

type report



The striking Berlin Airlift Memorial at Rhein Main along with C-47 'The Berlin Train'. (USAF via Author)

IT IS JUST forty years ago that the most humanitarian airlift of all time commenced, when the Soviets attempted to force the Allies out of Berlin. The attempted blockade of the city failed, and it is appropriate that today examples of the aircraft involved are preserved at no less than three of the major air bases involved – Gatow, Tempelhof and Rhein Main.

RAF Gatow, located on the Russian border, was the destination of the first RAF Dakota, one of six, which became airborne on June 24, 1948 under the Operational Order known as *Knicker*, which as the situation worsened four days later became Operation *Carter Paterson*, and three weeks later as Operation *Plainfare*. These first supply flights provided the pattern upon which the most colossal air operation in history was built.

The Commonwealth contributed Dakota crews to the airlift, aircrews from Australia, South Africa and New Zealand flying RAF aircraft which were operated in a pool for convenience. It was the Royal Australian Air Force who contributed the Dakota currently on display, alongside a Handley Page Hastings, at RAF Gatow. This is A65-69 a Douglas C-47B-20-DK (c/n 15682/27127) built at Oklahoma City as 43-49866 and delivered to the US Army Air Force on July 12, 1945 but diverted as a Lend-lease transport to the RAAF as A65-69 with radio call-sign 'VH-CUZ' on February 16, 1945. Between 1964 and 1980 it served with the Transport Support Flight at RAAF Butterworth in Malaysia.

After a journey of approximately 6,500 nautical miles, the RAAF Dakota found its last resting place in West Berlin. The transport was presented by the Australian Government to the West Berlin traffic museum, in memory of the outstanding work done by the forty RAAF aircrew who flew Dakotas of the RAF during the airlift in 1948-1949.

DAKOTA

Arthur Percy

On June 6, 1980, A65-69, one of five remaining Dakota veterans serving the RAAF Transport Support Flight at Butterworth, departed with a crew of six commanded by F/L Garry Edward Dunbar. Its flight took eleven days via Bangkok, Calcutta, Bombay, Dubai, Jeddah, Cairo, Athens and Marseilles and finally to the RAF Base at Gutersloh, West Germany. Rest days were spent at Dubai and Athens. The Dakota performed well requiring only fuel (5,700 gallons) and oil occasionally.

At RAF Gutersloh, special action had to be taken. Since the end of the airlift the three air corridors remained between West Germany and West Berlin flying over Russian territory occupied by East

Germany, these being restricted to civil and military traffic of the three Allied nations, France, the UK and the USA. So the RAAF Dakota had to be changed into a RAF transport. All signs of RAAF ownership were removed, 'Royal Air Force' appeared on the fuselage with roundels and the serial was changed to ZD215 and the radio call-sign 'MBKHG' allocated. S/L Al Culloway of the RAF took command on the flight to Berlin. At Gutersloh, an RAAF airlift veteran, Air Vice Marshal David Evans joined the crew.

During the afternoon of June 18, 1980, ZD215 departed Gutersloh on its last flight to Berlin, landing at RAF Gatow around 1530 local time. The crew were welcomed by the Station Commander, G/C

Bobby Robson, and Fritz Becker, a Berliner who worked at Gatow during the airlift. Back in RAAF livery the Dakota was handed over to West Berlin officials on June 20. Then it reverted back to RAF markings in order for it to fly as the star performer at the open days at RAF Gatow on June 21/22.

Today it is resplendent in RAAF livery once more and on permanent display. A plaque now mounted on the aircraft reads: "This Douglas DC-3 (Dakota) was presented to the people of Berlin by the Australian Government. It proves a lasting reminder of the Royal Australian Air Force crews who flew the Berlin airlift and commemorates the vital role of the Dakota in preserving the freedom of Berlin."

Forty RAAF aircrew flew RAF Dakotas from Lubeck during the airlift into the three bases in Berlin – Gatow, Tegel and Tempelhof. In contrast to the RAF aircrew whose tour on the airlift was ninety days, and the US Air Force and US Navy aircrew who rotated every 100 missions, the RAAF operated until the end of the airlift, flying more than 200 missions each.

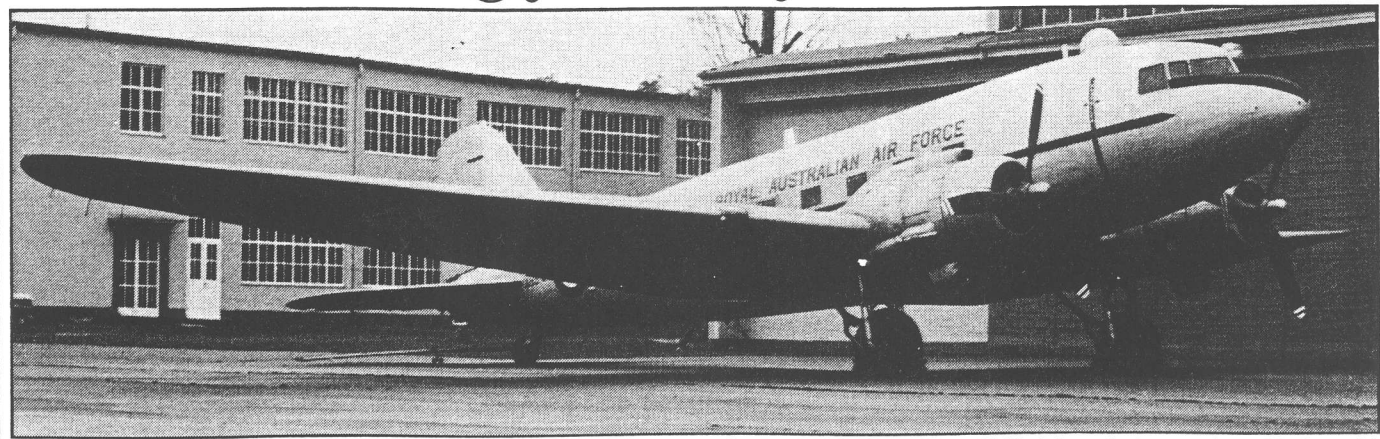
RAF Gatow was the main terminus for British airlift traffic, an airfield developed by the *Luftwaffe* as a training centre and during World War Two was a fighter base. It initially had no metalled runways, so one of the first tasks after the RAF took over in 1945 was to lay a 4,500ft pierced steel planking (PSP) runway to handle the communication traffic consisting mainly of Avro Anson and Douglas Dakota transports. This runway was inadequate and a concrete replacement was started in 1947. Various additions were made during the airlift.

Located prominently in front of the huge terminal at Tempelhof air base, today home of the US Air Force 7350th Air Base Group, is parked on display a Douglas C-47 Skytrain and a C-54 Skymaster, representing the two major types used on the airlift. The Skytrain is a C-47B-45-DK 45-951 (c/n 16954/34214) built at Oklahoma City and delivery to the US Army Air Force on July 19, 1945. Its early record of service is missing but it served in the post-war USAF and in 1950 was a WC-47 indicating service



Centrally placed by the huge terminal building at Tempelhof airport is C-47 45-951, which also has a C-54 Skymaster adjacent. (USAF via Author)

type report



Today RAF Gatow boasts a Hastings and a RAF Dakota on permanent display as a tribute to the Airlift. It is unfortunate that a York could not be found to go with them. (RAF Gatow via Author)

with the Weather Division of the huge Military Air Transport Service.

On an unknown date it was placed in storage at Davis-Monthan storage centre in Arizona, and as N73856 was registered at a later date to the Aero American Corporation of Tucson, Arizona, going later to Charlotte Airmotive for overhaul. On April 23, 1962 it was sold to the Spanish Air Force - *Ejercito del Aire* - serving as 461-29 with *Escuadrone 461* at Gando, as 744-54 with *Escuadrone 744* at Mataban, and finally with *Escuadrone 372* as 372-54. It was withdrawn from use on 10 May, 1977 and on 14 March, 1984 was registered as G-BLFL to Aces High.

However the transport remained in storage at Cuatro Vientos, Spain, until transferred to the US register on August 12, 1985 as N951CA to Consolidated Avia Enterprises of Middleburg, Vermont. This registration was cancelled on August 27, 1986 and the aircraft was sold to the Berlin Airlift Memorial organisation being delivered over the period September 9/10, 1986. The Skytrain is now back in USAF livery carrying the markings of the early post-war European Air Transport Service (EATS) and appropriately named *Tempelhof*.

Tempelhof Central Airport is located in the southern suburb of West Berlin, surrounded by a heavily populated area only two miles from the centre of the city. It has some magnificent buildings

attached, including a massive administration and operations block with a reputed seven storeys underground. During the war years, this remarkable structure housed, among other things, a Messerschmitt aircraft factory and a well-equipped hospital.

When the USAAF took over in May 1945 following a brief Soviet occupation, they laid a 4,987 by 120ft PSP runway, together with an apron and connecting taxiway built of concrete block. The first USAAF unit to activate the base was the 483rd Air Service Group on May 27, 1945. On September 1, 1945 the group came under the control of the European Air Transport Service (EATS), which operated the C-47 Skytrain on a hub and spoke operation throughout Europe.

Highlight of the base's historical past was the period from June 20, 1948 to May 12, 1949 when the now-famed Berlin Airlift was in operation. During this period, a 24-hour flying schedule between the 'island city' and the outside world brought in over two million tons and flew out 83,000 tons of cargo. After the end of the airlift the C-47 Skytrain was still a regular user of Tempelhof, the last C-47 assigned to the 7350th Support Group departing Berlin on April 24, 1970 for RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk.

Located at the US Air Force base at Rhein Main, near Frankfurt, West Germany, is the headquarters of the Berlin Airlift Memorial, *Luftbrücke* Chapter, Airlift

Association Inc. Today a replica of the airlift monument which stands outside Tempelhof, has been erected west of the Kassel-Karlsruhe autobahn overlooking Rhein Main air base and the civilian Frankfurt airport. This monument was dedicated in 1951 and is flanked by examples of the two principal aircraft which actually flew in the Berlin Airlift. Both aircraft, a Douglas C-47 Skytrain and C-54 Skymaster are still in flying condition.

The Douglas C-47 Skytrain on display is a C-47B-10-DK 43-49081 (c/n 14897/26342) and appropriately named *The Berlin Train*. This transport was delivered to the US Army Air Force during October 1944, and unfortunately its record card is missing. However, it clearly survived World War Two and served in the post-war USAF and like many others was later placed in storage at Davis-Monthan in Arizona. During 1961 it was 'frozen' by the USAF but on October 10, 1963 was registered EC-ASF in Spain with Iberia, this being cancelled in 1966. On April 12, 1966 it went to the *Ejercito del Aire* as T3-64 serving with *Escuadrone 744* based at Mataban and coded 744-64.

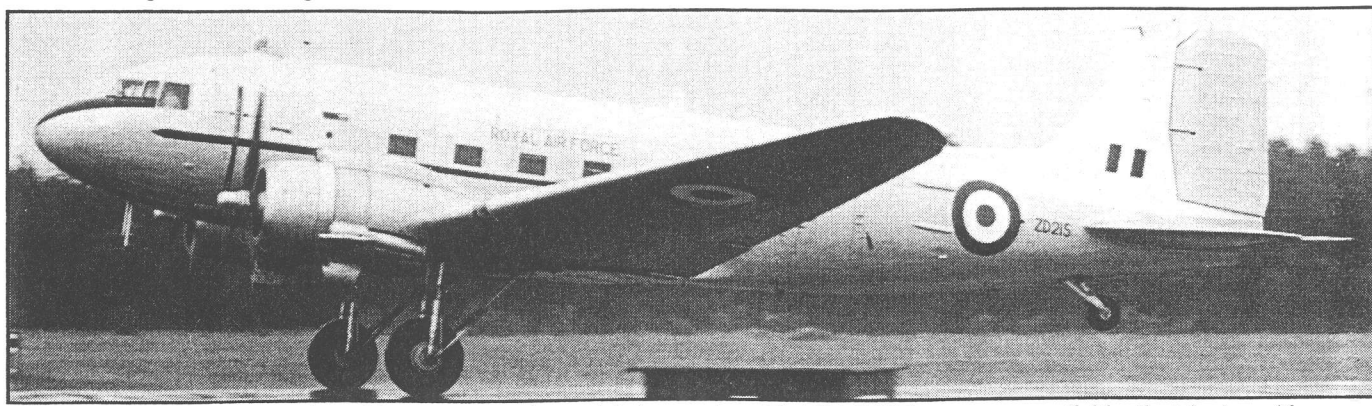
Withdrawn from use on April 18, 1978, during October 1981 as N1350M it returned to the USA with Kerns Aircraft Electronics Inc and in February 1982 was registered to Professional Flyers Inc of Wilmington, Delaware. On January 24, 1983 it was bought by C Green of South Bend, Indiana

and in September 1985 it was taken over by Jack L Rhoades Aircraft Sales.

By February 1986 it was back with C Green in Indiana, only to be ferried by an Aces High crew on March 25, 1986 to the airlift museum at Rhein Main. Today it is displayed in immaculate USAAF livery as worn by the many C-47 Skytrains that took part in the airlift.

Rhein Main air base located near Frankfurt was the largest post-war USAF base in western Germany and Europe. It was a *Luftwaffe* fighter base during World War Two, and has a history which extends back as far as the Graf Zeppelin and the ill-fated Hindenburg. It suffered extensive bomb damage from the Allies, but was developed after the war as the gateway to Europe for both civil and military operations. The resident unit in June 1948 at the beginning of the airlift, was the 61st Troop Carrier Group equipped with three squadrons of Douglas C-47 Skytrain transports. The air base had a 6,000ft runway at this time.

The aircraft described are a small part of a lasting monument and living educational complexes dedicated to the Berlin Airlift. The significant role of keeping the city of Berlin free and the symbolic value of that act are the central themes of the airlift memorials located at Gatow, Tempelhof and Rhein Main bases. Those of us who know freedom must keep it forever alive.



Disguised as ZD215, RAAF Dakota A65-69 touches down at Gatow on June 22, 1980. RAF livery was essential for the trip down 'the Corridor'. (Peter J Bish via Author)

BASC/5/2/Air

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Berlin Air Safety Centre
BFPO 45

309 - 5210

GSO 2 (PR)
HQ Berlin (British Sector)

12 Jun 80

PRESENTATION OF RAAF DAKOTA AT RAF GATOW - 20 JUN 80

1. In August 1979 an article appeared in 'Flight' magazine reporting that the RAAF were about to dispose of their Douglas DC3 aircraft. At the time I was slowly reading through the official history of 'Operation Plainfare' and was aware that 12 complete RAAF DC3 crews had been attached to the RAF and had flown RAF Dakotas from Lubeck on the airlift between Sep 48 and Sep 49. Since arriving in Berlin I have been surprised that there was not a Dakota airframe on display in the city. I discussed with Wg Cdr Nicholson a possible approach to the RAAF to have them present an aircraft to RAF Gatow or Berlin to commemorate the part played by the RAAF crews in the airlift.
2. By coincidence, Mr A M Morris, the Australian Ambassador to the DDR, who had served with the Allied Control Council in 1946, requested a sentimental visit to the ACA building on 11 Sep 79 before he left Berlin on retirement. The British Element of BASC hosted his visit during which Wg Cdr Nicholson suggested the possibility of such a gift and asked if he could advise on the proper channel for the request. Mr Morris was delighted with the idea and agreed to approach their Embassy in Bonn.
3. In Oct 79 Mr Morris wrote saying that their Embassy in Bonn had supported our suggestion and had forwarded it to Canberra. Nothing more was heard until Jan 80, when Mr Michael van Rijn (pronounced van Ryan) telephoned to say that the RAAF strongly supported the idea and it was being considered by the Department of Defence. On 24 Mar 80 Mr van Rijn phoned again to say that the Australian Government had agreed to present a Dakota to Berlin and when did we want it ? It was provisionally agreed that the aircraft would be flown to Berlin by the RAAF for presentation during the Gatow Open Days in June.
4. There have been lots of plans and revisions since then which I shall ignore. The (final) plan is:
 - a. The aircraft (Australian serial no. A65-69) will be flown into RAF Gutersloh on 15 Jun 80 when the RAAF markings will be changed to RAF markings for the flight within Quadripartite airspace. As far as I know, the only change to the crew and passengers named in the Australian Embassy letter dated 14 May 80 is that Mr C Ford has been deleted. They will be accommodated at RAF Gutersloh in the Mess and I will join them there on 15 Jun.
 - b. The aircraft will fly to Berlin on Wednesday 18 Jun 80, under my nominal captaincy, and should arrive at RAF Gatow at 1015 local time. The RAAF markings will be restored ready for the presentation and the aircraft will NOT be flown on the Open Days.

One Australian, Flight Lieutenant M. Quinn, a pilot, was killed during the airlift. His Dakota crashed during an instrument approach to Gatow airport in November 1948. Two crew members, an Englishman and a South African, were also killed. Flight Lieutenant Quinn, a member of the RAAF, was on exchange duty with the RAF at the time. He was buried in Hamburg.

The DC3, or Dakota (its military name) is universally regarded as one of the greatest aircraft ever built. It was affectionately known as the "Gooney Bird", by airmen the world over. No less than 10,123 of the military version were built and the remnants of them are still flying in many countries.

The RAAF had 138 Dakotas during World War II. Only 12 are still in service and these are all due to be phased out by 30 June 1981.

A65-69 will retain its RAAF markings in the Berlin museum. It is a C47B model, which was taken over by the RAAF from the United States Army Air Corps in 1945 and operated under the callsign "Cuz". Its USAAC serial number was 45-49866 and its Douglas Aircraft Company, USA, number: WA 15686-27127.



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Royal Air Force

Gatow

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AUSTRALIAN GIFT FOR BERLIN

1. In memory of the 12 Royal Australian Air Force Crews who flew during the Berlin Airlift in 1948 and 1949, the Australian Government has presented a Dakota Douglas DC-3 Aircraft to the people of West Berlin.
2. The aircraft, which is 37 years old, had been used by the RAAF for the past 20 years in Malaysia. It set off for its 7,500 mile journey to Berlin on 5 Jun piloted by an RAAF crew which included 2 members who had previously flown in the Berlin Airlift: Air Vice-Marshal David Evans, currently the RAAF Chief of Joint Operations and Plans, and Squadron Leader "Dinny" Ryan who is a senior Air Traffic Controller. With travel down the air corridors to Berlin being restricted to aircraft from the Allied Powers, the Dakota had to stopover at RAF Gutersloh where RAF roundels were substituted for the kangaroo markings. The aircraft finally touched down at RAF Gatow in a thunderstorm at 1526hrs on 18 June under the captaincy of Sqn Ldr A Callaway RAF, from BASC.
3. At a ceremony at RAF Gatow on 20 June the Dakota was formally handed over from the RAAF by Air Vice-Marshal Evans to the Berlin Senate. Herr Dr Dieter Sauberzweig accepted the aircraft on behalf of the Senate and in turn handed it over to the Station Commander Gp Capt Robson for safe keeping. The aircraft will be



stored at Gatow before finding its final resting place in the Berlin Transport Museum.

Photo:

Herrn Dr Saubersweig hands over the log book of the DC-3 Dakota to Station Commander Gp Capt Robson. Air Vice-Marshal Evans and the Minister, Mr MacGinnis, look on.



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RAAF DAKOTA TO BE PRESENTED TO BERLIN AIRLIFT MEMORIAL MUSEUM

An Australian officer who flew in the Berlin airlift will present a Royal Australian Air Force Dakota to the Berlin airlift memorial museum at 8 p.m. on Friday 20 June at Gatow airport.

He is Air Vice-Marshall S.D. Evans, D.S.O., A.F.C., Chief of Joint Operations and Plans at the Australian Department of Defence in Canberra. Air Vice-Marshall Evans is the only pilot who took part in the airlift who is still serving in the RAAF.

The presentation ceremony will be attended by the Australian Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, who is also head of the Australian Military Mission in Berlin, Mr. Max Loveday, senior allied government and military officers and prominent members of the Berlin community.

The RAAF Dakota to be presented is a veteran of 5, years service with the RAAF. It was one of three Dakotas serving with the RAAF's transport support flight at the Australian air base at Butterworth, Malaysia. The Australian Government is making the gift of the Dakota as a permanent reminder of the outstanding work done by RAAF crews during the Berlin airlift in 1948-49.

The Dakota - RAAF Serial number A65-69 left Butterworth on June 5 and flew to Berlin via Bangkok, Calcutta, Bombay, Jeddah, Cairo, Athens, Marseilles and Gutersloh. The captain of the six-man crew is Flight Lieutenant Garry Edward Dunbar, 30, of Balaclava, S.A.

Another member of the RAAF who flew in the Berlin airlift as a signaller, Squadron Leader C.S. ("Dinny") Ryan, of Melbourne, is a member of the plane's crew. He will also be a special guest at the handover ceremony in Berlin.

Squadron Leader Ryan is now senior air traffic control officer at the RAAF base at Point Cook, Victoria. He flew 240 missions into Berlin, flying in mainly food and coal to break the 15-month blockade of the city.

The RAAF supplied 12 crews for the Berlin airlift and they operated Royal Air Force Dakotas from Lübeck airport.

The 12 RAAF crews all had "Master Green" instrument rating which permitted them to operate in bad weather which "grounded" many of the crews from allied nations. In contrast to RAF crews, whose tour of duty was three months, and United States Air Force crews, whose tour was 100 missions, the RAAF crews operated until the end of the emergency, flying more than 200 missions each.

c. The presentation will take place on Friday 20 June at approx 1930 hrs during the Open Day Preview and Reception which will be held in No 1 Hangar. The Dakota will be parked just outside the hangar with the 2 other aircraft (a Junkers 52 and a Varsity) which Gatow is holding for the Berlin Air Museum. The aircraft log book will be symbolically presented to Gp Capt Robson by AVM S D Evans DSO AFC RAAF who is the Australian Chief of Joint Ops and Plans, and who actually flew on the airlift as a pilot. He arrived in England in Aug 48 and flew RAF Dakotas from Lubeck from Sep 48 to Sep 49. I have asked Bonn to obtain a CV. He is intending to fly from Gutersloh to Berlin in the Dakota. The receiving party will contain members of the Transport Museum Board and 2 Senators (Names are not yet available). It is probable that the Australian Ambassador to the FRG, Mr H E Loveday MBE, will attend the presentation informally.

d. The Dakota will be exhibited as part of the static display on 21/22 Jun, complete with plaque inscribed "This Douglas DC3 (Dakota) aircraft was presented to the people of Berlin by the Australian Government. It provides a lasting reminder of the Royal Australian Air Force aircrews who flew the Berlin airlift, and commemorates the vital role of the Dakota in preserving the freedom of Berlin", in English and German.

e. Until the Berlin Air Museum is able to house the Dakota it will stand next to the Hastings near the main gate at RAF Gatow.

5. I will keep you informed of any changes as they occur.



A CALLAWAY
Squadron Leader
Deputy Officer Commanding

Copies to:

OC Britel
Sqn Ldr Griffiths ←