

550th GUIDED MISSILE WING

MISSION

LINEAGE

550th Guided Missile Wing established, 27 Jun 1949

Activated, 20 Jul 1949

Inactivated, 30 Dec 1950

STATIONS

Eglin AFB, FL, 20 Jul 1949

Patrick AFB, FL, 11-30 Dec 1950

ASSIGNMENTS

Air Proving Ground, 20 Jul 1949

Long Range Proving Ground Division, 1-30 Dec 1950

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1949-1950

B-29, 1949-1950

T-33, 1950

F-80, 1950

F-86, 1950

COMMANDERS

Col Thomas J. Gent, Jr., 20 Jul 1949

Col George M. McNeese, 23 Oct-30 Dec 1950

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

None

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

None

EMBLEM

None

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Replaced 1st Experimental Guided Missiles Group in Jul 1949. Developed tactics and techniques for employment of USAF guided missiles and drone aircraft. Service tested radio-controlled B-17, B-29, and T-33 aircraft. Monitored research and development of several air-to-surface and surface-to-surface guided missiles, including Lark, Matador, GAPA, Falcon, Shrike, Rascal, Snark, and Boojum types. ***Replaced by 4800th Guided Missile Wing in Dec 1950.***

Meanwhile, the 1st Experimental Guided Missile Group was established at the Air Proving Ground Command. This organization was to have responsibility for operation of the drones on their return from "Crossroads". In addition, the Group was assigned testing responsibility for the newly emerging guided missile program.

After successfully completing the "Crossroads" mission the drones arrived at Eglin and stepped into an active testing program of JB-2 missiles, a modification of the German V-1 Buzz Bomb. Following this the Groups executed a series of remote controlled ditching (water landings) of B-17 drones to determine the validity of data obtained through similar tests conducted with scale models. In this manner the validity of future model testing could be established without the expenditure of full scale aircraft.

As the grease paint and glamour of Hollywood rubbed off, the drone people found their mother organization redesignated and expanded into the 550th Guided Missiles Wing. B-29 drone aircraft were used for a time, but with the completion of the "Banshee" project they were withdrawn.

Another AEC test was forthcoming and drone activity would again be required. Long range plans indicated a requirement of this type. Since the use of drones for other purposes by the 550th appeared to be very limited, and to prevent the recurrent disruption of the wing caused by the periodic withdrawal of drone personnel and equipment, a separate 3200th Drone Squadron was formed and placed within the structure of the, 3200th Proof Test Wing. From this unit personnel were temporarily assigned to support the "Greenhouse" project.

In mid-1950 the organization moved to Field Three and the first jet drone aircraft arrived. The

original equipment was two-place T-33 type jet trainers modified as drones and directors. Later the F-80 became the standard jet drone.

The U.S. Air Force 1st Experimental Guided Missiles Group that had been formed at Eglin Air Field in 1946 was inactivated on July 20, 1949, and replaced by the 550th Guided Missiles Wing. The 97 officers and 523 airmen of the 1st were transferred to the new 550th Wing, and were assigned duties identical to their tasks in the old Experimental Guided Missiles Group. The 550th was a Wing-level organization, rather than the smaller Group, and it had four squadrons to carry out its functions rather than depend on the host unit for support. The 550th Headquarters Squadron, the 1st Guided Missiles Squadron, the 2nd Guided Missiles Squadron, and the 550th Maintenance Squadron (Guided Missiles) comprised the new Guided Missiles Wing. Gone was the "Experimental" part of the name. Instead, the 1st Guided Missiles Squadron was given the responsibility of air to surface guided bombs and missiles, while the 2nd Guided Missiles Squadron was given the task of surface to surface missiles, which included the JB-2, most of the drones, and the new Matador which at that time was still in the hands of the Martin Company. The 550th Maintenance Squadron (Guided Missiles) had been the former 1st Experimental Air Service Squadron.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

Created: 5 Nov 2011

Updated:

Sources

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