

Big



The 1947 press release from Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corp. proclaimed this XC-99 transport—shown in flight off southern California—as “the world’s largest land plane.” It was 182.5 feet long and 57.5 feet tall—longer and taller than its sister aircraft, the B-36, though they both had a 230-foot wingspan. The XC-99 had two levels of cargo decks. Its interior volume equaled that of 10 railroad freight cars, and it could

haul 400 troops, 100,000 pounds of cargo, or 300 patients in litters. Each of the six pusher-type engines generated 3,000 horsepower. Wing tanks held more than 21,000 gallons of fuel, giving the mammoth transport an 8,000-mile range. USAF took delivery of this one-of-a-kind aircraft in 1949. However, the approach of the jet age and realization that the aircraft was much larger than needed for USAF’s future

requirements sealed the fate of the XC-99. The service retired the sole aircraft in 1957, just eight years after taking delivery.