

**ALPENA COMBAT READINESS TRAINING CENTER**



## **LINEAGE**

### **STATIONS**

Alpena, MI

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **COMMANDERS**

Col Bryan J. Teff, Jan 2011

### **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

### **EMBLEM**

### **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

ANG units from all over the United States come annually to train. In addition to Air National Guardsman, other users of the site include Air Force, Army, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines.

Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, formerly named Phelps Collins, began its recorded history in the early 1900's. Before that time, Indians and local residents picked blueberries in the flat area known as the "Seven Mile Plains". With the onset of air travel, area developers saw the potential for a landing strip and plans began for Michigan's first state owned airport. The Works Progress Administration cleared and prepared the site for aircraft use. In 1931, Governor William M. Brucker accepted the site during the dedication ceremony. The airport was named after Phelps Collins, a WWI ace from the Alpena area, who was killed in action while serving in the French Escadrille.

The first military to use of the site was the 1st Pursuit Group from Selfridge Airfield; and they housed 500 personnel at the Alpena County Fairgrounds. This marked the beginning of the site as a training base.

WWI and WWII highlighted the need for training sites; and resulted in two major construction projects, the first in the 1940's for \$5M and second in the 1950's for \$2.5M. The facility could

now house and feed 2,500 personnel. The Army Air Corps was the primary user of the site until the late 1940's when the Air National Guard took over. Several improvements were made and the facility was instated as an ANG Permanent Field Training Site.

The first seven military personnel transferred from the Grayling Army Air Field in 1953. With the addition of numerous missions through the years, the employee number has grown to over 200 combined military and civilian personnel.

In the early 60's, a tower and new hangers were built. During that period, the Air Defense Command Detachment from Wurtsmith AFB, MI, had 60 persons permanently stationed in Alpena until 1972 at which time their unit was deactivated. The Grayling Air to Ground Range became part of the base property around the same time.

In 1991, the base was renamed Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, to align the name with the base mission of "combat training".

#### COMBAT READINESS TRAINING CENTER PHELPS COLLINS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

Phelps Collins Air National Guard Base is a military installation that is located in a 675 acre area on the premises of Alpena County Regional Airport, seven miles west of Alpena, Michigan.<sup>1</sup> The base was named for World War I fighter pilot and Alpena resident Captain Phelps Collins, who died in combat while flying with the famed Lafayette Escadrille. The U.S. Army Air Corps first began utilizing the airfield in 1931 for training and by 1952, it was assigned to the Air National Guard. During the Cold War, active-duty fighter interceptor squadron detachments performed alert duty at the base.

The Combat Readiness Training Center (CRTC) was established in 1986 to provide military units with year-round realistic training for their wartime missions in a simulated combat environment.<sup>3</sup> Although it was originally conceived as a military training facility, the CRTC ultimately expanded its training to include a variety of civilian emergency response and law enforcement agencies.

Units from all over the country deploy to the CRTC for training that they might otherwise not be able to receive at their home bases, thus enhancing their readiness and capability. In 2008 alone, 210 units deployed to CRTC for training.<sup>4</sup> The moderate spring and summer climate provides ideal conditions for training and the harsh winters of Northern Michigan creates realistic conditions for winter warfare training. In addition to training deployments, U.S. military units often conduct their Operational Readiness Exercises and Operational Readiness Inspections at the base.

The base has a 9,000 foot runway and an assault field landing strip for C-130s, located near the drop zone.<sup>5</sup> Capable of conducting sustained flight operations, the airfield has a large ramp that can accommodate up to 100 fighter-size aircraft and numerous support facilities.<sup>6</sup> The base boasts over 150 buildings and can house approximately 1,200 personnel at any given time. Morale Recreation and Welfare (MWR) services are also available at the base

Among the more unique facilities at the CRTC is a Rapid Runway Repair training center. This facility provides civil engineers valuable experience repairing battle-damaged runways and it includes an 800 foot runway covered with mock bomb craters.<sup>8</sup> A Prime Base Engineer Emergency Force (Prime BEEF) support facility is also present at the base. The Prime BEEF program organizes civil engineering combat support teams for deployments.<sup>9</sup> The base also houses the Airman Leadership School and the Medical Readiness Training School.

The CRTC provides training and facilities for security and law enforcement groups, both military and civilian. Military security forces typically undergo sustainment training at the base, which enables personnel to maintain proficiency in their duties.<sup>11</sup> Such training often involves tactical movements in urban warfare scenarios.<sup>12</sup> The CRTC also provides realistic firefighting training for military and civilian units and participates in state and county disaster response exercises, in conjunction with civilian emergency response and law enforcement agencies.

In December of 1998, the CRTC received the Alpena-Kadena Interim Training System (AKITS) for use by fighter pilots to assist them in air combat training.<sup>14</sup> As a part of the new system, an Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation (ACMI) pod is carried by fighter aircraft to track and film every combat maneuver. 12 satellites are also utilized to recreate the air combat maneuvers of an aircraft. In addition, AKITS eliminates the need to use live ammunition and bombs during combat training flights. The AKITS system replaced the old chalkboard and hand-gesturing system pilots traditionally utilized to debrief their training missions.

In 2008, the Joint Threat Emitter (JTE) system was installed at CRTC.<sup>15</sup> The JTEs simulate threat signals, such as those emitted by enemy surface to air missiles and anti aircraft artillery radar systems.<sup>16</sup> These threat signals are utilized to train combat pilots to defeat or otherwise avoid Integrated Air Defense Systems. The new JTE system also allows for accurate debrief and analysis following a training scenario.

Elements of the 805th Air Expeditionary Wing disembark from a C-17 of the 436th Airlift Wing, Dover AFB, DE. for their Operational Readiness Exercise at CRTC in 2008. (USAF photo)

The realistic training environment and facilities located at the Combat Readiness Training Center are second to none, making Phelps Collins Air National Guard Base an essential component to the warfighting readiness of the United States Armed Forces.

Updated:

Sources