

390th INTELLIGENCE SQUADRON



MISSION

The unit's airborne cryptologic linguist aircrew, airborne special signals operators, airborne maintenance specialists and information integration officers fly operational reconnaissance missions aboard the RC-135V/W RIVET JOINT in both U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Central Command and augment other 55th Wing requirements as necessary. Supplies direct threat warning, provides intelligence expertise and Defense Special Security Communications System service, conducts Air Force intelligence specialty testing and provides special security officer services.

LINEAGE

6990th Security Squadron, 15 Jul 1967
Redesignated 6990th Security Group, 1 Sept 1971
Redesignated 6990th Security Squadron, 1 Jul 1975
Redesignated 6990th Electronic Security Squadron, 1 Aug 1979
Redesignated 6990th Electronic Security Group, 1 May 1980
Redesignated 6990th Electronic Security Squadron, 1 Apr 1990
Redesignated 390th Intelligence Squadron, 1 Oct 1993

STATIONS

Kadena AB, Okinawa, Japan

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

LTC Robert W. Throckmorton, 6 Jul 1970-May 1972
Col Robert N. Anderson, Jun 1972
LTC Homer E. Morgan, 10 Jun 1974

LTC Ernest L. Short, 5 Aug 1975
LTC Frank P. Leuck, Jul 1977
LTC William C. Andersen, Jul 1979
LTC John F. Lewis, Jul 1981
Col Milton V. Driggers, Jul 1983
LTC Paul R. Schafferberger, Jul 1987
LTC Kenneth G. Dumm, Jul 1992
LTC Daniel L. Scott, Jun 1995
LTC D. Scott George, Jun 2001
LTC David G. Landfair, Jun 2003
LTC Elizabeth O. Almeida, May 2005
LTC Kevin M. Coyne, May 2007
LTC Ricky L. Mills, Jun 2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor

1 Jan 1969 - 31 Dec 1969

1 Jan 1970 - 31 Dec 1970

1 Jan 1971 - 31 Dec 1971

1 Jan 1972 - 30 Jun 1973

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1 Jan 1968 - 31 Dec 1968

1 Jul 1981 - 30 Jun 1983

23 Apr 1975 - 30 Apr 1975

17 Mar 1976 - 17 Mar 1978

EMBLEM



6990th Electronic Security Group emblem

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Air Force Security Service activated the 6990th Security Squadron at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, on 15 July 1967. The squadron reported to the 6922nd Security Wing for command supervision and administrative control, and USAFSS/DOR maintained operational control through the Pacific Security Region.

USAFSS commander Maj. Gen. Louis E. Coira selected a seasoned commander with airborne recon experience par excellence to activate and command the 6990th Security Squadron. He picked Lt. Col. Doyle E. Larson, who as a captain five years earlier had stood up and grown the 6985th Security Squadron, Eielson AFB, Alaska, into Security Service's model airborne squadron. As a mustang officer who began his Air Force career as an enlisted USAFSS Russian linguist, Larson appreciated the role of senior NCO's in Security Service.

Manpower authorization for the squadron was eight officers and 363 enlisted airmen. On 15 July, the unit had a strength of two officers—Col. Larson and administrative officer Capt. Paul J. McKenna—and three airmen. On 31 December, personnel strength was eight officers and 336 airmen.

Col. Larson established the unit's Operations Branch in the Joint Sobe Processing Center (JSPC) building on Torii Station, Okinawa. Squadron headquarters, the admin section, security and a mission briefing room were located in Building 3520 on the Kadena flight line. The 6990th mission was to provide direct combat support to 7th Air Force and Commander, U.S. Navy Task Force (CTF) 77.32

In contrast to the C-130A-II and B-II ACRP's equipped with COMINT intercept positions only, the RC-135M was an airborne signals intelligence reconnaissance platform (ASRP) with a COMINT suite staffed by 6990th personnel and ELINT positions—initially two, later reduced to one—operated by SAC electronic warfare officers (EWO's nicknamed Crows or Ravens). The 6990th Security Squadron assumed USAFSS reporting responsibility for the RC-135M's on 15 September 1967 although the 82nd Strat Recon Sqdn did not reposition the aircraft from Yokota to Kadena until November. All six Rivet Card RC-135M aircraft were operating from Kadena by early 1968.

In 1971, USAFSS redesignated the 6990th Security Squadron as the 6990th Security Group, reporting administratively to Pacific Security Region and operationally to USAFSS/DOR. At the end of 1972 when PSR folded, the 6990th Group reported directly to USAFSS/HQ. Finally on 1 July 1975, the 6990th Security Group reverted back to the 6990th Security Squadron. From its inception in July 1967 through Operation Frequent Wind (Fall of Saigon), the 6990th supported Seventh Air Force in all major campaigns of the war.

With the cessation of U.S. involvement in hostilities in Southeast Asia in August 1973, the 6990th Security Squadron phased back its operations tempo dramatically, while broadening its mission. The squadron flew tactical direct support missions during Frequent Wind (29-30 April 1975) and the Mayaguez Incident (12-15 May 1975) — both covered in due course. The unit continued intelligence gathering in the Far East throughout the Cold War.

From 1972 when USAFSS discontinued the C-130 ACRP fleet in the Far East, the 6990th Security Group absorbed mission area coverage formerly provided by the 6988th Security Squadron. A decade earlier—five years before the RC-135M and 6990th existed—Air Force Security Service was pursuing ways to supplement ACRP operations in Southeast Asia.

The 6990th Security Squadron was activated at Kadena on July 15, 1967 by Maj. Gen. (then Lt. Col.) Doyle E. Larson. At that time, it was part of the 6922d Security Wing based at Clark Air Base, Philippines, with operational control vested in the Pacific Security Region, which eventually became the Pacific Electronic Security Division.

The unit's first mission was to provide RC-135 direct support to COMBAT APPLE Operations in Southeast Asia. It additionally provided C-130 direct support from a detachment at Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of South Vietnam. In September 1971, the unit was re-designated the 6990th Security Group and headquartered at Kadena to cope with its expanding cryptologic role in the Pacific theater as well as the addition of communications security responsibilities. The unit's involvement in the Vietnam War continued through April 1975 with participation in FREQUENT WIND Operations, supporting the withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces.

In July 1975, with the cessation of combat support missions and the concurrent reduction of responsibilities, the unit was again designated a squadron. When the U.S. Air Force Security Service became the Electronic Security Command in August 1979, the 6990th was renamed the 6990th Electronic Security Squadron. The reorganization expanded the command's and

unit's operational mission to include the use of electronic warfare capabilities for both offensive and defensive combat operations in support of Air Force Command, Control and Countermeasures. During this period, the unit became the workhorse for the command's airborne operations, expanding its role in electronic warfare capabilities through direct participation in theater exercises such as TEAM SPIRIT, held annually in South Korea. This increased responsibility once again elevated the unit to group status on May 1, 1980. On April 1, 1990, due to the restructuring of the unit's tasking, the unit was again designated a squadron.

On Oct. 1, 1993, the 6990th Electronic Security Squadron was re-designated the 390th Intelligence Squadron. The 390th IS currently has 161 assigned personnel with 72 airborne cryptologic linguists, over 89 communicators, maintenance, security forces and administrative personnel, as well as numerous ground cryptologic linguists, intelligence analysts, intelligence officers and a resident civil engineer, comprising a diverse and highly motivated force of professionals to guarantee the success of the RC-135 mission.

The director of operations is responsible for executing flying operations aboard the RC-135, as well as conducting intelligence analysis and reporting. The director of operations also maintains the constant Tactical Surveillance Interaction Center-Kadena that provides tethered communications and intelligence support to U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy reconnaissance missions flying in USPACOM, USCENTCOM and U.S. European Command and is the integrated broadcast service program manager for Southwest Asia.

The Logistics and Communications Support flight provides systems maintenance and communications support to the RC-135. With over 46 members assigned to eight diverse support sections, LS provides full-spectrum information technology services spanning four communications networks at four different classification levels, as well as specialized maintenance support to troubleshoot unique RC-135 intelligence systems, thus keeping the aircraft mission capable at all times for support to PACOM requirements. Finally, Logistics and Communications Support flight plans, budgets and executes the implementation of local and higher headquarters directed ground intelligence systems upgrades necessary for conducting post-mission processing, intelligence modeling and simulation and cryptolinguist proficiency maintenance.

The squadron has participated in Operations DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, SOUTHERN WATCH, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM and NEW DAWN.

With the air war in Southeast Asia escalating, Doll added six RC-135 aircraft to the SAC inventory. On 15 July 1967, the 6990 55 activated at Kadena AB, Okinawa to support the IC-135 mission there with USAFSS crews. On 12 September 1967, the first USAFSS manned COMBAT APPLE RC-135 mission staged out of Modena. During the Vietnam conflict, USAFSS personnel also served with distinction aboard the EC-47, supporting search and rescue operations for downed U.S. airmen.

1967 In June, the Air Force named Kadena AB, Okinawa, as the most economical location for the six additional RC-135 aircraft in a post-hostility posture. As a result, USAFSS and SAC activated units at Kadena to operate the RC-135 program in Southeast Asia. USAFSS activated the 6990th Security Squadron on 15 July 1967, while SAC activated the 82d Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron on 25 August 1967.

The first three Combat Apple RC-135 aircraft arrived at Kadena AB on 10 September, three more in October, three in October/November 1967, and the final one in January 1968. On 12 September 1967, just two days after the first aircraft arrived at the 6990 SS, an RC-135 flew its first operational Combat Apple mission. By November, daily scheduled Combat Apple missions of 18 hours and 45 minutes were being flown. The typical mission profile included 12 hours and 30 minutes on the primary orbit. 1967

The 6990th Security Squadron, Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, assumed responsibility from the 6988th for staffing the Rivet Top (and later the College Eye/Rivet Gym) missions operating from Korat. In January 1968, the squadron established Operating Location 1 (OL-1), 6990th SS, at Korat. The same month, CMSgt. Raul "Sandy" Sandoval and a 6990th team replaced MSgt. McCormick's deployed team.²⁹⁷ Sandoval discussed his role in Rivet Top with the author in 2010.

The second half of 1967 saw the 6988th Security Squadron handing off USAFSS airborne recon responsibilities in Southeast Asia to the 6990th Security Squadron. Two years earlier when the Air Force contracted for delivery of six new RC-135M aircraft, the plan had been for the -135's to replace the C-130B-II ACRP's at Yokota. Aboard the RC-135M's, the 6988th would continue as the sole Security Service airborne recon unit in the Far East. All that changed as the flare-up of hostilities in Vietnam turned into a full-fledged war—SAC and USAFSS activated the 82nd Strategic Recon Squadron and 6990th Security Squadron at Kadena, Okinawa, to conduct RC-135 Combat Apple operations in SEA.

A cadre of NCO's and airmen (primarily Vietnamese, Chinese and Russian linguists, Morse operators and airborne maintenance technicians), who transferred from the 6988th to the 6990th in August 1967, formed the nucleus of airborne Security Service operations at Kadena. Meanwhile, the 6988th Security Squadron had been supporting two C-130 ACRP missions daily from Da Nang since September 1964. The ACRP front-end crews operated from Bangkok (and later Ubon), Thailand, making intermediate stops at Da Nang to pick up and drop off USAFSS airborne intercept operators until late 1965 when C-130B-II Commando Lance missions began staging from Da Nang.

An enemy rocket attack that destroyed ten aircraft and damaged several others at Da Nang on 15 July 1967 did not harm the four Commando Lance C-130's on the ramp; however, the incident put an end to bedding them down at Da Nang. On 19 July, Seventh Air Force ordered

the ACRP's relocated to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam. By 21 July, the four C-130 ACRP's were in place at Cam Ranh Bay, but Security Service aircrews and ground processing facilities remained at Da Nang.³¹⁵

The "split operation" concept was once again implemented. As during previous split operations, the USAFSS maintenance personnel were relocated with the aircraft, with aircraft pick-up and drop-off of USAFSS crews at Da Nang. As a result of the move, mission length was reduced from 10 hours to 7.5 hours Da Nang-Da Nang. This was due to "lost" time expended by the ACRP aircraft transiting to and from Cam Ranh Bay and Da Nang.

6990 Security Squadron was activated at Kadena AB Japan on 15 July 1967 assigned to 6922 Security Wing to provide specialist cryptologic technical intelligence personnel to man stations as flight crew on board RC 135M Burning Candle and Combat Apple Signals Intelligence SIGINT and Communications Intelligence COMINT operations gathering signals intelligence over the Gulf of Tonkin and Laos Southeast Asia. The Squadron deployed a detachment as OL 2 to Cam Ranh Bay South Vietnam in 1969 to provide to provide specialist cryptologic technical intelligence personnel to man stations as flight crew on board specially modified electronic reconnaissance C 130 Hercules aircraft. OL 2 at Cam Ranh Bay was renamed Detachment 1 in 1970.

To cope with its expanding cryptologic role in Vietnam and the Pacific theatre as well as the addition of communications security responsibilities the Squadron was expanded and redesignated 6990 Security Group In September 1971 with Headquarters at Kadena AB. The Group continued its support in Vietnam until April 1975 supporting the withdrawal of US and allied forces participating in Operation Frequent Wind.

With the end of combat support missions over Vietnam and subsequent reduction in tasking 6990 Security Group was reduced and redesignated as 6990 Security Squadron in July 1975. The Squadron was redesignated 6990 Electronic Security Squadron in August 1979 when USAF Security Service became USAF Electronic Security Command. The reorganization expanded the Command and Squadrons operational mission to include the use of electronic warfare capabilities for both offensive and defensive combat operations. The Squadron expanded its role in electronic warfare capabilities participating in theatre exercises such as Team Spirit in South Korea. With the increased responsibility and workload the Squadron was reorganised and redesignated 6990 Electronic Security Group on 1 May 1980.

The Group was restructured and redesignated 6990 Electronic Security Squadron on 1 April 1990 and was redesignated 390 Intelligence Squadron on 1 October 1993.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 2 Sep 2011

Updated:

Sources

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

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.