

73 SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

73 Special Operations Squadron utilizes the MC-130W Combat Spear to conduct infiltration, exfiltration, and re-supply of US and allied special operations forces in direct support of unified and theater special operations commands. The MC-130W is also capable of refueling special operations rotary wing assets, forward arming and refueling, ordnance delivery, psychological operations support through airdrops, and to some extent, command and control functions.

LINEAGE

73 Aero Squadron organized, 26 Feb 1918
Demobilized, 4 Jul 1919

73 Headquarters Squadron constituted, 18 Oct 1927
Redesignated 73 Pursuit Squadron, 8 May 1929
Activated, 15 Jul 1931
Redesignated 73 Attack Squadron, 1 Mar 1935

73 Aero Squadron organized reconstituted and consolidated with 73 Attack Squadron, 16 Oct 1936

Redesignated 73 Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 17 Oct 1939
Disbanded, 1 Nov 1943

3 Strategic Support Squadron constituted, 26 Oct 1950
Activated, 16 Nov 1950
Inactivated, 15 Jun 1961

73 Bombardment Squadron (Medium) reconstituted and consolidated with 3 Strategic Support Squadron, redesignated 73 Special Operations Squadron, 19 Sep 1985

Activated, 1 Oct 2006

Inactivated, 2015

STATIONS

Waco, TX, 26 Feb 1918

Call Field, TX, 1 Mar 1918

Garden City, NY, 16 Jul-13 Aug 1918

St Maixent, France, 5 Sep 1918

Delouze, France, 20 Sep 1918

Colombey-les-Belles, France, 5 Oct 1918

Ourches, France, 15 Nov 1918-1919

Hazelhurst Field, NY, 19 Jun-4 Jul 1919

March Field, CA, 15 Jul 1931

McChord Field, WA, 26 Jun 1940-10 Mar 1941

Elmendorf Field, AK, 14 Mar 1941 (detachments operated from Ft Randall, Umnak, Adak, and Amchitka, AK, 1942-1943)

Umnak, AK, Apr 1943

Amchitka, AK, Jun-30 Aug 1943

Paine Field, WA, 14 Sep 1943

Pyote AAFld, TX, 6 Oct-1 Nov 1943

Hunter AFB, GA, 16 Nov 1950

Barksdale AFB, LA, 5 Jan 1953-15 Jun 1961

Hurlburt Fld, FL, 1 Oct 2006

Cannon AFB, NM

ASSIGNMENTS

Unkn, 26 Feb-Nov 1918

2 Day Bombardment Group, Nov 1918-1919

Unkn, 1919-4 Jul 1919

17 Pursuit (later 17 Attack; 17 Bombardment) Group, 15 Jul 1931

28 Composite Group, 3 May 1941

Second Air Force, 6 Oct-1 Nov 1943

Second Air Force, 15 Nov 1950

4238 Strategic Wing, 1 Jul 1959-15 Jun 1961

16 Operations Group, 1 Oct 2006

27 Operations Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Unkn, 1918-1919

P-12, 1931-1934

P-26, 1934-1935
P-12, 1935-1936
A-17, 1936-1940
B-18, 1939-1942
B-26, 1942-1943
B-25, 1942-1943
C-124A, 1950

COMMANDERS

1lt Loren W. De Motte, 26 Feb 1918-4 Jul 1919
Unknown, 12 Oct 1927-15 Jul 1931
1lt Carl W. Pyle, 15 Jul 1931
1lt Hugh C. Minter, 1 Oct 1931
1lt John H. Dulligan, 8 Jul 1932
Capt Charles Douglas, 6 Sep 1933
Maj William C. Morris, 12 Jan 1934
1lt Charles B. Overacker, 3 Jul 1935
1lt Nathan B. Forrest, 26 Jul 1935
Maj Louis C. Mallory, 15 Aug 1935
Unknown, Sep 1939-Jun 1940
Maj Charles B. Overacker, Jun 1940
Capt Jack N. Donohew, 27 Mar 1941
Maj Henry S. Taylor, 15 Dec 1942
Capt Warren E. Beth, 13 Apr-1 Nov 1943
Maj Hugh B. Vail, 16 Nov 1950
Lt Col James R. Wiley, 8 Dec 1950
Lt Col Joseph W. Donovan, Apr 1951
Lt Col Robert E. Copley, By Jan 1952
Maj Fred Q. Stalker, 18 Aug 1953
Lt Col Carroll B. Markel, 1 Sep 1953
Lt Col Elmer T. Harshbarger, 6 Apr 1956
Maj Vinson S. Huegele, 1 Jul 1956 (Temporary)
Lt Col Elmer T. Harshbarger, 20 Aug 1956
Maj Vinson S. Huegele, 1 May 1958 (Temporary)
Lt Col Frank M. Newman, 23 Jun 1958
Maj Vinson S. Huegele, 25 Jul 1958
Col Frank M. Newman, 24 Sep 1958
Lt Col Courtney A. Remele, Jul 1960-15 Jun 1961
Lt Col Thomas A. Markland, 1 Oct 2006

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War I
Theater of Operations

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Aleutian Islands

Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

4 Apr 1956-31 Dec 1957

EMBLEM

73 Pursuit Squadron emblem: On a hurt and within an annulet or a conventionalized California Bear's head and shoulders affronte, with right paw raised, of the last, markings sable, eyes and tongue gules. (Approved, 23 Mar 1932)





3 Strategic Support Squadron emblem was yellow over a black field. The globe was medium blue.



73 Special Operations Squadron emblem: On a disc Sable, a globe Azure land masses Vert, perched on top of the globe is a War Hawk facing sinister wings addorsed and inverted Or, Tenné

and Gold Brown, all within a narrow border Yellow. Attached above the disc, a Black scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "WITHOUT FAIL" in Yellow letters. Attached below the disc, a Black scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "73 SOS" in Yellow letters. Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. A War Hawk is set against the night sky, with wings spread across the globe. The War Hawk is a fearsome predator, ready to strike unsuspecting prey at a moments notice (any time). Its majesty and grace is respected by all and feared by prey. The War Hawk's magnificent wings span the globe, signifying global reach (any place). The black background symbolizes the unit's primary mission, clandestine or covert, accomplished under the cover of night. (Approved, 23 Mar 1932)

MOTTO

Globesters
Without Fail

OPERATIONS

Managed an air park with Second Army, 15 Nov 1918-1919.

February 22nd is George Washington's birthday, but it is also the birthday of the 73 U. S. Aero Squadron. The latter was born at Waco, Texas, and in its ranks were 150 privates all of the volunteer variety, and one officer, 1st Lt. Loren W. DeMotte, who assumed command of the organization at its inception. Six days after the Squadron became a squadron, it picked up its barrack bags and shelter halves and hied itself to Call Field, Wichita Falls, as per such and such an order, such and such a date, such and such a headquarters. Here it received intensive training in the care and currying of airplanes. Five months of this prepared the squadron for overseas duty, or at least it was ordered to report to Garden city for transportation overseas.

After a month of waiting at this place, which, as any one who has waited at Garden City for a month knows, is a long long time, the squadron pushed off from Hoboken for France on August 13, 1918. There were no submarine scares for the 73 during its voyage, nothing but rolling, rocking, and reducing hunger among the finny tribes. It landed safely at Brest, and for the first time in its history, was billeted in barracks. Later the squadron, after being issued rifles and gas masks, which brought to it the name of "flying infantry", was ordered to St. Maixent.

After a tour of France, with Nancy, Colombey-les Belles, Delouze and other well known American stations included on the itinerary, the squadron finally found a home with the 2nd Day Bombardment Group at Ourches (Meuse), France, on November 13th 1918. Here it proceeded to act as a Park squadron, taking charge of the transportation of the Group. It completed the happy family of the Group by furnishing a football team, and teams in various other athletic competitions and, "best of all, transportation to Toul.

Constituted in the Regular Army on 18 October 1927 as the 73 Headquarters Squadron and allotted to the Eighth Corps Area. Concurrently organized with Organized Reserve personnel as a

RAI unit at San Antonio, TX.

Organized Reserve officers assigned to the unit participated in summer training at Kelly Field, TX, 1928-30 with the Headquarters, 3rd Attack Group.

Redesignated as the 73 Pursuit Squadron on 8 May 1929 and assigned to the 18th Pursuit Group.

Designated mobilization training station was Dodd Field, TX, 1927-31. Activated on 15 July 1931, less Reserve personnel, at March Field, CA. Concurrently relieved from assignment to the 18th Pursuit Group and assigned to the 17th Pursuit Group.

Reorganized and redesignated 73 Attack Squadron on 1 March 1935 and assigned to the 17th Attack Group. Awarded the Frank Luke Trophy for 1935.

Consolidated on 5 June 1936 with the 73 Aero Squadron

Participated in flood relief operations in southern California 2-5 March 1938.

Reorganized and redesignated 73 Bombardment Squadron (Medium) on 17 October 1939 and assigned to the 17th Bombardment Group.

Relieved from assignment to the 17th Bombardment Group on 3 May 1941 and assigned to the 28th Composite Group.

Combat in Northern Pacific, Dec 1941-Aug 1943.

Flew airlift support for SAC bases in CONUS and overseas from 1950-1961.

Primary mission of the 3rd Strategic Support Squadron was to move special weapons and other cargo throughout the world in the support of Strategic Air Command. The aircraft and crews are also called upon for aid in disaster relief and other domestic emergencies which may arise; perform such special support missions as may be directed by higher headquarters.

Fulfillment of the mission required the organization to maintain C-124As with 18 crews of which normally 14 were combat ready.

By the beginning of January 1951, the squadron had seven C-124s on strength, and by the end of February a full complement of 13 aircraft were on hand.

On 6 Jul 1959, C-124A, 49-254, Jumbo 14, is involved in a Broken Arrow when it crashes on takeoff from that base at 1411 hrs. CST, two minutes after the start of the takeoff roll, coming down 3,300 feet (1,000 m) S and slightly to the right of runway 14. The cargo load of an unspecified number and type of nuclear weapons was to be transported to Little Rock AFB, Arkansas. One weapon was destroyed by the post-crash fire which also burned out the airframe.

No nuclear or high explosive detonation occurred, and contamination was limited to a confined area directly below the weapon. Six flight crew of crew R-41, and one substitution, all survived the crash. Although they denied any knowledge of engine malfunctions during the takeoff roll, witnesses stated that one or more engines were after firing or backfired from the beginning of the roll throughout the entire flight. After approximately 6,000 feet of ground roll, the airframe assumed a nose high attitude as it climbed to between 50 and 100 feet, with one or more engines after firing excessively during the climb. The aircraft leveled off briefly before again assuming a nose high attitude when it then settled back to earth amidst smoke and dust. An intense fire then broke out (the aircraft was carrying 5,000 gallons of fuel). After firefighters extinguished the blaze, weapons were removed using a M246 wrecker and a 40-foot trailer.

Airmen at Cannon AFB, New Mexico, stood up the newly designated 27th Special Operations Wing during a unit re-designation and change of command ceremony on 1 October. The first AFSOC aircraft to move to Cannon will be the 73 Special Operations Squadron, which flies the MC-130W Combat Spear, The 73 is currently located at Hurlburt Field, Florida. The MC-130W is used to conduct infiltration and exfiltration and to resupply Special Operations forces. It also provides refueling capability for vertical-lift assets, like the CV-22 Osprey,

Air Force Special Operations Command inactivated the 73 Special Operations Squadron at Cannon AFB, N.M., and transferred its aircraft and personnel to Cannon's 16th SOS last week. "A squadron with almost 100 years of history does not just get inactivated," 27th Special Operations Group Commander Col. Robert Orris said during the June 12 ceremony. "We will preserve this squadron and its guidon until it begins the next chapter in its phenomenal history," he added. The 16th SOS operated AC-130H Spectre gunships until the unit's final airframe retired last month. The 16th SOS now transitions to the AC-130W Stinger II gunship variant, transferred from the former 73 SOS. AFSOC retired the AC-130H and is reshuffling its gunships in preparation to transition to the new AC-130J Ghost Rider. The command is retaining 26 gunships, which will be phased out as new AC-130Js enter service. 2015

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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