

126 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

126 Observation Squadron designated, 30 Jul 1940

Activated, 12 Nov 1940

Ordered to active service, 2 Jun 1941

Redesignated 126 Observation Squadron (Light), 13 Jan 1942

Redesignated 126 Observation Squadron, 4 Jul 1942

Inactivated, 18 October 1942

Activated, 1 Mar 1943

Organized as the 126 Reconnaissance Squadron (Fighter), 2 April 1943

Redesignated 34 Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, 11 August 1943

Inactivated, 22 Nov 1945

Redesignated 126 Fighter Squadron, and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946

Activated as 126 Fighter Squadron (SE) and received federal recognition, 25 Jun 1947

Redesignated 126 Fighter Interceptor Squadron

Redesignated 126 Air Refueling Squadron, Aug 1961

STATIONS

Milwaukee, WI, 12 Nov 1940

Ft Dix, NJ, 10 Jun 1941

Hyannis, MA, 27 Aug 1941

Birmingham, AL, 18 Oct 1942

Ft Myers, FL, 1 Mar 1943

Thomasville AAFld, GA, 12 Apr 1943

Peterson Field, CO, 29 Aug 1943

Will Rogers Field, OK, 16 Oct 1943-12 Mar 1944

Chalgrove, England, 29 Mar 1944
Rennes, France, 11 Aug 1944
Chateaudun, France, 25 Aug 1944
St Dizier, France, 12 Sep 1944
Dijon, France, 6 Oct 1944
Azelot, France, 3 Nov 1944
Haguenau, France, 3 Apr 1945
Furth, Germany, 15 Jul-22 Nov 1945
General Mitchell Field, Milwaukee
Truax Field, Madison, WI Mar 1951

ASSIGNMENTS

Wisconsin NG, 12 Nov 1940
II Army Corps, Jun 1941
59 Observation Group, 1 Sep 1941-18 Oct 1942
59 Observation (later Reconnaissance) Group, 1 Mar 1943
111 Reconnaissance Command, 11 Aug 1943
8 Photographic Group, 9 Oct 1943
III Reconnaissance Command, 15 Jan 1944
10 Photographic Group, 31 Mar 1944
XII Tactical Air Command, 3 Oct 1944
69 Tactical Reconnaissance (later Reconnaissance) Group, 20 Apr 1945
10 Reconnaissance Group, 11 Jul-22 Nov 1945

ATTACHMENTS

Provisional Reconnaissance Group, 16 Oct 1944

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

O-47, 1940
O-46, 1941
O-59, 1941
O-52
O-46 1941
BC-1, 1941
F-3
F-10, 1944
P-38/F-5, 1943
P-38/F-4, 1943
A-20, 1945
P-51, 1947
F-80, 1949
F-51, 1952
F-86, 1953

F-89, 1954
KC-97, 1962
KC-135, 1977

COMMANDERS

Maj Paul D. Meyers 12 Nov 40-1 Sep 41
Capt Richard T. Crane 1 Sep 41-12 Aug 42
Lt Col Seymour M. Levenson, 1947
Maj Ron Daniels
Maj Paul Dowd
Lt Col James Graczyk, #1990

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
France, [19]-20 May 1944
Germany, 22-23 Feb 1945

EMBLEM



126th Observation emblem: A new creature from the ranks of the animal kingdom has given up his nocturnal habits of life and has joined the armed forces of the United States. He is the sole-walking, long-clawed, sharp-eyed canny badger from the clover-scented dairy lands of Wisconsin. Walt Disney artists placed a large pair of binoculars in his hands to aid him in scouting for enemy planes or ships. They seated him on a toy plane and sent him to the 126th Observation Squadron at Fort Dix, New Jersey, whose personnel had requested him. In days past this group of "high flying" eyes had operated as a National Guard unit of Wisconsin. The new assignment and station of its members only served to bind them more closely to the place where they had grown their wings. Wisconsin is known as the "Badger State". Whatever the locale of its future activities, the boys of the 126th will be paying tribute to the home state as they "badger" the enemy in his lair.



126 Observations Squadron emblem: When a "land-lubber" goes to sea, the ship-wise "tar" is apt to con-It template another yarn in the fo'castle before the end of the voyage, all spun around the luckless adventurer whose new seafaring occupations had been ill-chosen. In nine cases out of ten the "tar" will have his story told before the ship reaches port. But the tenth case is that of 126th Observation Squadron, stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey. Organized and equipped as a "land" unit, its first assignment was that of ocean patrol. As the true story of its unorthodox activity was unfolded to the artists at Walt Disney studios an insignia was created which was as fanciful as it; was symbolic of unusual heraldry. "Jiminy Cricket," the "land-lubber" star of many a complicated occupation, was put astride a sea horse and sent out to complement the ocean-going patrol of the 126th.



34 Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron emblem



126 Air Refueling Squadron emblem: A disc divided horizontally blue and black by a modernistic representation of a streamlined aircraft (a horizontal white spear with a triangular white and black form issuing from it pointing to upper right); behind the aircraft a red lightning flash point to upper left. (Approved, 23 Apr 1954)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The first Air unit of the Wisconsin National Guard came into being. That unit was designated as the 126 Observation Squadron and was assigned to the Wisconsin National Guard on July 30, 1940.

Recruiting began in October 1940 at the Plankinton Arcade. The recruiters had over 1,000 applicants to choose from and could therefore be very selective. Each recruit was selected on the basis of his job skills, professional background and attitude. Federal recognition for the unit was granted at the Richards Street Armory, Milwaukee, WI, on 12 November 1940.

Drills were organized and held at the Richard's Street Armory as the new unit awaited call-up. Military guidance was provided by experienced non-commissioned officers who had previously served with the 105th Cavalry Regiment, Wisconsin National Guard. A hangar was obtained at Milwaukee County Airport and three O-47 and one BC-1A were assigned to the unit. Classes in aviation theory were conducted at the regular Thursday evening drills, and active flying began in February 1941.

By the end of May, squadron strength had grown to 21 officers and 104 enlisted men, with another 30 enlisted men on inactive duty. The call to active service came on 2 June 1941 and by 16 June the officers and men of the unit were involved in a thirteen week basic training course at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

On 1 September 1941 the 126 was assigned as one of three squadrons to make up the 59th Observation Group at Pope Field, Fort Bragg, North Carolina and operated from an auxiliary field known as Marston Strip. One of the unique assignments the 126 had while at Marston was evaluating pierced steel planking (PSP) which at that time was called Marston Mat. During November of 1941, the mat was tested by all types of aircraft from the P-39 to the B-24 with uniformly positive results. The success generated high level interest and Major Meyers hosted military leaders from several foreign countries and Gen Hap Arnold, Commander Army Air Corps, who pronounced it the year's greatest achievement in aviation.

The 126's three O-47 were augmented by the O-52s and, because of the German submarine threat to East Coast shipping, they immediately went on submarine patrol. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 Dec 1941 it was determined that the greatest threat was to the west coast so the planes from the 126 were shipped there and the unit received obsolete O-46s as replacements. Their patrol responsibility remained even though they had no armament to combat any kind of threat.

In February 1942, 14 enlisted men were transferred from the 126 as a cadre to form the newly activated 95th Air Base Squadron, Army Air Base, Fort Dix, NJ. In August, the rest of the unit was moved to Hyannis, MA where it continued anti-sub patrol until 18 October 1942 when the 126 Observation Squadron was deactivated. All of the personnel, most of whom were from Milwaukee, were transferred to the newly activated 519th Bombardment Squadron (H) which was assigned to the 337th Bombardment Group. The 519th was permanently assigned to Otis Field, Falmouth, MA on 6 November 1942. The unit was redesignated the 14th Anti-Submarine Squadron (H) and was assigned to the 25th Antisubmarine Wing. They eventually received B-24.

The 126 Observation Squadron, part of the Army National Guard in Milwaukee before WWII, had been deactivated and in 1947, there was no foundation in place for a Wisconsin Air National Guard.

Facilities were the critical problem. The city of Madison was reluctant to release the facilities they had accepted from the War Assets Administration. With no support, the people and

efforts were moved to Milwaukee with a warmer reception. The 126 Utility Flight, Weather Flight and Detachment "A" of the 228th Service Group received Federal recognition on Jun 25, 1947 and the 128th Fighter Group on June 29.

in 1946 there were many WWII aviation veterans especially interested in Hying. Major Paul Fojtik, a fighter pilot, gathered together several other volunteers who were interested in keeping the flying spirit alive. Every Wednesday evening, Major Fojtik and his people met at General Billy Mitchell Field where they watched training films and traded experiences. Many of the men did not have uniforms and they were not paid for the meetings, but when the opportunity presented itself, they were more than willing to work with Capt Fran Hanson and Col Berg, the Army Advisor, to help form the Framework to establish a unit.

Captain Francis T. Hanson was hired as the first Air Technician on 1 January 1947. His task was to secure facilities The first Air Guard unit was to have been in Madison. However the city would not release the necessary facilities so the operation was moved to a much warmer reception at General Billy Mitchell Field at Milwaukee.

On 25 June 1947 the newly formed 126 Fighter Squadron, Utility Flight, Weather Station and 228th Air Service Group received Federal Recognition as units of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. Lt Col Seymour M. Levenson was appointed commander of the 126 Fighter Squadron and Major Paul Fojtik was the new commander of the 228th Air In July of 1947 the 126 received its first aircraft. Twenty-two P-51D were delivered to Mitchell Field. The mission of the squadron was air superiority and ground support so much of the training was devoted to aerial gunnery over Lake Michigan. In 1948, our sister squadron, the 176th Fighter Squadron at Truax Field, Madison, WI was Federally recognized along with our parent 128th Fighter Group.

126 F-I Squadron: federalized ANG 2 Mar 51 at Gen. Mitchell Field, WI, as the 128th F-I Wing; called 126 Ftr Sq, Jet, when federalized; moved to Truax Field, WI and assigned to 128th F-I Wing on 10 Apr'51; F-80A acft; transferred to 31st AD 6 Feb 52; cony- to F-86F acft Apr 52; released from AD and returned to control of State of WI 1 Dec 52.

The seven years with the F-89 had a stabilizing effect on the unit in that there was a consistency in the mission and aircraft. This encouraged planning and allowed forecasting with some degree of accuracy. The unit settled in to working with the other ADC units. In 1955, Summer Camp was at home station and was used to transition into the F-89. In those days, the big push was to log flying time with little thought given to the quality of the mission. The pilots averaged 28 hours of flight time during Summer Camp that year but the Radar Observers (RO's) logged twice that because there were so few of them. The pilots could alternate missions but the scarcity of the RO's meant they had to fly every mission. In fact, during this period, the Squadron was pulling an active Air Defense Alert for fourteen hours a day. Because Milwaukee did not have enough RO's, RO's from the Madison unit were allowed to fill in. Since they were University students, the pay also helped the Madison RO's. Shortly after Summer Camp the F-89's were grounded because throughout the Air Force because of frequent engine failure and the engines were modified. At the time it was a big improvement but in retrospect, the F-89 always had

engine problems because it was so easy to inhale rocks and it was drastically underpowered. FOD (Foreign Object Damage) became an integral part of everyone's vocabulary and work day. Personnel had to line up and walk the ramp, shoulder to shoulder, picking up anything that could be sucked into the engine inlet ducts. It was not necessary for the pilots to practice single-engine landings; they did it often enough with actual engine shutdowns.

Tragedy struck in August of 1959 when Colonel Levenson and his RO, Bob Goham were killed while attempting to land in bad weather at Milwaukee.

In November it was announced that the ADC era was at an end, Milwaukee was to be the first of four ANG units to convert to the KC-97. When it became apparent that the conversion was irreversible, everyone closed ranks and

In January of 1961, the first steps toward conversion were taken as MSGT Ralph Ellis and TSGT Robert Totskey were sent to Randolph AFB for training as boom operators. Another era ended with the change to the Refueling mission. Summer camp was no longer to be held at Volk Field, a change that was deeply regretted. Summer camp was held at home station that year. It was in two sections, one late in August, the other the last two weeks in September. Reorganization was the Summer Camp objective. In spite of the fact that conversions were put on hold because of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the 128th Air Refueling Group was federally recognized early in August. Because there were no KC-97s on hand, Summer Camp flying involved the F-89s using 30th Air Division for control. The net result was that the F-89s remained until the following year and in March of 1962, the first KC-97G arrived.

The facilities on Howell Ave were not adequate for the new mission and by the time the first aircraft arrived, an agreement had been reached to swap the existing facility for land on the eastern perimeter of General Billy Mitchell Field.

In November the 128th received newer KC-97F which were able to carry troops and an additional 7,000 pounds of fuel. The "Fs" were used for the first two refueling group missions - a total of 74 hookups were accomplished with a flight of F-84s.

In December, the first of what would prove to be many productive over-water flights was made with two flights to Hawaii.

In January of 1963, Col Bailey received permission from NGB for a humanitarian flight. George Brest, a civilian afflicted with a rare kidney disease, was flown to a Boston hospital where a successful transplant was performed.

The following month was the first actual operational month for the Refueling Group with 117 wet contacts.

In December, 1966, the Group flew profile missions to Hawaii to evaluate the feasibility of the KC-97L to haul cargo to Viet Nam as part of the ANG mission to Southeast Asia.

In 1967, between January 28 and February 6, 12 aircrew took an unusually long training flight to New Zealand and Australia, a total of more than 23,000 miles involving 72 hours of flying time.

Later in February, the Unit participated in OPERATION TROPIC LIGHTNING III, refueling the F-84's of the 178 TFG on their deployment to Hawaii and on their return in April. On April 11, soon after the return from TROPIC LIGHTNING, crews left for McDill AFB to participate in OPERATION CLOVE HITCH III. The mission was to provide refueling for fighters supporting an "assault" on a Caribbean island.

June 2, 1967 was an important date in the history of the Wisconsin Air National Guard. On that date, a contingent of 24 Wisconsin Guardsmen left for Germany to establish a contingent of KC-97's at Rhein-Main AB, Frankfurt, Germany. Their mission was to provide refueling training for European USAF units. It was the beginning of a program that lasted 10 years and maintained a sustained operation in a foreign land without a recall. Today, it remains the longest sustained operation in the ANG. It was the beginning of OPERATION CREEK PARTY.

During June and July of 1967, the 128th participated in OPERATION GUARD STRIKE, a huge war game for the Army and Air National Guard. It was designed to provide joint training under a tactical air situation and in a mobile field situation. The entire war game involved 15,000 people, over 400 aircraft (fighters, reconnaissance and interceptors), 3 ARNG Infantry Divisions and 1 ARNG Armored Cavalry Division. It covered 4 states. The 128 flew its first mission in support of the exercise on June 20, 1967 and the last on July 15. It was an especially important exercise in that it gave the Guard an opportunity to work with and solve the problems associated with large integrated forces.

During the fall (October and November) the 128th participated in OPERATION GOLD RUSH, refueling F-100's out of Niagara Falls enroute to and from Alaska.

In Early October, the Unit received its only C-97 (522828). It was used to carry people and cargo. It did not have the jet engines and could not be used for refueling but it relieved some of the pressure on the tanker's support role and freed the tankers for refueling.

Since the start of the refueling mission, TAC had operational control of the tankers that were dedicated to fighters and Strategic Air Command (SAC) had owned the tankers dedicated to the bombers but now the Department of Defense decreed that there would be one single manager of the tanker resources and that would be SAC.

1969 29 January A Wisconsin Air National Guard KC-97, 52-0904, arriving at Milwaukee-General Mitchell Airport, on flight from Key West International Airport, Florida, in fog and rain (ceiling reported as 200 feet with 1/2 mile visibility), contacts ground 1/2 mile (.8 km) short of runway, breaks up and catches fire with fatalities to four of 11 on board. The year 1969 had a tragic beginning for the 128th. On January 29, a KC-97 piloted by Col Tom Bailey and Lt Gene Schmitz, crashed while landing at General Mitchell Field in heavy fog and rain. MGen Ralph Olsen, Mrs.

Olsen, ARNG Capt Jerry Herreman and TSGT Gorlyn L. Becker died. The crash was blamed on poor weather and an error in the instruments.

On July 1, 1976, the 128 ARG, with some apprehension, came under the guidance of SAC and another era began. This new era created additional challenge and responsibilities.

The first mission for SAC involved sending a KC-97 to Richards-Gebauer AFB to be modified with electronic monitoring equipment. From there, the aircraft went to Thule AB where the crew flew missions in and around the Arctic Circle to test communications equipment at various bases along the Distant Early Warning line.

Routine missions and OPERATION CREEK PARTY continued throughout the remainder of 1976. However, as USAF assets returned from Southeast Asia, tanker assets were reassigned to Europe. They reestablished control of the air refueling mission there. On December 5, 1976, the trips to Germany for the 128th stopped. As a result of participating in CREEK PARTY the Unit received two awards. The United States Air Forces Europe Outstanding Achievement Award and the National Guard Bureau Meritorious Service Award.

The first months of life in SAC were difficult as the 128th learned to live with SAC and SAC tried to live with the Guard. As time went on, the situation became much more comfortable as SAC learned what they could expect of the units and the units adjusted to the SAC way of doing things

The KC-97 had finally reached the end of the line. SAC and the modernized USAF required the ANG to enter the jet tanker age. On October 17, 1977 the first KC-135 arrived on base. This first aircraft was only to be used for ground training for the crews and for maintenance conversion. Col Bailey and Col Maher from State Headquarters greeted the aircraft on its arrival and the event was well covered by the local media. After one and one-half years of preparation, the conversion had begun!

Two months later, on December 2, Capt Richard W. Maslowski and his crew brought in the first operational KC-135A number 57-2600, from McConnell AFB. The next day, Col Tom Bailey flew the first transition training mission.

1977 The first functional KC-135 arrived at Mitchell Field on 2 December 1977.

1979 In January 1979 the unit began the 24 hour per day Strategic Air Command (SAC) alert commitment. This commitment would be maintained for the next 12 years until President George Bush ended the SAC Alert Force in 1991.

When the midnight phone call was relayed to our people through the chain of command, everyone responded with enthusiasm. Eleven hours after the call, our first aircraft departed Milwaukee for Moron AB, Spain at 1100 hours 7 Aug 90. This launch was the "first tanker" from the ANG, Air Force Reserve and active duty tanker fleet to deploy to a forward operating

location. Furthermore, we were one of the first aircraft in the USAF to launch in support of Desert Shield. In all, 3 aircraft and 69 Operation and Maintenance "volunteers" deployed to a SECRET Forward Operating Location during this first wave. At Moron, 10 aircraft from the ANG Tanker community (Milwaukee, Chicago, Phoenix, Pittsburgh and Knoxville formed a cohesive, efficient air bridge operation. They stay in place until the requirement for this mission ended on ; September. The deployed Unit Commanders took turns commanding this ANG task force with Milwaukee in charge '. August to 10 September. The four (4) Milwaukee Tanker alone compiled an enviable record of 440 flying hours, 86 sorties, and 2,274,300lbs of fuel offloaded as we performed o critical mission of deploying USAF aircraft to the Persian; Gulf. Our next assignment was to support the Tanker Operations at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Again many "volunteers" stepped forward to fulfill the taskings of air refueling the hundreds of fighter and support aircraft stationed in Saudi. The 128th supplied 2 aircraft, 2 crews and numerous maintenance support personnel continuously from 1 October to 18 December when our aircraft were recalled to home station by the NGB in anticipation of new directions from the President. 27 December was the beginning of our aircraft and personnel movements to our Forward Operating Location Cairo West AB, Egypt. Cairo West is an Egyptian Air Force Base 20 miles NW of Cairo. Because of limited facilities, the 1706 Air Refueling Wing (Provisional), our new name, established a tent city where 850 military personnel from 42 different world-wide bases set up operations. Milwaukee contributed 10 KC-135E, 15 crews and 196 support personnel and Spokane ANG contributed 5 KC-135E, 7 crews and 105 support personnel. 88 ANG security personnel from Selfridge ANG Base and Pittsburgh ANG rounded out the total ANG contingent. The 1706th maintained a continuous 24-hour operation from 28 Dec 90 until 14 Apr 91. Missions were flown every day we were there. During the 43 day war from 16 Jan to 28 Feb, our daily sortie rate frequently reached 21 sorties with an average sortie rate of 15.2 for the war. During the War, the 1706th flew 650 sorties, filled up 2831 receivers, compiled 3277 flying hours and offloaded 29,016,000 lbs of fuel.

Spring of 1984 brought a very large "first" for the 128th Air Refueling Group. The unit participated in Coronet Giant, an exercise which entailed a direct flight from the United States to West Germany by 12, A-10, refueled along the way by three KC-135's from the 128th. The route spanned 3600 miles, and was the largest mission of this type ever undertaken by a guard force.

A deployment to Wake Island was accomplished between 25 March and 3 April 1986 by aircraft and 130 personnel. A total of eight air refueling sorties were flown from Wake Island, with 458,000 pounds of fuel being off-loaded. 1987 Early Spring of 1987 saw another significant accomplishment by the 128th.

"The most important mission ever flown" was the reaction of Maj Bob Harris, pilot of our KC-135, that diverted from K.I. Sawyer AFB to Milwaukee on a "Flight For Life" mission. Our aircraft flew a critically ill 3 1/2 month old baby to awaiting doctors at Children's Hospital. The infant girl suffered a ruptured diaphragm which was life threatening. Our timely reaction definitely saved the child's life

10-26 May 90 saw four aircraft and ninety personnel travel to RAF Upper Heyford, England for our annual unit deployment. Many friendships developed between the English Army Unit that handled our billeting requirements along with USAF personnel at the Air Base. We did not wear out our welcome.

1990 A chain of events which had a spectacular effect upon the day-to-day operations of the 128th began in August 1990. On 2 August 1990 Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded and occupied tiny, oil-rich Kuwait. On 7 August unit aircraft and volunteer personnel deployed to a forward operating base in support of Desert Shield; the defense of Saudi Arabia. As time passed the crisis went unresolved and in fact became more acute: Desert Storm. On 20 December 1990 the 128th received orders for a partial activation. All aircraft, aircrews and a number of support personnel were dispatched to the newest forward operating base at Cairo, Egypt on 27-29 December 1990. They became the basis for the 1706th Air Refueling Wing (Provisional). Other unit personnel were mobilized for use as stateside "backfill" (replacing troops sent forward) or sent to overseas destinations.

1991 Conversion from KC-135E to KC-135R began on 3 July 1991 when the 128th transferred aircraft to the Pennsylvania Air National Guard. The first permanently assigned KC-135R, arrived on 7 August 1991. The 128th ARG was the first Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve unit in the country to receive the "R" model tanker. The "E" model era came to an end on 9 February 1992.

1992 Three aircraft and 47 volunteer guard members departed for Spain on 28 December 1992, in support of Operation Restore Hope. Our tankers became part of the Moron Tanker Task Force, based out of Moron Air Base, Spain. Over 16 million pounds of fuel were unloaded during the mission. The purpose of this humanitarian mission was to restore order and provide food and medical supplies needed to stop suffering in Somalia.

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On 5 November 1993, four KC-135R's, along with 172 guard members deployed to Yokota Air Base, Japan. The deployment was designed to train American and Japanese Air Self Defense Forces for the defense of the Northern Japanese Islands, in the event of an attack by another country. 1994 During a 24 February 1994 trip to the Azores the unit completed its very first "roller mission." The steel rollers are placed on the floor of the aircraft making it very easy to load and unload cargo. This gave the aircraft a dual mission; refueling and cargo transport.

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1994 During a 24 February 1994 trip to the Azores the unit completed its very first "roller mission." The steel rollers are placed on the floor of the aircraft making it very easy to load and unload cargo. This gave the aircraft a dual mission; refueling and cargo transport. This was a flight of firsts, not only did the 128th Air Refueling Group have its very first roller mission, but our aircraft refueled a B-2 Stealth Bomber and a C-17, the newest Air Force Cargo hauler.

1996 The 128 ARW joined an elite group of Air National Guard units in April 1996, when the KC-135 simulator became operational. The simulator allows the 128th flight crews to be trained more safely and at a lower cost than the KC-135 aircraft. During the month of July 1996 over 400 members of the 128th deployed to Pisa Air Base, Italy for Operation Decisive Endeavor. Over 5500 personnel from 13 NATO countries joined the 128th as part of IFOR (Implementation Force) air component. Unit members had the opportunity to perform their job during deployment rotations from 1 July - 3 August 1996. This deployment gave the 128th the opportunity to work with other tankers units from Mississippi and Nebraska, along with the Italian Air Force.

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The 128 ARW was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period 15 April 1995 through 14 April 1997. This was the fifth time the unit has won this award. The previous awards were 5 June 1967 through 10 May 1968; 11 May 1968 through 31 December 1976; 1 July 1988 through 31 June 1990 and 1 September 1992 through 31 August 1994.

On 30 April 1999, the 128 ARW was tasked for a Presidential Reserve Call Up due to the crisis in Kosovo. President William Clinton authorized the call up of 33,000 reserve personnel for up to 270 days. The 128 ARW and the 117 ARW (Alabama Air National Guard) deployed together to Europe to support Operation Allied Force. 2000 During 2002 the 128 ARW continued to fully support air refueling missions around the world. The 128 ARW participated in NATO AWACS missions out of Geilenkirchen AB, Germany and Moron AB, Spain, as well as Iceland Tanker Task Force missions out of Keflavik NAS, Iceland. Along with supporting missions overseas, the 128 ARW also managed to accomplish its mission at home and also participated in several air shows throughout the year. 2001 Following the terrorist's attacks on the U.S., the 128 ARW was tasked to provide aerial refueling support for the countless fighter combat air patrols

performed over major U.S. cities. Dubbed Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), the 128 ARW flew their first ONE mission on 12 September 2001. From Sep to Dec 2001, the 128ARW flew 64 sorties in 333.6 hours. A total of 100,956.6 pounds of fuel was off-loaded to 156 aircraft in support of ONE. The highest sortie production occurred in November when fighter combat air patrols occurred every four hours over most of the major U.S. cities. In addition to supporting ONE, the 128 ARW also provided support for Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), deploying aircraft and personnel to Spain to support combat air operations from late Sep 01 until the spring of 2002

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2003 While the 128 ARW continued to support Operation's Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom during 2003, in March the unit also began major support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The 128 ARW deployed to several different theaters of operation ranging from total bare base conditions to fully operational bases. The deployed unit members worked under various commanders, as well as commands, providing top-notch refueling support of combat air operations in Iraq.

2004 The 128 ARW, along with the 126 Air Refueling Squadron (ARS) were tasked to perform at a very high OPSTEMPO during 2004, deploying eight aircraft and 204 personnel to Istres AB, France in support of Operation Joint Forge (OJF

During 2005, the 128 ARW was very active in supporting Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Pacific Tanker Task Force (PTTF) in Guam, Iceland Tanker Task Force (ITTF), and Hurricane Katrina Relief efforts.

2006 Throughout 2006 the 128 ARW continued to support Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). In addition, the 128th ARW deployed two aircraft and 30 unit members to Geilenkirchen AB, Germany in support of NATO and three aircraft and 96 unit members to Eielson AFB, Alaska in support of COPE THUNDER.

2007 Throughout 2007 the 128 ARW continued to support Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). In addition, the 128 ARW deployed four aircraft and 189 personnel to Incirlik AB, Turkey in support of Air Expeditionary Force (AEF). The 128 continued to support Operation Jump Start, NATO in Geilenkirchen AB, Germany.

2008-2010

Throughout 2008 the 128 ARW continued to support Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Maintenance crews from the Milwaukee-based 128th Air Refueling Wing, Wisconsin Air National Guard, ushered in the first of three additional KC-135 refueling tankers on Nov. 10. The unit is receiving the additional aircraft as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure 2005, eventually bringing the wing's total number of KC-135s to 12. Lt. Col. Winston Hainsworth, the 128th's comptroller, said "the financial impact to our wing and community is quite impressive. With the additional aircraft the wing will add 41 full-time and 41 part-time jobs, and also result in an additional \$5.3 million above the current economic impact of \$71.7 million made to our community." On its way to the 128th, the first of three aircraft made a two-month stop at Kelly Field in San Antonio, Texas to receive KC-135R Block 40 aircraft upgrades. "The upgrades markedly improve the aircraft's avionics," said Maj. Todd Walton, KC-135 instructor pilot, "specifically the navigation and satellite communication systems." The remaining two additional KC-135s are expected to arrive by February 2011.

2011 Members of a Wisconsin Air National Guard unit based in Milwaukee have deployed for 90 days in support of Operation Unified Protector, the NATO led operation in Libya. Col. Ted Metzgar, commander of the 128th Air Refueling Wing, and a team consisting of a number of 128th ARW members and senior staff, departed Milwaukee on June 10 on a Kansas Air National Guard KC-135 supporting the same mission. Metzgar assumed command of the 313th Air Expeditionary Wing on June 17 from Brig. Gen. Roy E. Uptegraff, commander of the 171st Air Refueling Wing, Pennsylvania Air National Guard. The 313th AEW provides air refueling to NATO aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone over Libya. Operation Unified Protector, formerly known as Operation Odyssey Dawn, is a NATO operation enforcing United Nations Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973, which call for protecting the Libyan civilian population from the Libyan military. The resolutions impose sanctions on members of the Moammar Khadafi regime, authorize international embargos, a no-fly zone and all means necessary short of foreign occupation to protect civilians. The operation, which began on March 23, is supported by a coalition of 18 nations. Metzgar said his personal goal is to provide leadership opportunities for members of the 128th during this mission.

2012 Airmen, friends and family members welcomed home their commander and fellow wing members Oct. 14 following a four-month long deployment in Western Europe supporting Operation Unified Protector. Col. Ted Metzgar, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee, deployed with a number of his staff and

commanded active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Airmen. “It was an honor to have commanded a wing dedicated to the successful completion of its mission,” Metzgar said. “I was impressed with the professionalism and patriotism of our Airmen.” While deployed, Metzgar commanded the 313th Air Expeditionary Wing in Western Europe, providing aerial refueling to aircraft supporting Operation Unified Protector — a NATO-led mission enforcing a no-fly zone over the nation of Libya and providing humanitarian assistance to the Libyan civilian population, in accordance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1973. The 128th Air Refueling Wing is home to 12 KC-135R Stratotankers and more than 900 Airmen with a primary mission of aerial refueling.

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