

4258 STRATEGIC WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

4258 Strategic Wing, 2 Jun 1966-1 Apr 1970

STATIONS

U-Tapao AB, Thailand

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-52, 1967-1970

COMMANDERS

Capt Ralph W Ingram, 2 Jun 1966

Col John W. Farrar, 1 Jul 1966

Col Alex W Talmant, 1 Jul 1967

Brig Gen Richard Hoban, 5 Aug 1968

Brig Gen Woodrow A. Abbott, 11 Jul 1969

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Replaced by 307th Strategic Wing.

Activated at U-Tapao AB, Thailand, on 2/6/66, initially as an air refuelling outfit. Inactivated on 1/4/70 and replaced by the 307 SW. Possible that the 4258 SW exercised operational control over the B-52Ds stationed at U-Tapao from 4/67, although subordinate MajCom units may have been established to facilitate control.

The tanker buildup in Southeast Asia took significant steps forward beginning in June 1966. In that month, the King Cobra force at Takhli received five more KC-135s to attain its maximum strength of 15 aircraft. For a short while, refueling operations were resumed from Clark while the Kadena runway underwent extensive repair. But perhaps the most significant happening was the organization of the 4258th Strategic Wing on 2 June 1966, at Sattahip, which by this time had acquired a new name: Ban U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Air Base.

4258th was to take over control of tanker operations only after U-Tapao had attained the status of a main operating base, but its formation heralded the closer approach of that day. Actually, U-Tapao was still under construction in June. There had been some delays, but there had been some last minute compensating shifts in priorities to speed up its operational readiness by keeping people housed in tents, using makeshift water and sewage facilities longer than expected, and cutting planned air conditioning to the barest minimum. The net result was to make it the more austere in its earlier days. Major Stewart, Chief of Programs Branch, 4252d Strategic Wing, later remarked to the effect that U-Tapao was built in a rush to get more tanker operations going as soon as possible. The need was so great that the tankers were brought in and flown even though there were still big, open holes in the ramp near the fuel pits and even though there was as yet only one taxiway connecting with the runway.

U-Tapao's tanker task force, appropriately named Giant Cobra, began on 11 August 1966 with a force of ten KC-135s and without incident. Five of the tankers had deployed from Kadena, the other five being additional aircraft coming into Southeast Asia from the CONUS. At the end of that month, SAC shifted five more tankers from Takhli to U-Tapao making the latter the main KC-135 base in Southeast Asia with a total of 15 aircraft. Takhli remained a forward operating base with operational control of the Giant Cobra task force firmly held by a detachment of experienced people from the 4252d Strategic Wing. The plan was to retain this arrangement until early 1967 when U-Tapao would become a main operating base. Then, the 4258th Strategic Wing would take control of both the U-Tapao and Takhli tankers and the Don Muang operation would close down.

In retrospect, the expansion of KC-135 operations to the Taiwan base would seem so natural a sequel to what transpired during 1966 that one might well assume it would come about early in 1967, perhaps not long after the U-Tapao-based 4258th Strategic Wing took over full control of the Southeast Asia' tanker force. Indeed, at one point in the first half of 1966 indicators seemed to point to 15 tankers operating from Taiwan early in 1967, but that was not to be. In actuality, a full year was to pass before tankers came to ChingfChuan Kang. The course of events which led to their arrival, began in 1965 and embodied such subjects as the progress of construction at various bases, political considerations involving various countries, and the

search for a B—52 base in addition to Andersen. During this time there were a number of major changes from what was first envisioned in regard to the Taiwan base which were exemplified by a change in the name of the base itself.

Arc Light sorties remained at the 1,800 monthly rate until 18 July 1969 when they dropped to 1,600 with a further drop to the 1,400 level on 6 October. The reductions came mainly out of sorties launched from Andersen, in order to reap the maximum benefits from the savings involved. On 1 September 1969, the 4252d Strategic Wing at Kadena became the single manager for all KC-135s deployed to Southeast Asia; of course, the 4258th Strategic Wing continued to operate the tankers stationed in Thailand. By this time considerable progress had been made toward eliminating any remaining refueling requirements for bombers launched from Kadena. Also, as bomber sorties receded so did those of tactical aircraft, thereby precipitating a decrease in the requirements for KC-135s. At approximately the same time the bomber sortie rate dropped to 1,400, the required number of daily Young Tiger sorties fell to 46, six of them furnished by Ching Chuan Kang tankers. Between 16 March and 10 May 1970, when U-Tapao underwent extensive repairs, ten tankers operated once again from Takhli. During this particular period there was a further temporary curtailment in the daily requirement to 44 Young Tiger sorties. Of these, U-Tapao-based KC-135s furnished 27, Takhli tankers 14, and those at Ching Chuan Kang supplied the remaining three. At this time the main mission of the tankers based at Ching Chuan Kang was to provide practically all refueling for Guam-based Arc Light bombers.

It was while this arrangement was in effect that far-reaching changes occurred in Strategic Air Command's organization in the Western Pacific area. On 1 April 1970, Headquarters 3d Air Division was replaced on Guam by Headquarters Eighth Air Force, formerly located at Westover Air Force Base, Massachusetts. On the same day the 3d's former subordinate units were also renamed, the 4252d Strategic Wing became the 376th Strategic Wing at Kadena; the 4258th Strategic Wing became the 307th Strategic Wing at U-Tapao; and the 3960th Strategic Wing became the 43d Strategic Wing at Andersen. All the new units succeeded to the personnel, missions and bases of their respective predecessors. Now, plans rapidly matured to take Arc Light bomber operations not only out of Kadena but also out of Andersen.^{1°}

Activated at U-Tapao Afd, Thailand 2 June 1966 to 1 April 1970. Redesignated 307th Strategic Wing

In June, SAC activated the 4258th Strategic Wing at U-Tapao Airfield, Thailand, and gave it responsibility for satisfying some of the growing demand for in-flight refueling. The majority of the KC-135s assigned to the 4258th and the 4252d Strategic Wings came from air refueling squadrons that were deployed to the area at the same time their parent B-52 wings deployed to Guam. These tanker forces were also augmented with aircraft and crews from other air refueling squadrons. 1966

U-TAPAO ROYAL THAI NAVY AIR FIELD

11th USAF Hospital
635th Combat Support Group
1985th Communications Squadron

The 4258th Strategic Wing (SAC) was activated in June 1966 at U-Tapao under 3rd Air Division, Anderson AFB, Guam. The wing was charged with the responsibility of supporting refueling requirements of USAF fighter aircraft in Southeast Asia, plus conducting bombing missions on a daily basis.

On 1 April 1970, in conjunction with the redesignation of the 3rd Air Division, Anderson AFB, Guam, as the Eighth Air Force, the 4258th SW was redesignated as the 307th SW.

U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield Historical Brief

The 4258th Strategic Wing (SAC) was activated in June 1966 at U-Tapao under the 3rd Air Division, Andersen AFB, Guam. The wing was initially charged with the responsibility of supporting refueling requirements of USAF fighter aircraft in Southeast Asia. Later, a second mission of hosting B-52 strategic bombers was added and these aircraft conducted bombing missions over Indochina on a daily basis from U-Tapao.

4258th Strategic Wing - 36 B-52Ds, 14 KC-135s

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The six Young Tiger tankers remaining at Kadena moved to U-Tapao late in January 1967 and on 1 February of the same year the 4258th Strategic Wing assumed total operational control of Young Tiger tankers as U-Tapao became a main operating base. At this time KC-135s for Southeast Asia operations numbered 75 refuelers plus the two Combat Lightning aircraft. Their distribution was: 27, plus the two radio relay, operating from U-Tapao and eight from Takhli for a total of 35 Young Tiger tankers; and 40 based at Kadena, of which two were kept on strip alert at Andersen.

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Sources
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