
COMBAT CARGO GROUPS—WWII

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It is attributed as one of General H.H. Arnold's pet ideas that cargo aircraft could fly into a battle area carrying not only its flying crew, but complete ground support personnel and supplies to set up a base and "begin moving cargo the next day."

Although available sources suggest that Combat Cargo Groups never did operate in exactly the method "Hap" contemplated, there is ample supporting evidence that they all embodied the "can-do" attitude of "beginning to move cargo the next day." Combat Cargo routinely flew day and night into unimproved forward airstrips that had been bulldozed out of the dirt to unload such diverse cargo as canned goods, ammunition, chickens, gasoline, Bailey Bridges, tents, fire engines and once even a disassembled locomotive. Movement of such cargo as well as thousands of people including refugees, casualties, VIPs and parachute troops all became routine flights for these flexible and adaptable organizations.

Two extremes may illustrate the variety of missions: Between January 1946 and April 1947 the 11th Combat Cargo Squadron of the 3rd Combat Cargo Group provided transportation for General G.C. Marshall's State Department Agency which was attempting to resolve the dispute between the Nationalist and Communist Chinese factions (the Mars Task Force). At the other

extreme, an operation of considerable skill and courage was the successful delivery of a cargo of 9000 pounds of Canadian whiskey by the 4th Combat Cargo Group with only one case missing! Surely dedication of a high order in the C.B.I. Theatre in WWII.

The Army Air Corps formed four Combat Cargo Groups during WWII. Each group consisted of four squadrons and were consecutively numbered. Activation occurred between April and June of 1944. The 1st, 2nd, and 4th Groups were activated, equipped and trained in the U.S. while the 3rd Group was activated in India. Equipment was in all cases C-46 and C-47 aircraft.

1st COMBAT CARGO GROUP

The 1st Combat Cargo Group was activated on April 15, 1944, at Bowman Field, Kentucky. Equipped with C-47 aircraft) it deployed its squadrons to the C.B.I. Theatre in August/September 1944. The group began operations to support the British XIV Army in the Arakan Campaign as part of the Combat Cargo Task Force through May 1945. It was then assigned to 69th Composite Wing in China until November 1945 when it began movement to Conus where it was deactivated at Morrison Field, Florida, in December 1945. The 1st and 3rd Combat Cargo Squadrons were awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation

for the French Indo-China, China and Manchuria Campaigns. The group was redesignated as the 512th Troop Carrier Group in September 1945.

The group insignia, which was also utilized by the 3rd Combat Cargo Squadron, was apparently never officially approved. Both leather and cloth insignias are known.

1st Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron's insignia was approved on July 17, 1944.

2nd Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron's playing card insignia of "5 deuces" was approved on July 17, 1944.

3rd Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron used the insignia of the group through WWII. The illustration shows what is believed to be the insignia of the 328th Troop Carrier Squadron, although Maurer & Maurer indicates this to be the Combat Cargo insignia which was approved February 25, 1944.

4th Combat Cargo Squadron: The winged donkey insignia was approved on July 17, 1944.

2nd COMBAT CARGO GROUP

The 2nd Combat Cargo Group was activated on May 1, 1944, at Syracuse AAB, New York. It was equipped with C-47 and C-46 aircraft and trained at Baer Field, Indiana, prior to its assignment to the 5th Air Force in November of 1944. Initially stationed on Biak the group performed cargo and personnel movements between New Guinea, Australia, and the Philippines prior to its move to Leyte, P.I., in May 1945. Supply, casualty evacuation and supply dropping to guerrilla forces as well as regular flights to the Ryukyus occupied the group until August 1945 when it redeployed to Okinawa to begin transportation of personnel to Japan. The group moved again to Yokota, Japan, from where it continued its activities until it was deactivated in January 1946. No insignia is known for the group.

5th Combat Cargo Squadron: No insignia is known for the squadron.

6th Combat Cargo Squadron: The "Flying Elephant" insignia was approved August 8, 1944.

7th Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron's rabbit (Jungle Bunny) insignia was approved on July 5, 1945.

8th Combat Cargo Squadron: No insignia is known for the squadron.

3rd COMBAT CARGO GROUP

The 3rd Combat Cargo Group is unique among the four groups activated during WWII as it was the only group activated outside the U.S., being established on June 5, 1944, in Sylhet, India. All four squadrons and the group were apparently established utilizing existing theatre resources or as an administrative redesignation.

The group's initial equipment was C-47 aircraft and it relieved the 64th Troop Carrier Group and thereafter provided airlift for the British XIV Army from various bases in India and Burma. It supported Merrill's Marauders in the liberation of Myitkyina and the subsequent advance on Rangoon.

The group was re-equipped with C-46 aircraft in 1945 and all squadrons were redesignated Troop Carrier in September-October 1945. The group was redesignated as the 513 Troop Carrier Group and was eventually inactivated in Shanghai, China, in 1945. Two squadrons, however (the 10th C.C. Squadron and the 12th C.C. Squadrons), did return to Conus apparently independently of their parent where they were deactivated

in January 1946. No insignia is known for the group.

9th Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron's insignia is probably unofficial and no approval is known, although actual sample patches exist. It is entirely possible that all four squadrons at one time used the same design with only the squadron number changing.

A later insignia of the 330th Troop Carrier Squadron which the 9th became on October 8, 1945, is the "Pegasus" design. This insignia was not officially approved until 1957 but may have been worn prior to that as the squadron would not have wanted to retain their original insignia with its specific designation of Combat Cargo after their redesignation.

10th Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron's insignia of the "Pelican" is another unapproved and therefore unofficial design although sample patches exist. The caricatured aircraft design is the official insignia of the 331st Troop Carrier Squadron which the 10th became on October 1, 1945. This insignia was not officially approved until March 1957, although it may have been used for the same reasons as the 9th.

11th Combat Cargo Squadron: The squadron's original design of the "Flying Elephant" is another unofficial design, although sample patches exist.

When the squadron was redesignated the 332nd Troop Carrier Squadron in September-October 1945 the unit began to use the winged horse design. Note the Great Wall of China incorporated in the design as the squadron was based during that period at Luliang and Shanghai. Sample patches of this unofficial design also exist. The officially approved insignia of the 332nd Troop Carrier Squadron is the Irish shamrock. The insignia was not officially approved until 1957, although the squadron may have used it prior to that time.

12th Combat Cargo Squadron: No insignia exists for this unit so far as is known.

4th COMBAT CARGO GROUP

The group was activated at Syracuse AAB, New York, in June 1944. It trained there and at Bowman Field, Kentucky, with C-47 and C-46 aircraft, until deployment to India in November 1944. Equipped with C-46 aircraft the group began operations in support of the British XIV Army in Burma until May 1945. The group then moved to Namponmao, Burma, when it hauled men and supplies to China until the war ended. The group returned to India in November 1945 where it remained until it was deactivated at Panagaph, India, on February 9, 1946. No insignia is known for the group.

13th Combat Cargo Squadron: No insignia is known for the squadron.

14th Combat Cargo Squadron: The "Flying Elephant" design was officially approved on November 25, 1945.

15th Combat Cargo Squadron: The "Wolf design riding the "Jackass" is an unapproved insignia. Note the roman numerals for "15" referring, of course, to the squadron's designation. Patches are known to exist.

16th Combat Cargo Squadron: The cigar-smoking vulture is another unofficial and unapproved design, although patches are known to exist.

SOURCES

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