

121 AIR REFUELING WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

121 Fighter Wing established and allotted to Ohio ANG, 31 October 1950
Organized and received federal recognition, 1 Nov 1950
Redesignated 121 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 16 Oct 1952
Redesignated 121 Fighter-Interceptor Wing, 1 Nov 1952
Redesignated 121 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 1 Nov 1957
Redesignated 121 Tactical Fighter Wing (Special Delivery), 10 Nov 1958
Redesignated 121 Tactical Fighter Wing, 1 Sep 1961
Federalized and ordered to active service, 1 Oct 1961
Released from active duty and returned to Ohio state control, 20 Aug 1952
Redesignated 121 Air Refueling Wing, 16 Jan 1993

STATIONS

Lockbourne AFB, Columbus, Ohio
Youngstown, OH, 1952
Lockbourne AFB, Columbus, Ohio
Rickenbacker ANGB, Columbus, OH

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Etain-Rouvres AB, France
Kunsan AB, South Korea

ASSIGNMENTS

55 Fighter Wing
Ohio Air National Guard

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

F-51, 1950

F-84, 1950

F-80, 1954

F-84, 1955

F-100, 1962

A-7, 1974

KC-135, 1993

Support Aircraft

C-26

COMMANDERS

Brig Gen Errol H. Zistel, 1950

Brig Gen Ernest H. Briscoe, 1953

Brig Gen Dale E. Shafer, 1960

Brig Gen Paul E. Hoover, 1964

Col Harry L. Cochran, 1973

Brig Gen John H. Smith, #1993

Col James V. Jones, Oct 2012

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



The 121 Fighter Wing adopted the 121 Fighter Group emblem 15 Oct 1962. the SEMPER OMNIA motto was deleted and the 121 Tactical Fighter Wing title was inserted on the lower

banner.

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 121 Air Refueling Wing was originally established as part of the 55th Fighter Wing in December 1947 based at Lockbourne Air Force Base (AFB). The unit was redesignated the 121 Fighter Wing in 1950 and converted from the P-51 to the F-84C.

In 1961, the unit was called to active duty in support of the Berlin Crisis. After returning from active duty at Etain, France, the 121 converted to the F-100.

1 October 1961, The 121 Tactical Fighter Wing was called to active duty during the Berlin Crisis. The 121 Tactical Fighter Wing Headquarters stayed at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Columbus, Ohio. The 121 by drawing on key personnel from various units attached to its command to form the 7121 Tactical Fighter Wing which served and was stationed at Etain France during the 1961-2 Berlin Crisis. The attached 121 Tactical Fighter Wing Units that remained behind in the United States were utilized to support numerous Army and Air Force Exercises. On the 20th of August 1962, the 121 Tactical Fighter Wing was deactivated and returned to State Control. There was a complete reorganization of Wing, Group and Squadron concepts at this time. During the Berlin Crisis activation the GANG Wing was split and dispersed to so many different areas that the support group could not properly serve the squadrons.

In Sep 61, when the Russians started to rattle their sabres and war over Berlin threatened all of Europe, a top secret hurry call went out to the citizen-airmen of the Air National Guard. Special Order # 143, Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio, dated 8 Sep 61, was issued. It stated "By direction of the President and/or by order of Secretary of the Air Force, under authority confirmed by Public Law 117, 87th Congress, the following named officers, WOs, and airmen are ordered to extended active duty in accordance with TAC SO G-34, 1 Sep 61, for twelve (12) months, unless sooner relieved." The above order was issued to nearly all officers and airmen of the Ohio Air National Guard. The reporting date was 1 Oct 61. At that time it appeared that war before Christmas was a reality. The United States was materializing a counter-effort that is likely to go down in military history as an unprecedented demonstration of teamwork, preparedness, and flexibility. This operation was tagged "Stairstep."

The objective of "Stairstep" was to reinforce the North Atlantic Treaty Organization with a non-nuclear armada by deployment of hundreds of shortrange fighters, thousands of men, and a magnitude of tonnage of materiels. Plans called for aircraft to be combat ready within hours after touchdown at destination. To support such an operation, all military services were tasked for assistance to insure a timely operation. Approximately 25,000 of the ANGs 80,000 man force, across nearly a dozen states, received orders as indicated above.

Starting on 1 Oct 61, the month of October was full of 16 hour workdays. Required inspections of the aircraft and readying them for the overwater flight, as well as getting all the necessary support equipment either on hand or on order, kept the materiel personnel extremely busy. The operations personnel were busy also — training the pilots in operational, crash landing, and ditching procedures, and fitting pilots with poopy suits for anti-exposure protection, should an ejection be a must. The personnel people too had their task of processing, cutting orders, and performing a myriad of other duties to get all the troops deployed. All other support personnel were also busily engaged in the performance of their many support tasks.

D-Day for the deployment of aircraft was Monday, 30 Oct 61. The personnel supporting this operation from Ohio were members of the 121st Tactical Fighter Wing and the 166th Tactical Fighter Squadron. The only two routes possible to short-range fighter jets were north via Labrador and Greenland or south via Newfoundland and the Azores. First to go were Ohio's 121st tactical fighters. All aircraft deployed and touched down at their new base in Etain, France, without a delay or loss of any aircraft along the way. Minor maintenance was required enroute on one aircraft. It was somewhat of a feat when you consider that these citizen-airmen were recalled 1 Oct 61 and by 3 Nov 61 they were on French soil at Etain and within hours were combat ready. Interesting to note is that operation "Stairstep" was the largest single deployment of jet fighter aircraft overseas.

Maj Gen (then Colonel) Dale E. Shafer, Jr. after leading the contingent of Ohio Air National Guard aircraft on their ocean spanning deployment to France, was directed by Tactical Air Command to return home to command the state side portion of the 121st Tactical Fighter Wing which remained at Lockbourne Air Force Base. Assigned to the Wing were the 162nd and 164th Tactical Fighter Squadrons, and their supporting elements, located at Springfield and Mansfield, Ohio, respectively. In addition, to Col Shafer, the Wing Staff was composed of Col Frederick P. Wenger, Capt Robert J. Brown, Lt Col Robert T. Gimperling, 2d Lt Dennis M. Rodgers, Lt Col Edwin B. Carskadon, Capt Thomas D. O'Connor, Capt George S. Hosier, Jr., Lt Col Thomas F. Markham, Maj William D. Havens, Lt Col Darrell R. Larkin, Maj Robert Z. Bothe, CWO Richard J. Malek, Capt Miller T. Huggins, Capt Louis N. DeWitt III, 1Lt Jimmy L. Parrish, 1Lt Leonard E. Zamkoff, and 2nd Lt Phillip B. Shannon. Lt Col Andrew C. Lacy and Lt Col Emerson E. Lewis commanded the subordinate fighter squadrons. Approximately 30 enlisted men supported the Wing Headquarters while over 1,500 were assigned to the tactical squadrons.

Throughout their ten month EAD stint the state-side Ohio ANG units maintained a high state of combat readiness through periodic training deployments and exercises. In this way the Air Force was provided a sizeable force in being capable of instant world-wide deployment to meet possible emergency situations. Though not used on foreign soil, the presence of these units, and their demonstrated capabilities, served to help ease the tense international situation.

The overseas portion of the 121st Tactical Fighter Wing was originally designated 121st Tactical Fighter Wing (ADVON). On 7 Dec 61, Special Order A-19, Hq 121st ABgp (USAFE) relieved all members of the 121st Tactical Fighter Wing (TAC) (ADVON) and assigned them to the 7121st Tactical Wing (USAFE).

A part of the 121 Tactical Fighter Wing was activated 26 January 1968. The Tactical Fighter Group and the 166th Tactical Fighter Squadron were activated and served at Kunsan, Korea during the Pueblo Crisis. These Units reverted back to State Control 16 June 1969. Another call-up to active duty occurred in 1968 as a result of the USS Pueblo Crisis. One year of the 18-month activation was spent in Kunsan Air Base, South Korea.

The 121 Air Refueling Wing finished two months of Expeditionary Aerospace Force deployments in October 2000. About 75 airmen and two KC-135s participated in rotations at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. They supported the no-fly zone over Iraq as part of Operation Northern Watch. In addition, personnel also provided support in security, supply and communications. A second contingency participated in Operation Joint Forge, based in Istres, France. The mission provided mid-air refueling to coalition aircraft in the Bosnia-Herzegovina region. Overall, 200 members deployed for rotations of 10 days or more.

Air Force Unit Histories
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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.