

**CANDY BOMBER TALKS ABOUT MILITARY THEN, NOW.**

By DEPARTMENT OF U.S. AIR FORCE.

650 words

16 September 1998

FDCH Regulatory Intelligence Database

FDCHRI

English

Copyright 1998. Federal Document Clearing House, Inc.

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. (AFNS) - The Berlin airlift set the standard for airlift operations, said retired Col. **Gail Halvorsen**, known as the "Candy Bomber."

Halvorsen visited here Sept. 14 and 15 to help the base celebrate the 51st Air Force anniversary, 50th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift, 11th U.S. Transportation Command anniversary and sixth Air Mobility Command anniversary.

Halvorsen became known as the Candy Bomber during the Berlin airlift, also called Operation Vittles. During that time, while flying missions in his C-54 aircraft, Halvorsen tied his and friends' rations of candy and gum in little parachute bundles and dropped them from the aircraft to children in Berlin. After dozens of children began lining up to catch the bundles of candy, a newspaper caught wind of the candy dropping and published the story. The rest of the world soon heard about the American Candy Bomber.

The Berlin airlift set the precedent for America's handling of humanitarian crises for decades to come.

"I think other (humanitarian crises) would have been handled in spite of the Berlin airlift - because the American people know how important it is to be concerned for others outside of our borders - but I think they wouldn't have been handled as well," Halvorsen said.

Americans flew approximately 26,000 bombing missions on Berlin dropping 73,000 tons of bombs during a 48-month period, Halvorsen said. However, in the Berlin airlift, which lasted from June 1948 until September 1949, Americans flew more than 190,000 missions carrying approximately 1.8 million tons of food and supplies to rebuild Berlin after the war. If it weren't for the size and scale of the Berlin airlift, all other humanitarian missions today would be done differently, Halvorsen said.

Besides setting the standard for airlift operations, Operation Vittles shattered the perception that airlift wasn't an essential tool for world peace and national security.

"We can use it to save a city such as Berlin, or a people from earthquake," he said. "It has marvelous humanitarian applications ... but is also a powerful deterrent. When those who would start something realize that they can have a tank loaded and ready to roll right down their alley in just a few hours, world politics change."

Today's downsized and stressed military force is very familiar to Halvorsen.

"It reminds me a little bit that we were in the same situation during the airlift," the C-54 pilot said. "Force reduction had been paramount. I had to change some of the starting motors on the airplane. I was back at a base where they didn't even have enough qualified mechanics, and I was certainly not qualified. I was out there and had to get the airplane going, so I changed the starter. There's some similarities here."

Although Halvorsen retired in the 1970s as a colonel with 31 years in the Air Force, he has stayed involved with today's military through speaking engagements around the world. He recently completed a 27-air show tour through Europe aboard a C-54 transport plane with two other pilots.

"It was fantastic," he said. "The people were marvelous. They'd see that old airplane and just flock to it at all of the airshows. It was one of the most popular airplanes there....It was a great experience flying this little airplane again."

Halvorsen worked as a university dean after his Air Force career and is now retired for a second time, enjoying life as a farmer in Provo, Utah.

"The Air Force is still my family," he said. "Wherever we go, we know someone that we've met during different tours of duty. I think that is the thing that makes being in military service special."

Regulatory Intelligence Database

Copyright 1998. Federal Document Clearing House, Inc.

Document fdchri0020010923du9g002qb

Search Summary

Text	"Gail Halvorsen"
Date	All Dates
Source	All Sources
Author	All Authors
Company	All Companies
Subject	All Subjects
Industry	All Industries
Region	All Regions
Language	English