

## 1 SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



### MISSION

The 1 Special Operations Squadron operates the MC-130H in support of joint and allied special operations forces. This aircraft is capable of delivering troops and equipment into denied areas during adverse weather conditions at night by airdrop or landing. Air crews are specially trained in night, low-level flying using night vision goggles.

### LINEAGE

1 Pursuit Squadron [Single Engine] constituted and activated, 1 Aug 1939

Redesignated 1 Pursuit Squadron [Interceptor], 6 Dec 1939

Disbanded, 1 May 1942

1 Liaison Flight constituted, 27 Sep 1949

Activated, 24 Oct 1949

Inactivated, 22 Jul 1952

Redesignated 1 Liaison Squadron, 13 Feb 1953

Activated, 8 Apr 1953

Inactivated, 18 Jan 1954

1 Air Commando Squadron, Composite constituted and activated, 17 Jun 1963

Organized, 8 Jul 1963

Redesignated 1 Air Commando Squadron, Fighter, 15 Aug 1967

Redesignated 1 Special Operations Squadron, 1 Aug 1968

1 Pursuit Squadron [Interceptor] reconstituted and consolidated with 1 Liaison Squadron and 1 Special Operations Squadron, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated organization retains 1 Special Operations Squadron designation

### **STATIONS**

Maxwell Field, AL, 1 Aug 1939

Orlando, FL, 1 Sep 1940

Eglin Field, FL, 29 Jun 1941-1 May 1942

Biggs AFB, TX, 24 Oct 1949-22 Jul 1952

George AFB, CA, 8 Apr 1953-18 Jan 1954

Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 8 Jul 1963

Pleiku AB, South Vietnam, 5 Jan 1966

Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, 20 Dec 1967

Kadena AB, Japan, 15 Dec 1972 (segment of squadron operated from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, 15 Dec 1972-28 Jan 1973)

Clark AB, Philippines, 1 Jan 1981

Kadena AB, Japan, 5 Feb 1992

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

23 Composite Group (later, Air Corps Proving Ground Detachment; Air Corps Proving Ground Group), 1 Aug 1939-1 May 1942

Twelfth Air Force, 24 Oct 1949

Fourteenth Air Force, 1 Jul 1950

Tactical Air Command, 1 Aug 1950

Ninth Air Force, 10 Aug 1951-22 Jul 1952

Ninth Air Force, 8 Apr 1953-18 Jan 1954

Pacific Air Forces, 17 Jun 1963

34 Tactical Group, 8 Jul 1963

6251 Tactical Fighter Wing, 8 Jul 1965

2 Air Division, 18 Feb 1966

14 Air Commando Wing, 8 Mar 1966

56 Air Commando (later, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations) Wing, 20 Dec 1967

18 Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Dec 1972

18 Tactical Fighter Group, 1 May 1978

3 Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Jan 1981

2 Air Division, 1 Mar 1983

Twenty-third Air Force, 1 Feb 1987

353 Special Operations Wing (later, 353d Special Operations Group), 6 Apr 1989

### **ATTACHMENTS**

2602 Tow Target Squadron, 24 Oct 1949-22 May 1950

1 Tow Target Squadron, 27 May 1950-22 Jul 1952

479 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 8 Apr 1953-18 Jan 1954

3 Tactical Fighter Wing, 21 Nov 1965-8 Mar 1966

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

P-36, 1939-1942

YP-37, 1939-1940

O-38, 1940

B-12, 1940

C-40, 1940

P-40, 1941-1942

L-13, 1949-1952

C-45, 1952

L-20, 1952

L-20, 1953-1954

H-19, 1953-1954

B-26, 1963-1964

T-28, 1963-1964

U-10, 1963-1966

C-47, 1963-1966

RB-26, 1963-1964

A-1, 1964

FC-47, 1964-1965

AC-47, 1965

C(later, MC)-130, 1972

## **COMMANDERS**

Maj John C. Crossthwaite 1 Feb 1940-30 Mar 1942

Col George K. Finan, 8 Jul 1963

Lt Col Jack A. Robinson, 26 Aug 1963

Lt Col Charles J. Chenault, 11 Apr 1964

Lt Col John M. Porter, 18 May 1964

Lt Col William R. Eichelberger, Dec 1964

Lt Col John J. Knight, 10 May 1965

Lt Col Eugene P. Deatrck, Jr., 17 Mar 1966

Lt Col Joseph L. Hart, 22 Jan 1967

Lt Col Robert A. Madden, 25 Feb 1967

Lt Col James R. Hildreth, 17 Apr 1967

Lt Col John A. Saffell Jr., 20 Dec 1967

Lt Col William B. Canning, Jun 1968

Lt Col John M. Vargo, Mar 1969

Lt Col Wallace E. Lowman, 11 Dec 1969

Lt Col Robert S. Johnson, Jun 1970

Lt Col William J. Hagan, 15 Dec 1970

Lt Col Francis J. Kaiser, 17 Jul 1971

Lt Col Martin W. Barbena, 28 Jul 1971

Lt Col James C. Harding, Jun 1972

Lt Col William H. Latham, 23 Oct 1972

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

None

### **Campaign Streamers**

*Vietnam*: Vietnam Advisory

Vietnam Defensive

Vietnam Air

Vietnam Air Offensive

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III

Vietnam Air/Ground

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV

TET 69/Counteroffensive

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**

### **Decorations**

Presidential Unit Citations (Southeast Asia)

1 Aug 1964-15 Apr 1965

8 Mar 1966-7 Mar 1967

1 Nov 1968-1 May 1969

1 Oct 1969-30 Apr 1970

1 Apr-15 Dec 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

1 Dec 1970-30 Nov 1971

1 Dec 1971-29 Feb 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 May 1963-31 Jul 1964

1 Apr 1974-31 Mar 1976

1 Apr 1976-31 Dec 1977

1 Sep 1978-30 Sep 1979

1 Oct 1979-31 May 1980  
15 Feb 1980-30 Apr 1982  
1 Feb 1986-31 Jan 1988  
6 Apr 1989-5 Apr 1991

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm  
1 Oct 1967-15 Dec 1972

## EMBLEM



1 Air Commando Squadron patches



1 Special Operations Squadron emblem and patch

On a Blue disc within a narrow Gold border a White pale and over all a Red eagle displayed eye Gold detailed Blue, outlined and detailed White, grasping in its talon in dexter base the end of an

arrow bendwise that is banded with two, in saltire with one and one palewise all Gold and grasping in its talon in sinister base a Gold rose compass highlighted White. (Approved, 20 May 1966)

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

Gunnery testing and training, 1939-1942.

Flew administrative flights, 1949-1952 and 1953-1954.

Combat in Southeast Asia, 8 Jul 1963-7 Nov 1972 and 15 Dec 1972-28 Jan 1973. Trained Vietnamese Air Force pilots in counterinsurgency operations, Jul 1963-Nov 1972.

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 1 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 21 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 T-28 with A-1Es in the Air Commando squadrons and with A-1Hs in VNAF units.

On May 30, 1964, six A-1Es arrived at Bien Hoa for duty with the 1 Air Commando Squadron as replacements for the T-28s and B-26s which had been operating there since 1961. The A-1Es soon showed themselves to be rugged, hard-hitting aircraft, well suited to the counterinsurgency role and rescue escort.

During assignment with the 56th at NKP, December 1967-November 1972, the squadron flew air cover, close support, direct air strike, armed recce, and SAR missions. In October and November 1972, the squadron's A-1s were transferred to the VNAF. The 1 SOS flew their last A-1 missions on 7 November 1972. The 1 SOS and NKP parted company on 15 December 1972 when they moved without personnel or equipment to Kadena AB. The 1 SOS later flew the C-130 and MC-130 on operational unconventional warfare missions.



The A-1s flew their last rescue escort mission on November 7. An Army UH-1 helicopter, with seven persons aboard, had crashed west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. With a typhoon closing in, the A-1s took off into heavy rain, wind, and low clouds to fly below 200 feet in an effort to locate the survivors. After finding the men, they strafed the nearby enemy troops, then called in the Jolly Green to make the recovery. Even as this last mission was being flown, the inactivation of the 1 Special Operations Squadron had begun. On November 3 four A-1s were turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force at Bien Hoa. Twelve days later the final delivery was made.

In Feb 1981, an MC-130E from the 1 Special Operations Squadron crashed into the water with the loss of 23 lives.



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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

Created: 25 Oct 2023

Updated:

Sources

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

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