



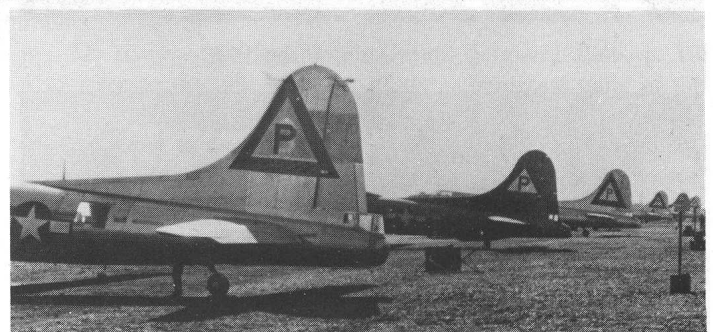
*B-17 interior redesign for Project Green passengers.*

and to compensate for the dismal environment at Istres, was packed with variety. The daily bulletins announced countless dances, USO shows, movies, daily transportation to the Riviera beaches and Marseilles, and quotas of enlisted men selected to stay in leased villas near the seaside resort of Sausset. The highlight of recreational activities was the daily liberty run. The B-17s transported group personnel, on a daily basis, to either Rome, Paris or London. A disturbingly high price was paid for these activities, particularly for the daily runs to Marseilles, for there was an alarming increase in the rate of venereal disease among the men. (23)

The flights from Istres to Casablanca were tricky and dangerous from beginning to end. Because of the acute dust problems, there was always the low-lying threat of dust contamination of the engines, and it was virtually impossible to change the B-17s' cylinders in the midst of the frequent mistrals that blew through the base. As a consequence, the commanders of the 92nd and 384th Bombardment Groups agreed that their maintenance shops should be located at Port de Bouc, eight miles from the field. Maintenance crews were indeed kept busy throughout Project Green's tenure. In addition to the routine maintenance problems, they were required to change an average of 40 tires per week because of the unimproved runway at Istres. (24)

Project White, meanwhile, was proceeding at a commendable pace. In July alone, the Air Transport Command was given a quota of 50,000 passengers, and, augmented by the redeployment of heavy bombers to the United States, was able to exceed Eisenhower's quotas with its C-46s, C-47s, and the new four-engined C-54. In total, by October 1945, after five months of ferrying troops to the United States, ATC could boast that 166,000 passengers were flown home without one fatality. (25)

The Air Transport Command was not without its problems, particularly in the area of morale. The command itself was full of homesick airmen who unselfishly watched as others deplaned in Miami and other disembarkation points in the United States, and then they were required to return to Casablanca for another load of passengers. ATC personnel morale was also stung by sneering remarks by combat veterans who labeled them "allergic to combat" or "terrified civilians." There was even a



*B-17s in line at the airfield at Istres France 1945.*

song dedicated to the noncombatant nature of the Air Transport Command called "To Hell with the ATC!," often sung by the battle star veterans of the bomber commands. Fights, accordingly, were not uncommon among the soldiers. (26)

But the Air Transport Command subsequently redeemed itself among the combat veterans. The visible efficiency, courtesy, and safety witnessed in the hundreds of flights gave the command its finest hour. The flights from Casablanca to Miami (the southern route) averaged 72 hours, while the northern route to various bases in the northeastern United States rarely exceeded 36 hours. Passengers were treated with hot meals en route, blankets were provided for high-altitude flying, and base exchanges were available at all stopovers. The exchanges carried popular souvenirs and other items for the soldiers to take home. At the end of the journey, passengers were always given the opportunity to write down criticisms or comments about their flight home. The comments were, for the most part, favorable. One infantryman, for example, wrote that "the air crews are courteous regardless of rank." Further evidence that ATC met the challenge of Project Green was its development of a 75-page Standard Operating Procedures manual that spelled out the responsibilities of all personnel associated with the project. Out processing paperwork was, according to the SOP, to be cut to a minimum, excessive roll calls and formations were forbidden, and Project Green passengers were to be, as much as was possible, treated as individuals. The passengers wore green tags on their uniforms, and their luggage was likewise identified. The "Green Manifest," as it was called, had been initiated at Istres, leaving ATC few processing responsibilities. Other bases located in Italy, responsible for transporting high pointers to Casablanca, followed the example set by Istres. (27)

Perhaps the final flight of Project Green, which occurred on