

18th FLIGHT TEST SQUADRON



MISSION

The mission of 18th Flight Test Squadron is to conduct operational test and evaluations for all Air Force special operations assets. It serves as the command focal point for all test related matters. The squadron conducts operational tests under realistic wartime scenarios to determine that the suitability of equipment, concepts, tactics, and procedures meet designated operational requirements. Testing includes evaluation of operational effectiveness, maintenance suitability, and human performance factors. Many of the tests are joint command and joint service programs.

The 18th Flight Test Squadron consists of a command section with eight functionally organized flights: fixed wing, rotary and tilt-rotor, non-traditional, operations analysis, combat applications, special missions, instrumentation and mission support.

LINEAGE

18th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 20 Nov 1940

Activated, 15 Jan 1941

Redesignated 18th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, 20 Aug 1943

Inactivated, 28 Aug 1945

18th Special Operations Squadron constituted, 18 Jan 1969

Activated, 25 Jan 1969

Inactivated, 31 Dec 1972

18th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy and 18th Special Operations Squadron consolidated, 19 Sep 1985

Redesignated 18th Test Squadron, 1 Jul 1991
Activated, 15 Jul 1991
Redesignated 18th Flight Test Squadron, 23 Mar 1994
Inactivated, 1 Apr 1994
Activated, 1 Apr 1994

STATIONS

Langley Field, VA, 15 Jan 1941
Westover Field, MA, 29 May 1941
Pendleton Field, OR, 27 Jan 1942
Davis-Monthan Field, AZ, 13 May 1942
Geiger Field, WA, 4 Jul 1942
Ephrata AAB, WA, 1 Dec 1942
Blythe AAFld, CA, 7 Dec 1942
Salinas AAB, CA, 29 May 1943 (operated from Kern Co Aprt, Bakersfield, CA, 22 Jun–13 Jul 1943)
Blythe AAFld, CA, 13 Jul 1943–2 Apr 1944
Mendlesham, England, 23 Apr 1944–24 Jul 1945
Sioux Falls AAFld, SD, 13–28 Aug 1945
Lockbourne AFB, OH, 25 Jan–1 Oct 1969
Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam, Oct 1969
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, 25 Aug 1971–31 Dec 1972
Edwards AFB, CA, 15 Jul 1991–1 Apr 1994
Hurlburt Field, FL, 1 Apr 1994

ASSIGNMENTS

34th Bombardment Group, 15 Jan 1941–28 Aug 1945
1st Special Operations Wing, 25 Jan 1969
4410th Combat Crew Training Wing, 15 Jul 1969
14th Special Operations Wing, 1 Oct 1969
56th Special Operations Wing, 25 Aug 1971–31 Dec 1972
Special Missions Operational Test and Evaluation Center, 15 Jul 1991–1 Apr 1994
Air Force Special Operations Command, 1 Apr 1994

WEAPON SYSTEMS

PT-17, 1941
LB-30, 1941
B-18A, 1941
B-17E
B-17F
B-17G
B-24D, 1943–1944
B-24H
B-25J

AC-119K, 1969-1972

COMMANDERS

Maj Torgils G. Wold, 15 Jan 1941
LTC Ralph E. Koon, by 7 Dec 1941
Capt Allen Lindberg, c. 13 Feb 1942
Maj Theodore A. Milton, 21 Jul 1942
Maj Charles Lancaster, 28 Oct 1942
Maj Harold M. Harmon, 19 Feb 1943
Maj Wesley A. Anderson, 21 Apr 1943
Capt Winston O. Defieux, 12 May 1943
Capt Robert Wilcox, 11 Jul 1943
Maj James H. Keenan, 26 Jul 1943
LTC William S. Boyd, 13 Nov 1943
LTC Frank R. Crabtree, 8 Aug 1944
Maj Charles Cook, Jun-28 Aug 1945
LTC Ellwood E. Johnson, 29 Jan 1969
LTC Hugh M. Matheson, 1 May 1970
LTC Charles F. Apgar, 1 Sep 1970
LTC Leroy A. Bruflat, 15 Feb 1971
LTC Thomas L. Kelsey, 14 Jul 1971
LTC Fritz F. Hugger, 18 Dec 1971
LTC Robert G. Matthews, 1 Jan 1972
LTC Lawrence R. Hileman, by Oct-31 Dec 1972
Unkn, 15 Jul 1991
Col Jon T. Huinker, 5 Aug 1994
Col Clark P. Lee, 17 Jun 1996
Col James A. Sills, 29 Jun 1998
Col Joseph W. Arvai, 1 Jul 1999
LTC Count B. Tye Jr., 22 Nov 2000
LTC Jeff D. White, 20 May 2002
LTC Joseph B. Maguire, 18 Jun 2004
LTC David Haupt, 23 Jun 2006
LTC Patrick Pope, 20 May 2011

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Antisubmarine, American Theater
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy

Northern France
Rhineland
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Vietnam
Vietnam Summer-Fall, 1969
Vietnam Winter-Spring, 1970
Sanctuary Counteroffensive
Southwest Monsoon
Commando Hunt V
Commando Hunt VI
Commando Hunt VII
Vietnam Ceasefire

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citation
Southeast Asia, 1 Apr–31 Dec 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards With Combat "V" Device

1 Jul 1970–30 Jun 1971
25 Aug–30 Nov 1971
1 Dec 1971–29 Feb 1972
8 Apr–13 May 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jun 1995-31 Aug 1996
1 Sep 1996-31 Aug 1997
1 Sep 1999-31 Aug 2001
1 Sep 2001-31 Aug 2003
1 Sep 2003-30 Sep 2004
1 Oct 2004-30 Sep 2005
1 Oct 2005-30 Sep 2006

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm
[Oct] 1969–31 Dec 1972

EMBLEM



18th Special Operations Squadron emblem

18th Flight Test Squadron emblem: Azure, between a stylized vol Argent a spearhead Or garnished Sable surmounted at tip by a scale of the last, all within a diminished border Or. (Approved, 13 Jul 1992; replaced emblems approved, 16 Dec 1969 and 20 Mar 1942)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 18th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) was constituted on 20 Nov 1940 and activated on 15 Jan 1941. Using PT-17, B-18 and B-17 aircraft, trained and participated in maneuvers until 7 Dec 1941. Transferred to the western United States in Jan 1942 to bolster defense forces and serve as training unit. Served as replacement training unit from mid-1942 until the end of 1943 and then began preparing for overseas duty in B-24s. Moved to England in Apr 1944 for operations with Eighth AF. Entered combat in May 1944. Helped to prepare for the invasion of Normandy by bombing airfields in France and Germany, and supported the landing in Jun by attacking coastal defenses and communications. Continued to take part in the campaign in France by

supporting ground forces at St. Lo, 24-25 Jul, and by striking V-weapon sites, gun emplacements, and supply lines throughout the summer of 1944.

Converted to B-17s and engaged primarily in bombardment of strategic objectives from Oct 1944 to Feb 1945. Targets included marshalling yards in Ludwigshaven, Hamm, Osnabruck, and Darmstadt; oil centers in Bielefeld, Merseburg, Hamburg, and Misburg; factories in Berlin, Dalteln, and Hannover; and airfields in Munster, Neumunster, and Frankfurt. In March 1945, with few industrial targets remaining and with Allied armies advancing across Germany, the squadron turned almost solely to interdicting enemy communications and supporting Allied ground forces.

After V-E Day it carried food to flooded areas of Holland and transported prisoners of war from German camps to Allied centers. Returned to the US in the summer of 1945. Inactivated on 28 Aug 1945.

A conference in mid-December 1968 agreed to retain AC-119 production aircraft nine through thirteen at St. Augustine awaiting the 18th Special Operations Squadron's activation. TAC said it lacked the people on station to maintain these five extra aircraft until the squadron was formed. A TAC conference at Lockbourne AFB on January 13, 1969, discussed activation of the 18th Special Operations Squadron and the slow aircraft deliveries. The 18th Special Operations Squadron first operated at Lockbourne in late January. For several months it concentrated on crew training, aircraft familiarization, and development of mission procedures.

The late delivery of AC-119Ks hampered combat crew training. At one time, the first combat crews were to enter Phase I training at Clinton County AFB, Ohio, on October 3 and complete the phase in December 1968. A shortage of aircraft delayed entry dates and created problems for classes moving from one training phase to the next. The first AC-119Ks were without FLIRs which further weakened training. TAC finally had to draw upon its AC-130 experience and take special measures to train FLIR operators. The training program planned to ready five crews each month, February through May, and four in June 1969. The ten-man crew of the AC-119K consisted of an aircraft commander, pilot, navigator/safety officer, FLIR/radar operator (navigator), NOD operator (navigator), flight engineer, three gunners, and an illuminator operator. Plans envisioned aircrew manning at a 1.5 ratio per assigned aircraft. The experiences of the 71st Special Operations Squadron guided the 18th Special Operations Squadron's training and deployment.

In mid-March 1969 Warner Robins Air Materiel Area personnel met with those of TAC, 18th Special Operations Squadron and 4440th Air Delivery Group to complete the AC-119K ferry configuration. Three 500-gallon rubberized fuel tanks would be installed in each aircraft, requiring the temporary removal of cockpit/cargo armor, 7.62-mm and 20-mm gun installations, the radar, and the flare launchers. In May 1969 Warner Robins Air Materiel Area advised AFLC that final preparations for the ferry/deployment configuration were over. On May 20 it closed out its AC-119 Gunship Program Office and assigned further management of the gunship program to the Cargo Aircraft Systems Management Division."

Not until October 21, 1969, did the 18th Special Operations Squadron's first six AC-119K gunships depart Lockbourne AFB for South Vietnam. Lt. Col. Ernest E. Johnson, the squadron commander, and the rest of the advance party reached Phan Rang AB on the 11th of October. The first AC-119K arrived there on November 3, 1969 and by the close of the year twelve AC-119Ks were in the theater. The final contingent of six aircraft deployed on December 27, the eighteenth, and last, AC-119K ending its transpacific flight on January 25, 1970. All aircraft were combat-configured by February 4, 1970.

The 18th Special Operations Squadron's combat operations commenced side by side with the AC-119K's combat evaluation (known as Combat King). On November 13, 1969, barely ten days after the first AC-119Ks arrived, the first combat mission was flown. During the combat evaluation (November 3, 1969-February 28, 1970), eighteen AC-119Ks flew a total of 778 of the 865 sorties scheduled, a ninety percent rate. The type of sorties ranged from armed reconnaissance to check flights. On February 1 the 18th Special Operations Squadron began flying the full rate of ten sorties a day as directed by the Seventh Air Force. After all this activity, the Combat King evaluators concluded that "the AC-119K effectively supported the PACAF mission requirements by flying its assigned combat missions. It was capable of destroying trucks and attacking targets as assigned."

The AC-119K had been into the combat evaluation almost a month when it received a new call sign and a new nickname. The 18th Special Operations Squadron reviewed a list of available calls including Gun Shy, Poor Boy, and Charlie Brown. The men of the squadron dejectedly picked Charlie Brown as the "least of these evils" but strongly asserted they deserved better. It turned out later the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing at Da Nang had an unused tactical voice call sign—Stinger. The 18th Special Operations Squadron, backed by the 14th Special Operations Wing, put in a claim for it. The 18th saw Stinger as slightly off the gunship tradition but a satisfactory compromise, a sign around which unit pride could be built and a continuation of the "S" alliteration of gunship call signs. The Seventh Air Force approved the call-sign transfer and the AC-119K became Stinger on December 1, 1969.

On April 25, 1970, the 18th Special Operations Squadron operating location at Da Nang—focal point for most squadron interdiction missions—claimed its 1,000th disabled truck

Support problems and the demand for greater time-over-target soon spurred a further adjustment in 18th Special Operations Squadron basing. The first few interdiction missions from Phu Cat clearly proved that base unsuitable for such out-country sorties. Phu Cat's distance from the target area and the AC-119K's fuel load confined Stinger operations to certain areas in Laos. Even to the closest areas, the Stingers had trouble getting 1/2 hours on target.

The 18th Special Operations Squadron lost a second aircraft on the night of June 6, 1970. Shortly after the plane took off from Da Nang, its left-engine propeller went out of control. The pilot tried to head back to base but the situation deteriorated and the crew bailed out over the South China Sea just east of Da Nang. The empty aircraft kept on seaward, creating a

momentary flurry of excitement since it seemed headed for China's Hainan Island. The Stinger crashed at an undetermined spot. All crew members but one were safely recovered.

May 2 1972 18th Special Operations Squadrons suffers third Stinger Loss. Operating from the FOL at Bien Hoa, Stinger 41 is shot down near An Loc, RVN. Three of ten crewmembers killed. Last daylight mission for Stinger gunships. The pilot of Stinger 41 was posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross.

Feb 24 1973 18th Special Operations Squadron instructors receive Vietnamese Air Service Medal and Vietnamese Aviation Wings at Tan Son Nhut Air Base for 45-day Stinger training course.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 19 Nov 2010

Updated: 6 Nov 2015

Sources

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

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.