

390 STRATEGIC MISSILE WING (ICBM-TITAN)



MISSION

LINEAGE

390 Bombardment Group (Heavy) established, 15 Jan 1943
Activated, 26 Jan 1943
Redesignated 390 Bombardment Group, Heavy, 11 Aug 1944
Inactivated, 28 Aug 1945

390 Bombardment Wing, Medium established, 23 Mar 1953
Redesignated 390 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan) and activated, 28 Nov 1961
Organized, 1 Jan 1962

390 Bombardment Group, Heavy and 390 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan) consolidated, 31 Jan 1984. Consolidated unit designated 390 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan)

Inactivated, 31 Jul 1984

STATIONS

Geiger Field, WA, 26 Jan 1943
Great Falls, AAB, MT, 6 Jun-4 Jul 1943
Framlingham, UK, Jul 1943-4 Aug 1945
Sioux Falls AAFld, SD, c. 14-28 Aug 1945
Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, 1 Jan 1962-31 Jan 1984

ASSIGNMENTS

II Bomber Command, 26 Jan 1943
402 Provisional Combat Wing

Bombardment (Heavy) (later, 13th Combat Bombardment Wing, Heavy 13th Bombardment Wing, Heavy), 13 Sep 1943

Second Air Force, 14-28 Aug 1948

12th Air (later 12th Strategic Aerospace; 12th Strategic Missile, 12th Air) Division, 1 Jan 1962-31 Jul 1984

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1943-1945

Titan II, 1663-1984

COMMANDERS

None (not manned), 26 Jan -28 Feb 1943

Col Edgar M. Wittan, 1 Mar 1943

Lt Col Thomas S. Jeffrey, 17 Apr 1944

Col Frederick W. Ott, 21 Apr 1944

Col Joseph A. Moller, 10 Sep 1944

Lt Col George W. Von Arb, Jr., 23 May 1945

Maj John A. Angott, 26 Jun-Aug 1945

None (not manned), 28 Nov-31 Dec 1961

Col Raymond D. Sampson, 1 Jan 1962

Col John C. Fahringer, (by 5) Jun 1962

Col Clyde J. Johnson, 26 Jul 1962

Col Raymond D. Sampson, Aug 1962

Col Robert J. Hill, 15 Dec 1965

Col Robert R. Scott, 1 Aug 1966

Col Charles R. Hammack, 25 Jul 1968

Col Edward P. Denton, 6 Jan 1969

Col Edgar A. Northrup, Jr., 7 Dec 1971

Col Eugene D. Scott, 29 Jan 1973

Col Joseph P. Cerny, 10 Feb 1975

Col George Holt, Jr., 15 Jul 1976

Col Charles H. Greenley, 30 Sep 1977

Col Nathan Hartman, 15 Mar 1979

Col Robert J. Roetcisoender, 3 Apr 1980

Col Paul C. Comeux, 22 May 1981

Col John E. Chamber, 21 Mar 1983-31 Jul 1984

HONORS

Service Streamers

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe, Air Combat, EAME Theater

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1969-30 Jun 1970

1 Jul 1976-30 Jun 1977

1 Jul 1977-30 Jun 1979

1 Jul 1982-30 Jun 1984

Distinguished Unit Citations

Germany, 17 Aug 1943

Germany, 14 Oct 1943

EMBLEM



390 Bombardment Group emblem



390 Strategic Missile Wing (ICBM-Titan) emblem: Per pale argent and azure, originating in dexter flank and arched to chief an olive branch vert, in sinister three mullets chevronwise to dexter of the first, over all in base a cloud gules enfiled by an open mailed hand with fingers outstretched, the finger tips surmounted by a missile both palewise of the first, all within a diminished bordure or. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The emblem is symbolic of the squadron and its mission. Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The inner field of red, white and blue, our national colors. The field of blue is also the domain of the Titan's, the sky. The three stars represent the three operational squadrons of the wing, the 390th MIMS, 570th SMS and the 571st SMS. The 390th Headquarters Squadron is assumed by virtue of the shield shape. The olive branch recalls the motto of Strategic Air Command (SAC), "Peace is Our Profession" The missile, representing the weapon system. The gauntlet, represents strength and challenge of mission. The red cloud is unique to the Titan II, oxidizer vapor release during maintenance. (Approved 2 March 1964)

MOTTO

NON NOBIS SOL-UM—Not for ourselves alone

OPERATIONS

390th Bombardment Group activated in Jan 1943 and trained for combat with B-17s.

Activated 26 Jan. 43 at Geiger Fd, Wash. Formation did not begin until late Feb. 43. Training at Geiger until 6 Jun. 43 when Group moved Great Falls AAB, Mont, for final preparations. Air echelon began overseas movement 4 Jul. 43 taking northern ferry route via Iceland to Prestwick, where first a/c arrived 13 Jul. 43. Ground echelon left for Camp Shanks, NY. 4 Jul. 43 and sailed on USS James Parker, 17 Jul. 43, arriving Liverpool, 27 Jul. 43.

Moved to England in Jul 1943 and assigned to Eighth Air Force. Operated chiefly against strategic objectives, flying many mission with the aid of pathfinders. Began combat on 12 Aug 1943 by

attacking the Rumpf instrument factory at Bonn, Germany. Five days later attacked the Messerschmitt aircraft complex at Regensburg and received a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for the mission. Received a second DUC for the mission on 14 Oct 1943, when the group braved unrelenting assaults by enemy fighters to bomb antifriction-bearing plants at Schweinfurt. Participating in the intensive Allied assault on the German aircraft industry during Big Week, 30-25 Feb 1944, the group bombed aircraft factories, instrument plants, and air parks. Other strategic missions included attacks on marshalling yards at Frankfurt, bridges at Cologne, oil facilities at Zeitz, factories at Mannheim, naval installations at Bremen, and synthetic oil refineries at Merseburg. Sometimes flew interdiction and support missions. Bombed the coast near Caen fifteen minutes before the landings in Normandy on 6 Jun 1944. Attacked enemy artillery in support of ground forces during the breakthrough at St. Lo in Jul. Cut German supply lines during the Battle of the Bulge, Dec 1944-Jan 1945. Hit airfields in support of the airborne assault across the Rhine in Mar 1945. Flew last combat mission on 20 Apr 1945. Dropped food supplies to Dutch during the week prior to V-E Day. The air echelon returned to the US in late Jun 1945; the ground echelon in early Aug. A detachment of the ground echelon, representing the group, arrived at Sioux Falls AAFld on 14 Aug and inactivated there on 28 Aug 1945.

First Mission, 12 Aug 1943

Last Mission, 20 Apr 1945

Total Missions: 300

Total Credit Sorties: 8,725

Total Bomb Tonnage: 19,059.2 tons

Aircraft missing in action: 144

Other operational losses: 32

Enemy aircraft claims: 342 74-97

6 food missions May 45, 436.4 tons

Redeployed USA Jun./Aug. 45. A/c left Framlingham 25 and 26 Jun. 45. Ground echelon sailed Greenock on Queen Elizabeth 5 Aug. 45 arriving New York, 11 Aug. 45. Personnel 30 days R & R. Group established Sioux Falls AAFld, SD. and inactivated there 28 Aug. 45. Activated as Titan missile wing in 1962 with headquarters at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.

The 390th SMW formed from "scratch" in Jun 1962, but drew some personnel from the 303d Bombardment Wing at Davis-Monthan. Supervised and coordinated SM068B Titan II personnel training and facility construction, 1 Jan 1962-30 Nov 1963. First Titan II missile arrived on 27 Nov 1962 and was installed in its silo on 8 Dec 1962. Accepted its first Titan II missile complex on 31 Mar 1963. The 570th SMS became fully operational on 13 Jun 1963 and the 571st on 30 Nov 1963. Wing was declared fully operational on 1 Dec 1963. Maintained host unit responsibilities at Davis-Monthan, 30 Jun 1971-1 Aug 1972.

As work on the weapon system progressed, SAC began to integrate Titan II personnel into the program. The 390th Strategic Missile Wing (SMW) was activated on 1 January 1962 and personnel to man the unit began to arrive shortly thereafter. The Titan II program was based on the concept of concurrency. Basically, that meant that development of the weapon system was still being

accomplished at the same time as personnel to man it were being acquired and trained.

One of the biggest steps forward in the activation program occurred on 27 November 1962 when the first Titan II missile arrived at Davis-Monthan aboard a C-133 transport aircraft. Personnel of the 390th Missile Maintenance Squadron (MIMS) garnered the distinction of being the first all-military crew to perform the Titan II off-loading function. Ingenuity played a significant role in that accomplishment. When it was discovered that there was insufficient clearance between the plane and the missile to permit unloading, someone came up with an idea to lower the pressure in the transporter tires. It worked, but just barely. When the missile finally rolled down the ramp, there was only one-half inch of clearance. That first missile was subsequently installed at site 570-2 on 8 December 1962 and the complex was turned over to SAC for operational use on 31 March 1963.

Construction of the complexes was not without controversy. During the first week of August 1962, three professional staff investigators from the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee visited Davis-Monthan to look into charges of waste and inefficiency in the construction program. Although it was true that costs had risen considerably above the original projections, the subcommittee later concluded that those increases were comparable to those experienced by SAC's two other Titan II wings. Phase III, which consisted of missile installation and checkout of the associated hardware, began at site 570-2 on 7 May 1962. The prime contractor for the Titan II system, the Martin Company, performed this operation. Phase III was completed and the final complex was turned over to SAC on 14 October 1963.

The wing accepted its ninth complex and declared the 570th Strategic Missile Squadron operational on 13 June 1963. A little over five months later, on 30 November, the 18th and final Titan II missile went on alert. The next day, the 571st Strategic Missile Squadron and the 390th Strategic Missile Wing were declared fully operational. With that action, the 390th SMW became the first operational Titan II wing in the United States Air Force.

Throughout the entire construction and activation process, base officials had to deal with repeated protest marches and demonstrations by small pacifist groups. The most active of those were the "Fellowship for Reconciliation," the "Committee Against Ringing Tucson with Titans," and the "Committee for Nonviolent Action." Generally, members of those groups peacefully picketed near the entrances to the base and the construction sites. Several demonstrators who had previously been barred from the base had to be turned over to federal marshals for trespassing on Davis-Monthan.

Davis-Monthan's entire Titan II program was just three days shy of three years to completion; from the turning of the first earth on 7 December 1960 to full operational status on 1 December 1963. As the 390th Strategic Missile Wing began its alert status, Davis-Monthan AFB assumed an increased strategic posture as an essential part of the nation's nuclear deterrent force.

The wing's 18 on-alert Titan IIs were housed in separate launch complexes situated in the desert around the base. They were widely dispersed to gain maximum protection with the closest 24

miles from the base and the farthest more than 60 miles away. Each Titan II was housed in its own hardened underground silo with system launch control provided from a subterranean Launch Control Center located on the site. Unlike Titan I, the Titan II missile could be maintained in a fully fueled state that permitted launch directly from its silo on a moment's notice.

Throughout 1963, all of the 390th's Titan IIs were maintained in a constant state of alert. Under the operational rules of that year, all missiles were required to remain on continuous alert once they became operational. Whenever a missile went off alert for any reason (be it scheduled or unscheduled maintenance, training purposes, or a missile/launch verification exercise), it had to be returned to active alert status as expeditiously as possible. To accomplish that end, maintenance personnel were often required to work an 80-90 hour work week. Such conditions quickly resulted in a demoralization of the maintenance force.

Major maintenance operations on the 390th's missiles were always performed under the watchful supervision of an experienced maintenance crew chief. A new "two-thirds force" concept was implemented on 1 January 1964 to alleviate some of the heavy maintenance burden associated with keeping all missiles on constant alert. Under the new plan, the 390th was required to keep 13 of its 18 missiles on primary alert with the remainder to be used as backups. As a result, maintenance technicians could quite often delay repair of an off-alert missile until a normal duty day.

The main drawback to this concept was that many of the Titan IIs were employed in a backup mode when they could have been used to cover a primary alert requirement. Correspondingly, on 6 March 1964, the "two-thirds force" concept was changed back to a 100 percent alert commitment with some modifications to the maintenance response requirements. Return to the previous system resulted from in-commission rates that had greatly exceeded original expectations. The revised rules did permit delay of maintenance to a normal duty day if sufficient on-duty personnel were not available.

The first of many forthcoming modifications to the 390th's missiles and launch complexes began in 1964 with "Project Green Jug." On 6 March 1964, the Air Force signed a \$2.6 million contract for the installation of dehumidification equipment and other changes necessary to increase the reliability of the Titan II missile force and the associated installed equipment systems. The modifications were required to prevent the rapid erosion of the missiles' metals when the Titan II propellants came in contact with humidity. The dehumidification system was also designed to reduce corrosion of electrical equipment, machinery, and plumbing. On 30 March, the project began at Davis-Monthan with sites 570-5, 570-6, and 570-9. Project Green Jug was completed at the 390th's complexes by year's end.

Another major system change, "Project Top Banana," modified certain portions of the missiles' hardware to decrease reaction time and increase range. Phase I of the modification program began at site 571-4 on 6 July 1964. Phase II began on 27 March 1965 and was completed at all of the 390th's complexes by the 25th of June that same year. A third program, "Project Yard Fence," began on 26 January 1966. The purpose of the "Yard Fence" modifications was to increase system

reliability and provide for sustained post-attack survivability by making changes to the facility systems at the unit's launch sites. The last of the 390th's launch facilities were finished with the conversion on 30 October 1967.

On 25 February 1965, after more than three years of preparation and training, the 390th SMW performed the first operational test launch of one of its missiles. The operation took place at the Air Force Missile Test Range Facility located at Vandenberg AFB, California. This launch, nicknamed "Arctic Sun," was the first time that any of the wing's Titan IIs had ever flown. Over the next several years, many more of the 390th's missiles would take to the Pacific skies from Vandenberg AFB. Three more (Bear Hug, Card Deck, Long Ball) were launched during 1965. Two additional operational test launches, "Winter Ice" and "Close Touch," were completed in the early part of the following year. Follow-on operational testing began in late 1966 with the launches of "Black River" and "Bubble Girl."

Although follow-on testing came to a temporary halt for almost two years, the 390th resumed its participation with the launch of "Glory Trip 08T" in June 1968 followed by "Glory Trip 26T" in November.

In April 1967, the 390th participated in SAC's first missile competition, "Project Curtain Raiser" and immediately established a reputation for excellence by walking away with the trophy for Best Titan II Combat Crew. The second missile competition in 1969 (thereafter known as Olympic Arena) brought the wing additional accolades for Best Titan Wing, Best Titan Crew, and Best Titan Maintenance. The 390th continued to garner additional awards in future editions of the Olympic Arena competition.

Missile operations at Davis-Monthan from 1971 through 1976 consisted basically of keeping each Titan II operable and on constant alert. The ability of the 390th's missiles to meet those continuing mission requirements was enhanced by a major system change project called "Extended Life." The "Extended Life" modifications involved the relocation of water lines throughout the launch facilities and the replacement of various pumps and ducting at each site. The changes, which began on 1 March 1976, were still in progress at year's end.

The 390th's involvement in operational test launches of Titan II missiles had come to a conclusion in late 1968. Launch activity resumed on 20 June 1971 when a task force from the 390th successfully fired off another of the wing's Titan IIs from Vandenberg AFB. This operation was the first of four scheduled launches performed by the wing in support of the Army's Safeguard Anti-ballistic Missile (ABM) System Test Target Program. The second safeguard launch was also a success but the third launch on 20 June 1974 failed. The 390th's fourth Safeguard Program launch on 4 December 1975 was a complete success. This event marked the last actual launch of any of the wing's Titan IIs.

Selected to be the first of three wings to deactivate their Titan II missiles. Deactivation of the Titan II missile complexes began in Jul 1982 and ended 12 Jul 1984 when custody of the last complex was turned over to the base civil engineers under caretaker status. Wing inactivated on

31 Jul 1984.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.