

4407 COMBAT CREW TRAINING SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

4407 Combat Crew Training Squadron

STATIONS

Eglin AF Auxiliary Field #9 (Hurlburt Field), FL, 1 Dec 1967-30 Apr 1973

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

A-1

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

early 1961 the U.S. Army Special Forces entered Viet Nam to train the South Vietnamese. Based on this lead the USAF started activating its first special unit for guerrilla warfare since WWII. These units would become known as "Air Commandos". The first Air Commando unit, established on 14 April 1961, was the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron based at Eglin AFB. The unit's original allotment of aircraft were 16 C-47s, 8 B-26s and 8 T-28s. The purpose of this unit, like the Army Special Forces was to train the South Vietnamese. In this capacity, detachment 2A of the 4400th left for South Vietnam on 11 Oct. 1961. For combat purposes, the 4400th was code-named Jungle Jim, and detachment 2A was called Farm Gate. Farm Gate arrived in country with 8 T-28s, 4 SC-47s, 4 B-26s and 151 men. Additionally, all aircraft carried VNAF markings.

Being a training unit for the South Vietnamese, Farm Gate's early combat directive was to "fire back if fired upon". This directive was augmented by one dated 26 Dec. 1961, which required a VNAF crewman aboard during combat operations. T-28s were also authorized to aid the VNAF in emergency situations when the VNAF could not perform the mission. So, like its Army counterparts, the Air Commandos found themselves in a limited combat capacity by the end of 1962.

In addition to Farm Gate's T-28s, the South Vietnamese received 30 T-28s on 13 Nov 1961. This allotment would allow the VNAF to form its first T-28 squadron, known as the 2nd fighter squadron. In Feb. 1962 Farm Gate received five re-placement T-28s plus an additional five in Jan. 1963. 1962 would see another eighteen T-28s shipped to Nam to form the nucleus of a new squadron. The squadron, established in Sept. 1962, was known as the 716th recon squadron, and was allotted 18 RT-28s and 3 RC-47s. A RT-28 was simply a T-28 fitted with a special photographic belly pack. Some of the T-28s used by this squadron were modified Navy T-28Cs with the tailhook removed.

June 1963 marked the end of Farm Gate. The aircraft and personnel of the de-commissioned unit became the 34th tactical group. Under this new structure the 1st Air Commando squadron was activated. During 1963 the Air Commandos would encounter increased ground fire and the resulting losses. In Sept. 1963, .50-caliber ground fire would claim one T-28 during the heavy fighting around Soc Trang airstrip. Then on 19 Oct. 1963 six T-28s were damaged by ground fire while defending the ARVN 21st division. Another T-28 was lost and one was damaged when on 24 Nov. 1963 a mission was attacked by hidden enemy forces equipped with five 7.9 mm guns and a twin .50-caliber weapon. 1964 brought not only more losses by ground fire, but something worse structural failure. Structural failure in the form of wing separations claimed the lives of two men, Capt. Edwin G. Shank Jr. on 24 March 1964, and Capt. Robert Brumert on 9 April 1964. Because the appearance of North Vietnamese regulars and the heavier weapons they fielded made ground attacks in T-28s very unhealthy, and the fact that structural failure was emerging, the Air Force withdrew the T-28 in 1964-65. The Air Force replaced the Trojan with Al-Es in the Air Commando squadrons and with A-1Hs in VNAF units.

Although the T-28 was replaced in Viet Nam, it would appear again in strength in the Royal Laotian Air Force in 1966. As early as April of 1964, Detachment 6 of the 1st Air Commando wing,

stationed at Udorn, Thailand, was responsible for checking out Laotian pilots in T-28 aircraft. By 1967 the unit's strength had risen to approximately fifty T-28s.

USAF Unit Histories

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Sources

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