

## **Navy Transport Squadrons at NAS Moffett Field**

**Success in battle depends heavily on adequate logistic support which many times provides the thin thread on which hangs the victory. Throughout its history, NAS Moffett Field had been home for one or more of these all-important air logistics units.**

**Dating back to 1945 with the arrival of *Transport Squadron Four* (VR-4) and NATS (Naval Air Transport Service) headquarters, such squadrons as *Transport Squadron Three* (VR-3), *Transport Squadron Five* (VR-5) and *Transport Squadron Forty-four* (VR-44), have played an important role as one of Moffett Field's tenant units. *R4D (C-47)*, *R5D (C-54)* and *R6D (C-118)* aircraft were familiar sights in Bay Area skies, as these squadrons supported operations in the Berlin Airlift and the Korean War.**

**With the decommissioning of Fleet Logistic Air Wings in the summer of 1957, two Military Air Transport Squadrons (MATS), VR-7 and VR-8, began the move from their Hawaiian base to Moffett Field. Flying the sleek *R7V Super Constellation*, these squadrons operated from here to the far reaches of the Pacific to provide a supply line of men and equipment to the Pacific Fleet. In 1964, VR-22 moved with its *C-130 Hercules* aircraft to Moffett Field, where it joined VR-7 & VR-8 in their missions for the Naval Air Transport Wing, Pacific under MAC (Military Airlift Command), especially in support of the Viet Nam War.**

**These squadrons compiled enviable records for hours, miles and cargo tons flown, for flight safety and for aircraft maintenance and availability.**

The **Naval Air Transport Service** (NATS) was conceived by Captain C.H. Schildhauer with the mission of rapidly transporting vital cargo, specialist personnel and mail to the Fleet and ground forces, especially in advanced areas of operation.



On December 12, 1941, NATS was established under the Chief of Naval Operations by the Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Initially squadrons were established at Norfolk, Virginia, Olathe, Kansas and Oakland, California to operate only where the Navy had a direct interest. In the Pacific, their supply lines extended right into the combat area. The prime objective was to deliver critical supplies, materials and personnel quickly. In some cases they dropped supplies by parachute to the combat groups. To organize the early operations, they borrowed personnel and facilities from the commercial airlines and also called up reserve officers with airline experience. Later, the Navy developed a training program to provide the crews that they needed, but throughout the war many of the routes continued to be flown by contract airlines. In 1943, NATS operated over 100 planes flying 50,000 miles of routes. By the end of the year they were flying 3,600,000 miles, carrying 22,500 passengers, 8,300,000 pounds of cargo and mail, and ferrying 3,000 airplanes a month. Return flights to the U.S. carried thousands of pounds of critical war materials such as mica, tantalite and natural rubber. They also returned many wounded and sick. NAS Moffett Field was one of the many airfields NATS squadrons, such as VR-4, operated from, as depicted in these 1947-era photos.



By the end of the war 26,000 men and 540 aircraft provided services worldwide. In June 1948 the mission and operational control of NATS squadrons were consolidated into the

United States Air Force's Military Air Transport Service; NATS was disestablished on July 1, 1948.

**Transport Squadron Three (VR-3)** was established at

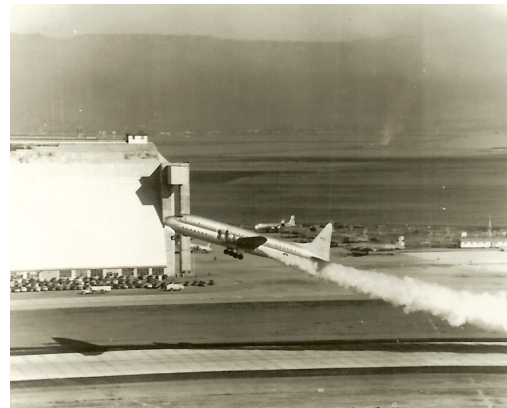


Olathe, KS in July 1949 as the first Navy R5D (C-54) squadron assigned to Military Airlift Transport System. The squadron transferred to NAS Moffett Field on December 1, 1951 and flew their R6Ds (C-118s) throughout the Continental Division's area of operations, as well as supporting airlifts



to, and transporting wounded from the Korean Theater of Operations. The squadron transferred to McGuire AFB, New Jersey on July 12, 1957, and transitioned from their R6Ds to the newer C-130E in June 1963. They were the last U.S. Navy component of MATS when they were decommissioned July 19, 1967 at McGuire AFB.

**Transport Squadron Four & Forty Four (VR-4 / VR-44)** was designated to move to NAS Moffett Field on 26 April, 1945 under the headquarters of Naval Air Transport System (NATS), and arrived the following November to operate from Hangar 2. During the Berlin Airlift, VR-44 added to its NATS training curriculum to provide pilot training for MATS-bound replacement crews destined for Germany. On February 3, 1949, the squadron began operating its two brand new R6O *Constitution* aircraft on transcontinental service between NAS Moffett Field and Washington, D.C.



The squadron was disestablished on April 20, 1950, and its two *Constitutions* were transferred to VR-5.

**Transport Squadron Five (VR-5)** During the Korean Conflict, VR-5 moved from NAS Seattle to NAS Moffett Field on May 31, 1950, and joined with VR-21 in Barbers Point, HI and the JRMs of VR-2 in Alameda on the San Francisco-Honolulu route to supply the bulk of the trans-Pacific Navy/Marine combat air logistic support. These squadrons were augmented by the R5Ds of Marine squadrons VMR-352 El





Toro, CA, VMR-152, Barbers Point, HI and TAD crews and aircraft from VR-1. R5D (C-54) aircraft were initially utilized during this period and were replaced by R6D (C-118) *Liftmasters* starting with the initial delivery of R6D #128424 to VR-5 on September 7, 1951. VR-5 was disestablished on July 15, 1957.

**Naval Air Transport Wing, Pacific** (NATWINGPAC) is a descendant of the Naval Air Transport Service (NATS), established in 1942 (see above). In early 1958, DOD's single manager concept began to shape the destinies of the Navy squadrons in the Military Air Transport Service. Reorganization of VR-7 and VR-8 was set up by senior Navy and Air Force officers, and the formation of a Transport Wing was set. Navy MATS reorganization on the west coast moved into the embryonic stage with the commissioning of Naval Air Transport Wing, Pacific, at NAS Moffett Field on May 1, 1958, under command of Captain Alfred Gurney. Shortly thereafter, the Wing's two squadrons, VR-7 and VR-8 were reorganized. Flight personnel were assigned to VR-7 which became the operational squadron, and ground maintenance specialists were assigned to VR-8 which became the maintenance squadron. The Wing was assigned to the Military Airlift Command (MAC), under the operational control of the Twenty-Second Air Force. The Wing was eventually disestablished on June 30, 1967.



**Transport Squadron Seven (VR-7)** began transferring from Hickham Air Force Base,



Hawaii to NAS Moffett Field on August 2, 1957. In 1963, the squadron delivered most of its R7V *Super Constellations* to the Air National Guard as they transitioned into the C-130E *Hercules*. While participating in Operation Big Strike in Puerto Rico, the squadron maintained a presence across the



Pacific carrying critical supplies, equipment, and men to Viet Nam. VR-7 suffered the loss of one of its C-130Es off the east coast of Viet Nam (Cam Ranh Bay) on June 16, 1966 when the aircraft blew up shortly after take off. The squadron was disestablished in 1967 at NAS Moffett Field.

**Transport Squadron Eight's (VR-8's)** motto was "We Carry the Load". Based in Hawaii since the latter part of WW-II, VR-8 was transferred to the Military Airlift Command (MAC) in June, 1948. In November of that year, the squadron's 12 R5D *Skymasters* were transferred to Germany to participate in the Berlin Airlift. After eight months participation in the airlift, VR-8 emerged as the most outstanding MAC unit, topping all other squadrons in cargo hauled, aircraft utilization, payload efficiency and tons carried per plane. The squadron later followed its sister squadron, VR-7, and began transferring its fleet of R7V-1 *Constellations* from Hickham AFB, Hawaii on September 3, 1957 to NAS Moffett





Field. Under NATWINGPAC directive, the squadron was transformed into a maintenance unit in 1958. In early 1963, the squadron began retiring its *Super Constellations*, and accepted the C-130E *Hercules* while continuing its exceptional maintenance of its remaining *Connies*. This was done without deterioration of admirable aircraft availability record. The squadron was disestablished in June 1967.

**Transport Squadron Twenty Two (VR-22)** was operating R6D (C-118) aircraft out of NAS Norfolk, Virginia for Fleet Logistics Support in the Atlantic theater when it was transitioned to the Military Airlift Command (MAC) in 1958. During the period of 1963-64, the squadron transitioned to the C-130 *Hercules*. Equipped with ten C-130's, along with maintenance and repair facilities, the squadron was manned by some 140 officers and approximately 500 men. In 1966, the squadron transferred from NAS Norfolk to NAS Moffett Field, where it joined VR-7 and VR-8 in their missions for the Naval Air Transport Wing Pacific (NATWINGPAC) under MATS until disestablishment in April 1967.



**Transport Squadron Fifty Five (VR-55)** Fleet Logistics Support Squadron 55 was established in April 1976 at NAS Alameda, CA and was the first Naval Reserve unit to fly the C-9B *Skytrain II*. During the Gulf War, the squadron established a VR community record for the most monthly and quarterly hours flown--794 hours in January 1991 and 2,178 hours from January to March 1991. The squadron moved 4,327 troops and 2,729,665 pounds of cargo supporting that war effort. In December, 1993, the VR-55 Minutemen transitioned to the C-130T *Hercules* and relocated to NAS Moffett Field.



The end of Navy transport aviation era came on December 21, 1998, when the Minutemen began another permanent duty station move from NAS Moffett Field to NAS Point Mugu, CA, where they continue to operate.