



The SACRED COW, the first Presidential aircraft, just prior to its last flight in 1961. (Photo - USAF)

PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT

BY

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A short time ago the first Presidential airplane, of an ever increasing list of dignified aircraft, was withdrawn from active flying service. The retirement ceremony of the SACRED COW resembled somewhat the pomp and military customs of the retirement of a general from active duty. On December 4, 1961, Major General Brooke E. Allen, Commander, Headquarters Command, USAF, presented the SACRED COW to the National Air Museum, on behalf of the United States Air Force.

In his acceptance speech for the National Air Museum, Dr. Leonard Carmichael, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, aptly stated:

"Many people feel that when an object-like this airplane - is turned over to a museum - that is the end of its career. We at the Smithsonian do not think so! We like to feel that this ceremony is in a sense a recommissioning of this historic airplane for continuing service to the nation: a

service of inspiration and education to the millions of visitors who each year come to our National Air Museum." So ended the flying career of the first Presidential aircraft which had its inception as far back as 1943.

When the announcement was made that the President of the United States was traveling by air for the first time, many mixed feelings of public opinion were evident. This occurred in 1943, and at that time, air travel was still not widely accepted as "safe travel" as we know it today. "Was it wise to allow the President to travel in an airplane?" Being well into World War II, situations of the day did, however, dictate such a flight.

President Roosevelt, with his great sense of historical drama, created history when he flew from Miami to Casablanca in January 1943. He was to meet with Churchill and other U.N. officials for Allied planning of military strategy. The Secret Service, charged with

the safety of the President, decided that the menace of German submarines was too great for a trans-Atlantic voyage by ship. Departing Dinner Key Seaplane Base, in Miami on January 11, 1943, he took to the air in a Boeing 314--specifically NC18605, known as the DIXIE CLIPPER. [1] Several of the Pan American Clippers were under contract to the Navy during the war years. The P.A.A. crews of these aircraft were Naval Reservists on active duty and this particular aircraft was flown by Lieut. Howard M. Cone, USNR, during the first Presidential flight.

The trip was made with stops at Port-of-Spain, Trinidad; Belem, Brazil; then on to Bathurst, south of Dakar on the east tip of Africa. The overland routes were flown in C-54s, piloted by TWA crews, under government contract to the AAFTC. Major Otis F. Bryan, Vice Pres. of TWA [2] was the C-54 pilot for the President on his arrival at Casablanca on January 14, 1943. Following the ten day conference, the President again used two C-54s for a 2,000 mile side trip to Liberia. [3] Upon his return to Bathurst, he boarded the DIXIE CLIPPER on January 27 for the return flight across the Atlantic. After arriving at Natal, Brazil, C-54s of TWA were used for the flight to Port-of-Spain. On board the DIXIE CLIPPER once more, the President celebrated his 61st birthday, flying from Port-of-Spain to Miami.

Not only was this flight a Presidential first, [4] but no President of the U.S. since Abraham Lincoln, had ever visited a battle theatre. No President had ever been to Africa, and none had ever left the U.S. during war time. Thus, the 32nd President of the U.S. shattered four precedents at one time. [5]

This historic flight by President Roosevelt had such a dynamic influence throughout the whole world, that it was obvious more trips were to come. Plans had to be formulated to meet such requirements.

THE SACRED COW

In the fall of 1943, classified documents, known as "Project 51", were sent from Washington to the Douglas plant at Santa Monica, California. They directed that Douglas was to build for the USAAF, under Contract No. 20284, a passenger transport aircraft intended primarily for use by the President of the United States.

From the production line of C-54A-5-D0s, fuselage 78, factory serial number 7470--now became "Project 51"--and was moved to a secluded and restricted area of the Douglas plant. Workmen assigned to the job were aware that their efforts were being constantly surveyed by an unusual number of inspectors, both civilian and military, whose purposes were deeply shrouded in secrecy.

Many innovations were incorporated into this special airplane for the President. The interior was so laid out that a specially designed collapsible, chromium steel wheelchair for Mr. Roosevelt could be easily moved to all parts of the cabin. It was said that F.D.R.'s favorite position while flying was in the cockpit between the two pilot's seats. To allow him to get into this position a removable set of inclined rails was built on which the wheelchair could be rolled up to the cockpit floor level.

The President's private stateroom measured 7.5 X 12 feet. Among the special furnishings, was an upholstered swivel chair which was within easy reach of an oxygen mask, reading lights, and a telephone connecting with the pilot's compartment and three other compartments. A conference table was in the middle of this stateroom, while on one side were four maps on rollers; four enlarged flying instruments, including an airspeed indicator, altimeter, compass and clock; and a cabinet, the top of which contained an electric fan. At one end was a sofa that electrically unfolded into a bunk. Another side of the room contained two electrically operated folding chairs, offering a seating capacity in this room for

seven persons.

A large bullet proof picture window was an additional feature of this section of the airplane. Although this heavy window would afford protection against an assassin's bullet, ironically the surrounding skin of the aircraft would hardly have stopped an ice-pick. Since this window was the most distinctive exterior feature of the President's transport, an aluminum template was made that could be placed over this window when needed. It had, cut within its center, a standard size window opening. This gave the airplane the typical C-54 appearance for security purposes.

All upholstery was blue worsted wool. The draperies were of blue gabardine on which was embroidered the insignia of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. The plane accommodated 15 passengers, could sleep 6, and carried a crew of 7.

Most unique feature of this airplane was that it contained a battery-operated elevator, located aft of the main passenger cabin, which could lift a passenger directly from the ground to the cabin-floor level. This elevator represented a security measure as well as a convenience. The President's need to walk with crutches or use a wheelchair, was an important factor in developing "Project 51". In the past, it had been necessary to construct bulky ramps to aid Mr. Roosevelt in embarking or debarking from an airplane. The very presence of such ramps at a foreign airfield suggested the impending arrival of F.D.R. Advance identification of the President as an incoming passenger was, of course, undesirable during W.W. II. The elevator eliminated need for the telltale ramps.

When "Project 51" materialized, it was identified as a Douglas C-54C, and was the only one ever so designated. [6] Basically a C-54A, it had C-54B wings with special ailerons that fitted no other aircraft. Along with other innovations, like specially stressed landing gear doors, it emerged as one of the heaviest C-54s in the entire inventory. The airplane carried the noncommittal USAAF serial No. 42-107451, with no other external non-standard markings. Delivery date to the Army Air Force is listed as January 26, 1944. However, it was not until June 12, 1944 that Major (soon promoted to Lt. Col.) Henry T. "Hank" Myers, who was designated as the President's pilot, flew the airplane from Santa Monica to National Airport, in Washington, D.C., where it was assigned to the 503rd Army Air Force Base Unit, of the Air Transport Command. This aircraft may have been christened "The Flying White House", but to most interested observers the world over, it was always the SACRED COW, a name cherished by admiring but irreverent Washington correspondents. Official attempts to discourage its use as "undignified" were to little avail. The name was never painted on the airplane, nor was the name ever officially accepted. Special insignia were designed for this aircraft, though they were never adopted. [7]

Test, acceptance, and delivery flight all completed, the first mission of the SACRED COW began on July 1, 1944, and ended 17 days later where it had begun; National Airport, Washington, D.C. In the interim, Sec. of War, Henry L. Stimson, and his party had been flown from New York, to Naples, via Casablanca, with the Casablanca-Naples leg receiving strong fighter cover. On the return trip, the first non-stop flight from the United Kingdom, to Washington, D.C.--3800 miles--was flown in 17 hours and 50 minutes.

The contention of the men who flew the SACRED COW, that all its flights were "strictly routine", is not entirely borne out by other historians, as witness some of the details of ATC Special Mission No. 17:

Classification: TOP SECRET

Code Name: "ARGONAUT".

Destination: YALTA, USSR.

The SACRED COW left Washington at sunset on January 21, 1945. A very sharp eye might have noted that a different serial number had been substituted for 107451. Instead, serial number 42-72252 was used on this mission,



The first flight of any President occurred when President Roosevelt flew to the Casablanca Conference in this Boeing 314, DIXIE CLIPPER. (Photo - PAA).



Returning from Casablanca, F.D.R. celebrated his 61st birthday on the DIXIE CLIPPER with Adm. W. D. Leahy, Harry Hopkins and Clipper pilot, H.M. Cone. (US Navy)



Douglas C-54C, 42-107451, was the first official Presidential aircraft, the SACRED COW. Seen at Portland AAB, Oregon in late 1945. (Photo - USAF, 29899AC)



A rare photo of the SACRED COW with substituted serial number. Shown at an air field near Cairo just after Yalta. (Photo - Nat'l Archives, 208-PU-173A-7)



In late 1948 the 51 flags were removed from the nose of the SACRED COW and the new MATS markings were applied to the aircraft. (Photo - C.N. Trask)



The SACRED COW on the day after its AF decommissioning ceremony in December 1961 at Andrews AFB, APS-10 radar had been added to the nose. (Photo - Mikesch)

for security purposes; the new number being that of a C-54 which had been lost in the Pacific. With only the crew aboard, the President's airplane arrived at Naples on January 24; at 7:05 the next morning took off on a dry run into Saki, the Russian airfield some 60 miles from Yalta.

With the plane being ahead of its estimated time of arrival at Saki, and landing in very thick weather, the Russian ground defenders did not have a chance to train their weapons on the airplane. Since all went well, the SACRED COW was returned to Malta to take on its ranking passenger – traveling under the sheltering code name "Sawbuck" – but better known as Franklin D. Roosevelt. On February 3, 1945; President Roosevelt made his first flight in the SACRED COW departing Malta (where he had arrived in the USS QUINCY) in the still dark of 2:30 A.M., arriving at Saki at 9:10 A.M.

President Roosevelt was not greatly impressed with air travel. He liked to be with people, and air travel restricted this, compared to other modes of travel. Records indicate that the President made only three flying trips while in office. The first had been his trip to Casablanca; the second had been on the last leg to the Teheran Conference in November 1943 to confer with Joseph Stalin. The two flights were made before the existence of the SACRED COW. Now he made his third and last flight as Chief Executive to Yalta, to see Stalin once more. Surprisingly to many, this was the only trip in which he used the SACRED COW – an airplane especially designed for him.

Exclusive use by the President was not the sole mission of this airplane, or for that matter, any Presidential aircraft that followed. It was not unusual that travel performed by a member of the President's Cabinet, or other high ranking government officials as a direct representative of the President, utilized the SACRED COW. One such flight carrying Marshall and Byrnes, was the first non-stop New York-Paris flight after Lindbergh. The aircraft log book reflects many notable foreign passengers such as Winston Churchill, Gen. Sikorski of Poland, Mme. Chiang Kai-Shek of China, Dr. Benes of Czechoslovakia, to name but a few. All were on important missions and all under the sponsorship of the President of the United States.

Following the death of President Roosevelt, President Harry S. Truman made his first flight in the SACRED COW, May 5, 1945, a one-day round trip between Washington and Kansas City. He subsequently used the airplane for flights to the United Nations Charter Conference, and for part of the trip to the Potsdam Conference. Mr. Truman liked to fly, consequently he utilized Presidential aircraft far more than did his predecessor.

Following Mr. Roosevelt's use of this airplane, there was little requirement for the elevator although it was not removed from the aircraft. However, when President Truman's Mother was flown from Kansas City to Washington on Mother's Day in 1946, the elevator was used for her convenience.

Shortly following the secession of hostilities, the left side of the nose of the SACRED COW was adorned with the flags of 44 nations, which the airplane had visited up to that time. By the time Presidential flying duties terminated for this aircraft, a total of 51 flags had been applied. It has been recorded that the SACRED COW had flown over, or visited 55 different countries during its tenure as the Chief Executive's airplane.

While assigned to the White House, the SACRED COW flew 431,000 air miles, totaling 1900 hours, of which approximately 10 percent were flown by Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. (Ex-President Herbert Hoover made a single trip, and General Eisenhower flew in the SACRED COW when he made his triumphal return to the United States in June 1945.)

Following its retirement as the Chief Executive's aircraft in July 1947, it joined other aircraft in the Special Missions fleet at W.N.A. and continued to fly

high ranking governmental officials as faithfully as it had done for the Presidents. Up to this time the name of the unit to which the SACRED COW was assigned had been changed several times from the original 503rd AAF Base Unit. On October 1, 1948, it finally became known as the 1254th Air Transport Squadron of the newly formed Military Air Transport Service.

Late in 1955, the plane was transferred to the Headquarters Command's 1100th Air Base Wing at Bolling AFB, where it was used primarily for military administrative flights. (It was during this time that the APS-10 weather avoidance radar was added, which considerably changed the contour of the nose section.)

In July 1961, an agreement was reached for transfer of the airplane to the National Air Museum. The SACRED COW was temporarily stored at this time at Bolling AFB, after having logged 12,135 hours and 25 minutes.

On October 17, 1961, Major General Brooke E. Allen, Commander of Headquarters Command, piloted the last flight of the SACRED COW from Bolling AFB, to Andrews AFB, probably one of the aircraft's shortest flights. At an impressive ceremony on December 4, 1961, at Andrews AFB, the SACRED COW was decommissioned and placed in the custody of the National Air Museum.

When the new building for the National Air Museum is erected on the Mall in Washington, D.C., the SACRED COW will have a new home within its walls, and will be displayed for the viewing public. All the current markings will be removed and replaced with the markings of the ATC, along with the 51 flags, as it was when its services terminated as – the first official Presidential aircraft.

THE INDEPENDENCE

Services rendered by the SACRED COW were indeed commendable and outstanding. Its crew had claimed that they had broken six world records while in the performance of executive flying missions. However, with the war a thing of the past, progress was being made in the development of air transports. For efficiency as well as the safety of the President, new equipment was justifiable.

By now, Douglas DC-6s were on the production line and Washington officials decided that this aircraft would be suitable for Presidential use. An agreement was worked out among Douglas, American Airlines and the Air Force, whereby American Airlines would relinquish to the Air Force one of their DC-6s currently in production. Fuselage no. 29, manufacturer's serial no. 42881 was the DC-6 selected. The Air Force designation C-118 was assigned [8] and the plane received Air Force serial number 46-505 under contract no. 46124; November 2, 1946 being the date approved. [9] (It is interesting to note that this is the only C-118 in the Air Force Inventory; all others of this type are C-118As of the DC-6A airframe, having an added length of five feet.)

There was very little external difference between the production DC-6s and this C-118; the most noticeable being the three closely grouped windows on the rear starboard side of the fuselage. This is the location of the Presidential stateroom which is entered through a bleached-mahogany door bearing the Great Seal of the United States. The room was decorated in chocolate brown, dark blue and gray. The aircraft was further modified to carry 25 passengers, as opposed to the normal 52 passengers. The main cabin seated 24, or could sleep 12 passengers.

The INDEPENDENCE was the first AAF transport to use and test the revolutionary reversible pitch propellers, as well as to use water injection in the engines for added thrust on take-off. Additional fuselage tanks afforded an absolute range of 4,400 miles.

Before the aircraft was ever viewed by the public, and to avoid the risk of it being dubbed another undignified name such as SACRED COW II, (as one leading aviation magazine referred to it while it was in production)



Final touches of paint are added to the Douglas C-118 INDEPENDENCE at the Santa Monica plant where this was the 29th DC-6 to be built. (Photo - Douglas 76-8-9)



First INDEPENDENCE marking changes after delivery included addition of national insignia on aft fuselage and serial number 46-505 on tail. (Douglas 77-18-6)



Colors were two-tone blue, with yellow striping and grey beak, changed here to white. Note APS-10 Weather Avoidance Radar. (Photo - Douglas A28-13-3)



Nose contour of the INDEPENDENCE was changed by APS-10 radar. Three windows indicate position of Presidential stateroom. (Photo - Douglas 85-11-1)



Final stages in the changing color motif of the INDEPENDENCE included solar resistant white top and nose. (Photo - Douglas A28-13-2)



Current markings of the INDEPENDENCE which is currently based at Andrews AFB. Note Presidential Seal by main cabin door. (Photo - USAF)

the INDEPENDENCE s selected as the official name of the Presidential aircraft. Col. Myers made this selection, which was prompted as the aircraft was commissioned on Independence Day of 1947. Secondly, it was the name of Mr. Truman's home town in Missouri; a name having a "National flavor" in itself.

It goes without question that the INDEPENDENCE was the most colorful in external motif of any Presidential aircraft. It could be said, however, that this idea was developed almost by accident.

The INDEPENDENCE was born in the production line surrounded by American Airline DC-6s. The design department at Douglas was working with the idea of distinctive markings for A.A., and since the company insignia featured the American eagle, this was used as the theme for a painted design on the fuselage. A.A. did not care for the design, so the idea was abandoned. Planners for the INDEPENDENCE saw the design and asked if it could be further developed for the Presidential aircraft. Theme-wise, the meaning was the same, as it depicts the American bald eagle as seen on the Great Seal of the United States. If approved, the cost of the aircraft would have been increased by \$1,500 for the application of these elaborate markings. This added cost met with disapproval by the Air Force, but the Douglas people were so enthused with the idea that the motif was added after all, at no further expense to the government. Original color for the exterior paint scheme was a light blue fuselage stripe and tall feathers, outlined with a yellow pin stripe; navy blue head feathers, and a brown beak painted on the nose. To preclude possible comments by viewers, the color of the nose was quickly changed to a medium gray.'

Delivery to the Air Force of the INDEPENDENCE is recorded as July 1, 1947. This second Presidential airplane like the first one, was flown to its new home at Washington National Airport by Lt. Col. Myers. Receiving unit, again, was the 503rd AAF Base Unit.

During the service life of the INDEPENDENCE as the Presidential aircraft, it underwent several major modifications, both in color and equipment. First of these changes was the addition of the national insignia on the fuselage, which required a relocation of the ATC insignia forward. This occurred during a short time after its delivery, and it was probably during that time that the serial number was added to the tail, originally having been omitted. Sometime in 1948, the color of the beak was again changed, this time to white, and in the later years to follow, the entire top of the fuselage was painted solar white.

One may remember that early in the service life of the DC-6 types, cabin fires from the heating system caused them to be grounded after a fatal accident. Overflow from transferring fuel would be picked up in the air scoop going to the cabin-air heat exchanger. Because of this grounding, the INDEPENDENCE was returned to the factory on November 11, 1947. It remained there until the defect was corrected; resuming service on May 6, 1948.

During the time of the INDEPENDENCE, weather avoidance radar was becoming quite prevalent. After several months following the delivery of this aircraft APS-10 weather radar was installed in the nose of the INDEPENDENCE. This was the first such installation on any DC-6 type, and commercial fleet aircraft were soon equipped with similar radar. On June 2, 1948, a new stabilizer antenna was added, and the radome was replaced with an American Airlines type giving the nose a bubble appearance. This equipment was replaced by APS-42 radar on January 7, 1952, which utilized the more streamlined C-118A radome. Again, the INDEPENDENCE made another first for DC-6 types, by having APS-42 equipment installed.

To make mention of the official flights of the INDEPENDENCE, as well as the noted public figures it carried, would become quite repetitious. However, some of the sidelights surrounding these trips have proved to

contain some interesting facets. The first official flight of the INDEPENDENCE is one of these cases.

Col. Myers had planned to fly the INDEPENDENCE about the country to build up approximately 100 hours on the airframe as a "shake-down" operation. Much to his dismay, others had plans awaiting him upon termination of the delivery flight to Washington. The Greek Ambassador to the U.S. had died and suitable transportation to carry his remains back to his homeland was necessary. Standard procedures until this time had been to return national dignitaries by Navy ships. This being the long sought after peace-time, the use of a war ship seemed out of vogue. The obvious answer was to use the President's airplane. But the door of the SACRED COW was too small, and delivery of the INDEPENDENCE was still several days away. When the aircraft was delivered, the casket was loaded aboard the INDEPENDENCE, but once inside the main door, it was too confining to be turned to enter the main cabin. Nothing else remained but to leave it in the main entryway which proved to be an enormous obstacle for persons moving from the stateroom to the main cabin.

On another early flight of the INDEPENDENCE, Sec. of the Treasury John Snyder was being returned to the U.S. from Rio de Janeiro, when a failure of the No. 1 engine occurred between Lima, Peru and Albrook AFB in the Canal Zone. News of this created much concern at Albrook, so a B-17 and a flight of P-47s were dispatched to intercept and escort the "crippled" airplane. Sometime later Col. Myers observed the intercepting aircraft passing far below. He informed them he was cruising at 20,000 feet. It had not occurred to persons involved that war time procedures of intercepting unpressurized transports would not apply to the modern-day airliner. With only three engines operating on the transport, the intercepting aircraft were not seen again until sometime after the arrival of the INDEPENDENCE.

Lt. Col. Myers remained as President Truman's pilot until January 1948. Then he elected to return to his former civilian role of flying for American Airlines. Consequently, his last official flight with the President was on November 6, 1947.

Lt. Col. Francis W. "Frenchie" Williams, (later Colonel) who had been with Col. Myers on the Presidential crew, assumed his new position as Presidential pilot on January 6, 1948. He retained this highly responsible position for the remainder of President Truman's term of office, which ended January 20, 1953.

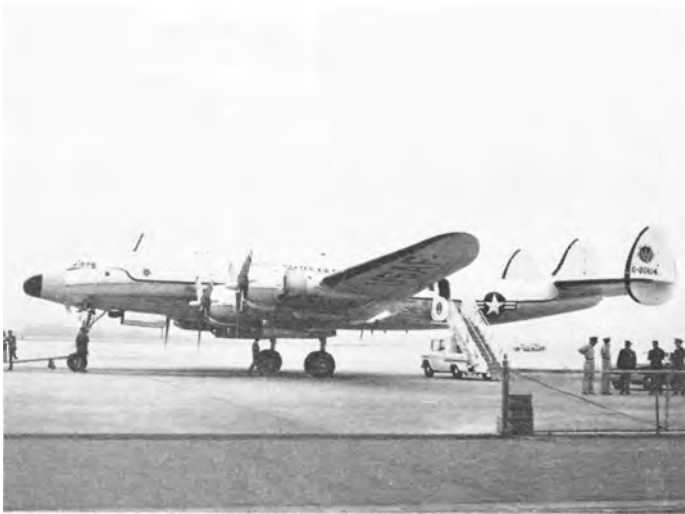
After five and a half years of service as the Presidential aircraft, the INDEPENDENCE was retired in January 1953. Shortly thereafter, in May 1953, the original distinctive markings were stripped from the aircraft at the Santa Monica plant and the standard MATS insignia were applied.

Also in 1953, the INDEPENDENCE received a major modernization, this too being accomplished at the Douglas plant. Of major importance was that the aircraft was completely re-engined. The four P & W R-2800 CA-15s were removed and replaced by the newer R-2800-52W, which were then standard for C-118As, offering approximately 100 hp more per engine. The Curtiss Electric propellers were retained in lieu of the Hamilton Standards as on the C-118As. The return flight of the INDEPENDENCE from California to Washington, D.C., set an unofficial speed record, declaring it the fastest transport type aircraft operational at that time. The combination of the relatively light airframe of the DC-6, coupled with the more powerful engines used on the heavier C-118As (DC-6As) was the reason for this outstanding performance.

Following Presidential flying activities, the INDEPENDENCE stayed on in the same Special Air Missions organization, and is still active today, carrying distinguished passengers with the 1298th Squadron of the 1254th Air Transport Wing, now relocated at Andrews AFB.

COLUMBINE II

With the change of national administration in



A recent photo of the original COLUMBINE on a visit to the U.S. Constellation 48-614 is now assigned to USAF Hq., Wiesbaden, Germany. (Photo - Mikesh)



The COLUMBINE II, Lockheed C-121A, serial 48-610, awaiting the President at Washington National Airport. (Photo - USAF A-46977AC)



The columbine blossom, state flower of Colorado which was home state of Mrs. Eisenhower, graced both sides of COLUMBINE II. (Photo - Lockheed AF7452 -)



When 48-610 ended Presidential aircraft activities it was incorporated into the Special Mission fleet and painted in standard MATS markings. (Photo - USAF)



Current markings for 48-610 are standard for all Constellations of the 1254th A.T.W. at Andrews AFB. Orange day-glo is on tail. (Photo - Mikesh)



COLUMBINE III, a C-121E, serial 53-7885, was based on the Super-Constellation 1049C. President Eisenhower used this plane for 6 years. (Lockheed AM 9837)

January 1953, a new Presidential aircraft was designated at Washington National Airport. This was the COLUMBINE; a new name given to an old "resident" of this airport within the 1254th Air Transport Group (Special Missions). The story of the COLUMBINE, however, started long before the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower to the Presidency of the United States.

Near the change of the year 1950-51, General of the Army, Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Commander of SHAPE, located near Paris, France. An aircraft and crew were to be assigned to support this headquarters, and General Eisenhower. Up to this time, the bulk of the 9 C-121As were assigned to the Atlantic Division of MATS at Westover AFB, Mass. As a replacement for the aging C-54s then assigned to the 1254th ATS at Washington National, it was decided that the C-121As were to be used for the Special Air Mission assignments. In the process of the transfer, C-121A, 48-614, was assigned from Westover to the 1254th on December 12, 1950. Since this aircraft was not as yet integrated into the SAM fleet, it was further reassigned for the mission to SHAPE Headquarters as levied against the 1254th. The chief pilot of the 1254th, Captain William G. Draper, was one of several nominated to be interviewed by Gen. Norstad and was subsequently selected to pilot Gen. Eisenhower's aircraft. [10] The airplane and crew left for Europe in early 1951.

Soon, the name COLUMBINE, chosen by Eisenhower himself, was painted across the airplane's nose in a flowing script. Beneath it was a painting of a blue columbine--the official flower of Mamie Eisenhower's home state of Colorado. This airplane, 8614, remained in Europe after Gen. Eisenhower returned to the U.S., and is now assigned to USAFE Hq., at Wiesbaden, Germany.

Although this COLUMBINE, 8614, was not a Presidential aircraft, it does indicate to some degree why President Eisenhower was partial to a C-121 over other types as a Presidential aircraft. He very often stated his "likes" for the Constellations, so the choice was accommodating.

For Mr. Eisenhower, the newly elected President, C-121A, 48-610, was chosen from the 1254th Special Mission inventory as the Presidential aircraft. This particular Constellation was Major Draper's choice of C-121A's due to its fine history of performance and interior configuration. It is noted also that 8610 is the aircraft that carried President-elect Eisenhower on his Far East tour to Korea in November 1952, which again complimented the selection of this airplane.

Since Major Wm. G. Draper was Gen. Eisenhower's pilot at SHAPE Hq., President Eisenhower requested that Draper be retained as his pilot, a post that he kept through Eisenhower's tenure of office, ending January 20, 1961. Draper who also acted as AF Aide to the President, was a Colonel when he left this position.

Lockheed Constellation C-121A, serial no. 48-610, as it is known before it became the second COLUMBINE, was originally accepted by the Air Force on December 22, 1948, and after 20 hours of test flying, it departed the Burbank plant on January 7, 1949. With the Lockheed serial number 2602, it was built under contract AC 20017, approved February 10, 1948, which called for 10 C-121As (one airplane was changed to VC-121B while in production under the same contract). All these Constellations were based on the Lockheed 749 airframe.

Initial assignment of eight of these C-121As was to the Atlantic Division of MATS at Westover AFB, Mass. However, in the case of Constellation 8610, later to become COLUMBINE II, it was delivered to MacArthur Field, Islip, L.I., on January 8, 1949. There it was placed on bailment to Lockheed Air Service International, on contract AF 33(038)-6714, in support of operation and management of the Keflavik Airport maintenance facility in Iceland. During this period, our "Status of Forces Agreement" with Iceland did not permit basing military personnel in that country except in civilian status or on temporary duty. This was the reason for "civilian-

ized" airlift support of Keflavik Airport. "Connie" 8610 flew 9 round trips every month from MacArthur Field, to Keflavik in support of this operation which terminated in November 1949.

At this point, a vacancy for a staff assigned aircraft existed in the 1254th A.T.S. at Washington, and 8610 was selected for this assignment. First, however, it was sent back to the Lockheed factory at Burbank, for interior modifications more suited for carrying V.I.P. When it emerged from Lockheed in February 1950, it was referred to as a VC-121A [11] and was flown to W.N.A. by a 1254th crew. Incorporated into the Special Air Missions fleet, it was used almost exclusively by Sec. of the Air Force, W.S. Symington until he resigned. Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. H.S. Vandenburg then took over its use, followed by Sec. of the Air Force, T. Finletter, who was using it when Gen. Eisenhower, as President-elect, flew in the aircraft on his trip to Korea in November 1952.

Often, many modifications take place during the lifetime of an airplane and 8610, along with other C-121s, was no exception. To mention a few, engines, propellers and landing gears were brought up to latest commercial configuration with significant improvements of performance and gross weight. Air Weather Surveillance Radar APS-10 was installed in the nose in late 1950, followed by the improved and still adequate APS-42 version. This changed the rather blunt noses of the "Connies" to the present, pointed profile appearance.

When prepared for Presidential use, the interior of the COLUMBINE was decorated in warm tones of gray. In the waist compartment was a 20 foot stateroom for the President. It contained two specially built chairs for President and Mrs. Eisenhower, stressed to the floor structure. These brown leather chairs revolved so the President could work at the table beside him or swing toward the other chair for conversation. At the President's elbow were two telephones: one was an intercom for communications with the pilot and the crew, the other could be hooked into a land line as soon as the plane landed. A number of instruments on the wall were provided for the President's flight information. Across from his chair was a small serving bar with a framed color photograph of the columbine blossom above it. Two long couches lined the opposing walls at mid-cabin. At night they could break down into 2 three-quarter size beds. A small AM-FM radio was at the end of one of the couches.

The COLUMBINE had two duplicate cabins forward of the President's with seats for 16 which could be made up into berths for 8. The lavatory in the tail section was large enough to be used as a dressing room. Immediately forward of the tail, on both sides of the main door, was a storage space for clothes, light baggage, odd gear, and the 30 parachutes which were usually carried.

When COLUMBINE II was replaced by a later version Constellation, the aircraft was returned to the S.A.M. fleet, but was made available to the President when a backup plane was needed. For a brief period in May and June 1955, 8610 was operated by Pan American Airways on a special assignment for the government of Thailand. Still with the S.A.M. fleet today, it is located at Andrews AFB, Md., with the 1254th Air Transport Wing.

COLUMBINE III

Again in 1954 progress in passenger carrying transports called for a change in Presidential aircraft. A Lockheed 1049C, Super-Constellation was selected as the replacement for COLUMBINE II, which had almost 4,000 flying hours before it became the Presidential airplane. Commercial airline success with the 1049 was outstanding. As compared to the smaller 749s, like COLUMBINE II, this new aircraft was 18.4 feet longer in fuselage length and had increased range by the added 730 gals. of fuel. The aircraft not only could carry more payload, but had an increased speed afforded by the Wright 9T2C18DA-1 (civilian counterpart to the military R-3350-34) Turbo-Com-



Following Presidential service, COLUMBINE III was incorporated into the S.A.M. fleet and carried only standard Air Force markings. (Photo - USAF)



Current markings of COLUMBINE III are white top and orange tail which is standard for aircraft of the 1254th A.T.W. (Photo - USAF 39431AC)



VC-121B, 48-608, was allegedly converted on production line for Presidential use if Mr. Dewey was elected in 1948. (Photo - USAF 39431AC)



The background story of 48-608 was well known and after four and a half years of Special Mission service the name DEWDROP was applied. (Photo - Stifflemire)



The name DEWDROP is all but forgotten on C-121A, serial 48-608 today. It is currently assigned to the 1254th A.T.W.(SM) at Andrews AFB. (Photo - Mikesh)



On its nose, 48-608 now carries the flags of the nations it has visited while in the service of the Sec. of the Air Force. (photo - Mikesh)

pound engines.

The added aircraft size accommodated many new improvements in communications. To name but a few, they included an airborne teletype machine, as well as an air-to-ground telephone. These communication advancements allowed the President to have constant personal contact with the White House while on board this airplane anywhere in the world.

Acceptance by the Air Force of this airplane was on August 31, 1954. With Air Force serial no. 53-7885, and Lockheed no. 4151, it was designated a VC-121E, the only aircraft of this series in the Air Force. Outwardly resembling the C-121C, it was actually selected from the production line of Navy R7V-1s in the early stage of construction. Procurement of this transport for the Air Force was on MIPR #33-600-0LL-570, which supplemented Navy contract NOAS-51-655.

On September 10, 1954, Lt. Col. Draper was at the controls of the VC-121E on the delivery flight from Burbank, Calif., to Washington National Airport. With all due honors Mamie Eisenhower formally christened the airplane "COLUMBINE III" on November 24, 1954, with a bottle of water flown in from Colorado. Moments later the President and his party were off on its first official flight to Augusta, Georgia, where he remained for 5 days before returning to W.N.A.

On March 6, 1955, COLUMBINE III departed Washington for its first over-water flight. On board was Sec. of State John Foster Dulles and party. It flew non-stop to Paris France, then to Vienna, Austria and back to Washington with a stop at Keflavik, Iceland, covering 9,320 miles in 32:10 flying hours.

COLUMBINE III served the President well during its more than 6 years as a Presidential aircraft, giving this airplane the longest service of any aircraft for Presidential use. Eisenhower's trips were frequent, covering approximately 30,000 statute miles a year which logged for him over a hundred flying hours per year. Frequently, the airplane was assigned to other missions directed by the President which included the carrying of other dignitaries of this nation, as well as head of state of foreign nations.

As of January 20, 1961, the COLUMBINE III was decommissioned as the Presidential airplane and integrated into the S.A.M. fleet of the 1298th A.T.S. of the 1254th A.T.W., which already included two other past Presidential aircraft. Immediately following its use by the President, it was assigned to the services of the Sec. of Defense, for a short time. Currently, however, it is a fleet aircraft only.

In April 1962, the completely silver airplane was given a face lifting, which made it the last S.A.M. aircraft to receive the white solar resistant top and orange conspicuity markings.

DEWDROP

Before leaving the subject of Constellations, mention should be made of another fine airplane which publicly aspired Presidential designation - but lost.

We discussed earlier the contract for 10 C-121As for delivery in 1948-coincidentally an election year. As Washington correspondents tell the story, some high official obviously placed his bet on Thomas E. Dewey, to win the election. What an impression it would make on the new President to have a Presidential airplane ready and waiting for him when he took office. Records show that the first of these C-121As was modified while on the production line to an executive configuration, and designated VC-121B, becoming the only such aircraft built. [12] With Lockheed serial no. 2600, it received the Air Force serial no. 48-608. Accepted on November 12 1948 it was flown to Washington National Airport from the factory, November 24, 1948. For several years this was the only Constellation assigned to the S.A.M.

The November elections of that year turned out much

differently than some people expected. In due course, someone offered the services of the new airplane to President Truman as his Presidential aircraft, it being much newer than the INDEPENDENCE. A news clipping of the time quotes the President as saying, "I don't want it-you can have it-it's too big for me.", a take-off on a popular song of the time. Obviously, the story of the original intent of this airplane had already reached the President's ears. In jest, following the election, someone presented the President with a mustache cup, which was more suited for Mr. Dewey. In good spirits, President Truman passed the mustache cup on to this airplane 8608 where it was mounted for several years (between occasional mysterious disappearances) in a cabinet within the stateroom.

Washington reporters had already named the airplane DEWDROP, a suitable name for Mr. Dewey's airplane had he been elected. Tactful caution, however, precluded painting this name on the nose until early 1953 when it was boldly marked and retained for about two years.

When it arrived from the factory it contained the Seal of the Sec. of the Air Force, which is still inscribed on the table in the main cabin. This airplane could conceivably be classified as the unwanted machine. Having been rejected by the President when offered, it remained in the services of Sec. of the Air Force, Mr. W. S. Symington. Other records show that it was assigned to Sec's. of State, Mr. George Marshall and Mr. John Foster Dulles. Quite often it served as a back-up aircraft for the INDEPENDENCE. This airplane was used by several Sec's. of Defense, including Mr. C. E. Wilson. It was Mr. Wilson's wife who was influential in having the name DEWDROP applied to the nose. Later Mr. Wilson selected a VC-118A (53-3240, later to become a Presidential aircraft) as his transport, and the DEWDROP once again was assigned to the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force.

It was Sec. of the A.F., Mr. Quarles who had the 30 flags of the nations this airplane had visited, painted on the nose, and they are still there. This airplane, like most of the S.A.M. fleet of today, is not assigned to support any particular agency, although with all its frequently changing users it has been considered for re-assignment from the 1254th A.T.W. on several occasions.

Constellation "8608" did make its small "niche" in aviation history, however. Shortly after delivery to the Air Force, it set a speed record from Washington to Burtonwood, England of 12 hours 8 minutes. It is believed that this flight took place during the Christmas holidays in 1948, while the Berlin airlift was in operation. Sec. of the Air Force Symington was on board and possibly Vice President Barkley was another passenger.

AERO COMMANDER

A farm in Gettysburg, Pa., was acquired by President Eisenhower and plans were made to retire there after his term of office. It took very few trips from Washington to the farm by car before the President asked his pilot, Lt. Col. Draper, to look into the possibility of acquiring a small twin-engine aircraft suitable for the trip. It was only natural that "Ike" would consider travel by light plane since he was a flyer himself in years back, having soloed a Stearman PT-13, in the Philippines in 1937. He acquired about 75-100 hours of flying time with (now Gen. ret.) William "Jerry" L. Lee, as his instructor.

In the past the Secret Service, which is charged with the safety of the President, insisted that Presidential planes have at least four engines. But the practicality and convenience of a light plane for short trips was obvious. By car the round trip to the Gettysburg farm from Washington took 4 hours, and the runway at the local airport would not accommodate the COLUMBINE.

Three types of light-twins were considered by Col. Draper, the Secret Service, and others. The requirement was met by all in that they had to be completely tested, and F.A.A. certified. After months of study, the Aero Commander was considered the most suited for the specific

tasks ahead. Generally unknown, the Army had a detachment of pilots in the Washington area who had been using Aero Commander L-26s since 1952. These were used to carry top Pentagon officials and had been found to be very satisfactory.

Air Force contract no. AF 30549 was awarded to Aero Design and Engineering Company, of Bethany, Okla., for 15 L-26-Bs on May 23, 1955. The Pentagon disclosed on May 27, that it had ordered this type aircraft but word did not leak out that the President intended to fly in one of them.

To fill the time lag for delivery of the first aircraft, an Aero Commander previously on order as a sales demonstrator was loaned to the A.F. by the manufacturer. This was a model 560, and was delivered to W.N.A. on May 24, 1955.

The aircraft was painted in the company's standard color design, no. 4, using Baltic blue and Polar white. The national insignia was affixed to that aircraft after it arrived in Washington, but it retained its federal registration number of N2724B.

On June 3, 1955 the first flight of a President of the United States in a light aircraft, took place when "Ike" flew to his Gettysburg farm, a flight lasting 32 minutes for the 73 air-mile route. The Aero Commander 560 landed on the Gettysburg 2200 foot sod airport. After a pleasant tour of his farm, the President flew back to National Airport in just 22 minutes. Accompanying the President was the Chief of the White House Secret Service Detachment. In another airplane, an Army Aero Commander L-26 based at Ft. Belvoir, there were 3 always-present Secret Service agents. Following closely behind were several Beechcraft L-23 Twin Bonanzas carrying members of the press. [13]

This original Aero Commander, N2724B, upon completion of its loan to the A.F. was returned to the factory and subsequently sold to a dealer in San Antonio, Texas. This same airplane is still being used by a company in Dallas, Texas.

The first of the 15 Aero Commanders, L-26B serial no. 55-4634, was accepted by the Air Force on July 29, 1955, having been F.A.A. certified on July 6, 1955. It was flown to W.N.A. on August 2, 1955, and officially accepted as a Presidential aircraft.

This was an improved aircraft over the type that was on loan by the factory. The L-26B was of the Aero Commander 560A configuration, having 10 inches more cabin space forward of the wing. An increase of 20 hp per engine was afforded by the 2 G0-480-G1B6 Lycomings, of 295 hp each.

This aircraft, 55-4634, contractors no. 234, re-

mained in Presidential service for 1 year, during which time it made 10 round trips to Gettysburg, carrying the President. Many other trips were flown, however, which were in support of the President. One such mission was on August 15, 1955, when the airplane was flown to Denver, Colo., to standby while "Ike" was on vacation there. Another mission carried Chancellor Adenauer of Germany from New York City to Gettysburg. Then Pres. Eisenhower and Chancellor Adenauer flew on together to Washington to resume their visit.

Another mission assigned was the "Greenbrier Air Lift", when the L-26B was taken to White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., on March 26, 1956. There, President Eisenhower met with several foreign and national dignitaries. Although the President did not use the airplane at this meeting, it was used by the President of Mexico and Sec. Dulles.

Because of the marginal performance of the L-26B aircraft on high altitude take-offs and landings a proposal was submitted requesting that L-26Bs, serial nos. 55-4647 and 648, be modified to Aero Commander 680 configurations. These were the last 2 of the 15 contracted that were still on the factory production line. Approval was granted and they were delivered to the Air Force as L-26Cs, although most published records do not show this change from the original contract. Improvements in the Aero Commander 680, L-26C, were primarily in the new supercharged engine, a 340 hp Lycoming GSO-480-A1A6. This not only provided better single engine performance, but it was also approximately 20 mph faster. Provisions were also made for extra fuel.

The L-26C, 55-4647, c/n 315 replaced L-26B, 55-4634, as the Presidential Aero Commander, and President Eisenhower made his first flight in the new aircraft June 6, 1956.

L-260Cs, 55-4647 and 648, were the only L-26s assigned to operate with the 1298th Squadron at National Airport. (4 L-26Bs were assigned to the 1299th Squadron at Bolling AFB, also for V.I.P. use. Both squadrons were part of the 1254th A.T.W.) Although 4647 was now the only L-26 assigned to the President, 4648 was usually the aircraft that accompanied the President's craft, carrying the White House Secret Service guard.

One of the most notable operations of the L-26 was termed "The Gettysburg Airlift". For six weeks in the Fall of 1955, when President Eisenhower was recuperating from his heart attack at his Gettysburg farm, a shuttle service was provided by the Aero Commanders for government officials and White House staff. On July 2, 1956 this shuttle resumed, following the President's June 9th operation. (The L-26 was fitted with a bed to carry Mr.



Aero Commander 560, N2724, loaned to the Air Force by the factory for Presidential use prior to delivery of Aero Commander L-26s. (Photo - USAF)



In standard delivery markings of the L-26s, 55-4642 is representative of the two L-26s assigned separately to President Eisenhower. (Photo - Aero Commander)



Douglas VC-118A, 53-3240, is the Presidential aircraft for J.F. Kennedy. It's seen here in the Fall of 1960 when used by the Sec. of Defense. (Photo - USAF)



As President Kennedy's aircraft, Douglas VC-118A, 53-3240, has standard "Special Missions" fleet markings. Note Presidential Seal. (Photo - Mikeshe)

Eisenhower to his farm, following release from the hospital.)

When 4634 was retired from Presidential service, it took its place with other L-26Bs at Bolling AFB in the 1299th Air Transport Squadron on June 12, 1956. For approximately three months, beginning April 15, 1959, the aircraft was assigned to MATS Hq., at Scott AFB, Ill. Following that, it was returned to Bolling AFB to join the 1100th Air Base Wing. In November 1961, 4634 was transferred to the Air University, Maxwell AFB, where it is currently assigned.

In late 1958, designations of Air Force L-26s were changed to U-4s. As there were no L-26As in the A.F., L-26Bs became U-4As and the two L-26Cs became U-4Bs.

U-4B, 55-4647 remained in the service of the President until he retired from office January 20, 1961. It, along with 55-4648 and 2 other U-4As have been retained in the 1254th A.T.W., and are located at Andrews AFB.

These 15 Aero Commanders were delivered to the Air Force in the same color design as that of the loaned demonstrator for Presidential use. It is entirely possible that this demonstrator introduced this blue and white color and design scheme to military aircraft since before this time all were either olive drab or silver. This same design is used today on these aircraft with only minor changes to include the orange conspicuity markings. Adaptations of this design are carried over into other types of light-twins of the Army and Air Force.

VC-118A "3240"

With a change in government administration in 1961, President John F. Kennedy and his Air Force Aide selected on January 23 of that year, a transport already in the S.A.M. fleet to be the official Presidential aircraft. This was a Douglas VC-118A, Air Force serial no. 53-3240 and manufacturer serial no. 44611, counterpart of the Douglas DC-6A.

Contrary to past Presidential aircraft custom, Mr. Kennedy's piston-powered transport remains unnamed, being generally referred to as the "Presidential Aircraft" or "3240". (The Kennedy family's private airplane, a Convair 240, registration no. N240K, is named CAROLINE, but the name is not associated with any government-owned Presidential airplane.)

Aircraft "3240" took shape on the production line at Santa Monica's Douglas Plant, and was similar in external appearance to others of the C-118A/R6D type. It was built under Navy contract NOAS-53-693, and "3240" was accepted from Douglas December 21, 1955. A few days

later, an authorized Navy crew signed for this Air Force C-118A. They flew it from Santa Monica to an undisclosed destination for a special project. Almost a year later, and just as suddenly as it departed, it arrived back at Santa Monica and underwent interior modifications. Now, as a VC-118A, it was flown to Washington and assigned to the 1254th A.T.G. December 14, 1955. It was coincidental of course, but here was an aircraft that was destined to be a Presidential aircraft six years later, replacing within the same month, the last remaining C-54 to leave the S.A.M. fleet; no. 42-107451--formerly known as the SACRED COW.'

As a fleet aircraft "3240" carried many dignitaries, but flew regularly in the service of the Sec. of Defense. Following the selection of "3240" to be the Presidential aircraft, the former COLUMBINE III "7885", was assigned to support the Sec. of Defense.

A new Presidential crew was assigned on January 23, 1961, headed by Col. James B. Swindal, as Presidential pilot.

The first flight made by President Kennedy in a C-118 was in 46-505, formerly the INDEPENDENCE, which took the President to LaGuardia airport April 27, 1961. ("3240 was being modified at Lockheed Air Service, New York.) It was not until September 24, 1961 that Mr. Kennedy made his first official flight in "3240". The flight was from Otis AFB, Mass., to LaGuardia Airport, N.Y., when on the 25th he addressed the United Nations. On September 26, the President departed LaGuardia for NAS Quonset Point, R.I. Original departure and final return to Washington was via VC-137; the usual mode of travel for the current President.

Externally "3240" looks no different from the rest of the S.A.M. C-118 type aircraft except for the Presidential seal, forward of the main cabin entrance. Inside the aircraft has modest appointments, but the electronic and communication equipment are most impressive. In addition to the abundance of equipment for aircraft operation, the President has at his disposal direct communication with the White House while in any part of the world. This is accomplished by either duplex radio teletype, high frequency radio, or radio-telephone.

Since the inception of a Presidential aircraft in 1943, it has always been hangared in ready status at Washington National Airport. This precedence was changed however, in March 1962, when the President's aircraft; "3240", was moved to Andrews AFB to rejoin the parent unit; the 1254th A.T.W., which had moved from W.N.A. the year before.

Aircraft "3240" has not yet had the operational experience in Presidential service to develop a personality



The newly acquired and only Boeing VC-137C photographed at Andrews AFB, Maryland. Striking colors of medium and light blue, with a white top, set off this new Presidential aircraft and S.A.M. fleet transport. (Photo - USAF)

of its own, as having past Presidential aircraft. For speed and efficiency, the Chief Executive frequently requests the use of a jet VC-137 from the S.A.M. fleet for much of his flying activities. Consequently "3240" is only used by the President on trips such as those to LaGuardia Airport and similarly close destinations not equipped for jet traffic. On the other hand, the White House staff usually precedes or follows the President in this aircraft when he uses the jet transports. Since the press has far too often misused the name, "Presidential Aircraft", in connection with the VC-137As much of the rightful honor that goes with a Presidential aircraft has been taken from "3240".

BOEING VC-137C

Since 1959, Presidents of the United States have been utilizing jet aircraft for a majority of their flying trips. These were VC-137As of the S.A.M. fleet, assigned for transporting government officials. As the Presidents frequently used these airplanes, they were called "Presidential Aircraft"; a title erroneously acquired.

On the evening of October 10, 1962, the most recent jet transport was delivered to the 1254th Air Transport Wing at Andrews AFB. This one and only VC-137C is of the Boeing 7-7-535B series, similar to the commercial 707-320B.

The mission of this transport is greater and more specific than that of the earlier jet transports. It is designed to provide air transportation for U.S. Government officials, including the President, Vice President, Sec. of State, and Sec. of Defense, as well as dignitaries of other countries visiting the U.S.

Often referred to as the President's aircraft, it has received the unofficial title "Air Force One"; the call-sign used by any aircraft carrying the President. Impressively colored, it features markings of a national

character rather than military. President Kennedy expressed his desire that the exterior decor be designed to reflect this spirit. In March 1961, he approved the distinctive combination of two shades of blue with white for the fuselage of this newest jet transport. And to emphasize the national character of the aircraft, he directed that the words, "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA", appear prominently on the fuselage and the the United States Flag be painted on the vertical stabilizer. Following its delivery, large decals of the Presidential Seal were applied to both sides of the nose. The plane carries the Air Force serial no. 62-6000 and manufacturer's serial no. 18461.

The first official mission for the new aircraft occurred on October 12, only 2 days after its delivery. "SAM 26000", (radio call-sign of this aircraft when the President is not on board) departed for Wheelus AB, Libya; making the non-stop, 4,360 nautical mile flight in 8:45. (Carrying 13 hours of fuel on long flights, it has a range of 7,000 statute miles.) Its mission was to pick up the Crown Prince of Libya, Hasan Ridael Mahdi el-Senussi and bring him and his official party to the U.S. for a state visit.

President Kennedy made his first flight in the VC-1370 when he attended the funeral of Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt at Hyde Park, N.Y.; a half day trip on November 10, 1962.

If one would follow the day to day activities of this aircraft, he would note that it is seldom seen idle at its home base of Andrews AFB. Flying the President seems almost incidental in fulfilling its assigned mission so that "SAM 26000", may well be considered to head a new type listing for future Presidential Aircraft.

ALLEGED PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT

It may surprise many to hear that the VC-137As recently used by two Presidents were not Presidential air-

craft. This misconception was derived through generalization in press releases when the VC-137As were used for Presidential flights. The Air Force had made efforts to correct this misunderstanding but to little avail. The question then arises: what actually determines which aircraft is Presidential aircraft?

Selection of specific aircraft is made by the President, based on the recommendations of his Air Force Aide and other advisors. The selected aircraft [14] is then assigned to the Office of the Presidential Pilot. Throughout the foregoing text, a unit of assignment has been mentioned in relation to the Presidential aircraft. This has been the parent unit only, which has the responsibility of aircraft maintenance, supply, security, and administrative control of the unit. The operational control of the designated Presidential aircraft, however, is that which is directed by the Air Force Aide to the President and the Presidential Pilot.

The association of a President with any specific aircraft in the past, has probably caused other misuses of the term; "Presidential aircraft".

One could imagine a very proud gentleman, firmly placing his hand on the wooden strut of a Wright Pusher on October 11, 1910, and referring to this as the "President's aircraft". It was on this date that the former President, Theodore Roosevelt, flew in a Wright, Type B, with Arch Hoxsey at Kinloch Field in St. Louis. Although this event followed his tenure as President, "Teddy" Roosevelt was the first President who actually participated in aerial flight. [15]

The next record of a similar event was during the Democratic National Convention in July 1932, when F.D.R. broke precedence by flying to Chicago to receive formal award of his nomination for the Presidency, during which he made his famous "New Deal" speech. As Governor of New York at that time, he left Albany, in an American Airways, Inc., Ford Tri-Motor NC 415H. This was not Mr. Roosevelt's first flight, but it received much notoriety with reference to the Presidency.

DOUGLAS RD-2 "SPECIAL"

Again, with reference to aircraft associated with Presidents, several recent publications [16] indicate that a Douglas "Dolphin" RD-2 was the first aircraft designated to support the President of the United States. Very little information can be found to actually determine the degree of assignment and support that this aircraft gave the President. However, one interesting letter was discovered that bears on this point. [17]

Dated August 10, 1936, a letter from the Commanding Officer, NAS Anacostia, to the Bureau of Aeronautics contained this information about the RD-2, BuNo. 9347:

"Although not exclusively used for the President and the Sec. of the Navy, this plane was set aside to carry the mail to the President when he was embarked in the Potomac (Presidential yacht) and it was used by the (Asst.) Sec. of the Navy, the late Col. H. L. Roosevelt, for official transportation. It is very necessary to have a plane of this type available on this station at all times for transportation of mail and guests of the President."

This letter was prompted by the fact that the subject RD-2 left NAS Anacostia to undergo major overhaul at NAS Norfolk, on July 10, 1936. Instead of being returned to Anacostia, however, it was sent to VO-9M at St. Thomas, V.I. The letter must have had some merit, as RD-2 9347, was again assigned to Anacostia from February 25, 1937 to January 5, 1938. Its later mission was not disclosed, but it is a known fact that the President did not personally fly in this airplane.

Of passing interest concerning this aircraft is that it was the first of the 3 RD-2s built for the Navy (contract no. 29527, dated December 19, 1932.) While in production, some exclusive assignment must have been envisioned for this particular "Dolphin", as it was redesignated to RD-2 "Special" when an impressive plush

interior was included. The all-blue Command exterior color (excluding wings) indicated that the aircraft may have been assigned to the Sec. of the Navy. It was perhaps only incidental that it was used to support the President. One example of Navy correspondence of that period indicated an effort to quell rumors that the Navy was maintaining an aircraft for the President. Still another letter [18] describing the aircraft prior to delivery made special note of removable metal plates on which were painted the President's flag. Brackets to which these panels could be quickly attached were installed on the side of the hull just forward of the pilot's windshield.

Following its second tour at Anacostia, the aircraft had assignments with VMS-3 (formerly VO-9M) at St. Thomas, V.I., VMJ-1 at Quantico, and finally assigned to N.A.C.A. at Langley Field for seaplane research December 5, 1939. [19]

No other information has been uncovered concerning aircraft associated with a President following the RD-2, until F.D.R.'s flight to Casablanca in the Boeing 314, which has already been discussed. One might suspect, however, that arrangements for an aircraft to support the Office of the President did exist during this interim period. Several aircraft photo collectors in the 1935 period labeled a Curtiss "Condor" YC-30, based at Bolling Field, as a Presidential aircraft. Nothing further can be found to support Presidential usage, but this YC-30 may have been used to the same degree as the RD-2 "Special".

GUESS WHERE II

Undoubtedly the least publicized aircraft associated with a President was a Consolidated C-87A "Liberator Express", known as GUESS WHERE II. This aircraft could very well head our list of official Presidential aircraft, as it was built expressly for use by President Roosevelt, and actually assigned to the White House in 1943/44 for that purpose. The factor that marred its historical career was that when it came time for the Chief Executive to fly in this aircraft, approval was denied, consequently it was not officially accepted as a Presidential aircraft. [20] It has a significant place, however, as the beginning of the line of transports intended for Presidential flights.

Based on the experience gained on the first air trip of the President, which took him to Casablanca, two factors had to be considered in selecting an aircraft for Mr. Roosevelt. 1) Extensive range was paramount for long overwater flights as well as to eliminate frequent resupplying stops; always a security problem. 2) The 30-ft loading ramps for the President required for C-54s were not only a logistic problem, but their presence was also a compromise to security.

The C-87 type transport seemed a logical solution to both of these problems. The aircraft had an inherent long range as it was developed as a transport for the extensive reaches of the Pacific. Secondly, the floor level was low to the ground whereby the President could be hand lifted into the aircraft while seated in his wheel chair, therefore not requiring the loading ramps.

From a large number of aircraft ordered from Consolidated Aircraft Corp., at Fort Worth, on contract no. A.C. 18723, dated May 4, 1943; 3 cargo C-87s in production were selected for conversion into C-87A passenger transports. These were A.A.F. serial nos. 41-23863, 41-24159 and 41-24174. [21] All 3 of these aircraft were destined for assignment to Washington National Airport in the "Brass Hat Squadron", with airplane #159 being selected specifically for the use of the President.

At the time these aircraft were being designed and built, engineers working on the project were unaware of the ultimate use to which one of the selected aircraft would be put.

The interiors of the 3 C-87As were identical in design. Along the right side of the fuselage were four



Ford Tri-Motor 5-AT-75, NC-415H, carrying President-elect Roosevelt to the Democratic convention in Chicago, 1932. (Photo - Nat'l Archives 208-PU-172J-1)



Douglas RD-2 "Special", 9347, had special plush interior for carrying guests of the President as well as the Sec. of the Navy. (Photo - Larkins)



Curtiss "Condor" YC-30 was referred to as a Presidential aircraft. Note insignia of Bolling Field behind the wing on fuselage. (Photo - J. C. Mitchell)



The only known photo of C-87A, GUESS WHERE II. Honors are shown Mrs. Roosevelt as she is received in Brazil, March 14-/17, 1944. (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library)

Pullman type compartments, each with double seats and a removable table between. These compartments would make up into upper and lower berths with Pullman curtains. Under the wing was a similar compartment, but lacking an upper bunk. Two lavatories were provided, as well as a Tapan aircraft galley, including an electric stove and oven. Along the left side was the aisleway which included a davenport type seat suitable for 3 persons located opposite the central compartment. The aircraft was so arranged that this compartment, along with a closet and lavatory could be isolated from the rest of the cabin by means of a curtain. The planes could sleep 9 people or could seat approximately 20 passengers.

Externally, these olive drab transports looked no different from the cargo type C-87s, other than the relocation of windows to suit the new interior arrangement.

Early in the life of the particular aircraft selected for the President, a C-54 fuselage tank was added, to provide for still greater range. This was located immediately behind the flight deck. Its contents were electrically pumped into the main aircraft tanks, supplemented by a hand pump that received far more than its share of the intended work. (Later it was not uncommon for the fuel from this tank to be "sloshing" about the floor of the plane.)

While this aircraft was in production, selection of a Presidential pilot was being made in Washington. Gen. Harold George, Commander of ATC, personally made the choice by assigning his own pilot; Maj. Henry T. Myers, to the new position. Myers, a former American Airlines pilot, whose most recent flying experience had been in DC-3s, proceeded to Tarrant AAFB (now Carswell AFB) at Fort Worth. There he received B-24 transition training

in preparation for receiving the new aircraft.

On June 2, 1943, 41-24159 was accepted by the AAF and on June 6, 1943, Maj. Myers and his crew delivered the aircraft to its new station at W.N.A. [22] Not long thereafter it acquired the name of GUESS WHERE II, being named after the C-84 (a DC-3B; half sleeper, half day plane) that Myers had flown for Gen. George. Inspiration for the name was fostered by the frequent changes in destination as requested by Gen. George after becoming airborne. By painting the name above the door of the C-84, it was hoped it would be a subtle reminder to the General of complications involved in changing destinations, especially with wartime scrutiny of all flights.

For the year that GUESS WHERE II held the esteemed position of being assigned to the President it was used on several extensive trips. Probably the first significant mission for the transport began on July 25, 1943. This was a round-the-world trip with Senators Russell, Lodge, Chandler, Meade, Brewster and Generals Schulgen and Mankin. [23]

On October 12, 1943, GUESS WHERE II again departed Washington, this time for England and North Africa, with Sec. of the Treasury H. W. Morganthau, Jr., and party. [24]

Undoubtedly, the most noted passenger of GUESS WHERE II, was Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt. From March 4 to March 28, 1944, Mrs. Roosevelt (traveling under the code name "Rover"), made a 13,000-mile air tour of the U.S. bases in the Caribbean, South America, and Galapagos Islands. This trip was made at President Roosevelt's request, and he mapped her itinerary. Mr. Roosevelt wanted the troops in these areas to realize that, although they were not in the front lines, they were doing a necessary job and were not forgotten. [25] (One of

the original 3 C-87s: #863 accompanied #159 as backup aircraft.)

This was the closest association this aircraft had to carrying the President. The first opportunity for GUESS WHERE II to actually transport the Chief Executive was in conjunction with the Teheran and Cairo Conferences in November 1943. As the crew was making preparations for the mission, word was received that contract TWA C-54s would provide airlift for the President and his party as needed. It seems that the decision was based on occasional tail buffet problems with B-24/C-87 aircraft. (Later it was discovered that unintentional opening of the inboard engine cowl flaps would cause mild to moderate tail vibration – of great concern to the unsuspecting pilot.) Due to the problem being unexplained at the time, however, the Secret Service would not grant acceptance of GUESS WHERE II as prime aircraft to carry the President. In conjunction with the four C-54s assigned to the mission, GUESS WHERE II went along in the event the President had cause to go to a field where C-54 loading ramps would not be available for him.

Contrary to previously arranged plans, the Russians released publicity about the conference while it was still in session. To suppress considerable pressure generated by the American press, Maj. Myers was asked if he could carry photos and press releases to the U.S. within 24 hours; a trip that usually took 2 days. His reply was that it could be done if he was permitted to refuel at Lajes Field in the Azores. Permission was received from the British government, who had control of the field for submarine patrols. It became evident, however, that the approval had not been relayed to the island when GUESS WHERE II approached at daybreak. It was greeted with anti-aircraft fire.

British practice was to challenge unexpected aircraft and shoot at them simultaneously, a disquieting custom tending to alienate U.S. pilots. After the first greeting, and while circling the island at a safe distance, firing signal flares, #159 was advised by the island defenders to return to its point of departure. Convincing the ground forces that insufficient fuel remained for such a flight (which was hardly true for this aircraft) and rebuffering several more bursts of flak, GUESS WHERE II finally touched down at Lajes Field, making it the first American plane to land in the Azores. Contrary to the inflight greeting, a hearty welcome was awaiting the crew on the ground. After pausing long enough for food and fuel, the airplane was in the air again on the final leg of its journey, during which it beat the previous time record, Cairo to Washington, D.C. by 24 hours.

Considerable disappointment was generated in that the aircraft intended for Presidential use was unable to serve him when needed. Consequently, plans for a more suitable aircraft became necessary. C-54s had already proven themselves in this respect, so Douglas was requested to produce one of the C-54s for Presidential use. Thus brought about the SACRED COW; the second aircraft built for the President, but the first one one officially accepted.

GUESS WHERE II stayed on with the Special Air Missions fleet until after the arrival of the new Presidential plane. From Washington National Airport on August 25, 1944, GUESS WHERE II was assigned to several ATC bases within the U.S. for the remaining sixteen months of its service life.

On October 30, 1945, records show that the plane made its last flight, terminating at Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, where it was turned over to the Reconstruction Finance Corp. Its records were closed on December 12, 1945, which is a good indication that it met the same fate at the smelter as was the case with many other war-weary aircraft following the war.

After its assignment at W.N.A., it was the impression of those associated with #159 that it was assigned to Lt. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, Commanding General of all

U.S. Air Forces in the South Pacific. On February 26/27, 1945, Gen. Harmon was lost at sea between Kwajalein and Johnston Island, however the aircraft concerned was not GUESS WHERE II, but 41-24174, also one of the C-87As formerly assigned at W.N.A.

BOEING VC-137A

Because of the aging equipment of the 1254th Air Transport Wing (Special Missions) at W.N.A., new jet aircraft were programmed in 1958. Under the project name of "Out Front", 3 Boeing VC-137s; civilian counterpart to the 707s, were added to the S.A.M. fleet in 1959. A detachment under the command of Col. J. B. Swindal (later to become President Kennedy's pilot) was established at Andrews AFB, a field better suited for jet traffic.

When the first VC-137A-BN-05; serial no. 58-6970A, was delivered to Andrews AFB on May 12, 1959, it set a new coast-to-coast flight record: Seattle to Washington in 3 hours 44 minutes. The two other aircraft 58-6971 and 972 closely followed on May 30 and June 2, 1959; respectively. (Mfg. serial no. 17925; 926 and 927 were assigned in order.) Integrated into the S.A.M. fleet, the specifically assigned mission of these aircraft was to transport high ranking officials of the United States, and distinguished visitors of foreign governments throughout the world. (The aircraft are being rotated individually in 1963 to the Boeing plant for extensive modification. They are being refitted with JT3D-3 turbofan engines and are having the same paint combination of two tone blue with white applied to the fuselage, as on the "C" models. When modified the aircraft are being redesignated as VC-137Bs.)

Because of the efficiency of jet travel, it was a natural assumption that the President would be utilizing these aircraft on official flights. In anticipation of this, President Eisenhower's flight crew, headed by Col. Draper, attended KC-135 transition training at Castle AFB, Calif. For further training they proceeded to the Boeing plant at Seattle, for specialized training on the 707.

On August 26, 1959; President Eisenhower departed Andrews AFB at 4:00 A.M. on his first jet flight with Col. Draper at the controls. Using VC-137A, 58-6970A, his first official stop was Bonn, Germany, where he was met by Chancellor Adenauer. He departed Bonn on the 27th and arrived in London, for an informal visit to the United Kingdom. While in England, the President had informal talks with Prime Minister MacMillan and was the guest of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at Balmoral Castle. The President departed London on the 2nd of September for Paris, and attended the pre-summit meeting until the 4th of September when he departed for Scotland and remained there until September 7, arriving at W.N.A. at 2:00 P.M.

Imagine the immense scope of what was only the first Presidential jet flight. The important face-to-face contact with heads of world powers – covering 8711 air miles --all accomplished in only 19 hours 27 minutes of flying time.

To further illustrate the degree to which jet travel has aided the President: Eisenhower averaged approximately 120 hours of flying time a year, covering about 30,000 air miles, while using conventional aircraft. With the use of jet aircraft in the last year of his Presidency, his air time was increased by 62% (193 hours) but most impressive, his air miles covered were increased by 262% (78,677).

With the change of Presidential administration in 1961, President Kennedy made his first 2 official flights using VC-137As; the first of which was on March 25, 1961, in aircraft 58-6970. This trip was to West Palm Beach, Fla., continuing on the next day to Key West, to confer with Prime Minister MacMillan of Great Britain, on the serious international situation in Laos. The First Lady accompanied the President to Palm Beach on her first jet flight in the same airplane on May 11, 1961.

The obvious interest and utilization of jet trans-



Finishing touches are added to one of the three VC-137As at Boeing's Renton plant in early 1959. Note original MATS markings. (Boeing P 22227)



With VC-137As added to the S.A.M. fleet. Presidential trips became almost exclusively jet beginning with Eisenhower in August 1959. (Photo - Boeing 22568)



Due to extensive international flights by U.S. government officials national markings were substituted for military markings in April 1961. (Boeing P 27758)



A rare photo of all three VC-137As on the ground at Andrews AFB. One jet was always available for use by the President if requested. (Photo Mikesh)

portation by two Presidents was indication that a jet aircraft would someday be a Presidential aircraft. However, it was the desire of both Presidents that none of these three jet transports be specifically set aside for the exclusive use of the President. With the small number of VC-137As, much better utilization could be obtained by having them in an aircraft pool for general mission flying. The aircraft, however, were programmed to insure that one VC-137A was available for Presidential use when requested by the Air Force Aide to the President.

The overseas flights of the President as well as other high ranking government officials are usually of a good-will nature, or a mission of peace. Since these flights are usually accomplished in the 4-engine equipment of the 1254th Air Transport Wing, President Kennedy requested that military markings be modified to a more national decor. This change began on April 24, 1961, when the words, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE, were replaced by, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and the MATS markings were removed.

In closing, one very interesting point should be mentioned concerning the aircraft manufacturers. While interviewing persons responsible for the design and construction of the past Presidential aircraft, it was

evident that the respective manufacturers accepted their contracts with mixed feelings. One's first impression is that it is a great endorsement of the manufacturers product to be used as a Presidential aircraft. In all fairness to reality, however, accidents can happen. The last thing an aircraft company would want is to have their product associated with any harm that might come to the Chief Executive. Consequently, no company has been known to encourage having its equipment officially selected for assignment as a Presidential aircraft. A great honor – but an even greater responsibility.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It was through the sincere efforts of many people that this history was possible. I can only hope that this brief acknowledgment will convey my appreciation for their individual assistance. My thanks to former pilots of Presidents: Mr. Henry T. Myers, Col. Wm. G. Draper, and Mr. H. M. Cone, Jr., for their personal and most interest accounts. The inspiration gained from Mr. Crosby Maynard, P. R., Douglas Aircraft Co., whose tireless efforts in obtaining many interesting details,

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Last, but by no means least, my sincere thanks to the many present and former members of the 1254th Air Transport Wing; far too many to list. Their personal knowledge and accounts of these historic aircraft could not have been recorded or authenticated, had it not been for their help and sincere interest in this history of which they are a part.

My thanks also to others who may inadvertently have been omitted.

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- UNIT HISTORIES of the "1254th Air Transport Wing" and prior unit designations.
- Supporting material for this history will eventually be filed with the National Air Museum.

FOOTNOTES

- [1] NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE, Vol LXXXIV, No. 1, (July, 1943) pp. 58.
- [2] THE AIRCRAFT YEAR BOOK, (1944) pp. 167.
- [3] TIME MAGAZINE, Vol. XLI, No. 6, (Feb. 8, 1943).
- [4] LIFE MAGAZINE, Vol. 14, No. 6, (Feb. 8, 1943).
- [5] TIME MAGAZINE, Vol. XLI, No. 5 (Feb. 1, 1943).
- [6] Redesignated VC-54C in April 1950.
- [7] H. Fredericks, "The President's Pilot", FLYING MAGAZINE, Vol. 38, No. 3, (May, 1946) pp. 31.
- [8] Redesignated VC-118, July 1950.
- [9] Listed as per factory records. AF records indicate contract No. as-14756, approved June 30, 1947 which was the day before delivery.
- [10] Draper had flown Gen. Eisenhower previously on a special survey of NATO for President Truman.
- [11] Reverted to C-121A designation in August 1956.
- [12] Redesignated C-121A in Aug. 1956, to simplify parts listings, as this differed only from other models by floor stressing being lighter, and not having a cargo door.
- [13] TIME MAGAZINE, (June 13, 1955) pp. 26.
- [14] President Eisenhower had two aircraft assigned: a C-121 and a L-26.
- [15] "Col. Roosevelt Rides Again", AERO MAGAZINE,

(October 15, 1910) pp. 7-8.

- [16] U.S. NAVAL AVIATION 1910-60, NAVWEPS 00-80P-1 (1960), U.S. Govt. Printing Office, pp. 83, one 111-ust. Also "Naval Aviation 50th Anniversary" SERVICE INFO. SUMMARY, Douglas Aircraft Co., Inc. (Jan-Feb 1962), p.105.
- [17] NATIONAL ARCHIVES, Record Group- 72, General Correspondence, BuAer, 1926-1942, file VRD-2/F1-1, Vol.2.
- [18] NAVY CORRESPONDENCE FILE. Letter from: Inspector Naval Aircraft, Santa Monica, Calif., To: Chief of the BuAer, Subject: Contract 29527 - RD-2 Airplane Final Inspection of, dated 23 February 1933.
- [19] Federal Records Center, Naval Aircraft Records cards, Job #10492, Box 23.
- [20] Based on interview and corres. with Mr. H. T. Myers.
- [21] Six months later, 3 additional C-87AS were built; nos. 43-30569, '70 and '71, making final total in inventory of 6 C-87As.
- [22] "Individual Aircraft Record Card", Natl. Air Museum.
- [23] "List of Special Missions Performed by ATC outside the U.S., 11 May 43 - 30 Nov. 44", from Historical Services & Research Division, MATS Hq.
- [24] Ibid.
- [25] From records relayed in letter from F.D.R. Library, Hyde Park, N. Y.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert C. Mikesch is a Major in the USAF assigned to the 3rd Bomb Wing in Japan. He is an AAHS member whose introduction appeared in the Summer 1961 Journal. His interest in aviation began with model aircraft building in 1938. A picture of his model of the NY-2 which he built for the National Air Museum was published in the August 1962 AMERICAN MODELER. Major Mikesch's interests have recently diversified to include writing. Having served in the USAF in the Far East on two previous occasions, he is specializing in Japanese aircraft.

Major Mikesch was previously stationed at Andrews AFB where he flew T-39s - mostly for VIP flights. His office window overlooked the 1254th's flight line. His daily contact with aircraft used by the Special Air Missions squadron of MATS coupled with the obviously fallacious stories about the "Presidential" aircraft prompted him to research the subject and write this article. His long personal friendship with "Hank" Meyers and other pilots in the Special Air Missions squadron gave him a unique opportunity to cover these misunderstood aircraft in a comprehensive and accurate manner.

ADDENDUM - A PRESS RELEASE OF THE BOEING COMPANY:

A new long-range Boeing VC-137C jet transport was recently delivered to the Special Air Missions squadron of the United States Air Force Military Air Transport Service. The VC-1370 is designed to provide fast, efficient transportation for United States Government officials including the President, Cabinet Members, and dignitaries of foreign countries visiting the United States. The aircraft has a range of 7,000 statute miles --an increase of 2,500 miles over the Boeing VC-137A jet transports used by the Special Air Missions squadron of MATS since 1959. Cruising speed of the VC-137C is more than 550 MPH. The new turbofan transport also has the capability of operating from shorter runways than those used by the three VC-137As. Powered by four Pratt & Whitney JT3D-3 turbofan engines, the new transport was built by The Boeing Company Transport Division at Renton Washington, and is a special version of the Boeing 707-320B Intercontinental now in airline service. The 707-320B spans 145 feet 9 inches and is 152 feet 11 inches long. The plane's maximum gross weight is 328,000 lbs. and its payload is 53,300 lbs. The VC-137C is equipped with improved long-range radio and teletype communications systems.