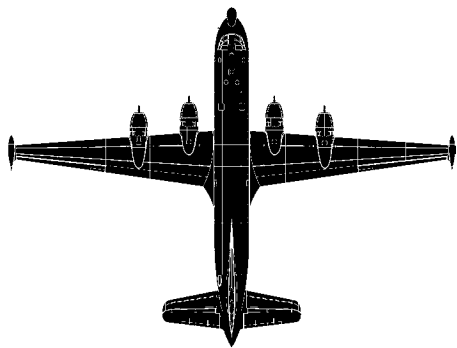


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

C-124 Globemaster II



They called it “Old Shaky,” but the Globemaster II could also be thought of as an aerial conveyor belt, carrying massive loads across vast distances—day in, day out. Globemaster II was America’s largest prop-driven strategic airlifter. The maestro of the Berlin Airlift, Lt. Gen. William H. Tunner, always maintained that bigger airlifters were better, and the C-124, with its enormous cargo capacity, proved him correct once again.

The C-124 actually was based, in part, on lessons learned from the 1948-49 Berlin Airlift. It was a major redesign of the C-74 Globemaster I. With its greater capacity, the C-124 filled a dawning need for a global heavy, long-range cargo transport. The enormous double-deck fuselage had huge clamshell loading doors. That and the built-in ramp made it easy to drive vehicles into or out of the airplane, cutting on-off loading times. For

fast cargo handling, two overhead cranes could move the length of the cargo compartment. It had an electrically controlled hoist mid-ship.

The C-124 first saw action in the Korean War. At that time, it was the only aircraft able to transport, intact, heavy US Army equipment. It could load tanks, field artillery, bulldozers, and trucks and as such provided a needed boost to US ground forces in Korea. The C-124, despite obsolescence, was also a major player in the Vietnam War, making regular flights to Southeast Asia during the 1960s US buildup.

USAF phased out the last C-124 in 1974, but, by that time, it had been in military service for nearly 25 years. The aircraft put in a long and useful service life, and was followed by faster, higher-technology jet transports.

—Walter J. Boyne

This aircraft: A USAF Military Airlift Command C-124C—# 52-1045—as it looked in October 1967 while at RAF Mildenhall, Britain.



The clamshell doors made loading a snap.

In Brief

Designed, built by Douglas ★ first flight Nov. 27, 1949 ★ crew of 6 (pilot, copilot, loadmaster, navigator, flight engineer, radio operator) ★ armament none ★ four 28-cylinder piston radial engines ★ number built 448 ★ **Specific to C-124C:** max load 34 tons cargo or 200 troops ★ max speed 271 mph ★ cruise speed 230 mph ★ max range 4,030 mi ★ weight (loaded) 194,500 lb ★ span 174 ft 2 in ★ length 130 ft ★ height 48 ft 4 in.

Famous Fliers

Dick Rutan (1,800 hrs as C-124 nav), former Misty FAC and co-pilot of first round-the-world, nonstop flight ★ Maj. Gen. Sloan R. Gill, former chief of Air Force Reserve.

Interesting Facts

USAF’s last piston-prop strategic transport ★ used same wings, engines, tail as earlier C-74 ★ suffered 60 major accidents, 515 fatalities ★ round trip California-Vietnam flight took 97 hours ★ flown by SAC, TAC, MAC, MATS, FEAFF, Air Materiel Command, Air Force Logistics Command ★ carried French troops to battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.