

480th INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE AND RECONNAISSANCE WING



LINEAGE

480th Antisubmarine Group (Separate) established, 19 Jun 1943
Activated, 21 Jun 1943
Disestablished, 29 Jan 1944

580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing established, 15 Mar 1951
Activated, 16 Apr 1951
Inactivated, 8 Sep 1953

480th Antisubmarine Group (Separate) reestablished and 580th Air Resupply and
Communications
Wing consolidated and redesignated 480th Special Operations Wing, 31 Jul 1985

Redesignated 480th Intelligence Wing, 23 Oct 2003
Activated, 1 Dec 2003
Redesignated 480th Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing

STATIONS

Port Lyautey, French Morocco, 21 Jun-Nov 1943
Langley Field, VA, 18 Nov 1943
Clovis AAFld, NM, 1-29 Jan 1944
Mountain Home AFB, ID, 16 Apr 1951-17 Sep 1952
Wheelus Field, Libya, 22 Sep 1952-8 Sep 1953
Langley AFB, VA, 1 Dec 2003

ASSIGNMENTS

AAF Antisubmarine (later, I Bomber) Command, 21 Jun 1943 (attached to: Northwest African
Coastal Air Force, 21 Jun-25 Jul 1943
Northwest African Air Service Command, 26 Jul-22 Aug 1943
XII Fighter Command, 23 Aug-Nov 1943
Under operational control of US Navy Fleet Air Wing 15, 21 Jun 1943-unkn)
Second Air Force, 1-29 Jan 1944
Air Resupply and Communications Service, 16 Apr 1951; United States Air Forces in Europe, 1

Oct 1952-8 Sep 1953
Eighth Air Force, 1 Dec 2003

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-24, 1943-1944
C-119, 1951-1953
B-29, 1951-1953
SA-16, 1951-1953
C-47, 1953

COMMANDERS

Col Jack Roberts, 21 Jun 1943-unkn
Col William O. Eareckson, 16 Apr 1951
Col John R. Kane, 12 Nov 1951
Col Frederick J. Knorre Jr., 8 May 1952
Col John R. Kane, 2 Jun 1952
Col Frederick J. Knorre Jr., 18 May 1953
Col Vincent M. Miles, 27 May-8 Sep 1953

COLONEL PAUL D. NELSON

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, EAME Theater
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
North African Theater of Operations [21 Jun]-28 Oct 1943

EMBLEM

Azure a vol Or, shaded golden orange, detailed of the field and surmounted in base by a compass rose counterchanged of the first and second and outlined of the third, in chief a key fesswise ward to sinister Gules, all within a diminished border Yellow. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "480TH ISR WING" in Blue letters.

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

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 displayed wings reflect intelligence dissemination to the command as it relates to the Air Force mission of peace through strength, which is provided by the Wing. The key denotes the

Wing's ability to unlock its protagonist's secrets. The four teeth on the key ward show the disciplines of intelligence gathering – IMINT, SIGINT, MASINT and HUMINT. The eight-point star suggests a compass and stands for the worldwide intelligence gathering capabilities of the unit.

On a shield of Azure, a Vol Or shaded Golden Orange detailed of the field and surmounted in base by a compass rose counterchanged of the first and second and outlined of the third, in chief a key fesswise wards to sinister Gules, all within a diminished bordure Yellow.

Motto

NON POTESTIS LATERE–“you can't hide”
(Literal translation: “you can't lie hidden in safety”)

Significance

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 displayed wings reflect intelligence dissemination to the warfighter as it relates to the Air Force mission of peace through strength, which is provided by the wing. The key denotes the wing's ability to unlock its protagonists' secrets. The four teeth on the key ward denote the disciplines of intelligence gathering–Imagery Intelligence, Signal Intelligence, Measurement and Signatures Intelligence, and Human Intelligence. Red denotes strength in war. The eight-pointed star suggests a compass and stands for the worldwide intelligence gathering capabilities of the unit

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Activated in North Africa in Jun 1943, replacing a series of provisional organizations. Carried out antisubmarine patrols in an area of the Atlantic extending north and west from Morocco. Its antisubmarine activity reached a peak in Jul 1943 when enemy U-boats concentrated off the coast of Portugal to intercept convoys bound for the Mediterranean. Destroying and damaging several submarines during the month, the group aided in protecting supply lines to forces involved in the campaign for Sicily. It also participated in protection of convoys and engaged numerous enemy aircraft. In Sep 1943, part of the group moved temporarily to Tunisia and participated in the assault on Italy; missions included searching for enemy submarines, covering Allied convoys, and protecting the Italian fleet after the surrender of Italy. Moved to the US in Nov 1943 and disbanded in Jan 1944. The 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing activated in Apr 1951 and trained in psychological warfare and unconventional operations in the US and Libya until inactivation in Sep 1953.

The Air Force on Jan. 1 renamed the 480th Intelligence Wing at Langley AFB, Va., and the 70th IW at Fort George G. Meade, Md., as the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing and 70th ISR Wing. Further, the intelligence groups under these wings are now designated as ISR groups, the service said in a release yesterday. These moves are part of the ongoing transformation

of the service's ISR organizations that began in June 2007. "Throughout the transformation process, we have broadened our scope beyond signals intelligence to include all elements of ISR," Maj. Gen. Craig Koziol, Air Force ISR Agency commander. He continued, "The renaming of our units to ISR solidifies our dedication to delivering the best trained forces and most effective capabilities and conducting integrated ISR operations for ground, air, space, and cyberspace missions." Under the ISR changes, the agency is now a field operating agency of the Deputy Chief of Staff for ISR (A2) on the Air Staff.

In 2003, the Air Intelligence Agency activated a new intelligence wing to better manage its expanding deployable ground station (DOS) resources.

Lt. General Bruce Carlson, 8th Air Force commander, officiated over a ceremony activating the 480th Intelligence Wing at Langley AFB on 11 December 2003.

After American entry into World War II, United States naval authorities realized they didn't have the required ships and long-range patrol aircraft to counter the German submarine menace in the Atlantic. The German submarine force directly threatened America's chief ally, Great Britain, by cutting off Britain's lines of communication. The German strategy was to "strangle" Britain's lifeline by preventing food and war materiel from reaching the British Isles. If successful, this strategy would force Great Britain out of the war and severely hamper the Allied war effort. To counter this threat, the U.S. Army formed the Army Air Force Anti-Submarine Command and established its headquarters at Langley Field, Virginia. The Army activated the 1st and 2nd Anti-Submarine Squadrons in 1942, and both units trained in the United Kingdom on anti-submarine warfare techniques. Both squadrons were equipped with a modified B-24D "Liberator" 4-engine bomber. The aircraft carried additional fuel tanks to extend its patrol range and anti-submarine radar equipment to detect enemy ships. These aircraft also sported a non-standard camouflage scheme designed to reduce visibility over water. Both units re-deployed to Port Lyautey, French Morocco, where conditions were primitive. The only building on base housed operations, while all other facilities on the site used tents. The commander of the 2nd Anti Submarine Squadron, Lt Col Jack Roberts, realized the need for better coordination between the operational squadrons and the anti-submarine commands of both the Army and the Navy. He advocated for the establishment of an anti-submarine group to enhance communications at all levels, which would result in an improved strike capability. While the Army Air Force formed a number of provisional units, the 480th Anti-Submarine Group (Separate) was not activated until 21 Jun 1943. With the activation of the group, the Army re-assigned the 1st and 2nd Anti-Submarine Squadrons to the new unit. The 480th Anti Submarine Group then engaged in anti-submarine patrols off the coast of Morocco. These patrols extended well out into the Atlantic. Their tactics were simple. After spotting their target, the bomber crew flew their aircraft a few hundred feet above the water at speeds approaching 200 miles per hour to attack the enemy vessel. Their primary weapon was the depth charge. They released their depth charge close to the submarine. The resulting "water hammer" effect from the explosion would fracture the thin-hulled submarine causing it to sink. Operations peaked in the summer of 1943 as the Allies noted the concentration of German U-boats, used to intercept convoys heading toward Britain, off the coast of Portugal. During these critical months, the 480th Anti-Submarine Group

logged 5,742 combat hours. The group detected 15 submarines and sank three U-boats to include U-951, U-232, and U-506. In less than two weeks after the group's activation, Lt H.W. Frazier and his crew became the first unit casualties. His aircraft attacked U-359 and U-446 off the coast of Portugal. The bomber strafed both ships and dropped three depth charges between the submarines. The U-boats returned fire striking the Liberator
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bomber. Both German ships submerged undamaged, however shortly after the attack, the Liberator crashed into the sea killing all 10 airmen aboard. The first U-boat sunk by the 480th ASG occurred on 7 July 1943. A B-24 from the 1st Anti-Submarine Squadron used depth charges to destroy U-951. On the next day, a crew from the 2nd Anti-Submarine Squadron attacked and sank U-232 commanded by Kapitaneutnant Ernst Ziehm. As with the previous sinking, there were no survivors. The final U-boat victory credited to the group occurred on 12 July 1943. A B-24D from the 1st squadron attacked U-506 using seven depth charges. The ship broke in two, and the Liberator crew spotted 15 survivors. They dropped a life raft and a signal flare to aid the surviving seamen. A British destroyer picked up six survivors in the life raft 3 days after the attack. The 480th Anti Submarine Group directly contributed to "turning the tide" during the Battle of the Atlantic. The Allies maintained the supply lines between Britain and North America that later enabled its forces to invade the European continent and liberate millions of people. With the decline in U-boat activity, the 480th ASG continued its patrol assignment, often engaging German maritime patrol aircraft in aerial combat. The group re-deployed to Langley Field in November 1943, and in January 1944, the unit was assigned to Clovis Army Air Field, New Mexico. The Army Air Force disbanded the group on 29 January 1944. For its service during the Battle of the Atlantic, the 480th Anti-Submarine Group received two European-African-Middle Eastern Theater campaign streamers and the Distinguished Unit Citation.

The 580 Air Resupply and Communications Wing During the early stages of the Korean War, Pentagon planners developed a concept to establish special Air Force units that would combine overt and covert intelligence and propaganda missions into one organization. On 23 February 1951, the Air Force created a headquarters function designated as the Air Resupply and Communications Service (ARCS), and assigned it to the Military Air Transport Service (MATTS). Initially, both the peacetime and wartime missions of the ARCS were not clearly defined. The Military Air Transport Service attempted to remedy this issue by proposing a draft Air Force regulation highlighting the service's mission as "providing worldwide air resupply and communications service for all Air Force and other U.S. military activities requesting such service." Eventually, the mission of the ARCS was further defined as providing:

- a. A psychological warfare function, which called for the capability of preparing psychological warfare material in printed form, propaganda and jamming enemy frequencies.
- b. Aerial resupply, which called for the capability of introducing and evacuating Ranger type personnel behind enemy lines and supplying these units and other guerilla units.

The Air Resupply and Communications Service established the 580th Air Resupply and Communications (AR&C) Wing on 15 March 1951 and activated this unit at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho on 16 March 1951. The Air Force selected Colonel William O. Eareckson as the wing's first commander. In addition to the organizations that provided normal base support and services, the wing comprised of five unique squadrons to include the:

- a. Aerial Resupply Squadron: Responsible for transporting and evacuating personnel and supplies behind enemy lines.

b. Airborne Materials Assembly Squadron: Provided storage, maintenance and aerial type packaging of operational supplies to include the packaging of overt propaganda leaflets for units engaged in "leaflet attacks".

c. Holding and Briefing Squadron: Provided for the administration, briefing and supply of personnel assigned by other agencies for introduction behind enemy lines.

d. Communications Squadron: Provided an agent communications circuit, operating round-the-clock broadcasting service over four frequencies simultaneously.

e. Reproduction Squadron: Responsible for the production of covert propaganda materials and up to 4 million overt propaganda leaflets per day.

After it established itself at Mountain Home AFB, the 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing began training in psychological and unconventional operations. The motto of the wing became "Libertas per Veritatem" -- Freedom through Truth. Prior to re-assignment, the wing developed a field training school that eventually became the predecessor of today's Air Force survival training school. The wing operated a number of unique aircraft for its special operations mission to include the Boeing CB-29A "Superfortress", the Fairchild C-119 "Flying Boxcar", and the Grumman amphibious aircraft, the SA-16 Albatross. Some aircraft, like the C-119 Flying Boxcar, were well suited for this unique mission, while the modified "Superfortress" was less successful.

Colonel John C. Kane replaced Colonel Eareckson as the commander of the 580th AR&C Wing in November 1951.

They began preparations to move the wing from the United States to Wheelus AB in Libya. In August 1952, an advanced party team arrived at Wheelus AB to coordinate the move and establish living facilities for wing personnel. The ground echelon departed for New Jersey and travelled by Navy transport to Libya. The air echelon arrived later after the ground component began operations at Wheelus AB. By 22 September 1952, the wing completed its movement to Africa.

In October, the Air Force re-assigned the 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing to HQ United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE). Despite the development of techniques and procedures supporting its unique mission, there was considerable debate between the Air Staff and the Military Transport Service on the future of Air Resupply and Communications units, especially as it related to their peacetime mission. At this time, Colonel Vincent M. Miles replaced Colonel Kane as wing commander and served as the last commander of this organization. On 8 September 1953, the Air Force inactivated the 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing and several of its subordinate units.

The 480th Intelligence Wing With a renewed emphasis in the mid-1980s to expand its special operations capability, the Air Force decided to consolidate the 480th Antisubmarine Group (Separate) with the 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing. On 31 July 1985, the Air Force re-designated the consolidated unit as the 480th Special Operations Wing. Although the new wing was projected to perform special operations missions, during the 18-year period between July 1985 and December 2003, the Air Force never activated the 480th Special Operations Wing. The increasing need for timely intelligence gathering and exploitation supporting both the Global War on Terrorism and operations in Iraq made the Air Force accomplish a re-assessment of its capabilities. In October 2003, the Air Staff made the decision to re-designate the 480th Special Operations Wing and activated the 480th Intelligence Wing on 1 December 2003. Colonel Larry K. Grundhauser served as the unit's first commander with its headquarters based at Langley AFB, Virginia. Initially, the Air Force assigned three intelligence groups to the wing to include the 480th Intelligence Group, the 497th Intelligence Group and the 548th Intelligence Group. Additionally, the 27th Intelligence Support Squadron was assigned to the wing. In its new role, the Air Force assigned the 480th Intelligence Wing to 8th Air Force (8AF), which was the intelligence, network and information operations focused component of Air Combat Command (ACC). During this period, the wing's main focus centered on the operation and maintenance of the Air Force's premier intelligence exploitation capability--the AN/GSQ-272 "Sentinel", commonly referred to as the Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS). So critical was this mission, the Air Force formally designated the DCGS as a weapons system. Both the 497 IG and the 548 IG; operated the DCGS. The 497 IG and the 548 IG were initially designated the Distributed Ground Station; DGS-1 and DGS-2, respectively. In addition to its DCGS mission, the wing provided targeting and geospatial intelligence support through the 480 IG. The DCGS weapons system provided, and continues to provide, real-time distributed intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance imagery and signals from a number of airborne platforms. During this period, the 480 IW achieved some major successes. As a result of a focused network expansion plan, the wing activated PACAF's DGS-3 at Osan AB, Korea in 2003 and DGS-5 at Hickam AFB, Hawaii in 2004. In 2003, the wing also extended the network to incorporate USAFE's DGS-4 in Germany. By mid-2009, the term Distributed Ground Station was re-named Distributed Ground System. The establishment of these nodes within the DCGS weapons system umbrella enables effective intelligence support to U.S. and Coalition global operations. Since its activation in 2003, the 480th Intelligence Wing provided, and continues to provide, direct combat support to in-theater military forces conducting operations in Afghanistan and USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR).

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The Wing Today In a major effort to exploit technology, processes and procedures, while reducing the impacts of manpower reductions, the Air Force Intelligence community initiated action that fundamentally changed how the Service performs this vital function. As part of this restructuring initiative, the 480th Intelligence Wing transferred responsibility for the 480th Intelligence Group to ACC Headquarters. On 25 February 2008, the group was re-assigned to Air Combat Command, however within four months, the 480 IG was inactivated. The next day, the Air Force re-assigned the 480 IW from Air Combat Command to the AF Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Agency (AFISRA). By July 2008, the wing assumed responsibility for the 692 IG at Hickam AFB, HI, the 693 IG at Ramstein AB, Germany and the 694 IG at Osan AB, Republic of Korea. This increased the total number of groups within the wing to five--all operating the DCGS system. The crews certified to operate the weapons system analyze and interpret raw data from a number of

sources and transform this material into “decision quality” information and “actionable” intelligence. These analysts rapidly disseminate this data to air, ground and naval force component commanders for use in the planning and execution of military operations. This information is used across the spectrum of conflict from humanitarian relief operations, peacekeeping efforts and insurgencies through conventional and theater warfare. It supports the combatant commander’s ability to prepare the battle space, execute the operation and assess the effectiveness of that operation.

On 1 January 2009, the Air Force again re-designated the wing--this time as the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing (480th ISR WG). The subordinate groups soon followed suit as each was re-designated as an ISR Group. In addition to the DCGS mission, the 480th ISR Wing received a tasking to provide signals intelligence (SIGINT) reports through the AF ISR Agency and the National Security Agency. This prompted the re-activation of the 480th ISR Group on 1 Nov 2010 and establishing this organization at Fort Gordon, Georgia. The Air Force then reassigned the group to the 480th ISR Wing. The wing also experienced significant internal growth with the activation of four new squadrons. Between 2010 and 2011, the 402nd Intelligence Squadron, the 693rd Intelligence Support Squadron, the 694th Intelligence Support Squadron, and the 792nd Intelligence Support Squadron were all assigned to the wing. The 27th Intelligence Squadron continues to provide key infrastructure and architecture support to the wing. In addition, this unit operates the Wing Operations Center (WOC), and the DCGS Processing, Exploitation and Dissemination (PED) Operations Center (DPOC) to support intelligence operations planning and execution. In 2010 and 2011, the wing was called on to provide imagery supporting humanitarian relief operations in Haiti and Japan. The timely processing of information enabled the international corps of relief workers to effectively plan and orchestrate rescue and relief efforts in these earthquake and tsunami ravaged areas. The wing also conducted operations supporting the military surge in Afghanistan as well as NATO operations in Libya. Most recently, the 480th ISR Wing responded to a request from the Intelligence Directorate at Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) to

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provide a distributed operations capability for MC-12W missions beginning 1 September 2011. The wing initiated action to ensure the availability of the network infrastructure needed to support this mission and our customers. Our Airmen received the training on “Project Liberty” unique requirements and testing occurred to validate our ability to create and send products to the supported units. On 1 September 2011, both DGS-1 at Langley and DGS-2 at Beale conducted the first 10 missions supporting the MC-12W for each Army site in Iraq. This effort was so successful that AFCENT requested a “reachback” capability for MC-12W missions over Afghanistan. Again, our Airmen developed and built an information technology architecture to support this new mission and the wing trained its personnel to meet this new requirement. On 1 October 2011, the wing initiated “shadow operations” supporting the “Project Liberty” efforts with Air Force ISR exploitation cells in Afghanistan. This capability was fully tested, and as a result, the wing began regular operations on 15 January 2011. The 480th ISR WG reached a significant milestone in its history as it concluded eight years of continuous intelligence gathering and dissemination actions supporting Joint and Coalition forces in Iraq. On 19 December 2011, the wing ended its mission in Iraq with a formal ceremony marking this event. Over 5,300 military, civilian and contractor personnel now comprise the wing. To enhance the war fighting capability of the DCGS weapons system, we actively partner with the Air National Guard (ANG) and the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC). ANG units from Alabama, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Massachusetts, Nevada, and Virginia, as well as AFRC units based in California and Virginia play a key role in the employment

of this ISR capability. Each unit is equipped and trained to perform duties with their active duty counterparts in peacetime and wartime operations. As the demand for ISR products and missions increase, our ability to seamlessly integrate with Guard and Reserve units serves as a force multiplier. The wing also enjoys a close working relationship with some key allied air arms to include the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force (RAF), the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF). Over the past 4 years, the wing established close ties with the Tactical Intelligence Centre at RAF Marham, UK to develop an integrated approach for intelligence exploitation. The wing also provides system familiarization through an exchange officer program with both the British and Australians. Today, the TIW conducts near real time imagery intelligence analysis under the tactical control or TACON of the 480 ISR Wing, and the combined effort is known as "CROSSBOW". This initiative makes the wing a leading Air Force exponent of coalition operations, and these efforts pave the way for future military operations in the 21st Century. Today, the Airmen assigned to the 480 ISR Wing enjoy a proud heritage of serving our Nation. This heritage includes the award of 46 campaign streamers and over 100 unit citations that span conflicts from World War II, through the "Cold War" to present day operations in Afghanistan. It did not come without sacrifice, and the men and women assigned to the wing stand ready to serve, as their predecessors did--with honor, commitment and an exceptional devotion to duty.

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HISTORY OF THE AIR FORCE'S AN/GSQ-272 "SENTINEL" WEAPONS SYSTEM-DCGS The story of the Air Force's Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS) started in 1969 through a test and development program. The purpose of the COMBAT DAWN program was to develop an ISR tasking, processing, exploitation and dissemination capability for the Air Force. During the test phase, Air Force technicians placed a signals intelligence (SIGINT) sensor on-board an AQM-34Q drone manufactured by Teledyne-Ryan. They employed the COMBAT DAWN ground station to capture SIGINT signals that were transmitted from the drone. As a result of a successful test program, the Air Force deployed the COMBAT DAWN system on 1 February 1970 to support intelligence gathering operations in Vietnam. The intelligence gathering capability initially employed by the Air Force was soon upgraded by placing a more sophisticated SIGINT sensor on the drone. Air Force technicians later fitted this device on a Lockheed U-2 reconnaissance aircraft. With the employment of the new sensor, the Air force re-named the COMBAT DAWN ground station to SENIOR BOOK. U-2 reconnaissance missions over Southeast Asia using the SENIOR BOOK system began in 1971. The next milestone in the development of DCGS occurred in the early 1970s. The latest SIGINT sensor upgrade resulted in the establishment of the SENIOR SPEAR ground station. As with COMBAT DAWN, the SENIOR SPEAR system incorporated the AQM-34Q drone as its primary aerial platform, and by 1975, employed the Lockheed U-2. The Air Force called its "next generation ground station SENIOR JUMP, and in August 1979, it became part of the Tactical Reconnaissance Exploitation Demonstration System (TREDS). The United States stationed TREDS in West Germany to support possible Air Force and NATO operations against the Warsaw Pact. By 1983, two major upgrades occurred that significantly improved SENIOR SPEAR and SENIOR RUBY ground station capabilities. In 1985, the Air Force introduced the first Advanced Synthetic Aperture Radar System (ASARS) and the SENIOR YEAR Electro-Optical/Infra-Red Reconnaissance System (SYERS) into its inventory. Both sensors linked to the respective ASARS and SENIOR BLADE imagery processing ground systems. By 1987, the Air Force employed these ground systems worldwide. In 1990, the SENIOR BLADE ground station deployed to support Air Force and coalition actions during Operation DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM. The program

received a setback in 1992 as the Germany-based TREDs transitioned to the TR-1 Ground Station (TR1GS). With the fall of the Soviet Union, the U.S. Congress terminated funding for this program. While we tend to think “reachback” as a relatively new concept, this capability actually existed in 1975. The National Security Agency (NSA) and the Air Force established the Temporary Remote Operating Facility-Airborne at Ft. Meade, Maryland. Using a series of data links supported by both terrestrial and space based communications networks, NSA and the Air Force concentrated the development of their system to support the signals intelligence mission. The result of their combined efforts established the SENIOR STRETCH system--program that continues to 480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing

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change through to the present day. These changes included the first use of the U-2 Extended Tether Program capability known as SENIOR SPAN. SENIOR SPAN linked SIGINT sensors on board U-2 aircraft with linguists in Maryland. After the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the U.S. Congress directed the Air Force to refocus its efforts on a Continental United States (CONUS) based ISR Tasking, Processing, Exploitation, and Dissemination (TPED) ground station system. As a result, the Air Force developed the Contingency Airborne Reconnaissance System (CARS). The first Deployable Ground Station (DGS) at Langley AFB, VA reached Initial Operation Capability (IOC) in July 1994. The second DGS site at Beale AFB, CA, achieved IOC in July 1995. Deployed in support of operations in Haiti in August 1994 and Iraq in October 1994, DGS-1 used standard line-of-sight data links. As the DGS-2 site prepared to deploy in 1995 to support Balkan operations, the Air Force implemented a fundamentally new way of conducting intelligence operations with the introduction of the MOBILE STRETCH (MOBSTR) communications package. Using MOBSTR, a DGS site could establish connectivity with a U-2 located hundreds of miles away. Instead of deploying the DGS with its large infrastructure and support requirements, the Air Force could now deploy a relatively small number of personnel and equipment using this new communications package. The CARS system first used the MOBSTR operationally in December 1995. In 1996, CARS was renamed the Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS). The delivery of a second MOBSTR package enabled DGS-1 to be permanently assigned at Langley AFB. DGS-1 completed the move in October 1997 after three years of deployed operations. DCGS reachback allowed the Air Force to maintain responsive U-2 operational capability on a global scale. By July 1998, DGS-1 at Langley initiated multi-intelligence TPED operations. In July 1999, the 27 IS played a key role in developing the network infrastructure allowing the sustainment of DGS operations on the East Coast. DGS-1 began line-of-sight Predator (RQ-1; later, known as MQ-1) ISR TPED operations in October 1999. In December, the Air Force declared this comprehensive intelligence capability as operational. In January 2000, the 27 IS established a systematic approach to provide the necessary communications infrastructure that initially allowed DGS-2 to operate from Beale AFB, and by 2000, the squadron led the network expansion effort that enabled the sites at Reno, Nevada; Shaw AFB, South Carolina; Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona; and Site 6. They continued this expansion with Site 7 in February 2001. The Beale site shifted from Bosnian operations to Afghanistan in October 2001 to support Operations INFINITE JUSTICE and ENDURING FREEDOM. For the first time, a CONUS-based DGS linked with U-2 multi-intelligence sensors to provide a TPED capability. Later that month, they linked with RQ-4 Global Hawk sensors to perform the TPED mission. In February 2002, they received data links from MQ-1 Predator sensors to further the capability of this weapons system. The 27 IS continued network expansion with Site 8 in October 2002, DGS-3 at Osan AB, Korea, and the Warrior Alpha site in January 2003. DGS-1 began U-2 and RQ-1/MQ-1 ISR TPED operations aimed at Iraq as part of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in

February 2003. By May, the 27 IS completed work on the network expansion effort that provided connectivity for DGS-4 to operate from Ramstein, Germany. Today, the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing serves as the Air Force's lead wing for the DCGS weapons system and currently operates five DGS sites in the United States, Europe and the Pacific. Together with our ANG and AFRC partners, the 480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing provide world class ISR TPED support to Joint and Coalition war fighters.

Throughout history, the ability to gather, analyze and disseminate accurate information about the enemy in a timely manner has been instrumental in winning wars. And as the United States and its coalition partners continue to fight the Global War on Terror, they are finding that having the right intelligence information, at the right time, is more critical than ever. "ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) has never been more important during our 60 years as an independent service," Gen. T. Michael Moseley, Air Force chief of staff, said in a recent Vector letter to Airmen. "ISR has become the foundation of global vigilance, reach and power." And, just as ISR is the foundation of global vigilance, reach and power, the Air Force Distributed Common Ground System is one of the foundations of ISR. AF DCGS is comprised of a variety of related intelligence processing, exploitation and dissemination systems that receive intelligence data from unmanned aerial vehicles, piloted aircraft and commercial satellites around the clock. Intelligence information processed by AF DCGS operators is then passed on to decision makers and war-fighters in near real-time. It's all about getting timely and perishable information to the right individuals within minutes or even seconds. For years, Air Force Reserve individual mobilization augmentees have been heavily involved in AF DCGS, primarily at Langley Air Force Base, Va., home of Air Combat Command's 480th Intelligence Wing and Distributed Ground System-1. The 480th is the Air Force's lead wing for DCGS operations, and

Distributed Ground Systems form the anchor of the DCGS system. There are six active-duty DGS locations worldwide. Currently, about 110 intelligence IMAs are assigned in a variety of organizations throughout ACC, including 27 in the 480th IW. Based on the success the Air Force has experienced using Reservists in AF DCGS operations at Langley and an anticipated 200-percent increase in DCGS mission requirements in the future, Maj. Gen. Thomas B. Wright, former director of intelligence at ACC, established the requirement for additional Reserve support to DCGS in 2005. Maj. Gen. Charles Stenner, former AFRC director of plans and programs, validated the requirement, resulting in current plans for the stand-up of the 50th Intelligence Squadron at DGS-2, Beale AFB, Calif. The 50th IS, a Reserve associate unit to the DGS enterprise, will provide much-needed augmentation to the active component. Requirements are also in the works for the 2010 program objective memorandum cycle for a second Reserve associate unit at Langley. Eventually, each associate unit will comprise approximately 110 people - about 30 full-timers and 80 traditional Reservists. "The DCGS mission is really a nice fit for the Reserve component," Maj. Gen. Michael K. Lynch, mobilization assistant to the ACC commander, said recently after a tour of DGS-1 at Langley. "This truly is a Total Force Integration success story. Everywhere we went on our tour today, we saw active-duty members, Reservists and Guardsmen working side by side to get the job done, and as the mission grows, we will see the Reserve's role grow as well." Brig. Gen. James Poss, ACC's director of intelligence, is a big proponent of using reserve component Airmen in AF DCGS operations. "The war we are fighting today is very much a human war," he said. "It takes a network to fight a network, and it takes a cell to take down a terrorist cell. And with Reservists as part of our network, we can have the same eyes on the same target for a long period of time.

Reservists give us that long-term presence that we can't get from our active-duty Airmen." Maj Aaron Wilson is one of the Reservists providing that long-term presence to DGS-1. An IMA who serves as a DGS

mission commander, Major Wilson leads a team of dedicated professionals who process and analyze information provided by Predator and Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicles operating half a world away. "When I'm commanding a mission, my crew is almost always a mix of active-duty Airmen, Reservists and Guardsmen," he said. "It's a Total Force team, and it's impossible to tell the three apart. They are all well trained and highly capable." Maj. Lonnie Garris is another IMA supporting AF DCGS. After serving on active duty for 6 1/2 years, Major Garris joined the Reserve and was working as a civilian on Wall Street on Sept. 11, 2001. After the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon, he volunteered for duty and has been supporting intelligence operations at Langley ever since. He currently serves as the director of plans and programs for the 30th Intelligence Squadron. "It's a great mission," he said. "You have the opportunity to directly support what is going on in the Global War on Terror. We have the ability to save lives. ... what we do really makes a difference." In the near future, Reservists will be making the same difference at Beale AFB. Many of the people who will man the unit are coming from Beale's 940th Air Refueling Wing, which was targeted for transition by the most recent Base Realignment and Closure Commission. "There has been a huge interest in cross-training from the people at Beale," said Col. Nidia Carrero, director of intelligence at AFRC headquarters, Robins AFB, Ga. "People are excited about moving into this mission. "DGS is a great new mission for us," said Col. Albert Reif, 940th ARW commander. "It's the glue between our reconnaissance assets and the shooter in the field." In addition to DGS, Beale has a growing Global Hawk and war-fighting headquarters mission that will open new possibilities for Reservists affected by the air refueling wing deactivation who are willing to cross-train. Technological advances in recent years have greatly altered the way intelligence information is gathered and disseminated. "Through technological advances and Airmen's ingenuity, we can now surveil or strike any target anywhere on the face of the Earth, day or night, in any weather," General Moseley said. "A more challenging issue today - and for the future - is determining and locating the desired effect we want to achieve." That's where the human factor comes in. "In just a few years, we've gone from taking pictures from spy planes, developing the film and analyzing the still photos in a matter of hours to having live images from UAVs streaming back to us real-time," General Poss said. "But what hasn't changed is the need to have a highly skilled team of people who can analyze and interpret what we are looking at." As that highly skilled team of people continues to grow in the years ahead, Air Force Reservists will play a major part. "DCGS is definitely a growth area for the Air Force," Colonel Carrero said. "Our taxi, take off and fly approach to this new mission will ensure Air Force Reserve Command is a big and very relevant player in that growth." 2007



480th Antisubmarine Group (WW II) Col Jack Roberts 21 June 1943–29 January 1944 **580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing (Korean War)** Col William O. Eareckson 16 April 1951 Col John R. Kane 12 November 1951 Col Frederick J. Knorre Jr. 8 May 1952 Col John R. Kane 2 June 1952 Col Frederick J. Knorre Jr. 18 May 1953 Col Vincent M. Miles 27 May–8 September 1953 **480th Intelligence Wing (OEF, OIF & GWOT)** Col Larry K. Grundhauser 1 December 2003, (8 AF SO #GL-091) Col Donald J. Hudson 1 June 2005, (8 AF SO #GL-141) Col Judy G. Chizek 8 July 2005, (8 AF SO #GL-147) Col James R. Marrs 22 June 2007, (8 AF SO #GL-207) **480th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Wing (OEF, OIF, OND, GWOT/OCO)** Col James R. Marrs 1 January 2009, (8 AF SO #GL-207) Col Daniel R. Johnson 1 April 2009, AFISRA SO #G-04) Col Paul D. Nelson 9 September 2010 (AFISRA GO-10-1)

480th ANTISUBMARINE GROUP

LINEAGE

480th Antisubmarine Group constituted, 19 Jun 1943
Activated, North Africa, 21 Jun
Disbanded, 29 Jan 1944

STATIONS

Port Lyautey, French Morocco, 21 Jun-Nov 1943
Langley Field, VA, 18 Nov 1943
Clovis AAFld, NM, 1-29 Jan 1944

ASSIGNMENTS

AAF Antisubmarine Command

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-24

COMMANDERS

Col Jack Roberts, 21 Jun 1943-unkn

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, EAME Theater

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

North African Theater of Operations [1943]

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Primary mission of carrying out antisubmarine patrols in an area of the Atlantic extending north and west from Morocco. Its antisubmarine activity reached a peak in Jul 1943 when enemy U-boats concentrated off the coast of Portugal to intercept convoys bound for the Mediterranean; by destroying and damaging several submarines during the month, the group aided in protecting supply lines to forces involved in the campaign for Sicily. The group also covered convoys and engaged numerous enemy aircraft in combat. In Sep 1943 part of the group moved temporarily to Tunisia and operated in connection with the assault on Italy; missions included searching for enemy submarines, covering Allied convoys, and protecting the Italian fleet after the surrender of Italy. The group was awarded a DUC for actions that contributed to the winning of the Battle of the Atlantic.

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Updated:

Sources

580th AIR RESUPPLY AND COMMUNICATIONS WING



LINEAGE

Established as 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing, 15 Mar 1951

Activated, 16 Apr 1951

Inactivated, 8 Sep 1953

STATIONS

Mountain Home AFB, ID, 16 Apr 1951-17 Sep 1952

Wheelus Field, Libya, 22 Sep 1952-8 Sep 1953

ASSIGNMENTS

Air Resupply and Communications Service, 16 Apr 1951

United States Air Forces in Europe, 1 Oct 1952-8 Sep 1953

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-119, 1951-1953

B-29, 1951-1953

SA-16, 1951-1953

C-47, 1953

COMMANDERS

Col William O. Eareckson, 16 Apr 1951

Col John R. Kane, 12 Nov 1951

Col Frederick J. Knorre, Jr., 8 May 1952

Col John R. Kane, 2 Jun 1952

Col Frederick J. Knorre, Jr., 18 May 1953

Col Vincent M. Miles, 27 May-8 Sep 1953

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

Quarterly, first and fourth, or, a stylized aircraft sable, nose to dexter; second and third, azure, a horse's head couped or; on a chief, gules over a wreath of two branches of olive, a sword in fess, all or. (Approved on 8 Nov 1951)

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

LIBERTAS PER VERTTATEM—Freedom through truth

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Performed psychological warfare and unconventional operations

The Air Force then activated, equipped, and trained the 580th, 581st, and 582nd Air Resupply and Communication Wings specifically for unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency operations. These wings possessed tremendous capabilities using a variety of aircraft such as C-47, C-54, C-118, C-119 transports, B-29 bombers, SA-16 seaplanes, and H-19 helicopters. This revitalization of special operations included the ability to recover downed airmen and the full spectrum of covert air operations. However, while three wings were activated, only one saw action in Korea. After the war, all three were inactivated by late 1953.

Libertas per Veritatem! (“Freedom through Truth!”) The spirited motto of the 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing rang out like the challenge to Communist propaganda it was meant to be. Even its emblem seized the spirit: brilliant red, yellow, and blue colors cover a shield mounted with proud horse heads and that universal symbol of peace, a wreath of olive branches. But then there is an odd shadow in this bright picture.

To the 580th ARC Wing went the honor of being the first ARC wing. Activated on 15 March 1951, less than 60 days after the activation of the Air Resupply and Communications Service itself, it was a unit hustling to catch up before the race ever started. And as all pioneers in every new endeavor learn, breaking a new trail is tough on the good days and downright dangerous on the bad ones. The tough part started early as the advance group of the 580th arrived at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, only to discover that the base had been essentially abandoned since the close of World War II. Tumbleweeds were stacked to the top of many maintenance buildings and barracks . . . inside the buildings!

Another major problem afflicting the 580th in the early days was that the sudden influx of personnel into Mountain Home outpaced the arrival of the equipment necessary for them to perform their jobs. A lack of tools for aircraft maintenance, printing machines for leaflet reproduction, and even radios for the communications squadron plagued all efforts to get the wing up and running. Perhaps remembering the cliché “Idle hands are the devil’s workshop,” the 580th’s first commander, Col William O. Eareckson, came up with a creative and useful, if decidedly unpleasant, idea to keep the troops busy: a rugged survival school complete with escape and evasion (E&E) and interrogation phases.

The 580th even managed to secure the loan of Maj John Fillingham from the British army as a “survival adviser” for its school. Although archival references to the major are unfailingly polite, they do describe Fillingham as “an authority on the subject.” Any reader familiar with the British army’s enthusiasm for realistic field training will know that Fillingham’s survival course earned its name the hard way.

In November 1951, the 580th got both an overseas deployment notice (to Wheelus Air Base, Libya) and a new wing commander to take them there. Col John R. Kane had won the Medal of Honor in one of World War II’s legendary brawls, the low-level bombing AAF by heavy bombers of the Ploesti oil refineries in Nazi-occupied Romania. The 580th airmen were probably less thrilled to learn what else their new commander won at Ploesti—the nickname “Killer.” Hustling as usual to make another short-notice deadline, the 580th had by early December moved the bulk of its squadrons to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, and its aircraft echelon to Westover AFB, Massachusetts. Tearful good-byes had already been made to families now far away, mountains of gear had been stored in containers at the ports, and flight plans had been drawn up.

The big adventure was about to start! Then, without warning, the balloon burst. The deployment orders were canceled, citing “political unrest in North Africa” as the reason. The truth was more sinister, but it was not for public release even to the 580th as new orders were issued: return to Mountain Home and continue training. Staff officers could hardly believe their eyes as they read the orders. The morale of the officers and airmen anxiously waiting in the drab embarkation barracks turned as dark as the New Jersey winter nights. Keeping a stiff upper lip, the 580th historian wrote that the morale of the troops took a sharp drop at the word of the return, because—in the minds of most of the personnel—Mountain Home in the winter was not the most desirable place in the world to be.

Using its own aircraft to return its personnel to Mountain Home, the 580th directed all flyable aircraft to proceed through blinding snowstorms and icy runways afflicting the East Coast to complete the airlift back to Idaho. Remarkably, no accidents occurred. While most of the wing resumed training in “not the most desirable place in the world to be,” those with language specialties went elsewhere.

The former commander of the 580th’s Holding and Briefing Squadron recounted to the author another explanation given to him at the time by friends in the CIA. Six months prior to the 580th’s scheduled deployment, two British intelligence officers, Donald MacLean and Guy Burgess, stunned England with their defection to the Soviet Union. MacLean had been receiving classified reports of

American intelligence plans from his friend Kim Philby, then England's senior intelligence liaison officer to the CIA. The subsequent CIA damage assessment estimate reportedly concluded that the 580th's links to the CIA (of which Philby had been informed) had almost certainly been exposed. The deployment was put on indefinite hold pending further investigation. Years later, Philby himself was found to be a Soviet spy.

In January 1952, the 580th sent nine officers to New York City for 75 days of on-the-job training in propaganda dissemination at the US government's Voice of America (VOA) radio station. This original group was later augmented by 13 other graduates of the Georgetown University program, who likewise delivered VOA's foreign language broadcasts into Communist-controlled Eastern Europe. A list of the tongues spoken by the 580th's foreign-language specialists clearly indicates the wing's wartime area of operations.

They included Armenian, French, German, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, Spanish, Tatar, and Turkish.³ Seven months more would pass before the foreign-language specialists would get the chance to practice their proficiency closer to their target areas.

January 1952 was also of note for a bizarre event happening a long way from the bright lights of New York City's VOA offices. During a night training mission over southern California's Death Valley, one of the 580th's twin-engine Albatrosses encountered a combination of bad weather and even worse luck. With the Albatross steadily and involuntarily descending due to severe icing conditions and the subsequent loss of one engine, the crew made the prudent decision to bail out before the aircraft collided with something much harder than ice.

As the first of the air resupply and communications wings to be established, the 580th frequently found its activities the center of debate in the acrimonious Army-Air Force-CIA bureaucratic struggle for "ownership" of the nation's unconventional warfare mission. This proved especially true for the Holding and Briefing Squadron, which, despite its bland name, put Air Force officers in roles nearly identical to those claimed by the Army's Special Forces and the USI's guerrilla warfare specialists.

Air support for unconventional warfare was one thing, but the 580th's Specialized Warfare Course for its H&B officers was breathtaking in its brashness. Not only was the Air Force seemingly going for a piece of the "ground action" of the unconventional-warfare mission, it was actually going to its bureaucratic antagonists in this competition (the Army and USI) for the training necessary to accomplish this goal!

This was the bureaucratic turf battle ongoing in Washington when Maj Edward Joseph reported to Mountain Home AFB in the summer of 1951 for his yet-to-be-determined assignment in the 580th. With two heavy-bomber combat tours in the Pacific in World War II under his belt, he had every reason to believe another flying tour lay ahead or perhaps a staff position following his completion of the demanding psywar course at Georgetown University. It didn't exactly work out that way.

The 6'5" former captain of his Columbia University wrestling team got his first clue regarding the 580th's plans for him when he discovered one of his in-processing interviewers was from USI. Shortly thereafter, he received the news that he had been selected for command of the H&B Squadron and, in the process, was designated as one of the small handful of Georgetown graduates selected for the Specialized Warfare Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. Stage 3 training was to be quite an eye-opener.

The USI compound at Fort Benning, designated "Training Center One" (TC-One), had buildings that were used as hospitals in earlier days. In addition to intelligence personnel, TC-One housed Air Force H&B officers who were also undergoing unconventional-warfare training by a cadre of Green Beret instructors housed elsewhere on the post. During the morning, both USI and H&B officers attended parachute training at Benning's well-known jump school. In the afternoon and evening, they returned to TC-One for Special Forces and USI training in weapons, demolitions, communications, and guerrilla warfare tactics. The training was intensive because H&B officers were expected to provide similar training to the guerrillas they were "holding and briefing." For example, ARCS Individual Training Standard 50-2-2, dated 15 January 1952, demanded that H&B officers be proficient in: (1) the instruction of light machine guns, heavy machine guns, rifles, carbines, pistols, mortars, bazookas, recoilless weapons, and grenades; (2) the instruction of demolition procedures and field expedients used in demolition activities; (3) performing the duties of an aerial delivery technician (jumpmaster); and (4) performing duties as members of a reception committee and as parachutist members of a reception committee when qualified.

It was a tough selection process, especially when one remembers that only 5 percent of the graduates of both the Georgetown University (stage 1) and Mountain Home (stage 2) psywar training were selected for the Specialized Warfare Course (stage 3). Six months later, the 580th finally started its long-awaited trip to North Africa. Surface echelons sailed in July and September aboard the US Navy Ship (USNS) General R.E. Callen and USNS General Hodges, respectively. The B-29s departed Westover with a refueling stop in the mid-Atlantic Azores Islands before proceeding on to Wheelus AB, Libya. The shorter-range C-119s and SA-16s departed Westover with flight plans that took them to Iceland, England, and Italy before the final leg into Wheelus. With the movement also came a change in the wing's reporting channels as the 580th ARC Wing left the jurisdiction of the ARCS for that of an overseas theater command.

Setting up their operation from scratch at the far end of Wheelus, members of the 580th once again found themselves in "rustic" surroundings that must have made some of them regret badmouthing their experiences in Idaho. It was "tent city" for the first group, and it would stay that way for months. By this time, the Mountain Home-toughened veterans were indeed living proof of the old pioneer adage "The cowards never started and the weak died along the way." It was just as well they landed ready because Killer Kane was anxious to move forward with some very definite ideas on the direction the 580th should take.

And the first direction the wing commander took his B-29 bombers was down. During the 1943 Ploesti mission, Kane and the other bomber commanders had taken their B-24 heavy bombers to the target in formation at 500 feet. On flights out over the Mediterranean Sea, Kane now determined to show his B-29 pilots they could do as well or better. Veterans of these hair-raising flights report that the huge bombers were flying so low over the sea that their propeller blasts were leaving "rooster

tails” in the water behind them! Flying low-level missions in the pitch-black nights over North Africa’s deserts put the B-29s at a more practical, but still dangerous, altitude of 500 feet. The bomber was equipped with the HTR-13 obstruction-warning radar developed expressly for such missions. The operative word here is warning. Unlike the more advanced systems of the future, this system did not take control of the aircraft to raise it above terrain obstacles in its flight path. In the desolate Libyan deserts during the mid-1950s, the HTR-13 could only warn the pilot to pull up or to mark the spot where the aircraft would collide with the ground. It happened in January 1954 when a B-29 impacted the ground at cruise speed on just such a low-level mission. Regardless of such tragedies, the 580th had little option but to continue training with its Army “cousins” in Europe—usually the Army’s 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne), based in Germany’s magnificent Bavarian Alps, although the 10th routinely came to Libya for parachute and desert survival training with the 580th’s squadrons. To accurately mark the drop zone for the Green Berets, the B-29 navigator sitting in the bomber’s Plexiglas nose would use the famous Norden bombsight developed during World War II. Fortunately for the paratroopers, the sight proved equally effective for bodies as well as bombs, even at 1,000-foot jump altitudes. As useful as this training was, the 580th would not be allowed to forget it was only a means to an end. And the “end” for this mission would inevitably take place behind the Iron Curtain.

Like most of nature’s amphibians, the SA-16 Albatross was a creature that excelled in neither land nor water environments. Its real value lay in its ability to function in both environments. And for a special operations unit that could hardly expect access to established airfields in Soviet-controlled territory, the rugged SA-16 made every lake, river, and inland sea a possible landing site. And there was always the possibility that the 580th would be called upon to exploit that capability. The sturdy Albatross cruised at 140 knots and could stay aloft for up to 16 hours with maximum allowable fuel. In this configuration, even its wing-mounted floats held fuel (200 gallons in each float). Unquestionably the most versatile aircraft in the ARC wings, the SA-16 could carry Special Forces teams to every conceivable location on land and water, day or night.

Shortly after its arrival in Libya, the 580th got another bonus with the arrival of four new SA-16s from the Grumman factory in Long Island, New York. “Someone” had obviously put the highest priority on the order, as all four SA-16s had sequential tail numbers (17252, -3, -4, and -5) right off the production line. Perhaps not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth, the happy SA-16 pilots didn’t stop to question why they had suddenly become so important. With new aircraft, the SA-16 flight began flying classified courier missions involving both material and personnel throughout the Mediterranean, southwest Asia, and southern Europe. The flight’s versatility was becoming more apparent every month, and the crews went where the action was. The action came in many different guises and so did the official explanation for these seemingly routine flights. For some special flights, there would be no explanation of any sort. There couldn’t be, because as far as the US government was concerned, these flights never happened.

In late 1955, an SA-16 pilot from the 580th reported to the US Embassy in Athens, Greece, for a most unusual mission briefing. The stranger in civilian clothes didn’t bother to identify himself, and the pilot wasn’t foolish enough to press the point. This mission called for a night, low level infiltration behind Stalin’s Iron Curtain into the area of the Balkans where the borders of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Greece meet. Once there, the aircraft would make a clandestine landing in the darkness on a lake from which three individuals would be extracted and returned to Greece.

The H&B Squadron had deployed to Libya with the rest of the wing in the summer and fall of 1952 and soon began working closely with the Green Berets stationed in Germany. The Army Special Forces troopers would frequently come to Wheelus for joint weapons and demolition training, as well as for the previously mentioned desert survival training in the barren wastelands south of the airfield. Other anonymous individuals from USI would also attend these training sessions before moving on to places and missions of no concern to the H&B trainers or Major Joseph. The major was, destined to be privy to the secrets of another unit within the 580th, one that warranted barbed wire fences and 24-hour-a-day security to provide the needed privacy.

The Airborne Materials Assembly (AMA) Squadron stored thousands of Communist-bloc and US weapons for aerial delivery behind the Iron Curtain. Rations were also stored after first having their English language labels removed and replaced with the language spoken in the country for which the rations were destined.

These 580th AMA riggers are customizing packages for airdrop. Packing nonstandard-sized bundles for parachute drop was just one of the AMA's specialties.

When Major Joseph assumed command of the 580th Airborne Materials Assembly Squadron in 1954, he discovered the true logistical power inherent in an ARC wing. Like his old H&B Squadron, the AMA Squadron was far more active than its innocuous title would suggest. Rigging parachutes and preparing nonstandard-sized bundles for parachute drop were routine activities, but it was what went into the bundles that told the true story of the AMA.

Stored in the AMA warehouses were thousands of Communist-bloc small arms weapons, waiting for the day they would be packed and "paradropped" behind the Iron Curtain to anti-Communist partisans. Purchased on the international arms market, there was no way they could be traced even should anyone bother to try. All had been stripped down, cleaned, and test fired by AMA armorers before being stacked for future shipment.

In addition to the weapons, field rations had been purchased for delivery to resistance movements present or anticipated in Communist-controlled territories. Unlike the Communist-made weapons whose source was self-evident, the rations had to be "sterilized" to hide their origin. Each individual item had its English-language label removed and replaced by a description of the same item in the language of the country for which it was intended. Both weapons and rations packaging did have one thing in common, and that was the unique manner in which they were packed for long-term storage.

"Seal and peel" was a technique developed specifically to protect AMA's weapons and rations from every conceivable combination of weather. The process was as simple as it was effective. For example, a Soviet-built assault rifle and extra magazines of 7.62 mm ammunition were tightly wrapped in cloth, then briefly dunked into a liquid solution, and retrieved. Within minutes the cloth bundle would harden to a tough, quarter-inch thick, brown-colored plastic shell that would protect the contents even if submerged in salt water. Shipments of both weapons and rations were exported in this configuration to various "customers" on a number of occasions.

In addition to AMA personnel, USI maintained a liaison office within the protected compound to ensure a prompt response to its own needs in the region. The integration of its people into the 580th's airlift and logistical system gave the US the capability to support a range of both military and USI special operations across vast distances while still maintaining the low profile that was mandatory for success in a high-stakes competition neither Washington nor Moscow were anxious to publicize.

In September 1953, Headquarters Air Force reduced its three ARC wings from wing to group size, losing in the process their capability to produce psywar materials (the Reproduction Squadron), direct support (the Holding and Briefing Squadron), and long-range communications (the Communications Squadron) to Army and USI guerrilla forces in the field. Other than a small group headquarters, only the flying squadron and, significantly, the multipurpose AMA Squadron remained in the groups. Despite this reduction in capability, the 580th Air Resupply Group remained active for the remaining 36 months of its existence primarily through its support of the Army Special Forces in Germany.

General Order 37, Headquarters Seventeenth Air Force, dated 12 October 1956, ordered the deactivation of the 580th Air Resupply Group at its home base in Libya. With minimal fanfare, its personnel and remaining aircraft were transferred to other duties and bases. Appropriately, the 580th left town in much the same manner it had flown its silent-success missions behind the Iron Curtain.

Two Air Force Albatrosses were involved in unusual incidents, both of which lend credence to the epithet "Grumman Ironworks." Based upon experiences in World War II, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) planned the development of classified air units during the early 1950s. One such brainchild, designed for integral Air Force operations, evolved into the 580th, 581st and 582nd Air Resupply and Communication Wings Formed to operate in the Far East, Europe, and Africa, these clandestine units, under CIA auspices, could penetrate foreign borders to infiltrate agents and equipment. The 581st, which compiled an impressive record of covert activities using Albatrosses behind enemy lines in Korea, operated both SA-16A and surplus B-29 aircraft. The B-29s flew long range missions with heavy loads while the SA-16A's amphibious abilities made it ideal for covert insertions and pick ups. Danger became a byword as missions were usually flown at night and at extremely low altitudes to avoid radar detection. At least three B-29s were lost and one SA-16A, serial number 51-001 of the 580th ARCW, met a similar fate.

580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing

Wing Heraldry
Air Resupply Sq
Airborne Material Assembly Sq
Communications Sq
Holding & Briefing Sq
Maintenance Sq
Motor Vehicle Sq
Reproduction Sq

The 580th Air Resupply and Communications Wing was activated on 16 April 1951 at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. Upon completion of their training, in September 1952, the Wing was deployed to Wheelus Field in Libya.

On 8 September 1953, the Wing was reduced to Group strength and the Communications Squadron, Holding & Briefing Squadron, Maintenance Squadron, Motor Vehicle Squadron and Reproduction Squadron were deactivated.

Colonel John R. Kane	Commanding Officer
Colonel Frederick J. Knorre, Jr.	Deputy Commanding Officer
Captain Fred A. McConnell, Jr.	Adjutant
Captain Martin Deckner	Inspector
Major Oscar E. Rymer (Acting)	Personnel Officer
Lt. Colonel William B. Rider	Intelligence Officer
Lt. Colonel Roderick G. Darelus	Operations Officer
Major Charles B. Grimm	Material Officer

The 580th ARC Wing, commanded by Col. John R. "Killer" Kane of World War II Ploesti fame, deployed to Wheelus Field, Libya, and the 581st, under Col. John K. Arnold, Jr. moved to Clark Field, Philippine Is. In September 1952 Brig. Gen. Monro MacCloskey, whose World War II special air warfare experiences have been mentioned, took command of ARCS, replacing Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Millard C. Young. 4 The 582nd ARC Wing formed, Col. Robert J. Fish, Commander, destined for RAF Molesworth, England, and at least one more, the 583rd, was planned, supposedly to move to Annecy, France in the Haute-Savoie.

Air Force Order of Battle
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Sources

Air Force Order of Battle
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Sources