of relief cargo, including fire trucks, generators, and communications vans, to Los Angeles.<sup>77</sup>

A year later, after another major earthquake struck Kobe, Japan, C-130s of the 374th Airlift Wing, based in Japan, delivered relief supplies to the victims.<sup>78</sup>

A 437th Airlift Wing C-17 airlifted 40 tons of blankets, sleeping bags, medical supplies, rations, and cold weather clothing from Kadena Air Base in Japan to Beijing after an earthquake in China's Hebei Province in January 1998.<sup>79</sup>

In an August 1999 operation called Avid Response, a 436th Airlift Wing C-5 airlifted a 70-person search and rescue team, along with dogs and 56,000 pounds of equipment, including three vehicles, from the United States to Turkey after a severe earthquake there. Two KC-10s from the 305th Air Mobility Wing refueled the C-5 on its non-stop flight. By September 10, the Air Mobility Command had flown 20 missions in support of the operation.<sup>80</sup>

Forest fires, not only within the United States but also abroad, also continued to elicit Air Force humanitarian airlift missions. In August 1996, six fires devastated northern California. Flying from the airport at Redding, four C-130s, two each from the 302d and 146th Airlift Wings, flew low over the fringes of the fires, each dropping as many as 3,000 gallons of water and fire retardant at a time using the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System.<sup>81</sup>

In response to forest fires in Indonesia in the autumn of 1997, three Wyoming Air National Guard C-130s from the 153d Airlift Wing dropped 685,000 gallons of water and fire retardant around fires in Java and Sumatra. Between October 12 and early December, they had flown more than 200 sorties.<sup>82</sup>

In July 1998, ten C-5 and two C-141 missions airlifted 300 firefighters and 740 tons of equipment from California, Oregon, and South Carolina to Jacksonville Naval Air Station and Patrick Air Force Base to fight forest fires in Florida. The operation was called Phoenix Flame.<sup>83</sup>

Another series of fires in the West resulted in a USAF airlift of almost 6,000 Army and Marine Corps troops to augment civilian firefighters during the summer of 2000. C-130s from the 145th, 146th 153d, and 302d Airlift Wings flew 774 sorties between July 25 and September 6, dropping 970,500 gallons of fire retardant on wild fires in California, Idaho, and Montana.<sup>84</sup>

Throughout the period, Denton Amendment airlift missions also continued. They delivered privately donated relief supplies to foreign nations at no charge to the charitable organizations that contributed them. Many of these missions were included in Operation Provide Hope, which aided the people of the fifteen republics of the former Soviet Union in the wake of its dissolution. In June 1997, the 500th Provide Hope mission was flown

when a C-5 from the 436th Airlift Wing transported relief supplies from Maryland to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. By then, the operation had delivered more than \$1.8 billion in assistance since its beginning in February 1992.<sup>85</sup>

### **Into the Twenty-First Century, 2001-2007**

Between 2001 and 2007, President George W. Bush led a “Global War on Terrorism” in response to September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States that destroyed the twin 110-story towers of New York’s World Trade Center and part of the Pentagon in Washington. The United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and toppled its Taliban regime because it had harbored Al Qaeda terrorists. In March 2003, President Bush also launched an invasion of Iraq which overthrew the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Although both invasions succeeded, insurgencies kept American forces busy in both Iraq and Afghanistan. USAF airlift resources were largely committed to the need to transport troops and war materiel to and from southwestern Asia. Despite ongoing war commitments, the Air Force continued to participate in humanitarian airlifts to relieve the victims of natural and political disasters around the world.

One of the USAF humanitarian airlift operations in the period 2001-2007 was a component of the larger Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. In early October 2001, C-17s began flying 22-hour 6,500-mile round trip missions from Ramstein Air Base in Germany to drop thousands of rations to the people of Afghanistan in areas not under Taliban control. The tremendously long flights required extensive aerial refueling. By the end of the month, the airlift had delivered its millionth meal. By the end of the year, C-17s had airdropped 2.44 million daily rations, 21,000 55-pound sacks of wheat, and more than 41,000 blankets on 198 missions. The operation continued into 2002.<sup>86</sup>

Fighting in Lebanon in July 2006 elicited another USAF humanitarian airlift. MH-53 helicopters from the 386th Special Operations Group airlifted noncombatant Americans from Lebanon to Cyprus, to which thousands of other noncombatants also fled by other means. C-130s of the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing flew more than 10 tons of food, blankets, bottled water, and other supplies to Cyprus for the evacuees. C-17s of the 816th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron also transported 500 tons of food, water, and equipment to Cyprus. Other evacuees from Lebanon reached Incirlik Air Base in Turkey by ship and overland transportation. From Cyprus and Turkey, USAF C-17s airlifted 2,250 passengers to Ramstein Air Base in Germany and then on to the McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Airliners under Air Mobility Command contract moved thousands more U.S. citizens to the United States from Cyprus and Turkey, to which they had gone from Lebanon. Between July 16 and September 3, some 12,700 evacuees had been airlifted in the largest noncombatant evacuation operation since Vietnam.<sup>87</sup>

USAF humanitarian airlift operations in the period 2001-2007 continued to respond to the needs of the victims of natural disasters such as earthquakes. For example, an intense earthquake in western India in January 2001 killed as many as 30,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless. Two C-5s, refueled by KC-135s from the Hawaiian Air National Guard, carried 115 tons of relief cargo across the Pacific Ocean from California to Guam. From there, four C-17s, refueled by KC-135s stationed in Japan, carried the supplies on to the airport at Ahmedabad, India, whose runways were too small to accommodate the C-5s.<sup>88</sup>

Another major earthquake in Algeria in May 2003 resulted in the airlift of 13 tons of medicine, blankets, bedding, tents, and portable kitchens from Ramstein Air Base in Germany to Algiers. The Air Force Reserve's 910th Airlift Wing performed the operation, using C-130s.<sup>89</sup>

An earthquake in December at Bam, Iran, earned the distinction of the world's worst natural disaster of 2003. Despite long-standing enmity between the United States and Iran, USAF airplanes airlifted 338,000 pounds of water, medical supplies, blankets, and food to the disaster victims. One C-5 based at Dover Air Force Base, staging at Moron Air Base in Spain, transported some of the relief supplies to Kuwait, where they were loaded on C-130s that flew on to Kerman Air Base in Iran. One C-17 already in the theater also flew relief supplies from Kuwait to Kerman. Another C-17 from Charleston Air Force Base, staging at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany, flew directly to Kerman with more relief supplies. From Kerman, Iranian military trucks took the cargo on to Bam.<sup>90</sup>

An even worse earthquake disaster struck the Indian Ocean on December 26, 2004. An undersea quake measuring 9 on the Richter scale produced a tsunami as high as 30 feet that reached many countries bordering the ocean, including Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand. As many as 300,000 people died from the sudden flood. Humanitarian assistance to the victims of the tsunami came from many countries all over the world, including the United States. In an operation called Unified Assistance, Air Mobility Command aircraft flew 106 missions to airlift 2,768 passengers and 3,370 tons of cargo to Colombo in Sri Lanka, U-Tapao Air Base in Thailand, and Banda Aceh and Jakarta in Indonesia by February 23, 2005. The 353d Special Operations Group flew MC-130s to deliver almost 800,000 pounds of relief cargo, evacuate 32 casualties, and airlift 591 relief workers to isolated parts of Thailand and Indonesia. The New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing flew C-5s to transport rescue helicopters, water purification equipment, and relief supplies from Kadena Air Base, Japan, to Sri Lanka and Thailand.<sup>91</sup>

Another earthquake in Pakistan in October 2005 left nearly 80,000 people dead. In response, USAF C-17s, C-130s, KC-10s, and contract airliners delivered nearly 10 million pounds of relief supplies, including food, water, tents, sleeping bags, cots, blankets, heaters, clothing, medicine, and medical equipment, to Chaklala Air Base. USAF C-5s of the

439<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing also carried U.S. Army helicopters to Pakistan. From Chaklala, they flew relief supplies to victims in the disaster region. This humanitarian airlift, named Operation Lifeline, was facilitated by the continuing U.S. military operations in neighboring Afghanistan.<sup>92</sup>

Besides earthquakes, hurricanes and typhoons also victimized thousands of people who needed humanitarian assistance. After Typhoon Pongsana struck Guam in December 2002 with sustained winds of 150 miles per hour, the Air Force airlifted 1,200 tons of relief equipment and supplies to Andersen Air Force Base, flying 58 C-5 missions in 10 days. The 60th and 349th Air Mobility Wings took part.<sup>93</sup>

The greatest of the humanitarian airlifts in the early 21st century undoubtedly was in response to Hurricane Katrina, which struck the central coast of the Gulf of Mexico in southeastern Louisiana, southern Mississippi, and southwestern Alabama at the end of August 2005. The hurricane's winds destroyed most of the buildings on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and left most of New Orleans under floodwaters for weeks. Although most of the city's residents had evacuated, thousands who remained were stranded in the midst of the waters without adequate shelter, food, water, electricity, and plumbing. USAF HH-60, UH-1, and MH-53 helicopter crews conducted weeks of search and rescue missions, the larger helicopters refueling from HC-130 and MC-130 tankers. Larger USAF C-5, C-17, and C-130 transports from the Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve Command, and the Air National Guard evacuated hundreds of refugees from the disaster area to other states, and also airlifted relief supplies from all over the country to the places where the displaced persons had been moved. The transports carried emergency personnel to the disaster region, including doctors and nurses to treat the sick and injured and engineers to reverse the flooding. U.S. Army troops from the 82d Airborne Division and Air National Guard troops from other states also rode USAF airplanes to New Orleans to keep order and enforce the law. USAF helicopters flew 648 sorties, 599 of these on missions that rescued 4322 people. Air Force fixed-wing aircraft flew 4,095 sorties, 3,398 of these on air mobility missions. USAF aircraft evacuated 26,943 displaced persons from New Orleans and surrounding areas to airports and bases outside the disaster area. The Air Force air-evacuated more than 2,600 medical patients to medical facilities across the country. The service also airlifted 11,450 tons of relief cargo from various parts of the country to the disaster zone. The USAF contribution to Hurricane Katrina relief, despite its impressive totals, was a small fraction of the total Department of Defense effort.<sup>94</sup>

Even as hurricane relief missions in the New Orleans and southern Mississippi areas continued, another hurricane named Rita struck the border of Louisiana and Texas on September 23. Joint Task Force-Rita organized three air expeditionary groups for the emergency. A combination of C-5s, C-17s, C-130s, C-9s, and civilian aircraft evacuated more than

5,000 patients from medical facilities in Beaumont and Houston, Texas, and Lake Charles, Louisiana. Between September 23 and 29, thirteen USAF HH-60 helicopters, refueled by three HC-130s, and six UH-1 helicopters in the 347th Air Expeditionary Group, flew 210 search and rescue sorties over eastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana. Two C-130s of the 910th Airlift Wing sprayed insecticide over the area between September 28 and October 14. Using Ellington Field near Houston, Texas, as a hub, USAF aircraft also transported food, water, and other relief supplies to the victims of Hurricane Rita. The Air National Guard alone flew 27 sorties, transporting 257 passengers and 90 tons of cargo.<sup>95</sup>

In the 21st century, extensive forest fires, particularly in the west, continued to break out and encourage states to seek federal assistance. In June 2002, fires southwest of Denver consumed some 90,000 acres and reached within ten miles of the city, forcing evacuations. Four C-130s, two each from the 302d and 145th Airlift Wings (Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard respectively), airdropped fire retardant liquid over the edges of the fires. They flew from Peterson Air Force Base in cooperation with the National Park Service's National Interagency Fire Center. Similar fires in the Simi Valley of southern California in October 2003, elicited a similar operation. Eight C-130s, six from the Air National Guard and two from the Air Force Reserve Command, flew 48 missions and dropped almost 130,000 gallons of fire retardant. Again in October and November 2004, California forest fires resulted in the airdropping of fire retardant by eight C-130s of the Air Force Reserve Command and the Air National Guard, again using the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System.<sup>96</sup>

## **Wings of Hope**

A review of the most significant U.S. Air Force humanitarian airlifts supports several conclusions. The airlifts were a team effort that often demanded international and interdepartmental cooperation. The governments of the afflicted nations and of the United States had to coordinate relief efforts, and the State and Defense departments had to integrate responses, often through the National Security Council. Some airlifts required the military services within the Defense Department to work together: USAF transports, for example, might carry Army helicopters, engineers, equipment, and supplies. Various major commands within the Air Force, such as the Military Airlift Command, the Tactical Air Command, the United States Air Force Southern Command, the United States Air Forces in Europe, and the Pacific Air Forces, also had to cooperate, as did the regular, reserve, and Air National Guard forces.

The airlifts also demonstrated the value of a large network of airfields, not only within the United States but abroad, in facilitating humanitarian relief. Although the sources of relief supplies were scattered across the

nation, the proximity of runways made the loading of supplies easier. Overseas facilities also proved necessary. For example, bases in Panama refueled aircraft en route to South America. Airfields did not have to be located on bases, but they had to be available to military aircraft in an emergency, and they had to accommodate those aircraft with sufficient runways and fuel. Another factor that helped the flow of relief cargo was the stockpiling of emergency supplies at certain locations. A sharp reduction in the number of U.S. Air Force bases at home and abroad could jeopardize America's ability to conduct the kinds of relief missions common during and after the Cold War. Civilian airports and airliners, already committed to busy schedules, will not be able to respond to all of the future emergencies that natural and man-made disasters will inevitably cause.

Throughout the forty-seven years between 1947 and 1994, the Cold War affected the willingness and ability of the United States to carry out relief operations. It provided large numbers of military cargo aircraft which, although designed to move troops and weapons into battle, could also transport relief supplies. America's confrontation with the Soviet Union also encouraged development of the organizational and logistical apparatus with which the United States responded to foreign emergencies, whether caused by conflict or natural calamity. Finally, the intense competition between the two superpowers for the loyalty of neutral nations encouraged participation in relief operations when natural disasters struck underdeveloped nations. Without the Cold War, the Air Force might have lacked the airplanes, bases, and budgets to conduct more than 450 humanitarian airlifts in forty years. Ironically, preparation for war has generated many of the resources used to save lives.

In the years since the Cold War, the United States Air Force continued flying global humanitarian missions, often as part of a larger Defense Department effort, because natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis continued to break out all over the world. Hot wars and political crises continued to threaten civilian populations, particularly in unstable and underdeveloped parts of the world, long after the demise of the Soviet Union that was sometimes blamed for them. USAF commitments to combat operations around the world did not displace the capability or the need for humanitarian airlift. In fact, sometimes the two would reinforce and complement each other. The need to airlift rotating military personnel, equipment, and supplies to combat theaters kept the Air Force ready and able to move relief personnel, evacuees, refugees, and relief cargo in response to humanitarian crises. Moreover, the presence of substantial numbers of U.S. forces overseas often made resources more readily available for relief airlift in the same or nearby areas.

Humanitarian airlifts called for large numbers and varieties of aircraft. The development of larger planes allowed more tonnage to be delivered by fewer flights, and bulky equipment and large quantities of supplies necessitated the use of large cargo planes. But in many areas hit by nat-

ural disasters, small landing fields required modest-sized aircraft that were capable of landing on them. In some places, fixed-wing airplanes were unable to land at all, and helicopters were needed. If the defense budget were reduced to the point where large numbers and varieties of Air Force transports were no longer available, the United States might not be able to respond to humanitarian emergencies around the world.

The humanitarian airlifts benefited both the nation receiving the aid and the United States. The victims of disaster obviously gained from the delivery of food, medicine, clothing, bedding, shelters, and other supplies, and their governments were also able to rebuild devastated areas more rapidly with airlifted American equipment. However, the United States also profited from the airlifts by forging stronger bonds of goodwill and economic interdependence between itself and the afflicted nation, and by contributing to regional stability. Through its airlifts, the Air Force helps to insure friendly regimes in the world that will be receptive to Americans politically, economically, and militarily.

The relief operations also doubled as combat training. The delivery of hundreds of tons of humanitarian equipment, relief workers, and supplies over thousands of miles in short periods of time prepared both air and ground crews for airlifting armored vehicles, weapons, and troops in case the emergency were war instead of natural disaster. The same skills Air Force personnel applied to relieving victims of natural disasters around the world would be needed in case of a wartime emergency in those very areas. Humanitarian airlift operations are not only an alternative to combat operations, but also a supplement to them.

Above all, the humanitarian airlifts have demonstrated that Defense Department organizations have useful peacetime roles. Military operations can kill, but they also save lives; they can injure, but they also heal; they can damage and destroy, but they also repair and rebuild. America will face many enemies in the future, including natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and blizzards. The United States Air Force has a tradition of meeting these challenges. With adequate support, that tradition will endure.

# Appendix

## Selected U.S. Air Force Overseas Humanitarian Operations, 1947-2007

Compiled by Christopher J. Bowie and updated by Daniel L. Haulman.

Acronyms used in descriptions: ACC, Air Combat Command; AMC, Air Mobility Command; ANG, Air National Guard; FEAF, Far East Air Forces; PACAF, Pacific Air Forces; MAC, Military Airlift Command; SAC, Strategic Air Command; TAC, Tactical Air Command; USAFE, United States Air Forces Europe.

### 1947

- Sep The USAF began the Post-Hostilities Mapping Project, in which reconnaissance aircraft photographed the land masses and island groups in the Pacific region from Guadalcanal to Japan.
- Oct USAF airlifters transported cholera vaccine to Cairo, Egypt, and conducted spraying operations.
- Nov A FEAF C-54 airlifted 10,000 pounds of cholera vaccine from Shanghai, China, to Jiddah, Saudi Arabia.

### 1948

- Jan After a fire destroyed a local warehouse in Labrador, a U.S. airlifter delivered relief supplies.
- Jun The Berlin Airlift began.



The Berlin Airlift helped keep the city in Allied hands.

Nov FEAF provided air rescue support for the flight of a British aviatrix from Chitose, Japan, to Shemya, Alaska.

## 1949

Jan After an outbreak of yellow fever, a B-29 airlifted 75,000 doses of vaccine to Panama.

Aug To aid earthquake victims in Ecuador, twelve C-47s transported forty-one tons of relief supplies to the affected area.

Sep C-47s delivered medical supplies to India to combat cholera and typhus outbreaks.

## 1951

Mar USAF aircraft delivered relief supplies to assist Japanese rendered homeless by severe earthquakes in Hokkaido.

May C-47s carried out spraying operations in locust-plagued areas around New Delhi, India.

Sep To aid victims struck by an outbreak of yellow fever in Costa Rica, a USAF C-82 airlifter and H-5 helicopter brought in medical personnel and supplies of vaccine.

Nov USAFE transports airlifted supplies and clothing to flood-stricken areas in Italy.

Nov To assist victims of a volcanic eruption in the Philippines, USAF aircraft delivered food and medical supplies.

Dec USAFE transported 2,000 pounds of clothing donated by children of Akron, Ohio, to the children of Berlin.

## 1952

Mar In Operation Warm Clothes, USAF airlifters delivered clothing and supplies to Japanese left homeless by an earthquake and a major tidal wave.

May The USAF sent two C-47s to India to spray insecticide where vital crops were threatened by a destructive locust infestation.

Jul After a British airliner crashed in the Mediterranean Sea, a USAF helicopter rescued thirty-two passengers.

Sep U.S. airlifters conducted relief and evacuation operations in the Pacific at Wake and Kwajalein in the aftermath of Hurricane Olive.

## 1953

Feb USAF airlifters assisted flood-stricken areas of the Netherlands by transporting more than a million pounds of relief supplies and evacuating people from disaster areas.

Mar After floods, six C-47s airlifted 657 tons of food and other supplies to Ecuador.

Mar USAF helicopters rescued crew members from a sinking Japanese vessel near Okinawa.

- Apr Four C-119 airlifters transported medical supplies to Turkey to provide earthquake relief.
- Jun In Operation Mercy Lift, the USAF delivered assistance to Japanese stricken by major flooding near Kyushu.
- Jun The USAF airdropped foodstuffs to Japanese victims of a flash flood at Wakayama.
- Jul After a British airplane ditched in the Mediterranean Sea, a USAF helicopter rescued all sixteen passengers.
- Aug Twenty C-119 airlifters flew 270,000 pounds of relief supplies to earthquake-stricken Greece.
- Nov The USAF delivered tons of foodstuffs to assist destitute Koreans.

## **1954**

- Jan USAF air rescue units saved crewmen from a sinking vessel near Casablanca, Morocco.
- Jan USAFE rescue aircraft evacuated sixty-eight persons and delivered rescue personnel and supplies to avalanche-struck Blons, Austria.
- Feb A USAFE C-119 airdropped thirteen tons of food and supplies to the German island of Juist, in the East Frisian Islands.
- Apr USAF aircraft airlifted and airdropped food and supplies to flood-stricken areas around Damascus, Syria, and Baghdad, Iraq.
- May Three USAFE C-119 aircraft airlifted 21,000 pounds of food to earthquake victims at Lárisa, Greece.
- Jun U.S. airlifters conducted Operation Wounded Warrior in Indo-China, the air evacuation of 509 wounded French soldiers from Asia to France.
- Aug Seven USAF C-119s airlifted flood relief supplies to Karachi, Pakistan, and New Delhi, India.
- Aug USAF aircraft flew flood relief to citizens of East Pakistan due to serious flooding.
- Sep After floods in Honduras, ten C-47s and two helicopters airlifted fifty tons of relief supplies.
- Sep Airlifters and helicopters provided relief supplies and evacuated survivors from earthquake-stricken zones in Algeria.
- Oct USAF C-124 airlifters delivered emergency fire-fighting equipment to assist in fighting a major oil storage fire in Japan.
- Oct After Hurricane Hazel struck Haiti, a USAF rescue unit airlifted relief supplies and evacuated victims.

## **1955**

- Apr The USAF provided assistance for Philippine citizens rendered homeless by a major earthquake.
- May USAFE airlifted food and medical supplies to earthquake-stricken Vólos, Greece.
- May In Operation Hiroshima Maidens, the USAF transported

twenty-five women disfigured by nuclear blast effects from Japan to New York for plastic surgery.

- Aug USAFE airlifters brought tarpaulins to Lyon, France, to provide protection after high winds blew the roofs off several buildings.
- Sep After floods in the Tampico, Mexico, area, USAF airlifters and helicopters airlifted 630 tons of relief supplies.
- Oct After flooding, a USAF unit airlifted food and medical supplies to Costa Rica.
- Nov TAC airlifters assisted Operation Deep Freeze in New Zealand with logistical and airdrop support. Deep Freeze supported the establishment of scientific research stations in Antarctica in preparation for the International Geophysical Year Program, 1957-1958.
- Nov USAF helicopters rescued flood victims near the town of Shizunai, Japan.
- Nov Due to flooding from the Magdalena River, USAF C-47s transported food and medical supplies to the stricken region in Colombia.

## **1956**

- Jan USAFE airlifted a rare drug to Italy in an attempt to save an Italian infant dying of leukemia.
- Feb During Operation Snowbound, forty USAFE C-119s transported 332 tons of relief supplies for refugees in Greece and Italy.
- Mar C-119 airlifters carried food and tents to Turkey following a major earthquake.
- Aug USAFE airlifters delivered 34,000 pounds of relief supplies following a flash flood in Tehran, Iran.
- Dec Serious crop failures in Japan led the USAF to airlift tons of rice into the famine area.

## **1957**

- Jun Airlifters brought insecticide to Tunisia and Morocco to combat a locust infestation.
- Jul Flood relief supplies were distributed to victims in southern Kyushu, Japan, by PACAF H-21 helicopters.
- Oct After flooding, USAF aircraft airlifted three tons of relief supplies to victims in eastern Spain.
- Dec After an earthquake in Iran, USAF airlifters brought in relief supplies.

## **1958**

- Jun A PACAF C-130 airlifted 300,000 shots of anti-cholera serum from Manila, Philippines, to Bangkok, Thailand, in response to an urgent request from the Thai government.
- Sep PACAF H-21 helicopters and C-47s provided Japan with airlifts

of relief supplies to the typhoon-stricken Izu Peninsula and Okinawa.

Sep A USAF helicopter rescued forty-eight victims of a Portuguese shipwreck off the Azores.

Dec After flooding in Morocco, USAF helicopters assisted in evacuating flood victims in the Souk el Arba area.

## 1959

May As part of the People to People Program initiated by President Eisenhower, TAC C-130s airlifted food, clothing, farm equipment, livestock, and other materials to Korea and Japan.

Jun After a polio outbreak in Guatemala, a C-118 carried 25,000 units of Salk vaccine to aid the local population.

Sep PACAF H-21 helicopters rescued almost 5,000 people and C-124s airlifted relief supplies to Japan following the devastation of Nagoya by a typhoon. TAC C-130s also participated in this relief operation.

Oct Air rescue helicopters from Kadena rescued twenty-nine Japanese sailors from a foundered vessel near Okinawa.

Nov USAF airlifters brought in a 100-bed hospital to assist local authorities in Morocco in dealing with a massive food poisoning crisis.

Dec USAFE transports airlifted food and relief supplies to Fréjus, France, following the bursting of a nearby dam.

## 1960

Jan In response to a major earthquake in Peru, three USAF airlifters brought in fifteen tons of relief supplies.

Feb In Operation Amigo, three TAC C-130s supported President Eisenhower's trip to South America and also delivered relief supplies to Chile following a tidal wave.

Mar USAFE airlifters transported rescue workers, supplies, and equipment to the Moroccan city of Agadir in response to an earthquake.

Mar In response to flooding in northeast Brazil, six USAF C-124s brought in two rescue helicopters and 160 tons of relief supplies.

May USAF cargo aircraft airlifted over 1,000 tons of relief supplies to aid victims of an earthquake in Chile.

Jun The USAF transported livestock to a Japanese village devastated by a major typhoon.

Aug USAF airlifted iron lungs to Hokkaido, Japan, where 600 cases of polio had been found.

Sep The USAF provided supplies and other materials to Philippine citizens rendered destitute by serious flooding.

Oct USAFE C-130s delivered almost eighty tons of relief supplies to Pakistan following cyclone and tidal wave damage.

Dec When Japanese farmers suffered major livestock losses in a local flood, the USAF airlifted Jersey cows to replace their stock.

**1961**

Jan The USAF airlifted 4,000 pounds of clothing to help destitute Korean orphans.



Korean children smile approval at their new attire.

Jan Sixteen C-130s flew more than two million pounds of food relief to the Congo to aid famine-stricken areas.



Workers in Southern Rhodesia load corn destined for the Congo.

- Apr USAFE aircraft airlifted blankets and tents to Jordan following major floods.
- Apr Following major fires in Al Hudaydah, Yemen, USAFE airlifters brought in relief supplies.
- Apr A USAFE airliner flew in relief supplies and carried out air rescue search operations following heavy storms around Benghazi, Libya.
- Aug USAF airlifters carried 120,000 pounds of insecticide to Egypt to save the cotton crop.
- Sep The USAF airlifted numerous supplies to a flooded Thai village using C-130 transports.
- Oct USAF air transports delivered water purification equipment to Cambodia, where heavy rains had caused floods.
- Nov Following floods in Kenya, USAFE airlifters brought in relief supplies.
- Nov Following the devastation of British Honduras (now Belize) by Hurricane Hattie, U.S. airlifters brought in communications equipment to assist in relief efforts.
- Nov Due to major famine, USAF airlifters provided food and supplies in response to a UN decision to send aid to the stricken Congo.
- Nov USAFE helicopters flew in relief supplies and helicopters following floods in Somalia.

## **1962**

- Feb USAFE provided relief assistance to flood-stricken areas around Hamburg, West Germany. Rescue operations were carried out by six USAF C-130s and four Army SH-19 helicopters.
- Feb USAF airlifted twenty-nine tons of food and supplies to the Philippines for the people of Mindanao, who were in danger of starvation because of floods.
- Mar USAFE provided relief assistance to flood victims around Tripoli, Libya.
- Apr U.S. transports airdropped over 1,400 tons of grain to aid 50,000 flood victims in Tanganyika.
- May A C-123 returning from the United States was routed through Iran and Afghanistan to conduct aerial spraying in response to a regional locust problem.
- Aug In response to floods and famine in western Colombia, USAF C-130s airlifted almost ninety tons of food and emergency supplies to the stricken region.
- Sep USAFE provided airlift support to Iran after an earthquake struck. Almost one million pounds of aid, including trucks, trailers, and a water purifying unit were airlifted to the region.
- Oct The USAF airlifted food for Congo inhabitants suffering from famine.

- Nov In the wake of Typhoon Karen, U.S. airlifters delivered over 1,000 tons of relief supplies to Guam to assist in recovery efforts.
- Nov The USAF participated in flood relief operations to Tunisia.

### **1963**

- Jan USAFE helped airlift almost 700,000 pounds of supplies and equipment plus medical teams to flood-stricken Rabat, Morocco.
- Jan Four C-119s airlifted nine tons of relief supplies to Honduras.
- Feb When the Ceyhan River flooded in Turkey, USAF helicopters rescued ninety persons.
- Feb USAF transports and helicopters provided medical and rescue personnel, a hospital, and other supplies to Al Marj (Barce), Libya, following a major earthquake.
- Feb The USAF carried out an airlift of beds, blankets, and foodstuffs to the people of Niigata, Japan, after a blizzard blocked all surface transportation to that city.
- Feb A C-124 delivered foodstuffs and mail to a snowbound Korean island.
- Feb After floods in southern Spain, USAF aircraft evacuated sixty-nine people.
- Feb MAC C-130s airlifted 16,000 pounds of medical supplies to Jakarta, Indonesia, following a devastating flood in that area.
- Mar When sustained bad weather prevented shipping to Santa Maria Island, Azores, USAF airlifters delivered food to the island.
- Apr The USAF airlifted 7,200 pounds of canned food to feed starving Papuan children in the Schouten Islands, Papua New Guinea.
- May To aid victims of a famine in northeastern Mexico, USAF C-119s and a C-47 airlifted seventeen tons of food and clothing.
- Jul After a devastating fire, USAF C-130s airlifted 2,000 pounds of clothing for the relief of homeless Vietnamese.
- Jul Twenty-five C-130s and other USAF aircraft airlifted 455 tons of relief supplies to Belgrade, Yugoslavia, to aid earthquake victims.
- Jul The USAF brought nearly two tons of medical supplies to Laos to equip a hospital set up by an American volunteer physician.
- Aug A TAC C-46 airlifted ten tons of medical supplies, along with researchers and medical technicians, to the village of San Joaquín, Bolivia, which was stricken by an outbreak of hemorrhagic fever.
- Sep After forest fires swept through southern Brazil, a TAC C-130 delivered fifty tons of relief supplies.
- Sep USAF aircraft airlifted six tons of foodstuffs to feed Korean orphans.
- Oct When Typhoon Gloria devastated parts of Taiwan, USAF airlifters delivered five tons each of wheat and clothing to aid victims.
- Oct After Hurricane Flora, a C-124 airlifted 385 tents and cots to aid victims in Tobago.

- Nov Three C-123s sprayed 24,000 acres of crops in Thailand threatened by an insect plague.
- Dec When a Greek luxury liner caught fire in the Atlantic, six USAF C-54 aircraft delivered survival kits and life rafts.

## 1964

- Jan A PACAF C-130 delivered fourteen tons of medical supplies to Saigon, South Vietnam, from Manila, Philippines, to combat an outbreak of cholera.
- Jan In response to flooding in eastern regions of Brazil, two C-124s airlifted 120 tons of relief supplies.
- Jan Volcanic eruptions followed by flooding caused much suffering in Costa Rica. To assist in recovery efforts, U.S. airlifters delivered 289 tons of relief supplies and an engineering team.
- Feb Medical supplies collected by U.S. civilians were airlifted to Nicaragua to support St. Luke's Clinic, the only free hospital in Managua.
- Mar After a series of earthquakes in the Azores, USAF airlifters delivered sixty tons of relief aid.
- Mar Two TAC C-130s supported the National Geographic Polar Expedition, delivering cargo, husky dogs, and personnel to Alert Island, northwest of Thule Air Base, Greenland.
- Apr After forest fires in western Panama broke out, a C-118 brought in three tons of borax to fight the blazes.
- May TAC's 1st Air Commando Wing delivered fifteen tons of medical and other supplies to Colombia for the World Medical Relief Fund.
- Jun PACAF C-130s airdropped over 100,000 gallons of fire-fighting foam and other supplies to earthquake-devastated Niigata, Japan.
- Jun After an epidemic in Bolivia, four USAF airlifters brought in medical personnel and supplies.
- Jun USAF C-130s carried almost 1,000 tons of food to flood-stricken Pakistan, including airdrops to isolated regions, where critical food shortages had developed.
- Aug After Hurricane Cleo hit Guadeloupe, a C-124 airlifted seven tons of relief supplies to the stricken region.
- Sep After a severe storm in Panama, the USAF airlifted food and other relief supplies to that nation.
- Oct Ten USAF C-124s and one C-130 transported tents, bedding, and 169 tons of other relief supplies to Yugoslavia.
- Nov Airlifters delivered bridge materials and engineers to flood-stricken Tunisia.
- Dec A PACAF C-54 delivered 4,000 items of canned food to the victims of a typhoon in Mindanao, Philippines.
- Dec A USAF airlifter delivered a badly needed generator to Africa for the hospital ship *Hope*.

Dec Airlifters transported 100 tons of grain for famine victims in Somalia.

## 1965

Jan Airlifters delivered relief to flood victims at the Tunisian seacoast town of Zarzis.

Mar SAC tankers provided support to Royal Air Force tactical aircraft after Britain grounded its Valiant refueling aircraft, which had been struck by a catastrophic fatigue problem.

Apr After an earthquake in central Chile, four USAF C-130s airlifted fifty-five tons of relief supplies to the region.

Apr Two C-130s deployed to Somaliland loaded with food and medical supplies.

May The USAF airlifted 61,000 pounds of firefighting chemicals to combat a fire raging aboard a Norwegian tanker off Japan.

May After an earthquake in El Salvador, USAF airlifters brought in over 300 tons of relief supplies and 207 rescue personnel.

Jun USAF airlifters delivered irrigation pumps to help Korean farmers cope with a severe drought.

Aug The USAF airlifted medical equipment and twenty-five dentists aboard C-54s to aid a Japanese leper colony.

Sep USAF air transports flew relief goods to the victims of a volcanic eruption in central Luzon, Philippines.

Sep After floods in Honduras, USAF C-130s airlifted twenty-five tons of relief supplies to the area.

Sep USAF helicopters rescued forty-three people during flooding in Italy.

Nov After a fire on a cruise ship in the Bahamas, USAF airlifters transported burn specialists to the scene and evacuated burn patients to the United States for further treatment.

Dec PACAF units provided relief supplies and assistance to fire victims in Khorat, Thailand.

Dec C-130 airlifters transported tents to flood victims in Rabat, Morocco.

## 1966

Jan C-130s airlifted 10,000 blankets to aid victims of a fire at Misawa, Japan.

Feb Following a hurricane in the Samoa Islands, three C-124s airlifted electrical power equipment, construction materials, and foodstuffs to Pago Pago.

Mar USAF airlifters brought in twenty-five tons of milk to needy families in Ghana.

Apr USAF air transports airlifted sixteen tons of medical supplies and vaccine to help the Sudanese cope with a cholera epidemic.

- Aug Airlifters brought in almost 100,000 pounds of supplies, including a thirty-six bed hospital, to aid earthquake victims in Turkey.
- Sep Two C-130s brought in personnel and supplies to assist in relief efforts in Chad. The airlifters brought in more than 500 tons of wheat.
- Sep The USAF participated in typhoon relief operations in Japan.
- Sep Airlifters provided relief and assistance to flood victims in both Thailand and Laos.
- Oct Two C-130s and a C-124 airlifted tents, food, and other relief supplies to the Dominican Republic after a devastating hurricane.
- Oct Two C-130s provided assistance to Mexican officials in their efforts to recover from hurricane damage. The cargo included medicine, vehicles, and fuel.
- Oct In response to an earthquake in Peru, four C-130s brought in fifty-five tons of fuel and other relief supplies.
- Nov USAF airlifters brought in over 200 tons of medical supplies and relief personnel to flood-stricken areas around Florence, Italy.
- Nov In response to flooding in Panama, USAF helicopters airlifted three tons of relief supplies and 105 refugees.

## **1967**

- Jul After an earthquake in northern Venezuela, a USAF C-130 and C-54 brought in thirty tons of relief supplies.
- Jul After an earthquake in Turkey, USAF airlifters brought in relief supplies.
- Sep USAF airlifters conducted evacuation and relief operations after Typhoon Sarah battered Wake Island.
- Sep Twenty USAF airlifters brought in 116 tons of relief supplies and 175 relief workers after floods hit Mexico.

## **1968**

- Jan USAF airlifters carried fifty-nine personnel and 168 tons of equipment to aid earthquake victims in Sicily.
- Feb After floods, USAF C-130s airlifted twenty tons of relief supplies to Bolivia.
- Apr To aid victims of drought, a USAF C-130 airlifted forty-six tons of food to Ecuador.
- Apr After Typhoon Jean wrecked havoc on Guam, USAF airlifters brought in ninety-seven tons of relief supplies.
- May USAF airlifted 100 tons of emergency supplies for food relief in Ethiopia.
- Jul After a volcanic eruption in Costa Rica, USAF aircraft airlifted twelve tons of relief supplies to the stricken area.
- Aug USAF aircraft airlifted twenty-six tons of food and 260 evacuees in response to major flooding in Nicaragua.

- Sep USAF C-130s airlifted foodstuffs to island inhabitants of Minami Daito, Japan, who had been cut off from ship traffic by bad storms.
- Sep After Typhoon Della struck the Ryukyu Islands, four C-130s airlifted relief supplies to inhabitants.
- Oct After an earthquake in Iran, two USAF C-130s airlifted fifty-seven tons of tents for homeless victims.

**1969**

- Feb In Operation Combat Locust, three TAC spray planes deployed to Saudi Arabia to eliminate a locust plague.
- Apr The USAF provided relief supplies for those injured and rendered homeless by a major fire in Rabat, Morocco.
- May After an outbreak of encephalitis in Ecuador, USAF C-141 airlifters and C-123 spray planes airlifted and dispensed fifty-four tons of insecticide.
- Jul A MAC C-141 airlifted a critically burned Russian sailor to Hawaii for treatment at a civilian hospital.
- Jul In response to flooding and a border skirmish with Guatemala, USAF cargo planes airlifted twenty-six tons of relief supplies and equipment to Honduras.
- Sep Six MAC airlifters flew in much needed food and equipment to Guatemala after Hurricane Francelia struck.
- Oct Two C-130s delivered more than 164 tons of foodstuffs to famine-stricken citizens of Chad.
- Nov USAF airlifters and helicopters provided rescue assistance for flood-stricken Tunisia.
- Dec MAC aircraft evacuated three sick Russians in the Pacific and brought them for treatment in U.S. hospitals.

**1970**

- Jan A C-141 airlifted relief supplies to Morocco to aid flood victims.
- Jan After flooding in Costa Rica and Panama, USAF aircraft airlifted fifty-six tons of relief supplies and 576 evacuees.
- Feb USAF rescue helicopters helped save crew members from two sinking vessels in the Pacific.
- Mar The USAF provided relief supplies to Turkey following an earthquake in the Gediz area.
- May Following a devastating earthquake in Peru, eighteen U.S. airlifters delivered 732 tons of relief supplies and transported injured locals.
- Oct After flooding, three USAF C-124s airlifted more than sixteen tons of relief supplies to Puerto Rico.
- Oct USAF airlifters moved in two military hospitals and medical personnel to Amman to treat wounded following the outbreak of the Jordanian civil war.

- Oct After flash flooding in northwestern Italy, a USAF C-130 delivered relief supplies.
- Oct A PACAF airlift moved 375 tons of cargo and 453 people during typhoon relief operations in the central Philippines.
- Nov After floods in Colombia, USAF C-130s airlifted twelve tons of relief supplies and equipment.
- Nov U.S. airlifters carried relief supplies and Army forces to Pakistan to assist in relief efforts.
- Dec USAF rescue units aided in rescue attempts following the sinking of a Korean ferry. Over 300 people were lost.
- Dec In response to major flooding in Costa Rica, a USAF C-123 and helicopter brought in seventy-three tons of relief supplies and airlifted 279 evacuees.
- Dec To aid victims of an earthquake in Ecuador, three USAF C-130s airlifted 140 tons of relief supplies.

## **1971**

- Jan PACAF airlifters provided relief to Kuantan, Malaysia, following a flood.
- Feb To aid flood victims in Bolivia, a USAF C-130 brought in seven tons of Red Cross supplies.
- Mar A C-141 airlifted a recently released American agricultural adviser who had been taken hostage by Uruguayan rebels.
- Mar MAC airlifted approximately forty tons of relief supplies to residents of Okinawa following a devastating typhoon.
- Mar In response to a volcanic eruption in Nicaragua, USAF airlifters brought in ninety-five tons of relief supplies and building material.
- May Two PACAF C-130s airlifted tents to Truk Island following a destructive typhoon.
- May A U.S. search and rescue unit delivered medical personnel by parachute to a Soviet freighter in the Pacific to assist a burned Russian sailor.
- May USAFE C-130 sorties aided earthquake victims around Bingöl, Turkey.
- Jun USAFE provided humanitarian aid to Pakistan and India to assist refugees of the East Pakistan civil war. During thirty days of operations, airlift aircraft flew in 2,176 tons of food and medical supplies and flew out over 23,000 refugees.
- Jun In Operation Bonny Jack, TAC deployed three C-130s from Pope AFB to Delhi, India, with cholera vaccine on board.
- Jul U.S. airlifters transported more than forty-three tons of relief supplies to aid survivors after an earthquake in Chile.
- Jul USAFE airlifters flew cholera relief supplies to Chad.
- Jul After floods in Mexico, USAF aircraft rescued nineteen flood victims and airlifted five tons of food and medical supplies.

- Sep After Hurricane Edith devastated coastal regions of Nicaragua, U.S. airlifters transported over ninety-three tons of relief supplies to aid victims.
- Sep After Tropical Storm Fern hit northeastern Mexico, USAF helicopters aided in the rescue of ninety-one persons.
- Oct USAF rescue helicopters saved the crewmen of a sinking Taiwanese freighter off the Philippines.

**1972**

- Mar In response to an earthquake and flooding in Peru, USAF C-130s airlifted 135 tons of relief supplies to the stricken area.
- May USAFE airlifted to Turkey 5,000 pounds of medical equipment donated by civilians from Germany.
- Jul PACAF C-130s moved over four million pounds of cargo to assist in flood relief operations in the Philippines.
- Jul USAF airlifters evacuated the inhabitants of Johnston Atoll when it was threatened by Typhoon Celeste.
- Aug USAF rescue units saved nearly 750 lives during heavy flooding near Seoul, South Korea.
- Nov Four helicopters from Osan Air Base saved 763 Korean civilians from flood waters.
- Dec Following a devastating earthquake in Managua, Nicaragua, U.S. airlifters brought in almost 2,000 tons of relief supplies and 1,200 personnel. Within thirty-eight hours, the United States delivered two mobile surgical hospitals.

**1973**

- Jan Airlifters evacuated local residents and “rescued” 833 tons of fish-processing equipment following the eruption of a volcano in Iceland.
- May TAC C-130s delivered 2,000 tons of food to drought-stricken areas in Mali, Mauritania, and Chad.
- Jun After a flood in Guatemala, a USAF C-130 airlifted seven tons of tents to the region.
- Jul PACAF C-130s delivered 100 tons of medical supplies to Tan Son Nhut, South Vietnam, to stop an outbreak of hemorrhagic fever.
- Jul To combat an encephalomyelitis epidemic in Panama, USAF aircraft airlifted and dispensed nine tons of insecticide.
- Jul Two PACAF C-47s flew to Lahore, Pakistan, for disaster relief operations. The aircraft sprayed 100,000 acres of rice fields to destroy borer worms.
- Oct After a flood in northern Colombia, two C-130s airlifted sixteen tons of relief supplies to the area.
- Nov To aid victims of floods in western Panama, USAF helicopters brought in food and relief workers.

## 1974

- Feb U.S. airlifters on rotational duty in Panama airlifted 40,000 pounds of relief supplies to flood victims in Bolivia. Supplies included 8,500 blankets, 10,000 units of penicillin and vitamins, and 10 field kitchens.
- May A TAC C-130 located a disabled sloop about 120 miles southwest of Cuba and directed a merchant vessel to render aid.
- Jul C-130 airlifters flew disaster relief operations after a massive landslide in Colombia.
- Jul A C-5 and C-141 delivered eighty-four tons of supplies, including blankets and cots, to Chile to aid flood victims.
- Aug Three MAC C-141s airlifted tents and blankets to Bangladesh to help refugees left homeless by flooding.
- Aug Two C-141s delivered thirty-four tons of medical supplies to Burma in the aftermath of severe flooding in that nation.
- Sep C-130s flew disaster relief operations after a major hurricane struck Honduras.
- Oct In Operation King Grain, USAF airlifters brought in foodstuffs to famine-stricken areas in Chad, Mali, and Mauritania.
- Nov USAF airlifters flew flood relief supplies to the Virgin Islands.
- Dec U.S. air transports airlifted emergency food supplies to Bangladesh. PACAF aircraft participating in the operation carried over 1,000 tons of supplies during fifty-one missions.
- Dec Three C-141s flew ten relief missions to Darwin, Australia, to support relief efforts for the city, which had been devastated by Cyclone Tracy.

## 1975

- Jan At the request of the king of Thailand, U.S. airlifters flew rice and other emergency supplies to northern Thailand. U.S. helicopters distributed these relief supplies to flood-stricken areas.
- Feb A C-141 airlifted relief supplies to cyclone-devastated Mauritius in the southwestern Indian Ocean.
- May USAF airlifters brought in medical supplies following an outbreak of dengue fever in Guam.
- Jul Following flooding in Recife, Brazil, C-130 airlifters carried thirty tons of relief supplies to the region.
- Aug After extensive flooding in Romania, USAF C-141s delivered sixty tons of disaster relief supplies to Bucharest.

## 1976

- Feb Following a massive earthquake in Guatemala, USAF aircraft delivered almost 1,000 tons of supplies and emergency support personnel. A TAC mobile fuel unit provided refueling support to

rescue helicopters and a SAC U-2 provided reconnaissance to aid in rescue efforts.



Communications equipment rolls off a USAF C-5 Galaxy in Guatemala.

- May After a severe earthquake in northeastern Turkey, a C-141 airlifted emergency aid to Aviano, Italy.
- May USAF helicopters evacuated 734 Philippine nationals who had been stranded by a major typhoon.
- May MAC airlifters flew in relief supplies to residents of Guam following a typhoon.
- Jul In support of earthquake relief operations, two C-130s carried twenty tons of supplies from Guam to Indonesia; a C-141 delivered 400 tents.
- Oct After an airliner crash that killed 75 and injured more than 100 in Bolivia, a C-141 transported a burn team and medical supplies.
- Nov C-141s, C-5s, and C-130s delivered earthquake relief supplies to Turkey following a major quake.

**1977**

- Mar After an earthquake, MAC delivered seven tons of relief supplies to Romania.
- Mar Following a collision of two Boeing 747s in the Canary Islands,

MAC aircraft airlifted more than fifty crash victims to medical facilities in the United States.

Apr USAF provided assistance in the Marshall Islands, evacuating personnel after a typhoon struck Eniwetok.

## 1978

Aug As part of Sudan flood relief, a MAC airlifter delivered twenty-six tons of relief supplies to Khartoum.

Sep A SAC U-2 located a missing fishing boat in the Atlantic.

Sep After Hurricane Greta hit Central America, USAF C-130s airlifted fifty tons of relief cargo to stricken areas in Honduras and Belize.

Oct USAF aircraft rescued twenty-three flood victims in Costa Rica.

Nov Twenty-one C-141s, C-130s, and HH-53s carried the remains of Congressman Leo Ryan, his party, and some 900 followers of the Reverend Jim Jones back to the United States from Jonestown, Guyana.

Nov Five C-141s supported typhoon relief efforts in Sri Lanka.

## 1979

Mar USAF helicopters, based at Hickam Air Base, Hawaii, rescued nineteen crew members from a sinking Japanese fishing vessel.

Apr After Mount Soufrière volcano erupted on Saint Vincent, Windward Islands, C-130s airlifted thirty tons of relief supplies to aid victims.

Apr Two C-141s airlifted supplies to the Fiji Islands following the ravages of Hurricane Mali.

Apr Osan Air Base helicopters rescued twenty-four persons from a sinking Korean fishing vessel.

Apr A USAF airlifter delivered twenty tons of vegetable seeds to aid starving people in Zaire.

Apr Seven C-141s and one C-130 transported 126 tons of relief supplies to aid earthquake victims in Yugoslavia.

Aug After Hurricane David and Tropical Storm Frederic devastated islands in the Caribbean, USAF airlifters transported more than 2,900 tons of supplies and 1,400 passengers.

Oct The USAF participated in refugee relief operations in Thailand.

Nov Following damage by high waves to the islands of the Majuro Atoll, PACAF aided in relief operations.

Nov After floods, USAF aircraft rescued twenty-seven victims and delivered fresh food and water to Panama.

Dec After an earthquake in Colombia, four USAF C-130s brought in 118 rescue workers and 87 tons of relief equipment.

Dec In response to flooding in Nicaragua, USAF C-130s airlifted at least 117 tons of relief supplies and 247 passengers to stricken areas.

Dec After a flood, a USAF C-130 airlifted fifteen tons of food to Belize.

## 1980

Jan A C-141 airlifted relief supplies to Mauritius Island in response to the destruction caused by Cyclone Claudette.

Jan USAF airlifters flew typhoon relief supplies to the Marshall Islands.

Jan To assist earthquake victims, C-141s airlifted 700 tents and 1,000 blankets from Italy to the Azores.

Apr The USAF participated in refugee relief operations in Thailand.

Jul An urgent airlift was conducted in Europe for Vice-Consul Richard I. Queen, one of fifty-two Americans held hostage by Iran, released because of illness. A USAF DC-9 flew him from Zurich, Switzerland, to Wiesbaden, West Germany.

Aug After Hurricane Allen, five USAF airlifters brought in sixty-one tons of relief supplies to Haiti and St. Lucia.

Oct After the Coco River flooded, a USAF C-130 brought in forty tons of relief supplies to Nicaragua.

Oct MAC delivered 240 tons of relief supplies after two major earthquakes struck Algeria. Soon afterwards, Algeria moved to act as an intermediary in the Iranian hostage impasse.

Nov Thousands who were rendered homeless by an earthquake in Italy were aided by relief supplies delivered by the USAF. At the request of the Italian government, a SAC U-2 conducted sorties over the Naples area to assess earthquake damage.

Nov USAF aircraft provided relief supplies to the people of Saipan following Typhoon Dinah.

## 1981

Jan Americans who had been held hostage by Iran were airlifted from Algeria to Germany, and then to the United States.

Feb The USAF provided earthquake relief missions for Greece.

Jul After an earthquake in southern Peru, a USAF C-130 airlifted eight tons of blankets to that nation.

Nov The USAF provided relief supplies for victims of a major earthquake in eastern Turkey.

Dec Six MAC C-141s brought medical supplies from Ramstein Air Base and Italy for earthquake victims in Yemen.

## 1982

May After a bridge collapsed in Panama, USAF C-130s brought in 381 tons of relief cargo.

Jul A C-130 deployed to Nigeria and set up an airhead to fly daily flights into Chad for famine relief.

- Aug USAF airlifters flew refugee relief operations in Lebanon.
- Nov After a flood in Tunisia, the USAF brought in relief supplies.
- Dec USAF airlifters delivered almost 200 tons of supplies to Yemen for earthquake relief.

**1983**

- Jan When forest fires broke out in Italy, the USAF deployed C-130s equipped for aerial fire-fighting to assist local authorities.
- Mar The USAF delivered relief supplies to Fiji islanders recovering from a major cyclone.
- Apr After an earthquake, USAF C-130s airlifted thirty-four tons of relief supplies to Colombia.
- Apr U.S. nationals who were wounded in an embassy bombing were airlifted from Beirut, Lebanon, to Rhein-Main Air Base near Frankfurt, West Germany.
- Jun Two C-130s transported an Army medical relief team from San Antonio, Texas, to El Salvador.
- Jul Following a major flood, three USAF C-130s airlifted 170 tons of relief supplies to northwestern Peru.
- Jul Two USAF helicopters airlifted ten tons of food and medical supplies to local residents after a flood in Ecuador.
- Sep Four C-141s transported eighty-six passengers and thirty-four tons of cargo from Ramstein Air Base to Japan, to assist in the search for the wreckage from Korean Airlines Flight 007. USAF F-15s, KC-135s, E-3As, and RC-135s supported the search operation.
- Sep The USAF provided medical supplies to the Truk Islands to combat a cholera outbreak.
- Oct Seventy-eight wounded personnel from a Marine barracks bombing in Lebanon were airlifted to medical facilities in the United States and Europe.



Wounded Marines are unloaded at Rhein-Main Air Base following the October 23 bombing of the barracks in Beirut, Lebanon.

Oct MAC flew four C-141 and thirteen C-130 sorties to airlift supplies to Turkey, which had been devastated by an earthquake.

## 1984

Aug The USAF participated in a typhoon evacuation of Johnston Atoll in the Pacific.

Sep A C-141 delivered three passengers and nine tons of equipment to Kinshasa, Zaire, in support of an AIDS research project.

Sep The USAF provided flood relief to Korea.

Dec Two C-141s flew survivors and bodies of victims from Kuwait after a hijacking attempt.

Dec The USAF provided assistance to refugees in Ethiopia.

## 1985

Jan When a typhoon left 3,000 homeless, the USAF sent two C-5s and a C-141 to deliver relief supplies to the Fiji Islands.

Jan The USAF again provided assistance to refugees in Ethiopia.

Feb USAF airlifters flew drought relief supplies to Mozambique.

Feb To aid earthquake victims in Argentina, a MAC C-141 brought in 500 tents.

Mar After an earthquake in Chile, a C-5 airlifted sixty tons of plastic tent sheeting to help homeless survivors.

Mar Sudan, Niger, and Mali received famine relief deliveries, which coincided with visits to the region by Vice President George Bush.

Jul A C-141 airlifted thirty-nine male hostages from Syria after a TWA flight was hijacked to Beirut, Lebanon.

Aug A C-5 airlifted three helicopters to Sudan to assist in famine relief operations.

Sep Massive earthquakes wreaked havoc on Mexico City, killing 4,000 people and destroying 2,500 buildings. Airlifters transported 375 tons of cargo to aid rescuers and assist the populace.

Oct The USAF airlifted from Italy to the United States eleven hostages released from the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship.

Oct After mud slides in Puerto Rico, five C-5s, two C-141s, and three C-130s flew in 361 tons of relief supplies and 66 workers.

Nov After a Colombian volcano erupted and unleashed torrents of mud and water, four C-130s delivered fifty tons of supplies and thirty-two tons of fuel for Army helicopters engaged in rescue operations.

Dec The USAF airlifted the dead from an Arrow Air crash in Canada and supported airlift missions.

## 1986

Feb A C-141 flew Haitian President Jean Claude Duvalier and his family to exile in France.

- Feb Helicopters from Clark Air Base extracted Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos and his family from Manila. Marcos was then airlifted to exile in Hawaii aboard a USAF transport aircraft.
- Mar The USAF began to deliver \$10 million in relief for Afghan refugees in Pakistan, contained in an amendment to the fiscal year 1986 budget.



An Afghan refugee arrives by C-9 in the U.S. for medical treatment.

- Apr After a massive meltdown at the Soviet Union's Chernobyl nuclear power plant, MAC aircraft flew eleven air sampling operations.
- May Four C-130s airlifted emergency relief supplies and equipment to the typhoon-ravaged Solomon Islands.
- Jun After floods, USAF C-130s airlifted twenty-seven tons of relief supplies to Jamaica.

- Jul The USAF participated in an airlift of American hostage Rev. Lawrence Jenco from Damascus, Syria, to West Germany, following his release by his captors in Lebanon.
- Sep Two C-5s delivered to Manila the largest shipment flown to date under the auspices of the Denton Amendment.
- Oct Eighteen MAC airlifters delivered thirty-nine tons of goods, medicine, and other relief supplies to El Salvador after a devastating earthquake.

**1987**

- Feb C-141 aircraft transported more than sixty-six tons of relief supplies to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, following Typhoon Uma.
- Mar After an earthquake in Ecuador, two USAF C-141s and four C-130s airlifted 107 tons of relief equipment and supplies.
- May The USAF airlifted thirty-six dead and wounded from the Arabian Gulf after the attack on the USS *Stark*.
- Sep The USAF participated in general relief missions to Chad.
- Sep The USAF helped provide general relief to Thailand.

**1988**

- Feb A medical team was transported to Mexico City.
- Apr A C-141 airlifted from Bahrain sailors who had been wounded on the *Samuel B. Roberts* when the vessel hit a mine. The transport carried them from the Arabian Gulf to Rhein-Main Air Base, West Germany.
- Sep Relief supplies were airlifted to Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, after a flood left thirty million people homeless.



Disaster relief supplies are unloaded from a C-5 in Bangladesh.

- Sep After a hurricane, the USAF airlifted relief supplies to Jamaica.
- Oct USAF airlifters flew hurricane supplies to the Philippines.
- Nov The USAF participated in pestilence relief operations in Senegal.
- Dec Seven humanitarian aid missions were flown to the USSR to aid survivors of a massive earthquake in Armenia, which left 40,000 dead and 500,000 homeless.

**1989**

- Feb A C-141 airlifted to the United States thirty-seven Soviet Armenian children who had been seriously injured in an earthquake.
- Jun A C-141 transported a burn team and supplies to Ufa, Bashkiria, in the USSR to treat one hundred burned children.



Medical equipment and supplies for the burn team are unloaded at Ufa.

- Aug USAF airlifters deployed search and rescue helicopters to locate Congressman Mickey Leland's aircraft, which had disappeared in Ethiopia. Congressman Leland and fifteen other passengers were killed in this crash and USAF airlifters returned their bodies to the United States.
- Sep The USAF participated in a medical airlift to Liberia.
- Sep Fifty-one C-5s, fifty-three C-141s, twenty-three C-130s, and one KC-10 transported 1,365 passengers and 3,938 tons of humanitarian cargo to Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, and St. Croix in the wake of Hurricane Hugo.
- Oct A C-5 delivered large quantities of excess Department of Defense property to Sierra Leone, Liberia, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon in a humanitarian special assignment airlift mission, Africa-2.

**1990**

Feb After a cyclone struck Western Samoa and rendered 12,000-15,000 people homeless, a C-5 transported disaster relief supplies and personnel to the stricken area. A C-130 aided in search and rescue operations.

Apr A MAC C-141 transported Robert Polhill, a freed American hostage who had been held in Lebanon, from Damascus, Syria, to Rhein-Main Air Base, West Germany. He was then flown by helicopter to the U.S. military hospital at Wiesbaden.



Freed hostage Robert Polhill walks off a C-141 at Rhein-Main Air Base.

- Jun A MAC rescue team operating from a C-141 dropped a canister containing medical supplies to an American citizen stricken with asthma aboard a private sailing vessel between Peru and Hawaii. The ailing man's wife retrieved the parcel, dropped within ten feet of the vessel's bow, and successfully administered the medication.
- Jul After a major earthquake devastated the northern Philippines, PACAF deployed construction personnel, opened hospitals, and supplied other humanitarian aid.
- Sep When heavy rains flooded South Korea, the 38th Air Rescue Squadron saved twenty-four people from flood waters.
- Dec The 38th Air Rescue Squadron rescued twenty-two crew members of a Panamanian vessel that ran aground off Korea.

**1991**

- Mar A C-5 delivered sixty-five tons of medical equipment to Romania. In addition to excess Department of Defense property, the flight carried cargo privately collected by Project Handclasp. Additional humanitarian flights followed.
- Apr Following a cholera epidemic in Peru, MAC C-5 missions brought in 200 tons of medical supplies.
- Apr In the wake of the Gulf War, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guards put down a rebellion by the Kurdish people in the northern part of the country. In April 1991 the Air Force began Operation Provide Comfort, which brought relief supplies to the Kurds.



One of thousands of Kurdish refugees at the Isikveren camp.

- May MAC established a strategic airlift to Bangladesh to deliver 738 passengers and 832 tons of food to alleviate suffering caused by Cyclone Marion. Additionally, an intratheater airlift delivered food from depots established in-country.
- May TAC deployed forces as well as Harvest Eagle and Harvest Bare equipment to Guantanamo (GTMO, pronounced “Gitmo”) Bay Naval Station, Cuba, in support of Operation GTMO, providing humanitarian relief to Haitian migrants.
- May A C-5 delivered twenty-five tons of medical supplies to Quito, Ecuador.
- Jun In the largest airlift evacuation since the war in Southeast Asia, MAC transport and civil aircraft moved 52,018 PACAF personnel and their dependents from Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Station in the Philippines to the United States following the volcanic eruption of Mount Pinatubo.
- Jun A MAC C-141 delivered medical supplies in what was the first flight of an American military aircraft into Mongolia.
- Jul MAC transport aircraft delivered food and relief supplies to aid miners as well as some of Mother Teresa’s relief organizations in Tiranë, Albania.
- Jul In response to drought and the consequences of civil war, MAC airlifted seventy tons of cargo to N’Djamena, Chad.
- Aug MAC C-141s began transporting hostages released in Damascus, Syria, from captivity in Lebanon.
- Aug Following flooding, a MAC C-5 delivered blankets and medical supplies to Shanghai for distribution in central and eastern China.
- Oct A MAC C-5 delivered relief supplies following flooding in Mongolia.
- Oct Two MAC C-5s delivered donated medical supplies as well as excess Defense Department blankets and equipment to Kiev, Ukraine.
- Nov The devastation caused by three typhoons beginning in November led to the delivery of relief supplies by MAC and PACAF aircraft to Guam and the Marshalls.
- Nov MAC aircraft joined Alaska Air National Guard and Canadian Forces aircraft to rescue fourteen survivors of a crash of a Canadian C-130 near the North Pole.
- Dec Two MAC C-5s made the first direct airlift of food aid to the Soviet Union.

**1992**

- Feb MAC and USAFE began delivering food and medical supplies to the Commonwealth of Independent States, the former Soviet Union, in Operation Provide Hope. The Air Force designated a follow-on operation “Provide Hope II.”

- Mar Within forty-eight hours of a devastating earthquake in Turkey, MAC C-130s began delivering food, water, and clothing. Heavy equipment to aid in rescue work was also brought in later.
- Apr Following extensive fires in oil fields in Uzbekistan, MAC C-141s delivered specialized fire-fighting equipment from the United States.
- Jul Operation Provide Promise, a series of relief flights into Sarajevo, began on July 3, 1992, and became the longest sustained humanitarian airlift in history. By May 1995 U.S. aircraft had delivered more than 55,953 metric tons of food, medicine, and supplies. They also had dropped more than 18,002 metric tons of relief into areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina that United Nations convoys could not reach by land.



A casualty of the conflict in Bosnia is airlifted to the U.S. for treatment.



Croatian corn seeds were airdropped over Bosnia during Provide Promise.

- Aug AMC aircraft began flying Operation Provide Relief missions to Somalia and Kenya to aid Somalis threatened by starvation due to anarchy in their country and a prolonged drought.
- Aug After devastation brought by Typhoon Omar, AMC and PACAF relief missions brought cargo and people to Guam to aid the island's recovery.
- Aug A day after Hurricane Andrew smashed into southern Florida, the Air Force embarked on one of its largest domestic humanitarian airlift operations. Despite devastation that caused the closing of Homestead Air Force Base, by September 25, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard transports, augmented by airlines under contract, had delivered more than

21,000 tons of relief supplies and had transported more than 13,500 passengers. (25 Aug-25 Sep)

Sep Following Typhoon Iniki, which devastated Kauai in the Hawaiian archipelago, Air Mobility Command, Pacific Air Forces, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard aircraft and crews airlifted 6,888 tons of relief equipment and supplies to Hawaii. The operation also airlifted more than 12,000 passengers, including evacuees as well as military and civilian workers. (12 Sep-18 Oct)



Part of the daily audience watching U.S. Marines at work in Somalia.

Sep An AMC C-141 airlifted seventy children who suffered from the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear accident of 1986, transporting them from Minsk, Belarus, to Belgium for medical treatment.

Nov AMC C-5 and C-141 missions delivered 236 metric tons of flour at the urgent request of the Armenian government to alleviate a severe bread shortage.

- Dec In Operation Restore Hope, AMC and ACC airlifters delivered food, medicine, logistical support, and other cargo to Somalia, while AMC tankers built an “airbridge” over the Atlantic to keep supplies flowing. These activities supported American ground forces who were rescuing starving Somalis from a country which had fallen into anarchy.
- Dec After flooding in Pakistan, six Air Mobility Command C-5 missions moved 415 tons of engineering vehicles and equipment to Islamabad. (6-20 Dec)

### 1993

- Feb An Air Force C-141 and C-5 took part in Operation Provide Refuge, which airlifted 18 tons of food and other relief supplies from Hawaii to Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands for more than 500 Chinese refugees rescued from a freighter. (13 Feb-9 Mar)
- Jul After extensive flooding in the Midwest, twenty Air Mobility Command C-141 and C-5 missions flown by active duty, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard crews delivered a million empty sandbags to Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri so that workers could fill them to rebuild or heighten levees. The airlift moved 141 passengers and 797 tons of relief cargo. (11 Jul-1 Aug)
- Aug Three USAF C-5s airlifted bridge components from England to Nepal to replace bridges destroyed by flooding. (11-15 Aug)
- Oct After an earthquake in India that killed 11,000 people, two Air Mobility Command C-5s airlifted relief supplies to Bombay. The cargo included 1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting, 950 tents, and 18,550 five-gallon water containers. (4 Oct)

### 1994

- Jan Crewmen in a 56th Rescue Squadron HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter earned the Mackay Trophy by rescuing six sailors from their damaged tugboat off the coast of Iceland. (10 Jan)
- Jan After an earthquake in southern California, six C-5 and four C-141 missions airlifted 270 disaster specialists and 340,000 pounds of relief cargo, including fire trucks, generators, and communications vans, to Los Angeles. (17-25 Jan)
- Jan As part of Operation Provide Hope IV, the United States Air Forces in Europe transported hospital equipment to Minsk, Belarus.
- Apr Operation Distant Runner, which involved resources from the Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, United States Air Forces in Europe, and the US Marine Corps, evacuated 148 Americans and 82 other non-combatants from Rwanda. Associate aircrews from the 315th and 446th Airlift Wings took part. (9-15 Apr)
- May Following an outbreak of massacres in Rwanda, AMC mounted Operation Support Hope, which flew 1,220 airlift sorties and

delivered 15 tons of humanitarian aid to this country. More than 400,000 refugees fled to neighboring nations, and civilian and military aircraft also made relief flights to Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zaire.

- May Air Force and Air Force Reserve aircrews airlifted 239 tons of relief supplies to Tanzania for Rwandan refugees.
- Jun As part of Operation Provide Hope, a 60th Military Airlift Wing C-5 Galaxy airlifted a 34-ton magnetic-resonance imaging system to Chernobyl, Ukraine, to help medical personnel treat victims of a 1986 nuclear accident. (26 Jun)
- June Starting in June, and going into September, C-130s of the Air Force Reserve's 302d Airlift Wing and the Air National Guard flew fire-fighting missions in the western and southwestern United States.
- Jul As part of Operation Support Hope (initially called Quiet Resolve), a humanitarian-relief operation for refugees from the Rwandan civil war, C-5s and C-141s began airlifting equipment and supplies from Germany to Uganda and Kenya. C-130s transported the cargo from there to refugee camps in Zaire. By August 7, they had delivered 3,660 tons of relief cargo. At least 22 airlift wings and groups took part. By November 15, C-130s from nine units of the Air National Guard, on rotation to Europe, had flown 915 sorties and airlifted more than 4,000 passengers and 4,500 tons of cargo for the Rwandan refugees. The Air Mobility Command flew 700 missions, airlifting more than 11,000 passengers and 23,000 tons of cargo. (22 Jul-15 Nov)
- Sep In an operation called Safe Haven, thousands of Cuban refugees were airlifted to camps in Panama from Guantanamo, Cuba. Of more than 8,600 refugees transported by the end of October, some 1,280 Cubans entered the United States legally from the Panamanian camps. (6 Sep 1994-Jan 1995)
- Dec Members of the Air Force Reserve airlifted 8,000 pounds of clothing, furniture, schoolbooks, beds, Plexiglas, and a refrigerator to Albania for orphanages in Tirana and Skoda.

## 1995

- Jan After a major earthquake struck Kobe, Japan on January 17, C-130s of the 374th Airlift Wing delivered relief supplies to the victims. (19 Jan)
- Feb After riots at Cuban refugee camps in Panama, the Air Force took part in the airlift of 7,300 Cubans back to Guantanamo. (1-20 Feb)
- Apr After a truck bomb exploded and partially destroyed a federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 169 people and injuring more than 400 others, the Air Force airlifted firefighters, urban search-and-rescue teams, investigators, and medical personnel from all over the United States to Oklahoma. (19 Apr-3 May)

- May After floods in Louisiana caused by more than 22 inches of rain in two days, Air National Guard units rescued thousands of flood victims. (8-11 May)
- May In response to an Ebola virus epidemic in Zaire in central Africa, a 349th Air Mobility Wing C-141 and a 60th Airlift Wing C-5 delivered more than a ton of medical supplies, including 2,000 face masks, 300 body bags, 2,000 caps, 4,000 examination gloves, 2,100 disposable boots, 200 units of plasma, and 2,000 disposable gowns. (10-17 May)
- Jul In an operation called Prompt Return, 147 Chinese migrants, found crammed in a hot fishing ship hold off Hawaii, were transported from Wake Island back to China, along with 11 members of the ship's crew. (21 Jul-10 Aug)
- Jul In order to relieve economic suffering, a 433d Airlift Wing C-5 Galaxy crew transported 28 pallets of supplies from the United States to Belarus. The cargo included medical supplies, blankets, clothing, furniture, and a military ambulance. (23 Jul)
- Jul After extensive flooding in Kharkov, three C-130s from the 37th Airlift Squadron at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, airlifted relief supplies to Ukraine. (19 Jul)
- Aug A 60th Air Mobility Wing C-5 Galaxy airlifted 75 tons of food from Ramstein Air Base in Germany to Zagreb in Croatia for refugees from a civil war in the former Yugoslavia. (20-21 Aug)
- Sep Two 436th Airlift Wing C-5s airlifted gas turbine generators from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, to provide electricity for Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. (7 Sep)
- Sep The Air Force airlifted more than 30 tons of medical supplies from Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, to Hanoi, Vietnam, marking the first USAF humanitarian-airlift mission to Vietnam since 1975. (14-30 Sep)
- Sep After Hurricane Marilyn devastated islands in the eastern Caribbean Sea, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard cargo aircraft airlifted nearly 1,000 tons of relief cargo to the Virgin Islands in an operation called Caribbean Express. This was the first disaster-relief operation to employ C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. C-5s, C-17s, C-130s, and contracted commercial aircraft joined the C-17s to deliver 3,617 short tons of cargo and airlift 2,348 passengers on 212 missions. The cargo included food, water, medical supplies, and plastic sheeting. (15 Sep-10 Oct)
- Oct In response to the disaster of Hurricane Opal, which struck Alabama and the Florida panhandle, USAF aircraft delivered relief supplies to the disaster victims.

## 1996

- Jan After three and a half years, Operation Provide Promise officially

- ended. During this international operation-the longest sustained humanitarian airlift in history-the U.S. Air Force flew more than 4,500 sorties to deliver 62,802 metric tons of cargo to Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Air Mobility Command and United States Air Forces in Europe aircraft taking part included C-130s, C-141s, and C-17s. (3 Jul 1992-9 Jan 1996)
- Apr Operation Assured Response evacuated by air more than 2,000 noncombatants from Liberia during civil unrest there. USAF aircraft, including MH-53 Pave Low helicopters, KC-135 Stratotankers, C-130 Hercules cargo airplanes, MC-130 Combat Talons, and AC-130 Spectre aircraft flew 94 missions for the operation by April 25. By May 6, Air Mobility Command had managed 103 airlift missions, that had delivered 2,148 short tons of cargo and airlifted 2,153 passengers. (7 Apr-6 May)
- May The United States Air Forces in Europe deployed medical teams to assist victims of a terrorist attack on the Al Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia. Air Force Reservists continued such missions in June.
- Jul A 908th Airlift Wing C-130 transported beds, tables, cribs, and bedding from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania via Newfoundland and England to St. Petersburg, Russia for Russian orphans. The cargo had been donated by Orphan Grain Train, a charitable organization based in Nebraska, and was airlifted as part of the Denton Amendment. (15-16 Jul)
- Jul A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter and a C-130 Hercules airplane searched part of the Atlantic Ocean where a TWA airliner had crashed on a flight from New York to Paris. They were not successful in finding any survivors.
- Aug By August 29, 1996, six fires in northern California destroyed millions of acres of trees and brush. Four C-130s modified for fire fighting, two each from the 302d Airlift Wing and the 146th Airlift Wing (Air National Guard) flew many missions over the fringes of the fires to limit their spread. Flying from the airport at Redding, California, the C-130 crews dropped 3,000 gallons of water and fire retardant at a time while flying at altitudes as low as 150 feet.
- Sep After a civil war in Burundi threatened foreigners there, a USAF C-141 from the 305th Air Mobility Wing evacuated 30 people of nine nationalities and their household goods from Bujumbura to Nairobi, Kenya. (4 Sep)
- Sep In the wake of Hurricane Fran, a 145th Airlift Wing C-130 of the Air National Guard transported Army National Guard engineers, security police, generators, mobile kitchens, and showers to damaged regions of Raleigh and Wilmington, where civil engineers set up a 500-person tent city. (5 Sep)
- Sep In Operation Pacific Haven, the Air Force airlifted thousands of refugees who had fled their homes in northern Iraq to Andersen Air

Force Base, Guam, where they were processed for settlement in the United States. A C-5 and a C-141 airlifted an air-transportable hospital and a 44-member medical team from Japan to Guam to provide medical care for the 2,500 evacuees. In Operations Quick Transit I, II, and III, additional thousands of Kurdish refugees from northern Iraq were airlifted to the United States for safety. (15 Sep-13 Dec)

- Nov After flooding in Honduras left some 40,000 people homeless, a 24th Wing C-130 delivered plastic sheeting and water containers.
- Nov In an operation called Guardian Assistance, USAFE deployed two C-130s to aid Rwandan refugees who had fled to Zaire. (14 Nov-27 Dec)
- Dec After a blizzard struck South Dakota at the end of the year, C-141 and C-130 aircraft from the 349th Air Mobility Wing and the 908th Airlift Wing airlifted relief supplies to the victims. (27 Dec 1996-19 Jan 1997)
- Dec Operation Provide Comfort, which had begun in April 1991 as a humanitarian airlift for Kurdish refugees along the border of northern Iraq, concluded, replaced by Operation Northern Watch, which enforced a no-fly zone over northern Iraq.

## **1997**

- Jan C-130s from the 911th and 913th Airlift Wings transported 40,000 pounds of cargo to Cancun, Mexico in order to construct a clinic for the Mayans of the Yucatan Peninsula. The cargo had been donated by a non-profit group called Mission of Love and was transported as a Denton Amendment project.
- Jan A C-141 crew from the Air Force Reserve's 349th Air Mobility Wing at Travis Air Force Base, California, airlifted 40,000 pounds of winter clothing to Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota, from which the freight was transported overland to the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation. (19 Jan)
- Jan A 911th Airlift Wing C-130 airlifted some 13,000 pounds of medical supplies, food, and educational material that had been donated by citizens of Hazelton, Pennsylvania, to Warsaw, Poland. (29 Jan)
- Mar In an operation called Silver Wake, non-combatants were evacuated from Albania following an armed rebellion. (14-26 Mar)
- Mar In Operation Guardian Retrieval, USAF aircraft evacuated U.S. citizens and other foreigners from Zaire, where civil unrest threatened them. Special Operations Command personnel flew MC-130s and MH-53s, for the joint task force. Air Mobility Command C-5s, C-17s, C-141s, and KC-135s also took part. By the end of March, the operation had flown 57 missions and had transported 532 passengers. (17 Mar-5 Jun)
- Apr A 459th Airlift Wing C-141 from the Air Force Reserve carried

- enough donated medical equipment for two surgical rooms from Scott Air Force Base in Illinois to Sucre, Bolivia. (2 Apr)
- Apr Air Mobility Command transport airplanes airlifted 50 generators, 900 sleeping bags, 4,000 blankets, and 90 pallets of Red Cross supplies from Washington and California to Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, for the victims of flooding along the Red River of the North. By early August, the command had flown 13 missions and airlifted 146 tons of cargo. (7 Apr-8 Aug)
- Jun In an operation called Firm Response, an MC-130 crew from the 352d Special Operations Group evacuated 56 people, including 30 U.S. citizens, from Brazzaville, Congo, to save them from civil strife. Under the command of Lt. Col. Frank J. Kisner, USAF, the crew earned the Mackay Trophy for the outstanding flight of the year. (8-18 Jun)
- Jun The ongoing Operation Provide Hope, which began in 1992 to airlift relief supplies to the independent republics of the former Soviet Union, completed its 500th mission when a C-5 from the 436th Airlift Wing at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, flew from Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. By then, the operation had delivered more than \$1.8 billion in assistance since its beginning in February 1992. (17 Jun)
- Aug In response to a Korean Airlines Boeing 747 crash on Guam, a 305th Air Mobility Wing C-141 carried medical equipment and seven physicians from Hawaii to Guam to treat survivors. Another C-141 from the 62d Airlift Wing airlifted Red Cross, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Federal Aviation Administration officials from Hawaii to Guam. The same day, a 92d Air Refueling Wing KC-135 transported a 31 member team of the National Transportation Safety Board from Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington to Guam. Other C-141s from the Air Force Reserve's 446th Airlift Wing transported some of the crash victims to medical facilities at Kelly Air Force Base in Texas. (5 Aug)
- Sep USAF elements took part in Operation High Flight a search and rescue effort off the coast of Namibia following a mid-air collision of a USAF C-141 with a German Tu-145 aircraft. (15 Sep-17 Oct)
- Oct In response to a Department of Defense tasking, Air Mobility Command C-141s from McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey airlifted \$580,000 worth of medical equipment and supplies to Sofia, Bulgaria. The cargo included 35,000 pounds of pharmaceuticals, respirators, blood transfusion equipment, needles, tracheotomy tubes, bandages, antibiotics, heart medications, anesthetics, surgical gowns and gloves, wheel chairs, and hospital beds. (3 Oct)
- Oct In response to severe and extensive forest fires in Indonesia, three Wyoming Air National Guard C-130s from the 153d Airlift Wing,

equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System, dropped 685,000 gallons of water and fire retardant on fires in Java and Sumatra, each airplane dropping up to 3,000 gallons at a time. The operation concluded in early December after more than 200 sorties. (12 Oct-Dec)

Nov After Typhoon Linda devastated southern Vietnam, leaving 373 people dead and 742 injured, the U.S. embassy in Hanoi requested assistance. A C-141 from the 62d Airlift Wing airlifted more than 47,000 pounds of relief supplies from Kadena Air Base in Japan to Ho Chi Minh City (formerly known as Saigon). The supplies included tents, cots, blankets, sleeping bags, first aid kits, litters, shovels, water cans, and hospital clothing. (12 Nov)

Dec Typhoon Paka hit Guam on December 16, 1997, bringing wind gusts as high as 236 miles per hour, a sea surge up to 35 feet above normal, torrential rains, and floods that left an estimated 1,700 people homeless. By January 4, 1998, the Air Force had delivered more than 2.5 million pounds of relief supplies on 45 relief flights, many of them across the Pacific Ocean. Passengers included Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) personnel, and cargo included electrical power crews, generators, transformers, utility trucks, telephone poles, medical supplies, chain saws, cots, and other equipment and supplies to Guam. The 62d and 436th Airlift Wings and the 60th and 349th Airlift Wings took part, flying C-5s, C-141s, C-130s, KC-135s, and KC-10s. (18 Dec 1997-4 Jan 1998)

Dec The 920th Rescue Group from Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, rescued 28 persons from the sinking British ship *Merchant Patriot* in the Atlantic Ocean, hoisting them by helicopter and transporting them to the Bahamas. The aircraft included two HH-30 helicopters and one HC-130 able to refuel them. (30 Dec)

Dec In an operation called Haydrop, Air National Guard C-130s from Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, Minnesota, and Idaho airlifted nearly 465 tons of hay to stranded livestock in New Mexico after a blizzard's 22 inches of snow closed highways and left herds snowbound. (30 Dec 1997-4 Jan 1998)

Dec After a Ukrainian YAK-42 crashed in northern Greece, USAF U-2 and USN P-3 missions helped locate the aircraft. (19-20 Dec)

## 1998

Jan After an earthquake in China's Hebei Province, a 437th Airlift Wing C-17 airlifted 40 tons of blankets, sleeping bags, medical supplies, rations, and cold weather clothing from Kadena Air Base in Japan to Beijing, China.

Jan In an operation called Recuperation, C-17 crews from the 437th Airlift Wing flew four missions to transport emergency workers and 181 tons of vehicles, generators, water purification equipment,

- field kitchens, and relief supplies from Edmonton, Alberta to Montreal, Quebec to relieve the victims of a blizzard. (10-14 Jan)
- Jan After a severe ice storm struck the northeastern United States, leaving half a million homes without electricity, 13 C-5s and 5 C-17s airlifted utility workers, trucks, chain saws, and other emergency cargo from North Carolina to Maine and New York. The 106th Rescue Wing of the New York Air National Guard also flew an MH-60 for the relief operation. (15-18 Jan)
- May Months of torrential rain washed out roads and caused landslides in the Menabi region of Ecuador, leaving 251 persons dead and 59 missing. The 24th Operations Group, based at Howard Air Force Base in the Panama Canal Zone, airlifted medicines, mattresses, wheelbarrows, plastic sheeting, and bananas from Quayaquil and Quito to the Menabi area, using seven small C-27A cargo aircraft that could land on the small airfields of the disaster region. (10-11 May)
- May The Air National Guard's 210th Rescue Squadron, using a Pavehawk helicopter, rescued six people from a Cessna 207 airplane that crashed on 10,500-foot Mount Torbert east of Anchorage in Alaska. (27 May)
- Jun In an operation called Shepard Venture, the Defense Department evacuated noncombatants from Guinea-Bissau in Africa. USAF KC-135 aircraft and MC-130s from the 352d Special Operations Group took part.
- Jul In response to forest fires in Florida, Air Mobility Command transports, on ten C-5 and two C-141 missions, airlifted 300 firefighters and 740 tons of equipment from California, Oregon, and South Carolina to Naval Air Station Jacksonville and Patrick Air Force Base, Florida. The operation was called Phoenix Flame. (2-7 Jul)
- Jul After a tsunami hit Papua, New Guinea, a C-141 of the 8th Airlift Squadron transported 20,000 pounds of medical supplies, water, tents, cots, and plastic sheeting from Guam, which Australian C-130s carried on from the airport to the flooded area.
- Aug After a terrorist bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, Kenya in Africa, which killed 200 people and wounded more than 1,000, A 305th Air Mobility Wing C-141 airlifted 15 seriously injured State Department Employees to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Other USAF cargo aircraft, including a 437th Airlift Wing C-17 and a 436th Airlift Wing C-5, carried the bodies of 11 Americans back to the United States for burial. (9-13 Aug)
- Aug After heavy rains flooded China, leaving over 2,000 people dead and some 2.5 million homeless, a C-141 from McChord Air Force Base in Washington delivered almost 20 tons of water jugs, blankets, tents, and plastic sheeting from Andersen Air Force Base in

- Guam to Kadana, Japan, from which a commercial aircraft transported the cargo on to Changsha, China.
- Sep At least 190 Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard flights from all over the United States airlifted medical teams, water, ice, generators, plastic sheeting, refrigeration units, construction equipment, and relief supplies to the victims of Hurricane Georges in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and southern Mississippi. The airlift moved 450 passengers and 8,500 short tons of cargo. (22 Sep-12 Oct)
- Nov In late October and early November 1998, Hurricane Mitch brought death, injury, and destruction to Honduras, Nicaragua, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, and southern Mexico, leaving more than 10,000 people dead. The Air Mobility Command managed 140 airlift missions to assist the hurricane victims. Air Force Reserve crews flew more than 100 trips to Central America between November 6 and 24, delivering more than 6 million pounds of relief equipment and supplies in an operation called Strong Support. Air National Guard crews and C-130s came from ten states. Participants included two C-130 crews from the Air Force Reserve's 908th Airlift Wing at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, who deployed via Gulfport, Mississippi, to Soto Cono Air Base and Goloson International Airport in La Ceiba, Honduras, to airlift many tons of rice, flour, medical supplies, clothing, and building materials to the hurricane victims. By the time the relief missions ended in March 1999, USAF crews had flown more than 200 missions, transporting 7.4 million pounds of relief cargo. (6 Nov 1998-19 Mar 1999)

## 1999

- Apr In an operation called Sustain Hope (Shining Hope), USAF transports, including C-5s, C-17s, and C-130s, airlifted more than 3,000 tons of food, medicine, tents, supplies, cots, blankets, sleeping bags, and other relief cargo to more than 450,000 ethnic Albanians who had fled Kosovo to camps in Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro. Some of the flights went from the United States to Albania. Maj. Gen. William S. Hinton, Jr., USAF, commanded the operation. By the time the operation ended, the Air Force, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard had airlifted more than 7,550 passengers and almost 6,000 short tons of food and supplies. (4 Apr-Jul)
- Aug In an operation called Avid Response, a 436th Airlift Wing C-5 airlifted a 70-person search and rescue team, along with five dogs and 56,000 pounds of equipment, including 3 vehicles, from the United States to Turkey after a severe earthquake there. Two 305th Air Mobility Wing KC-10s refueled the C-5 on its nonstop flight.

- By 10 Sep, Air Mobility Command had flown 20 missions in support of the operation. (18 Aug-10 Sep)
- Sep After Hurricane Floyd hit the North Carolina coast, three Air National Guard C-130s airlifted 33,000 cases of food rations to flood victims in the Wilmington area. The 920th Rescue Group assisted in saving more than 300 lives. (14-18 Sep)
- Oct A ski-equipped 109th Airlift Wing LC-130 airlifted Dr. Jeri Nielsen, a research physician, from her research post in Antarctica to New Zealand for treatment of a lump in her breast. The round-trip flight covered some 1,680 miles in bitterly cold weather.
- Nov After severe flooding in central Vietnam, the American Embassy in Vietnam requested an airlift of relief supplies from Guam, which was accomplished by two C-130s from the 353d Special Operations Group based at Kadena Air Base, Japan. Among items transported from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam to Hue, Vietnam were nearly 22,000 pounds of plastic sheeting, 3,600 blankets, and 5,000 water containers.
- Dec A C-17 from the 17th Airlift Squadron airlifted 18,000 boxes of Christmas gifts to the children of Macedonia in a Denton Amendment mission.
- Dec At least six C-130s, one C-5, and two MH-60 aircraft of the USAF took part in a humanitarian operation to Venezuela to relieve the victims of a flood that left hundreds of thousands homeless. For the same disaster, another operation commenced in January of 2000. (20-28 Dec)

## **2000**

- Jan In an operation called Fundamental Response, eleven C-17 and five C-5 missions airlifted 189 passengers and 527 short tons of cargo to Simon Bolivar International Airport in Caracas Venezuela after floods that left 30,000 people dead and 400,000 homeless. (4 Jan-10 Mar)
- Mar After floods in Mozambique and Madagascar that left an estimated million people homeless, the United States launched Operation Atlas Response. C-5s and C-17s flew 4600 miles from a base in Germany to southern Africa, where C-130s and MH-53 and HH-60 helicopters, staging from South Africa, delivered some 15,000 pounds of food, water, medicine, and tents. Maj. Gen. Joseph H. Wehrle, Jr., USAF, served a joint task force commander. By the end of the operation, Air Mobility Command C-5 and C-17 transports had airlifted 720 passengers and 910 short tons of cargo. (2 Mar-16 Apr)
- Mar In an operation called Fiery Relief, two USAF MC-130Hs from the 353d Special Operations Group airlifted relief supplies to Legapi, Philippines, for refugees fleeing a volcanic eruption.

- Jul Forest fires in the American West resulted in an USAF airlift of almost 6,000 Army and Marine Corps troops to augment civilian firefighters. Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve Command, and Air National Guard transports flew 48 missions and moved 339 short tons of cargo by September 23. Among the participants were C-141 crews from the 62d, 445th, and 452d Air Mobility Wings. Meanwhile, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard C-130s equipped with modular airborne firefighting systems flew 774 sorties between July 25 and September 6, dropping 970,500 gallons of fire retardant on wild fires in California, Idaho, and Montana. The C-130s came from the 145th, 146th, 153d, and 302d Airlift Wings. (25 Jul-23 Sep)
- Aug USAF C-130s from several organizations, including the 908th, 302d, 934th, and 913th Airlift Wings and the 317th Airlift Group, airlifted humanitarian supplies to the former Yugoslavia in an effort to help people rebuild after years of war. The missions were part of Operation Joint Forge.
- Aug Six Air National Guard C-130s dropped fire retardant chemicals over massive forest fires in ten states
- Oct After a terrorist bomb blew a hole in the side of the USS *Cole*, a Navy destroyer at Aden, Yemen, USAF transports, including two C-17s and one C-141, carried the remains of seventeen killed sailors to the Department of Defense mortuary at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. A 452d Air Mobility Wing crew flew 33 survivors of the attack from Aden to Norfolk, Virginia. (13-22 Oct)

## 2001

- Jan After a 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck western India, killing as many as 30,000 people and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless, two C-5s and four C-17s airlifted 115 short tons of relief cargo for the victims. The C-5s carried the cargo from California to Guam, refueled by KC-135s from the Hawaiian Air National Guard. In Guam, four 62d Airlift Wing C-17s picked up the cargo and flew it on to Ahmedabad, being refueled on the way by KC-135s from the 18th Wing at Kadena Air Base in Japan. The cargo transfer was required because Ahmedabad's airport was too small for C-5s. (31 Jan-3 Feb)
- Apr A 14th Airlift Squadron C-17 airlifted 24 US Navy men and women who had been held prisoner for 12 days in China from Anderson Air Force Base in Guam to Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. The Naval personnel had been operating an EP-3 aircraft off the China coast when it was rammed by a Chinese fighter and forced to land on Hainan Island. (12 Apr)
- Jun A C-17 carried 25 relief workers and 15 tons of relief supplies from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Ellington Field near Houston

- to support flood relief efforts there. (10 Jun)
- Oct In conjunction with Operation Enduring Freedom, USAF C-17 cargo airplanes from Ramstein Air Base in Germany began dropping large quantities of food to the people of Afghanistan in areas free of Taliban control. The flights spanned more than 6,500 miles (round trip) and took 22 hours, requiring several air refuelings on the way. The first two C-17s dropped approximately 35,000 humanitarian rations over eastern and northern Afghanistan. The effort continued for months. On October 31, the millionth meal had been delivered. By the end of the year, C-17s had airdropped 2.5 million daily rations, 21,000 55-pound sacks of wheat, and more than 41,000 blankets on 198 missions. (7 Oct 2001-31 May 2002)

## 2002

- Jun Fires in Colorado southwest of Denver consumed some 90,000 acres and reached within ten miles of the city, forcing evacuations. Four C-130s, two from the 302d Airlift Wing of the Air Force Reserve and two from the Air National Guard's 145th Airlift Wing of North Carolina, flying out of Peterson Air Force Base, dropped fire suppression liquid over the fire in response to a request from the National Park Service's National Interagency Fire Center. (13 Jun)
- Jul Between July 3 and 14, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard C-130s equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System dropped more than 200,000 gallons of fire retardant on forest fires in Idaho, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming.
- Jul A 436th Airlift Wing C-5 transported 13,115 pounds of school supplies donated by children from 58 American schools from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware to Kabul, Afghanistan. (10 Jul)
- Sep The United States Air Forces in Europe took part in a de-mining operation in Mauritania called Eagle Vision. (20 Sep-2 Oct)
- Oct A C-5 flew 40 volunteer physicians from Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, along with medicines, pharmaceuticals, and medical supplies worth nearly \$10 million. The airlift was sponsored by Physicians With Heart and the State Department for the people of Uzbekistan. (24 Oct)
- Dec One day after Typhoon Pongsona devastated Guam with sustained winds of 150 miles per hour, the Air Force began airlifting relief equipment and supplies to the island. Within 10 days, 58 C-5 missions delivered 1,200 tons of humanitarian cargo to Andersen Air Force Base. Participating were the 60th and the 349th Air Mobility Wings. (9-19 Dec)

## 2003

- Apr A 437th Airlift Wing C-17 crew airlifted fifty soldiers wounded in Iraq from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, to Andrews Air Force

- Base, Maryland. Among them was PFC Jessica Lynch who had been rescued by an American special forces team. (12 Apr)
- May C-130s of the Air Force Reserve's 910th Airlift Wing began airlifting 13 tons of medicine, blankets, bedding, tents, and portable kitchens from Ramstein Air Base in Germany to Algiers after a 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck Algeria. (30 May-5 Jun)
- Oct Eight C-130s, six from the Air National Guard and two from the Air Force Reserve Command, flew 48 missions and dropped almost 130,000 gallons of fire retardant on conflagrations in the Simi Valley of southern California.
- Dec On December 26, 2003, a 6.7 earthquake destroyed seventy percent of the city of Bam in Iran's Kerman province, killing and injuring some 60,000 people and leaving thousands more homeless and in need of water, food, and shelter. It was the world's worst natural disaster of the year. Although the United States and Iran had been enemies since 1979, the United States offered assistance, and Iran agreed to accept it. A C-5, a C-17, and several C-130s flew from the United States to the disaster region, laden with water, medical supplies, blankets, and food. The C-5, based at Dover AFB, Delaware, staged at Moron Air Base in Spain and dropped off its cargo in Kuwait, where the C-130s loaded it and airlifted it to Kerman Air Base. The C-17, based at Charleston AFB, South Carolina, staging at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany, delivered its relief cargo directly to Kerman. A second C-17, already in the theater, also flew relief supplies, like the C-130s, from Kuwait to Kerman. From there, Iranian military trucks took the supplies on to Bam. Between December 27 and 29, the USAF airplanes delivered approximately 338,000 pounds of humanitarian cargo, proving that, at least temporarily, enemies can forget their differences and aid the victims of natural disaster. (Dec 2003)

## 2004

- Feb After an earthquake in Al Hoceima Province of northern Morocco, two USAF C-130s from Ramstein Air Base in Germany delivered medicine, blankets, and a survey team to the disaster area. One of the C-130s came from the 37th Airlift Squadron and the other one from the Utah Air National Guard.
- Apr Following Typhoon Sudal's strike on Yap Island in Micronesia, two USAF C-130s from Yokota Air Base in Japan delivered 102 short tons of generators, water, food, juice, and other relief cargo from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam to Yap, flying eleven missions.
- May In response to forest fires in southern California, the 146th Airlift Wing used two C-130s to drop some 21,600 gallons of flame retardant over Santa Barbara County.
- Sep USAF C-130s of the 38th Airlift Squadron airlifted 36,000 pounds

- of medical equipment, supplies, and bedding from Ramstein Air Base in Germany to Vladikavkaz, Russia after terrorists attached an elementary school in Beslan.
- Sep As part of the continuing Operation Provide Hope, a C-17 from McChord Air Force Base airlifted medical supplies worth \$15 million to Kishkek in the Kyrgyz Republic, the largest humanitarian shipment the United States ever delivered to that former Soviet republic. (Sep 23)
- Oct Eight C-130s of the Air Force Reserve Command and Air National Guard dropped fire retardant over forest fires in California, using the modular fire fighting system. (Oct-Nov)
- Dec After Typhoon Nanmadol struck the Philippines, the USAF used three HH-60s, two MC-130s, and one KC-135 to deliver more than 16,000 pounds of supplies.
- Dec On December 26, 2004, a magnitude 9 undersea earthquake near the western coast of Sumatra produced a tsunami that sent 30-foot waves at speeds of up to 500 miles per hour against population centers in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, and other countries around the Indian Ocean, leaving as many as 300,000 people dead and millions in need. In an operation called Unified Assistance, Air Mobility Command aircraft flew 106 missions to airlift 2,768 passengers and 3,370 short tons of cargo to Colombo in Sri Lanka, U-Tapao Air Base in Thailand, and Banda Aceh and Jakarta in Indonesia by February 23. The 353d Special Operations Group flew MC-130s to deliver almost 800,000 pounds of relief cargo, evacuate 32 casualties, and airlift 591 relief workers to isolated parts of Thailand and Indonesia. They flew more than 40 sorties. Special Tactics personnel also opened four airfields for conventional airlift of additional relief supplies. Air Force Reserve Command C-5 and C-17 aircrews supported the disaster relief efforts. As part of the operation, C-5 transports from the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing transported rescue helicopters, water purification equipment, and relief supplies from Kadena Air Base, Japan, to Sri Lanka and Thailand. (26 Dec 2004-23 Feb 2005)

## 2005

- Jan C-130s of the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron began air-dropping blankets and bottled water to needy persons in remote areas of Afghanistan. Within two months they had delivered 127,000 pounds of relief supplies on 13 missions, using the container delivery system.
- Jun A C-130J crew from the 143d Air Wing, Rhode Island Air National Guard, serving with the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, airdropped 16,000 pounds of civic aid and relief supplies near Kandahar, Afghanistan.



An Air Force Reserve team from the 304th Rescue Squadron searches for survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Aug After a Russian mini-submarine became entangled in a fishnet off the Kamchatka Peninsula of Russia's Pacific Coast, a USAF C-5 transported a 32-man US Navy rescue team and equipment to Yelizovo Airport. Three other Air Mobility Command and Air National Guard transports carried more emergency personnel and equipment a day later. For example, a 172d Airlift Wing C-17 flew non-stop from New Orleans to Russia with 95,000 pounds of equipment and personnel. The four cargo airplanes, one C-5 and three C-17s, were refueled by four tankers, including a KC-10 and three KC-135s. Seven Russian sailors were eventually rescued by a British submarine. (5-8 Aug)

Aug With a 29-foot storm surge, winds as high as 140 miles per hour, and torrential rain, Hurricane Katrina struck the U.S. coast along the Gulf of Mexico between Lake Pontchartrain in Louisiana and Mobile Bay in Alabama, flooding New Orleans and Mobile and largely destroying the coastal towns of southern Mississippi between them. USAF HH-60, UH-1, and MH-53 helicopter crews conducted extensive search and rescue missions over New Orleans for two weeks, the larger helicopters refueling from HC-130 and MC-130 tankers. USAF C-5, C-17, C-141, and C-130 transport crews from Air Mobility Command, the Air Force Reserve Command, and the Air National Guard, also evacuated hundreds of refugees from the disaster area and airlifted relief supplies to



Evacuated patients from Gulfport, Miss. are loaded onto an Air Force Reserve Command C-130 toward a final destination at Andrews AFB.

regional bases chosen to shelter refugees. They also moved emergency management and medical personnel to the affected areas to care for victims in the disaster zone. Among the airlifted passengers were troops of the 82d Airborne Division from North Carolina who deployed to New Orleans to enforce the law. USAF helicopters flew 648 sorties, 599 of these on search and rescue missions that rescued 4322 people. Air Force fixed-wing aircraft flew 4,095 sorties, 3,398 of these on air mobility missions. USAF aircraft evacuated 26,943 displaced persons from New Orleans and surrounding areas to airports and bases outside the disaster area. The Air Force evacuated more than 2,600 patients to medical facilities across the country. The service also airlifted 11,450 tons of relief cargo from various parts of the country to the disaster zone. (31 Aug-10 Oct)

Sep Two C-130s from the 302d Airlift Wing, using the modular airborne firefighting system, dropped 36,500 gallons of fire retardant in 3 days and 14 sorties in response to forest fires in Idaho.

Sep In response to the devastation of Hurricane Rita in Louisiana and Texas, USAF aircraft from all over the country, some of them already in the area because of Hurricane Katrina relief, transported relief equipment and supplies to victims of flooding and high winds, and moved people to areas beyond the disaster zone. The Air National Guard alone flew 27 sorties, transporting 257 passengers and 90 tons of cargo.

Oct After a 7.6 magnitude earthquake in Pakistan that left nearly 80,000 people dead, the USAF C-17s, C-130s, KC-10s, and contract airliners delivered nearly 10 million pounds of relief supplies, including food, water, tents, sleeping bags, cots, blankets, heaters, clothing, medicine, and medical equipment, to Chakala Air Base. From there, U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopters flew the relief supplies to the disaster region. USAF C-5s of the 439th Airlift Wing carried the Army helicopters to Pakistan. Among the USAF organizations taking part was the 24th Air Expeditionary Group. (9 Oct-2 Dec)

## 2006

Feb After a severe mudslide in southern Leyte in the Philippines, a C-17 from the 15th Airlift Wing delivered 13,608 kilograms of relief supplies from Hawaii. The supplies included food, water, cots, tents, and heavy equipment. C-130s from the 36th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, already in the Philippines for a bilateral training exercise, also took part in the mudslide relief, moving 40 people and airlifting several tons of equipment.

Mar After a dam broke, causing extensive flooding in Kauai, a C-17 crewed by personnel from the Hawaiian Air National Guard's 204th Airlift Squadron and the Pacific Air Forces' 535th Airlift Squadron airlifted 27,000 pounds of recovery equipment from Hilo, Hawaii, to Lihue, Kauai. The cargo included large pumps and associated pipes.

Mar The 379th Air Expeditionary Wing used a C-17 to airdrop 32,400 pounds of food, blankets, winter survival gear, and school supplies over four sites for the people in central and eastern Afghanistan. The mission set a record of airdropping the most cargo to multiple drop zones in the shortest time. (16 Mar)

Apr In support of "Operation Smile," an international non-governmental charitable organization that provided corrective facial surgery for children, a C-17 flew 110 Iraqi children and 97 of their parents and escorts from Amman, Jordan, to Baghdad, Iraq, so that they would not have to return to their homes by a long bus ride through Iraq's dangerous western provinces. (29 Apr)

Jun After an earthquake in Indonesia, the 374th Air Expeditionary Group delivered relief supplies aboard two C-130s. They initially flew from Japan to Singapore for the operation.

Jul In the largest noncombatant evacuation operation since Vietnam, Air Mobility Command C-17s and commercial airlines under contract moved 12,703 U.S. citizens to the United States from Cyprus and Turkey, to which they had fled because of fighting in Lebanon. USAF C-17s moved 2,250 passengers on 151 sorties. Most flew from Cyprus and Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, usually flying

through Ramstein Air Base in Germany to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Many of the evacuees initially flew from Lebanon to Cyprus on USAF helicopters, including MH-53s of the 386th Special Operations Group. C-130s of the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing also transported more than 10 tons of food, blankets, bottled water, and other supplies to Cyprus for the evacuees gathered there. C-17s assigned to the 816th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron transported 500 short tons of food, water, and equipment to Cyprus. Many of the evacuees airlifted from Turkey had fled there by ship. The mobilization assistant to the Air Force Chief of Staff served as the Joint Task Force Lebanon Deputy Commander. (16 Jul-3 Sep)

Aug A C-17 of the 535th Airlift Squadron evacuated 188 people from Wake Island to Hawaii to save them from the impact of Typhoon Ioke, a category 5 hurricane. Three weeks later, in September, the same C-17 returned the evacuees to Wake, also transporting a 53-person damage assessment team and 44,000 pounds of cargo.

Nov USAF C-130s airlifted 48 tons of relief supplies to flood victims in eastern Ethiopia, transporting the cargo within the country from Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa to Gode.

Dec An Air Force Reserve Command C-17 aircrew from the 728th Airlift Squadron flew a nine-member Army Burn Center Flight Team from Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii to treat U.S. Navy sailors who had been burned when a steam line ruptured on the USS *Frank Cable*.

## 2007

Jan A Wyoming Air National Guard C-130, staging out of Pueblo, Colorado, flew multiple sorties in two days to drop hay to cattle stranded in deep snow in southeastern Colorado. Each sortie dropped 6 to 8 one-ton bales of hay. (3-4 Jan)

Feb A 304th Rescue Squadron team helped search for mountain climbers who had become lost on Mount Hood. (18-19 Feb)

Mar After widespread flooding in the northern and eastern parts of Bolivia, a USAF C-130 delivered relief supplies, including 20 rolls of plastic tarpaulin, 4,800 ten-liter water containers, 2,304 hygiene kits, and 4 water pumps. (5 Mar)



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