

168th AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



LINEAGE

437th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) constituted, 19 Jun 1942
Activated, 26 Jun 1942
Redesignated 437th Bombardment Squadron (Light), 3 Feb 1945
Inactivated, 4 Jan 1946
Redesignated 168th Bombardment Squadron (Light) and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946
Redesignated 168th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 1954
Redesignated 168th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1955
Inactivated, 31 May 1958
Redesignated 168th Air Refueling Squadron, 1986
168th Air Refueling Squadron extended federal recognition 1 Oct 1986

STATIONS

Barksdale Field, LA, 26 Jun 1942
Harding Field, LA, 8-27 Aug 1942
Shipdham, England, 12 Sep 1942
Horsham St Faith, England, 4-22 Oct 1942
St-Leu, Algeria, c. 10 Nov 1942
Tafaraoui, Algeria, 17 Nov 1942
Maison Blanche, Algeria, 26 Nov 1942
Telergma, Algeria, 13 Dec 1942
Oujda, French Morocco, 3 Mar 1943
Rabat/Sale, French Morocco, 25 Apr 1943
Sedrata, Algeria, 1 Jun 1943
Djedeida, Tunisia, 26 Jun 1943
Decimomannu, Sardinia, 1 Nov 1943
Serragia, Corsica, 20 Sep 1944-8 Jan 1945
Bradley Field, CT, 25 Jan 1945
Columbia AAB, SC, 28 Feb-27 Apr 1945
Kadena, Okinawa, 2 Jul 1945

Machinato, Okinawa, 21 Jul-8 Dec 1945
Ft Lawton, WA, 2-4 Jan 1946
Chicago, IL, 1946
Eielson AFB, AK, 1986

ASSIGNMENTS

319th Bombardment Group, 26 Jun 1942
VII Bomber Command, 18 Dec 1945-4 Jan 1946
176th COMPG, 1 Oct 1986

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

B-26, 1942
B-25, 1944
A-26, 1945
B-26B, 1946
B-26C
P-51D, 1954
F-84F, 1955
F-86L, 1957
KC-135E
KC-135D
KC-135R

Support Aircraft

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

B-26B

41-39324

TB-26B

43-22692	44-35264	44-35513	44-35697	44-34671
44-35208	44-35365	44-35527	44-35702	44-34692
44-35262	44-35493	44-35588	44-35761	

B-26C

44-34102	44-34121	44-34671	44-35527	43-22440
44-35274	43-22502	44-34742	44-35208	44-34102
44-35652	43-22440	44-35264	44-35554	44-35857
41-39297	44-34128	44-35365	44-35588	44-35868
41-39303	44-35857	43-22692	44-35697	
44-34114	43-22590	44-35493	44-35262	
44-34120	44-35868	44-35761	44-35702	
43-22499	43-22722	44-35513	44-35714	

KC-135

63-8060

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

168th Light Bomb Squadron - Black, yellow, red bands on vertical stabilizer and rudders

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Algeria-French Morocco, with Arrowhead

Tunisia

Sicily

Naples-Foggia

Anzio

Rome-Arno

Southern France

North Apennines

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Air Offensive, Japan

Ryukyus

China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Rome, Italy, 3 Mar 1944

Florence, Italy, 11 Mar 1944

French Croix de Guerre with Palm

Apr, May, and Jun 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

Jan 1994, Jan 1996, and Jan 2004

EMBLEM

The original insignia of the 168th Bombardment Squadron and later the 168th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, depicted a skunk wearing a red baseball cap and red and white apron. The skunk stood on a cloud and served a bomb on a tray. Old-timers at O'Hare, the stomping ground of the 168 FIS, believe the skunk to be a Disney character, probably "Flower" from the film Bambi. Whatever his origin, the skunk became known as "Sweet Willie" in honor of the first Air Guard Commander, LTC William Chum. In fact, the 168 FIS kept a live skunk as a mascot. According to Air Force Historian Mrs. Endicott, the 437th Bomb Squadron, predecessor to the 168th Bomb

Squadron, registered no official insignia. The skunk has its roots in Chicago, where it was originated, and represents "defiance". The word "Chicago" is Indian for "strong onion odor". The skunk's baseball cap is a replica of those worn by the aircrew of the squadron. When the 168 ARS inherited the honors and insignia of its past illustrious units, the insignia was changed slightly to correspond with the new mission of the unit, namely refueling instead of bombardment. Instead of the skunk serving a bomb, the skunk now holds a fuel nozzle, representing the mission of aerial refueling.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 168th Air Refueling Squadron is the only Arctic region refueling unit for all of PACAF, and maintains a substantial number of personnel on active duty and civilian technician status in order to meet its daily operational requirements. The Wing's Primary Assigned Aircraft are eight KC-135 R-models; there is also one Backup Aircraft Inventory. The 168th Air Refueling Squadron completed its R-model conversion in 1995, and in 2000 they completed a major flight deck upgrade called "Pacer CRAG" – with the CRAG standing for Compass, Radar, and Guidance Positioning System.

The mission of the 168th Air Refueling Squadron is to train and equip KC-135R combat crews to provide air refueling in support of PACAF Operations Plans. The peacetime mission provides air refueling training and exercise support for all 11th Air Force AWACS and fighter aircraft as well as alert tankers and crews to support Alaska NORAD Region plans and RC-135X/S refueling requirements. Besides a federally directed mission requirement, as a unit of the Alaska National Guard, the 168th Air Refueling Squadron is an asset of the Governor of Alaska. As such, the Governor can direct the unit to respond to emergencies declared or missions required within the State.

Constituted and activated at Barksdale Field, LA, in June 1942, the 437th BS (Medium) was assigned to the 319th BG, Twelfth Air Force, with which it flew combat operations with Martin B-26s and North American B-25s in the MTO between November 1942 and December 1944.

In January 1944 the units moved to new bases of operation in Italy and continued to demonstrate superior achievement in precision bombing during the critical periods of the Italian Campaign.

During their tour of duty in North Africa, Sardinia, Corsica and Italy, both squadrons were equipped with B-26, until November 44 when they received their B-25s.

Returned to CONUS and re-equipped with Douglas A-26B/Cs, the 437th BS and other squadrons of the 319th BG were reassigned to the Seventh Air Force in April 1945, and flew combat operations from Okinawa during the last month of World War II. Inactivated at Ft Lawton, WA, in January 1946, the squadron was redesignated 168th BS and was allotted to the Illinois NG on 24 May 1946.

1 Apr 1951: Called to active duty as part of the Korean War call-up, the 168th BS remained in Chicago for three months and then moved to Langley AFB, VA, for additional training.

126th Bomb Wing, Light, B-26Bs & Cs, 21 Nov 1951 - 24 May 1952 Sixteen aircraft per squadron. These Invaders were flown from Langley AFB, VA to Bordeaux AB, France by 126th BWg pilots; aircraft flown to Laon AB, France on 17-24 May 1952

B-26 43-22722 - Destroyed, nose gear collapsed, landing in rain. Torn in half by recovery crew at Capodichino Airport, Naples, Italy, 7 Nov 1952, no fatalities.

B-26 44-35652 - Crashed, hit mountain in rain, 1nm NW of Cava de Tirreni, Italy 7 Nov 1952, 2 fatalities.

1 Jan 1953: Returned to state control at O'Hare Field, Chicago, to be reorganized as the 168th FBS and equipped with North American F-51Ds (from mid-May 1954).

In 1954 it was redesignated the 168th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, and flew the F-51 In 1955 it received the F-84 becoming the 168th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron.

In 1957 it flew the F-86L In May of 1958, the 168th's aircraft and personnel were assigned to other units, but the 168th's unit designation remained on the state's rolls -- a "technical deactivation". Almost thirty years later, the unit was reactivated as the 168th Air Refueling Squadron and assigned to the Alaska Air National Guard.

31 May 1958: Inactivated due to funding restrictions.

The 168th Squadron designation was retained by the Illinois ANG until 1986, when it was transferred to the Alaska ANG.

The 168th Air Refueling Squadron started life in 1986 as the 176th Tactical Airlift Group's Eielson-based Detachment 1. Its mission was to build a tanker unit from the ground up. In the Spring of 1986, members of the unit — what few there were — began a 17-day tour of other Air National Guard tanker units. This trip had a dual purpose, one of its participants would recount later: “One, conduct interviews and make selection for the jobs ... and two, steal people.” Evidently they were very persuasive, because the new unit was staffed by 16 officers and 65 enlisted personnel by September, when its first planes, four renovated KC-135 arrived.

On 12 Sep 1986 KC-135E 571494 from 168th ARW lands at Kulis ANGB before going to Eielson AFB for final stop. Initially the Squadron was assigned 4 KC-135E.

Obtained from the Arkansas Air National Guard over vociferous objections from local politicians, the KC-135s were hand-me-downs, and the 168th's other facilities were antiquated. Despite this, the unit still managed to supply 70 percent of the theater's air refueling training needs in its first six months of operation.

The early days of the 168th, like those of its Anchorage parent, were not without tragedy. On 25 Sep 1989, one of the unit's KC-135 exploded on the flightline, killing MSgt. Cheryl Helgerman and MSgt. Bill Malico injuring 2 others.

Volunteers began flying missions in support of Operation Desert Shield, Aug 1990

The number of assigned tankers has been doubled and now includes four KC-135Es and four KC-135Ds. Only four air-refuelable KC-135 tankers were built. 63-8060 'Wil Thing' serves with the 168th

168th Air Refueling Wing supported NATO Operation Unified Protector during the Libyan civil war, offloading an average of 332,000 pounds of fuel per day to coalition forces. 2011

440809	B-26C	42-107546*	KCRL	Quattlebaum, Harrell O	Decimomannu
441016	B-26C	41-34992	CRL	Estaver, George W	Serrazia A/D
450316	A-26B	43-22443	CBLMAC	Howell, Charles G	Columbia AAF, SC
450405	A-26C	43-22700	TACMF	Stephenson, Clay C	Columbia AAF, SC
420716	B-26B	41-17597	KTOAEF	Lipscomb, Raymond N	2 mi S of Barksdale Field, LA
420720	B-26A	41-7479TOA	Kneen, George H	Barksdale Field, LA	
420807	B-26A	41-7466TAC	Sietz, Arthur J	Barksdale Field, LA	
420822	B-26A	41-7438TAC	Graham, Henry M	Harding Field, LA	
420824	B-26B	41-17742	TOA	Woolridge, Ashley E	Harding Field, LA
420901	B-26A	41-7483KCRGC		Pigoni, Louis J	Angola, LA
420926	B-26B	41-17767	KCRGC	Newton, Eugene L	2 mi N of Rimer, OH
421219	B-26B	41-17782	FLoG	Edwards, Theo O	Near Chatham, New Brunswick, ME
420930	B-26B	41-117832	LAC	Edwards, Theo O	Bluie West One, GRN
500306	T-6D	44-81430	LACW	Brett, Joseph P.	O'Hare IAP
500624	B-26C	44-35715	CRTEF	Whitney, Frederick C.	4 Mi SE O'Hare IAP
501103	T-6D	44-81534	GAC	Redlin, Andrew J.	Capital APT
510115	B-26C	44-35736	KLACW	Bourland, Myron A.	NAS Glenview



Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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