

963 AIRBORNE AIR CONTROL SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

3 Sea-Search Attack Squadron [Heavy], constituted 7 Dec 1942
Activated, 10 Dec 1942
Redesignated 3 Search Attack Squadron [Heavy], 22 Nov 1943
Disbanded, 10 Apr 1944

163 Liaison Squadron constituted, 11 May 1944
Activated, 15 May 1944
Inactivated, 27 Jan 1946
Activated, 3 Oct 1946
Inactivated, 1 Apr 1949

963 Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron constituted, 8 Dec 1954
Activated, 8 Mar 1955
Inactivated, 30 Apr 1976
Redesignated 963 Airborne Warning and Control Squadron, 5 May 1976
Activated, 1 Jul 1976

3 Search Attack Squadron [Heavy], 163 Liaison Squadron and 963 Airborne Warning and Control Squadron consolidated, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated squadron retains 963 Airborne Warning and Control Squadron designation.

Redesignated 963 Airborne Air Control Squadron, 1 Jul 1994

STATIONS

Langley Field, VA, 10 Dec 1942–10 Apr 1944
Cox Field, TX, 15 May 1944
Brownwood AAfld, TX, 8 Oct 1944–1 Jan 1945
Schofield Barracks, TH, 20 Jan–6 Apr 1945
Okinawa, 3 May 1945
Ft William McKinley, Luzon, c. 24 Dec 1945–27 Jan 1946
Marshall Field (later, AFB), KS, 3 Oct 1946–1 Apr 1949
McClellan AFB, CA, 8 Mar 1955–30 Apr 1976
Tinker AFB, OK, 1 Jul 1976

ASSIGNMENTS

1 Sea–Search Attack Group (later, 1 Sea-Search Attack Unit; 1 Search Attack Group), 10 Dec 1942–10 Apr 1944
III Tactical Air Division, 15 May 1944
Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas, 20 Jan 1945
Seventh Air Force, 14 Jul 1945
VII Bomber Command, 1 Dec 1945
Pacific Air Command, US Army, 25 Dec 1945–27 Jan 1946
Ninth Air Force, 3 Oct 1946
Tenth Air Force, 1 Dec 1948–1 Apr 1949
8 Air Division, 8 Mar 1955
552 Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing (later, 552 Airborne Warning and Control Group), 8 Jul 1955–30 Apr 1976
552 Airborne Warning and Control Wing (later, 552 Airborne Warning and Control Division; 552 Airborne Warning and Control Wing; 552 Air Control Wing), 1 Jul 1976
552 Operations Group, 29 May 1992

ATTACHMENTS

Tenth Army for operations, 20 Jan 1945–10 Aug 1945
Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing, Provisional, 8 Mar–7 Jul 1955

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B–18, 1942–1943
B–24, 1943–1944
L–5, 1944–1945
UC–64, 1944
L–4, 1945
L–5, 1946–1949
C–45, 1946–1947
R–5, 1947–1949
R–6, 1947
L–13, 1948–1949
H–5, 1948–1949

RC-121, 1955-1959, 1961-1963
TC-121, 1959-1961, 1972-1975
EC-121, 1963-1972
C-121, 1969-1976
E-3, 1977

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Claude W. Campbell, #1957
Lt Col James W. Patterson Jr.
Lt Col Kimberly J. Corcoran, 10 Aug 2000
Lt Col Joseph J. Rossacci, 12 Sep 2002

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Antisubmarine, American Theater
Ryukyus

Southwest Asia
Defense of Saudi Arabia
Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Panama, 1989-1990

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device
1 Jul 1969-30 Jun 1970
1 Jul 1971-31 Dec 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1961-30 Jun 1963
15 Apr 1965-1 Jul 1966
2 Jul 1966-1 Jul 1968
1 Jul 1970-30 Jun 1971
1 Jul 1974-30 Jun 1975
1 Jul 1977-30 Jun 1978
1 Jul 1978-30 Jun 1980
1 Jul 1982-30 Jun 1984
1 May 1985-30 Apr 1987
1 May 1987-30 Apr 1989

1 Dec 1989–1 Dec 1991

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

1 Apr 1966–28 Jan 1973

EMBLEM





EMBLEM

A disc checky, Black and White, edged with a narrow Black border, overall a Blue winged chess knight garnished Light Blue, eyed Yellow emitting three lightning bolts, one to dexter, one to the sinister top of the disc and one towards sinister base. (Approved, 24 May 1977; replaced emblem approved, 15 Aug 1956)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Tested electronic equipment and trained crews for antisubmarine operations; antisubmarine patrols, 1943. Replacement training unit, Jun–Oct 1944. Combat in Western Pacific, 16 May–c. 1 Jul 1945.

Replacement training, Jun-Oct 1944; combat in Western Pacific, 16 May-c. 1 Jul 1945

The 163 Liaison Squadron came to the Seventh in January 1945 and was stationed at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii until it moved to Okinawa in May 1945. It was in combat there from 16 May to July 1945. The Squadron flew L-5B liaison planes which had no distinctive unit markings.

The 963 Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron was activated March 8, 1955, at McClellan Air Force Base, Calif. It was assigned to the 552nd Airborne Early Warning & Control Wing of the Aerospace Defense Command. Its mission was to detect hostile forces and control defensive interceptors beyond the range of ground-based radars. The squadron was equipped with the RC-121 Constellation, a modified C-121 aircraft outfitted with a long range surveillance radar, identification friend or foe equipment and a variety of communications systems. The unit flew strategic air defense, anti-submarine warfare and air weather reconnaissance missions.

During the Southeast Asian conflict, aircrews from the 963rd Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron provided radar service for F-4C Phantom II fighters that scored the first MiG kills over North Vietnam. Under the code name College Eye, these crew members controlled more than 210,000 aircraft operations and assisted in the successful rescue of 80 downed crew members. For these sustained efforts, the unit was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Citation with "V" device and the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm.

The organization was inactivated April 30, 1976, at McClellan Air Force Base, Calif. Its retirement lasted only two months.

The organization was activated July 1, 1976, as the 963rd Airborne Warning and Control Squadron, the first operational squadron of the 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing. Along with new designation, new parent command, and new home station, the squadron was equipped with new E-3 Sentry aircraft. With this unique system came an expanded mission for the "Blue Knight" crews: to employ the E-3's enhanced capabilities for all-altitude and deep look surveillance, early warning, intercept control, and air battle management in a variety of tactical, strategic and special missions.

In September 1978 the 963rd represented the 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing in the first operational deployment of the E-3. Deployed to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, "Blue Knight" crews participated in a multinational air defense exercise over the Republic of Korea called Cope Jade Charlie '78.

Sep 1978 -- The 963 AWACS made its first operational deployment utilizing the E-3 AWACS to Kadena AB, Japan. The 963 AWACS exercised over the Republic of Korea in a multinational operation called COPE JADE CHARLIE.

Oct 1979 -- South Korean President, Park Chung Hee, was assassinated. In less than six hours, the 963 AWACS mobilized making its way to South Korea. The aircraft and aircrews remained in South Korea for 60 days and flew 54 missions for a total of 374 flying hours.

In early 1979 the 963rd represented the wing in demonstrations for military and political leaders in such diverse locations as Panama and Norway.

When President Park Chung Hee of the Republic of Korea was assassinated in late October 1979, the 963rd was directed to deploy to Osan Air Base, Korea. Less than six hours after the tasking was received, the first aircraft lifted off the runway, fully loaded with crews and equipment. The crews and E-3s remained in Korea for 60 days and flew 54 missions totaling 372 flying hours. "Blue Knight" crews provided deep look surveillance over the Korean Peninsula and conducted joint training missions to enhance American and Korean air defense capabilities.

In early 1980 tensions increased in the Middle East after the crisis in Iran; the 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing was directed to deploy to Egypt, and the "Blue Knight" conducted joint training missions with the Egyptian Air Force.

14 Mar 1980 -- A crew from the 963 AWACS, while on scramble over Iceland, located and saved a lost civilian aircraft.

When unrest flared again in South Korea in May 1980, the 963rd was tasked to return to Asia. Twenty four hours after the deployment order issued, the first crew was on the ground in Okinawa. "Blue Knights" flew missions over Korea for nearly 30 days. While at Kadena the crews assisted the 961st Airborne Warning and Control Squadron in becoming operational two months ahead of schedule.

In the fall of 1980 Iran and Iraq declared war, causing international concern. Crews and aircraft from the 552nd Airborne Warning and Control Wing were deployed to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to augment the Royal Saudi Air Force's radar coverage of Saudi airspace. The 963rd provided crew members and support personnel on 30-day temporary duty assignments to support the effort.

Just a few months later, in December 1980, 963rd crews on temporary duty at Keflavik Naval Air Station, Iceland, redeployed to Ramstein Air Base, West Germany, in response to heightening tensions in Poland. Linking up with NATO groundbased radar sites, the operation, called Exercise Creek Sentry, monitored East European air activity during the crisis.

Crews from the 963rd deployed to Egypt in October 1981 after the assassination of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The unit deployed to Egypt again in November 1981 to take part in the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force exercise Bright Star '82.

The 963rd also supports the 552nd Air Control Wing's commitment to the North American Aerospace Defense Command, providing crews on 24-hour alert in support of that command's tasking. The squadron also rotates crews on temporary duty assignment to the 960th Airborne Warning and Control Squadron, Keflavik Naval Air Station, providing command and control capability with the E-3 to the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Forces.

Crews from the 963rd routinely participate in recurring training exercises such as Red Flag and Maple Flag, involving United States and allied forces. These permit Air Force, Navy, Army and Marine aircrews to develop and practice combat tactics. In these exercises "Blue Knights" direct friendly aircraft against simulated foes. They also conduct frequent training missions with ACC ground-based radar personnel in the continental United States and Alaska.

When the United States took action in December 1989 against Panamanian forces, the 963rd was directly involved flying mission sorties out of Tinker AFB, Okla. The sorties for Operation Just Cause provided overall command and control and situational awareness for ground and airborne commanders.

In August 1990, the 963rd was the first squadron deployed to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Desert Shield to deter Iraqi aggression in the Middle East. Immediately after arrival the 963rd crews began continuous deep look surveillance over Kuwait and Iraq.

When hostilities broke out on January 17, 1991, the 963rd transitioned to flying combat support sorties for Operation Desert Storm. At the same time, additional crews began flying sorties out of Incirlik, Turkey for Operation Proven Force. For 43 days the 963rd helped provide 24 hour radar coverage of the entire combat area. Between both Desert Storm and Proven Force the aircrews flew 4000 flying hours during that period.

Following the conclusion of Operation Desert Storm on March 1991, the 963rd transitioned to Operation Southern Watch to enforce United Nations imposed sanctions against Iraq.

In March 1991, Operation Provide Comfort began in Incirlik, Turkey. The squadron provided command and control in support of Kurdish Relief Operations and aided in the rescue of avalanche victims on several occasions.

In August 1991, 963rd crews deployed to Howard Air Force Base, Panama to support international efforts to stop the flow of illegal drugs.

On July 1, 1994 the 963rd AWACS underwent an official name change to its present designation as the 963rd Airborne Air Control Squadron.

The 963rd AACS participated in Operation MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY from Sept. 9, 1994 to Sept. 29, 1994. This operation restored President Aristede as the lawful head of the Haitian government and helped to ensure the return of democracy to the people of Haiti.

Crewmembers from the unit currently support North American Aerospace Defense Command Alert, support national command authority taskings on a rotating basis in Al Kharj, Saudi Arabia, Incirlik Air Base, Turkey and Howard Air Base, Panama and take part in Composite Force exercises throughout the world such as Red/Green Flag.

15 Jan 1997 -- Lieutenant Colonel John J. Kennedy, Jr., assumed command of the 963d Airborne Air Control Squadron replacing Lieutenant Colonel Alan L. Vogel. Lieutenant Colonel John J. Kennedy, Jr., became the first non-rated officer in Air Force history to command an operational flying squadron.

30 Apr-6 May 1995 -- The 552ACW supported Woodland Cougar 95 (WC 95), the Air Force's largest combat search and rescue exercise to date. The Twelfth Air Force hosted WC 95 and units from the Air Force, Marine Corps and Navy all participated. The 963 AACS supplied one E-3 AWACS aircraft and one aircrew.

26 Aug 2007 – 7 Jan 2008 – The 963 AACS deployed to ADAB in support of CENTCOM OEF & OIF taskings. The 963 AACS flew 179 sorties for a total of 1,919.2 flying hours.

2 Jan – 7 May 2009 – The 963 AACS and members of the 552 MXG deployed to ADAB in support of CENTCOM AEF taskings supporting OIF and OEF. The 963 AACS flew a total of 158 sorties for 1781.7 hours during this deployment.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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