

## Chronology of the Berlin Airlift

1948

### June

- 24.6./6:00 Official start of the blockade of the western sectors of Berlin.
- 25.6. The first RAF Dakotas arrive in Wunstorf from England.
- 26.6 Official start of the Airlift to supply the civilian population of the western sectors of Berlin by the USAF. In 32 C-47 flights, about 80 short tons are flown to Berlin-Tempelhof.
- 28.6. Official start of the Airlift by the RAF as operation „Knicker“. At 4:00 p.m. the first Dakota takes off from Wunstorf to Berlin-Gatow. In the following 24 hours, 13 Dakotas fly 44 short tons of food to Berlin.
- In Wunstorf, the H.Q. Army Air Transport Organisation is set up together with the Rear Airfield Supply Organisation. Brigadier General Joseph Smith is given the command of the American part of the Berlin Airlift.
- By 11.7., 45 C-54 Skymasters arrive from the Alaskan Air Command to reinforce the Airlift, code name „Able“.
- 30.6. The first C-54 Skymasters arrive in Y-80 (Wiesbaden-Erbenheim) at 9:30 and take off for their first flights to Berlin on the same day from 19:36.
- RAF changes its code name to operation „Carter Paterson“.

### July

- 1.7. The first Avro Yorks arrive in Wunstorf from England.
- 3.7. The Avro Yorks begin their flights to Berlin-Gatow.

- 5.7. Two squadrons of RAF Short Sunderland flying boats arrive in Hamburg-Finkenwerder and immediately begin operations to Berlin.
- 7.7. RAF Dakotas fly coal to Berlin for the first time.  
The total tonnage within 24 hours exceeds the 1000 short tons mark for the first time.
- 8.7. First plane crash of the Airlift near Königstein/Taunus, C-47, 3 dead.
- 10.7. H.Q. Army Air Transport Organisation moves from Wunstorf to Bückeburg Palace, Supply Organisation remains in Wunstorf.  
By 13.7., 9 C-54 Skymasters arrive from MATS, Continental Division, code name „Baker“.
- 12.7. Work begins on construction of a new runway at Berlin-Tempelhof.
- 16.7. The 2000 yard concrete runway in Berlin-Gatow is completed.
- 19.7. The RAF changes the code name to its final version of operation „Plainfare“.
- 20.7. Total tonnage reaches 2250 short tons (USAF 1500 short tons, RAF 750 short tons).  
General Lucius D. Clay flies to Washington D.C. to discuss the position in Berlin with President Harry S. Truman.  
USAF has 54 C-54 Skymasters and 105 C-47 Skytrains in operation, the RAF has 40 Avro Yorks and 50 Douglas Dakotas.
- 23.7. HQ USAF (General Voyt Vandenberg) gives the order to MATS (Military Air Transport Service) to set up a provisional Airlift Task Force HQ with Major General William H. Tunner, until then the deputy commander of MATS, at the head, but under the command of HQ USAFE.  
By 16.8. MATS sends 8 more squadrons (Atlantic Div. 2, Pacific Div. 4, Continental Div. 2) with 72 Skymasters to Germany, code name „Charlie“.
- 25.7. 2nd plane crash: C-47 in Berlin-Friedenau, 2 dead.
- 27.7. The first British civilian charter company (Flight Refuelling) begins to transport fuel to Berlin from Bückeburg with three tankers.  
Moves to Wunstorf on 8.8.
- 28.7. General Tunner and his staff arrive in Wiesbaden-Erbenheim.

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- 29.7. RAF moves all Dakotas and two-engine civil transport planes from Wunstorf to Fassberg.  
General Tunner takes over the command of the American part of the Airlift from General Smith.
- 30.7. New daily record of the USAF with 1918 short tons.

### August

- 4.8. Official start of the participation of British civil charter companies in the Airlift from Wunstorf, Fassberg and Hamburg-Finkenwerder, including 2 Hythe flying boats which fly operations to Berlin until 15.12. together with the RAF flying boats.  
New daily record of the USAF with 2104 short tons.
- 5.8. A maintenance department for the 200 hour checks of the US planes is set up at Oberpfaffenhofen Air Base. The first industrial goods produced in Berlin are flown out to the west.  
Construction of Berlin-Tegel Airport begins.
- 7.8. Daily record for total tonnage (USAF plus RAF plus civil charter): 666 flights with 3800 short tons.
- 10.8. New daily record of the USAF: 346 flights with 2437 short tons.
- 12.8. For the first time, the total tonnage exceeds the target of 4500 short tons per day, reaching 4742 short tons on 707 flights.
- 13.8. 50th day of the Airlift, „Black Friday“, with consequences for the Airlift procedures.
- 14.8. The first Douglas C-74 Globemaster I arrives from the USA with 18 engines for the C-54s on Rhein-Main Air Base.
- 15.8. The first newspapers since the start of the blockade arrive in Berlin.
- 17.8. First flight of a Douglas C-74 Globemaster I to Berlin with 20 tons of flour.
- 20.8. RAF moves all Douglas Dakotas from Fassberg to Lübeck-Blankensee. Some take off to Berlin from Fassberg, then fly back to Lübeck and carry out further operations from there.
- 21.8. Three squadrons of C-54 Skymasters of the USAF move to Fassberg and fly coal from there to Berlin.  
1st Lt. Gail S. Halvorsen begins operation „Little Vittles“ by dropping chocolate for children during the approach flight to Berlin-Tempelhof.

- 24.8. 3rd plane crash: two C-47s collide in mid air near Ravolzhausen (nr. Hanau), 4 dead.
- 28.8. All civil charter planes are moved from Fassberg to Lübeck.
- 31.8. New daily record of the USAF: 3124 short tons.

## September

- 1.9. Work begins in Burtonwood/England to reopen the depot in order to carry out the 200 hour checks on US planes there. At Berlin-Tegel Airport, there are now about 19,000 German workers working around the clock in three shifts, about 40% of them women.
- 9.9. New daily record of the USAF: 3392 short tons.
- 10.9. New daily record of the USAF: 3527 short tons. By 10.10., 36 C-54 Skymasters of the Far Eastern Air Force (FEAF) are moved to Germany, code name „Dog“.
- 13.9. Three Fairchild C-82 Flying Boxcars with large rear flap doors arrive in Wiesbaden-Erbenheim to transport particularly large construction machines to Berlin.
- 15.9. 10 complete Dakota crews of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) arrive in Lübeck. Work begins on the construction of a paved runway in Celle-Wietzenbruch.
- 18.9. „US Air Force Day“ with a new record for the total tonnage: 6,987.7 short tons. In Berlin an extra ration of coal is distributed to the population. „Open Day“ on Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden-Erbenheim airports with about 15,000 German visitors.
- 19.9. 4th plane crash, the first British crash: Avro York in Wunstorf, 5 dead.
- 21.9. 10 Dakota Crews of the South African Air Force (SAAF) plus the commanding officer arrive in England from South Africa for instructions for their Airlift operations.
- 22.9. In Bückeburg the No. 46 Group Advanced Operational H.Q. is set up under the leadership of Air Commodore J. W.F. Merer, RAF, to command the British Airlift activities.
- 24.9. A Douglas C-74 Globemaster I flies the last of a total of 24 flights to Berlin with an overall total of 428.6 short tons.
- 30.9. RAF agrees in principle to a joint command of the USAF and RAF. USAF withdraws all its Douglas C-47s from the Airlift.

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### October

- 1.10. The first pilot reaches a total of 100 operations to Berlin: 1st Lt. John Finn from Jackson, Michigan.
- 2.10. 1st fatal accident on the ground: on Rhein-Main Air Base a vehicle of the airport fire brigade collides with the propeller of a C-54, 1 dead.
- 5.10. All civilian two-engine charter planes are moved from Lübeck to Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel.
- 7.10. Daily record of the RAF in Berlin-Gatow: 442 short tons in 24 hours.
- 8.10. Schleswig-Land airfield is chosen by the RAF as the location for 2 squadrons of the new four-engine Handley Page Hastings and civilian tanker planes.
- 13.10. Last details of the agreement between the United States Air Force in Europe (USAFE) and the British Air Forces of Occupation (BAFO) are decided.
- 14.10. 1000th flight of a C-54 from Y-80 (Wiesbaden-Erbenheim).
- 15.10. The agreement between USAFE and BAFO about a joint command for the Airlift in the form of the „Combined Airlift Task Force“ (CALTF) is signed by Lt. General Curtis E. LeMay (USAFE) and Air Marshal Sir Arthur P.M. Saunders (BAFO), and at the same time Major General William H. Tunner (USAF) is given the command, with Air Commodore J.W.F. Merer (RAF) as his deputy. South African Dakota crews begin their Airlift operations from Lübeck.
- 16.10. Change in the USAFE chief command: Lt. General LeMay leaves Europe to take command of the new Strategic Air Command (SAC). His successor is Lt. General John K. Cannon.
- 17.10. New daily record of RAF: 454 short tons.
- 18.10. 5th plane crash: the first C-54, near Rhein-Main, 3 dead. USAF recalls to active service about 10,000 former pilots, flight engineers and control tower personnel from civilian airlines and airports for temporary duty in the Airlift.
- 19.10. RAF begins to transport German civilians on its return flights from Berlin to Lübeck.
- 21.10. President Harry S. Truman issues USAF the order to reinforce the Airlift by providing a further 66 C-54 Sky-masters.

- 26.10. Three complete Dakota crews from New Zealand (Royal New Zealand Air Force) arrive in Lübeck.
- 27.10. By 11.11., 2 squadrons of the US Navy arrive in Germany with 24 Douglas R5Ds (the Navy term for the C-54 Skymaster). Code name: „Easy“.

## November

- 1.11. The first of two squadrons with the new Handley Page Hastings arrives in Schleswig-Land.
- 3.11. Total tonnage since the start of the Airlift reaches 300,000 short tons.
- 5.11. Construction work in Berlin-Tegel is so far advanced that provisional operation can begin.
- 8.11. The Free University of Berlin is opened in Berlin-Dahlem.
- 9.11. By 16.12., 10 more C-54s arrive in Germany, code name „Fox“.
- 11.11. In Schleswig-Land, the Handley Page Hastings begin their operations to Berlin.
- 12.11. By 12.1.1949, 20 additional C-54 Skymasters arrive in Germany. Code name: „George“.
- 17.11. 6th plane crash: RAF Dakota near Lübeck, 4 dead.  
By 10.1.1949 the last contingent of 24 C-54 Skymasters arrives in Germany, code name „How“.  
Since 28th June, a total of 240 C-54 Skymasters / R5Ds have thus been ordered to Germany for the Airlift.
- 18.11. The first RAF Dakota from Lübeck lands in Tegel.  
Burtonwood, England carries out the first 200 hour checks.
- 22.11. The total tonnage since the start of the Airlift exceeds the 500,000 short tons mark.
- 23.11. 7th plane crash: a British civil tanker crashes in England on its way to maintenance, 7 dead.
- 25.11. Four-engine British civil freight and tanker planes begin operating to Berlin from Schleswig-Land.
- 26.11. Foggy weather clearly shows the great advantages of landings under GCA control. Berlin-Gatow reports 1,316 GCA landings during the month.  
All civil C-47s / Dakotas are withdrawn from the Airlift.

## December

- 1.12. Berlin-Tegel Airport is fully taken into operation.
- 5.12. 8th plane crash: C-54 Skymaster near Fassberg, 3 dead.

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- At Berlin-Tegel Airport construction begins on a second runway of over 2000 metres in length, but it is only completed after the end of the Airlift.
- 8.12. 2nd fatal accident on the ground: on Berlin-Gatow Air Base a pilot from a civil charter company is run over by an unidentified lorry, 1 dead.
- 11.12. 9th plane crash, R5D of the US Navy in the Taunus, 1 dead.
- 13.11. After 171 days of the Airlift, the total tonnage transported reaches 640,284 short tons; USAF 460,501 tons, RAF + civil charter 179,783 tons.
- 15.12. 317th Troop Carrier Group moves from Wiesbaden-Erbenheim to Celle-Wietzenbruch and flies mainly coal and flour from there to Berlin
- 16.12. The French Commandant of Berlin, Général de Brigade Jean Ganeval, has the radio transmitting tower near the runway of Berlin-Tegel Airport detonated.  
5,000th landing of a British civil charter plane in Berlin (an Avro York of the Skyways company).  
Flying boats discontinue their operations to Berlin because of ice on the lakes of the River Havel.  
The water airstrip at Hamburg-Finkenwerder is closed.  
The first C-54 Skymaster flies from Celle to Berlin.
- 20.12. „Operation Santa Claus“ flies gifts for 10,000 children to Berlin.
- 24.12. Hollywood star Bob Hope begins his „Christmas Caravan“ tour for the Airlift personnel.  
The American Secretary of the Air Force, W. Stuart Symington, arrives in Wiesbaden and is briefed by Major General William H. Tunner about the status of the Airlift and the current problems.
- 25.12. The 50,000th Airlift landing in Berlin-Gatow by an RAF Dakota from Lübeck.
- 28.12. Since the start of the Airlift, 700,172 short tons have been flown to Berlin on 96,640 flights by the USAF, RAF and British civil charter planes.
- 31.12. The 100,000th Airlift flight.

**1949**

## January

- 1.1. Combined Airlift Task Force (CALTF) reports a new weekly record since the formation of the CALTE, with 41,287 short tons.
- 2.1. The first 12 crew members of USAF return to their home bases in the framework of the rotation programme.
- 7.1. 10th plane crash: a C-54 on its way to Burtonwood, England near Garstang north of Liverpool, 6 dead.
- 12.1. 11th plane crash: a C-54 near Rhein-Main, 3 dead.
- 13.1. CALTF reports the second highest daily record since US Air Force Day, with 6,678.9 short tons in 755 flights.
- 15.1. 3rd fatal accident on the ground: at night in Schleswig-Land an RAF Hastings collides with the service vehicle of a British civil charter company, 4 dead.  
The first British civil charter plane lands in Berlin-Tegel.
- 17.1. New weekly record of CALTF with 41,540 short tons.
- 18.1. 12th plane crash: a C-54 near Fassberg, 1 dead.
- 19.1. Total tonnage since the start of the Airlift reaches 750,000 short tons.
- 24.1. 13th plane crash: an RAF Dakota near Lübeck, 8 dead, including 7 German passengers.  
The 250,000th short ton of coal from Fassberg is unloaded in Berlin-Tegel.
- 31.1. Highest monthly tonnage since the start of the Airlift: 171,960 short tons.

## February

- 3.2. New British daily record: 1736 short tons in 293 flights.
- 18.2. The mark of 1,000,000 short tons total is reached by an RAF York from Wunstorf.
- 20.2. Bad weather means that there are only 22 flights with 205.5 short tons.
- 22.2. New daily record of 7,513 short tons in 876 flights.
- 24.2. New daily record: 7,897 short tons in 905 flights.
- 26.2. New daily record: 8,025 short tons in 902 flights.  
New weekly record: 44,612 short tons.

## March

- 4.3. The British Prime Minister, Clement R. Attlee, visits the Airlift.



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- 14th plane crash: C-54 near Langensalza (former Soviet zone of occupation), 1 dead.
- 11.3. The RAF flies the 50,000th civilian from Berlin to Lübeck.  
4th fatal accident on the ground: a German policeman is caught in the propeller of an RAF York at night in Berlin-Gatow, 1 dead.
- 12.3. New weekly record: 45,644 short tons.
- 15.3. 15th plane crash: British civilian York near Berlin-Gatow, 3 dead.  
H.Q. No. 46 Group moves from Bückeberg to Lüneburg.
- 16.3. CALTF reports 36,797 GCA landings since 1.7.1948.
- 21.3. 16th plane crash: civil Handley Page Halton near Schleswig-Land, 3 dead.
- 22.3. 17th plane crash: RAF Dakota near Lübeck, 3 dead.
- 31.3. New monthly record: 196,160.7 short tons.  
Another record: the 61st Maintenance Squadron on Rhein-Main Air Base reports the basic overhaul of 154 engines during the month.
- April
- 7.4. GCA in Berlin-Tempelhof handles 102 planes in 6 1/2 hours, i.e. GCA landings at intervals of less than 4 minutes.  
A C-54 from Fassberg flies Fassberg-Gatow-Fassberg in 1 hour 57 minutes, turnaround time in Gatow 15 minutes and 30 seconds.
- 9.4. 5th fatal accident on the ground: a German transport worker is fatally injured in Berlin-Gatow, 1 dead.
- 11.4. New daily record: 8,246 short tons in 922 flights.  
Record day for Wunstorf: 1,135 short tons (RAF and civil charter)
- 12.4. In Lübeck the RAF begins the replacement of a regiment of its Berlin garrison.
- 15./16.4. The „Easter Parade“ initiated by General Tunner as the absolute climax of the Berlin Airlift and the turning point in the blockade of Berlin: 12,940 short tons in 1,398 flights, i.e. a transport plane landed or took off in Berlin every 31 seconds!
- 21.4. 300th day of the blockade: 6,393.8 short tons in 927 flights.  
New weekly record: 58,155.8 short tons in 6,437 flights.
- 25.4. Soviets indicate willingness to lift the blockade (TASS report).

- 26.4. US State Department confirms positive discussions between the UNO ambassadors of the USA and USSR.
- 27.4. British daily record: 2,086 short tons.  
Second highest total daily record: 9,119.9 short tons in 1022 flights.
- 30.4. 18th plane crash: civil Handley Page Halton north of Tegel, 4 dead.  
New monthly record: 232,263.7 short tons.  
Daily average for April ,49: 7,845.5 short tons.  
New weekly record: 60,774.2 short tons.
- May
- 2.5. The first Boeing C-97 Stratofreighter lands on Rhein-Main Air Base.
- 5.5. The western powers USA, Great Britain and France, together with the USSR, announce the lifting of the blockade for 12th May.
- 7.5. The British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevan visits the Airlift facilities in Berlin.
- 9.5. New British daily record: 2,167 short tons.
- 10.5. New second-highest daily record: 9,257 short tons in 1,019 flights.
- 12.5./00:01 Berlin blockade lifted.  
New British daily record: 2,183 short tons.
- 15.5. New weekly record: 61,749.9 short tons.
- 22.5. Daily record of the civil charter planes: 1,009 short tons in 132 flights.
- June
- 1.6. The 100,000th short ton of liquid fuel is flown to Berlin from Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel by a British civil Lancastrian.
- 8.6. From now on, 8 short tons of „first class mail“ are flown to Berlin each day.
- 18.6. Fassberg: „Blockade Busters Party“ with 3,000 Americans and British.
- 26.6. New British daily record: 2,244 short tons.
- 30.6. Highest British daily tonnage during the Airlift: 2,263 short tons.
- July
- 2.7. The 2,000,000th short ton is flown to Berlin by the crew of an R5D US Navy plane.

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- 4.7. American Independence Day, new second-highest daily record: 9,374.5 short tons.
- 12.7. 19th plane crash: C-54 near Rathenow, 3 dead.
- 16.7. 20th and last fatal plane crash: Handley Page Hastings on take-off in Berlin-Tegel, 5 dead.
- 21.7. The 500,000th short ton of the British contribution to the Combined Airlift Task Force is flown to Berlin.

### August

- 1.8. The USAF begins to reduce its Airlift forces („phase out plan“).  
USAF ceases operations in Celle.
- 12.8. End of operations of British civil charter planes from Hamburg-Fuhlsbüttel.
- 16.8. The last British civil charter plane is withdrawn from the Airlift.
- 22.8. Night flights on the Airlift are discontinued.
- 29.8. The RAF Avro York squadrons cease Airlift operations.

### September

- 1.9. The H.Q. Combined Airlift Task Force is dissolved.  
Major General William H. Tunner returns to MATS in the USA.  
USAF ceases operations in Fassberg.  
No more Airlift activities in Berlin-Tegel.
- 23.9. RAF Dakotas cease Airlift operations.
- 30.9. Official end of the Berlin Airlift.