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349th Air Mobility Wing Heritage



The history of the 349th Air Mobility Wing begins with the 349th Troop Carrier Group. The 349th TCG was established on the 23rd of October 1943, at Sedalia Army Airfield in Missouri (the modern Whiteman Air Force base) and on the 1st of November 1943 activated. Initially it flew the Douglas C-54 Skymaster, the unit later transitioned to the Douglas C-47 Skytrain and eventually to the Curtiss C-46 Commando. In the spring of 1945, the 349th TCG was ordered to the European theater. It arrived at Barkston Heath, a Royal Air Force base on loan to the United States, on the 30th of March 1945, then transferred to Roye/Amy Airfield in France on the 18th of April 1945. The 349th TCG was at this time assigned to the IX Troop Carrier Command. It spent the last days of World War II moving vehicles, gasoline and other supplies forward and evacuating wounded allied soldiers. With the German surrender the 349th TCG moved back to RAF Barkston Heath, from which it airlifted the British 1st Airborne Division to Denmark to take the surrender of the German garrison there.

In July and August of 1945, the 349th TCG returned to the United States, where it was assigned to Bergstrom Field in Texas. While stationed here, the mission of the 349th TCG was to train Chinese pilots and aircrew in the operation of the C-46 Commando. With the surrender of Japan, the Second World War came to an end. No longer needed, the 349th TCG was inactivated on the 7th of September 1945. It was then activated as the 349th Troop Carrier Group (Medium) and assigned to Hamilton Air Force Base in California. It remained equipped with the C-46 Commando. On the 1st of April 1951 it was ordered to active duty and had its personnel dispatched to Korea to fill other Air Force transport wings. It was inactivated on the 2nd of April 1951.

On the 13th of June 1952, the 349th Troop Carrier Group (Medium) was redesignated as the 349th Fighter-Bomber Group and assigned to the Reserve. In 1957 it transitioned back to a transport mission, being redesignated the 349th Troop Carrier Wing (Medium) equipped with the C-119 Flying Boxcar. In October 1962 the Kennedy Administration discovered that the Soviet Union was preparing to place nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba. As part of the mobilization for this crisis, the 349th TCW(M) was ordered to active duty on the 28th of October 1962. It spent the next month moving cargo and personnel to the Southeastern United States in support of OPLAN 316, which provided for possible military action against Cuba. With the Soviet agreement to withdraw offensive missiles from Cuba, tensions eased and the 349th TCW(M) was relieved from active duty on the 28th of November 1962.

On the 1st of June 1966, the unit was designated as the 349th Military Airlift Wing. It was now equipped with the C-124 Globemaster II. In 1968, tensions had risen on the Korean peninsula. On the 23rd of January 1968, the USS Pueblo, an intelligence-gathering ship, was seized by North Korean forces while sailing in international waters. With the possibility of hostilities breaking out in Korea, the 349th MAW was ordered to active duty. While on active duty it provided vital airlift support not only to Korea but also to Southeast Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The crew of the Pueblo was finally released on the 23rd of December 1968, and tensions eased in Korea. The 349th MAW was relieved from active duty on the 1st of June 1969.

On the 25th of July 1969 the 349th MAW was transferred to Travis Air Force Base, California, where it was partnered with the 60th MAW. At this time, it was designated the 349th Military Airlift Wing (Associate). The unit was equipped with the C-141 Starlifter and the C-5A Galaxy. In October of 1973 Israel was attacked by Egypt and Syria. Running low on munitions and having suffered significant losses, Israel appealed to the United States for aid. The United States responded with a massive airlift, Operation Nickel Grass. Crews and aircraft from the 349th MAW(A) participated in this airlift alongside their active-duty counterparts. In 1989 conflict between the United States and Manuel Noriega, the dictator of Panama, reached a climax. In an operation named Just Cause the United States toppled the Panamanian strongman. Critical to this operation was the movement of elements of the 7th Infantry Division (Light) to Panama by the 349th MAW(A). In August of 1990 another crisis erupted as Iraq occupied Kuwait. The United States responded with the movement of forces to protect Saudi Arabia, Operation Desert Shield. Again, elements of the 349th MAW(A) were deployed to assist in the buildup of forces in Saudi Arabia.

On June 1st, 1992, the Military Airlift Command was disbanded and the Air Mobility Command established. The Wing was then redesignated the 349th Airlift Wing (Associate). In 1994 Rwanda degenerated into civil war. In August of that year the 349th AW(A) flew humanitarian aid into Rwanda. On September 1st of 1994 the unit received the KC-10 Extender aircraft and was again redesignated as the 349th Air Mobility Wing. In May of 1999 the unit's KC-10s deployed in support of Operation Allied Force, the air campaign over Kosovo, Bosnia and the Balkans.

The operational tempo of the unit increased after the terror attacks of September 11th, 2001. The 349th flew KC-10 and C-5 missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. By August 2003 the unit had mobilized over 1,000 Airmen in support of Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In April of 2005 the 349th AMW flew humanitarian relief missions in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In August of 2006 the unit received the C-17 Globemaster III, replacing the retired C-141. Along with the 60th AMW also based at Travis AFB, the unit became the first Air Mobility Wing to have three major weapons systems. In January of 2009 the 349th AMW flew missions in support of the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission to the Darfur region of Sudan. In April of 2010 the 349th Air Mobility Wing flew humanitarian missions into Haiti in the wake of a 7.0 magnitude earthquake there. It then provided refueling support for Operation Unified Protector, the NATO-led mission to protect civilians in war-torn Libya. Most recently the 349th Aeromedicine Squadron deployed reserve medical personnel in support of New York City's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and supported Operation Allies Refuge, the airlift of American allies out of Afghanistan from July to August of 2021.

(Current as of March 2025)