

## 99<sup>th</sup> AIR BASE WING



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

99<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Heavy) established, 28 Jan 1942

Activated, 1 Jun 1942

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, Heavy, 30 Sep 1944

Inactivated, 8 Nov 1945

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, Very Heavy, 13 May 1947

Activated in the Reserve, 29 May 1947

Inactivated, 27 Jun 1949

99<sup>th</sup> Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Heavy established and activated, 1 Jan 1953

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing, Heavy, 1 Oct 1955

Inactivated, 31 Mar 1974

99<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, Very Heavy and 99<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing, Heavy consolidated, 31 Jan 1984

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Strategic Weapons Wing, 22 Jun 1989

Activated, 10 Aug 1989

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Tactics and Training Wing, 1 Sep 1991

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Wing, 15 Jun 1993

Redesignated 99<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing, 1 Oct 1995

### STATIONS

Orlando AAB, FL, 1 Jun 1942

MacDill Field, FL, 1 Jun 1942  
Pendleton Field, OR, 29 Jun 1942  
Gowen Field, ID, 28 Aug 1942  
Walla Walla, WA, 30 Sep 1942  
Sioux City AAB, IA, 18 Nov 1942-3 Jan 1943  
Oran, Algeria, 22 Feb 1943  
Navarin, Algeria, 25 Mar 1943  
Oudna, Tunisia, 4 Aug 1943  
Tortorella Airfield, Italy, 11 Dec 1943  
Marcianise, Italy, 27 Oct-8 Nov 1945  
Birmingham Muni Aprt, AL, 29 May 1947-27 Jun 1949  
Fairchild AFB, WA, 1 Jan 1953  
Westover AFB, MA, 4 Sep 1956-31 Mar 1974  
Ellsworth AFB, SD, 10 Aug 1989  
Nellis AFB, NV, 1 Oct 1995

#### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Andersen AFB, Guam, 29 Jan 1956-25 Apr 1956

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Third Air Force, 1 Jun 1942  
Second Air Force, 29 Jun 1942  
5<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing (later, 5<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing, Heavy), c. 22 Feb 1943  
Army Air Forces Service Command, 2-8 Nov 1945  
19<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing, Very Heavy (later, 19<sup>th</sup> Air Division, Bombardment), 29 May 1947-27 Jun 1949  
57<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 1 Jan 1953  
817<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 2 Jul 1969  
45<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 30 Jun 1971-31 Mar 1974  
12<sup>th</sup> Air Division, 10 Aug 1989  
Strategic Warfare Center, 31 Jul 1990  
Strategic Air Command, 1 Sep 1991  
USAF Fighter Weapons (later, USAF Weapons and Tactics) Center, 1 Jun 1992

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

3<sup>rd</sup> Air Division, 29 Jan-25 Apr 1956

#### **COMMANDERS**

None (not manned), 1 Jun-Sep 1942  
Col Fay R. Upthegrove, 14 Sep 1942  
LTC Wayne E. Thurman, 24 Nov 1943  
Col Charles W. Lawrence, 19 Dec 1943  
LTC Wayne E. Thurman, 26 Jan 1944  
Col Ford J. Lauer, 15 Feb 1944

Col Trenholm J. Meyer, 14 Jul 1944  
LTC James A. Barnett, Aug 1944  
Col Ford J. Lauer, 22 Sep 1944  
Col Raymond V. Schwanbeck, Jan 1945  
LTC Robert E. Guay, 8 Oct 1945  
Maj Joseph D. Russell, 11 Oct 1945  
Maj John S. Giegel, 16 Oct 1945-8 Nov 1945  
Unkn, 29 May 1947-27 Jun 1949  
Col Salvatore E. Manzo, 1 Jan 1953  
Col Edward D. Edwards, 2 Jul 1954  
Col Bryson R. Bailey, 16 Apr 1955  
Col John W. Gaff Jr., 15 May 1956  
Col Bryson R. Bailey, Jul 1956  
Col Selmon W. Wells, 4 Sep 1956  
Col Gene F. Oholendt, 7 Oct 1956  
Col Selmon W. Wells, 10 Nov 1956  
Col Olbert F. Lassiter, 5 Jun 1958  
Col Gordon F. Goyt, 3 Aug 1959  
Col Olbert F. Lassiter, 9 Sep 1959  
Col Delmore P. Wood, 19 Sep 1960  
Col Gordon F. Goyt, 20 Sep 1960  
Col Delmore P. Wood, 1 Nov 1960  
Col Gordon F. Goyt, 8 Feb 1962  
Col Edward M. Nichols Jr., 1 Mar 1962  
Col Charles V. Neil, 24 Feb 1964  
Col Robert E. Brofft, 1 May 1967  
Col Roy J. Sousley Jr., 1 Oct 1967  
Col Robert E. Brofft, 2 Apr 1968  
Col Maxwell V. Judas, 22 Sep 1968  
Col Robert E. Brofft, 21 Mar 1969  
Col Harold E. Ottaway, 16 Jun 1969  
Col William Wolfendon, 19 Mar 1970  
Col Paul E. Clifford, 27 Apr 1970  
Col Harold E. Ottaway, 23 Jun 1970  
Col Alfred R. Grimm, 15 Jul 1970  
Col LeRoy P. Hansen, 4 Jun 1971  
Col Donald F. Ryan, 15 Jun 1972  
Col Paul W. Maul, 13 Apr 1973  
Col John W. Rosenbalm, 20 Aug 1973-31 Mar 1974  
Col James J. McKeon, 10 Aug 1989  
Col William C. Brooks, 13 Nov 1990  
Col Robert C. Hinson, 16 Jul 1992  
Col John E. Wilcox, 1 Jun 1993  
Col John D. Ladieu, 1 Oct 1995

Col Russell T. Bolt, 23 Jul 1997  
Col Andrew S. Dichter, 2 Apr 1999  
Col Delwyn R. Eulberg, 8 Jun 2000  
Col Gerald J. Sawyer, 15 Jan 2003  
Col Richard Boutwell

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-17, 1942-1945  
AT-6  
AT-7  
AT-11, 1947-1949  
RB-29, 1953  
RB-36, 1953-1956  
GRB-36, 1955-1956  
B-52C, 1956-1971  
B-52D, 1957-1961; 1966-1973  
B-52B, 1958-1959  
KC-135, 1966-1967, 1968, 1969-1970, 1970-1972, 1973  
EC-135, 1966-1970

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

None

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II  
Tunisia  
Sicily  
Naples-Foggia  
Anzio  
Rome-Arno  
Southern France  
North Apennines  
Po Valley  
Air Offensive, Europe  
Normandy  
Northern France  
Rhineland  
Central Europe  
Air Combat, EAME Theater

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

## **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

Sicily, 5 Jul 1943

Austria, 23 Apr 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Oct 1967-1 Mar 1968

2 Mar-1 Apr 1968

1 Jul 1971-30 Jun 1972

10 Aug 1989-30 Jun 1991

1 Jul 1991-15 Apr 1993

1 Oct 1995-31 May 1997

1 Jun 1998-31 May 2000

1 Jun 2001-31 May 2003

1 Jun 2003-31 May 2004

## **EMBLEM**



## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

On September 25, 1942, the 99th Bombardment Group (Heavy) was activated at Gowan Field near Boise, Idaho. Colonel Faye R. Upthegrove was designated as the Group Commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Leroy A. Rainey was designated as the Deputy Group Commander. The 99th consisted of the 346th, 347th, 348th, and 416th Bomb squadrons. Due to congestion at Gowan Field, the 99th immediately relocated to Walla Walla, Washington. During October the 99th received twelve flight leaders with crews, and four B-17. During the first phase of training, the 99th received six more B-17s. The winter weather in Washington was not favorable for flying, so the 99th relocated to Sioux City, Iowa for the second phase of training. By the middle of November, the 99th had acquired about seventy five percent of its ground and support

personnel. The third phase of training took place at Salina, Kansas in mid January of 1943. After completion of training, the 99th departed the United States at Morrison Field, Florida in February. The 99th B-17s flew the southern route via Boriniquen, Puerto Rico; Georgetown, British Guiana; Belem, Brazil; Bathhurst, Gambia; to their destination at Marrakech, Morocco. The ground and support personnel and equipment made the journey by ship.

The 99th was attached to the 5th Bombardment Wing of 12th Air Force, stationed in North Africa. Also in the 5th Wing were the 97th and 301st Bomb Groups. The 99th was stationed at Navarin, located near Constantine. The 99th flew its first combat mission on March 31, 1943 against an enemy airdrome at Villacidro, Sardinia.

The 99th came to be referred to as the Diamondbacks, due to a diamond insignia painted on the vertical stabilizer of their B-17s.

For the rest of 1943, the 99th flew missions primarily across the Mediterranean Sea to bomb targets in Sicily and Italy. Summer dust storms made life miserable. On July 5th the group bombed an airfield at Gerbini, Sicily. An estimated one hundred enemy fighters made repetitive and fierce attacks, trying to turn the 99th back. The group penetrated enemy defenses, and destroyed the airfield. For this mission, the 99th received its first Distinguished Unit Citation.

On July 9th, the group flew missions in support of the Allied invasion of Sicily. The first Allied air attack on Rome took place on July 14th. Great care was taken by the 99th to avoid dropping any bombs on the Vatican City.

On November 2, 1943, the four B-17 groups of the 5th Wing and two B-24 groups of the 9th Air Force were combined with two fighter groups to form the new 15th Air Force. On its first day of existence, the 15th flew a 1,600 mile round trip to bomb the Messerschmitt aircraft factory at Weiner Neustadt, Austria. Each group was assigned a base on the Foggia plains, the 99th being stationed at Tortorella. The planes arrived at Tortorella in December of 1943. Living conditions at Tortorella were very harsh. The summers were hot and dusty, the winters cold and wet. Buildings were few, and airplane maintenance crews worked out in the open. The men lived in tents using homemade gasoline stoves for heat. The men constantly had to struggle through mud and water, snow and ice, or choking dust, depending on the season.

Throughout 1944, the 99th bombed targets in German occupied Italy, Germany, Austria, Greece, Bulgaria, France, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia. On April 23rd the group, led by Colonel Lauer, bombed an aircraft factory at Weiner Neustadt, Austria. The 99th was the lead group on this mission. The flak was intense, and aggressive fighter opposition was encountered but no planes were lost. Despite the heavy opposition, the 99th made a highly successful bomb run. Thirty-one of the groups airplanes returned to base, riddled with flak and bullet holes. For this mission, the 99th received its second Distinguished Unit Citation.

On the morning of June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Colonel Lauer revealed that the 99th was going to bomb a railroad yard at Debrecen, Hungary, and fly on to land at Poltava, Russia in the Ukraine. The bombing that

day was excellent, and no flak or enemy fighters were encountered. The first three days in Russia were non-operational. The men of the 99th spent their time sightseeing and making friends with the Russians. On June 6th, the 99th flew a mission from Poltava, to bomb the German airfield at Galati, Romania. On June 11th, the 99th took off to bomb a German airfield at Focsani, Romania.

The 99th flew missions on the 13th and 14th, destroying German gun emplacements and lines of communication near Toulon, France. Colonel Lauer flew his last combat mission, leading the 99th on December 26th. The target was Blechhammer, Germany. The German flak and fighters were both fierce. The Germans gave Colonel Lauer a gift to remember by peppering his airplane. Lauer departed for the United States on January 1, 1945. During April, twenty-three missions were flown, primarily in support of Allied ground forces. The 99th flew its 395th, and last, combat mission on April 26, 1945. Heavy clouds prevented the target from being sighted so no bombs were dropped. The group flew a total of 10,855 combat sorties.

The 99th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing in Jan 1953, replaced the 111th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing at Fairchild AFB, WA. It performed worldwide photographic, electronic, and visual day and night strategic reconnaissance as its primary mission until late 1954, and until Sep 1956 as a secondary mission. From Jan 1955 to Feb 1956, the wing participated in Project FICON, in which one squadron's GRB-36D bombers were modified to carry RF-84K reconnaissance fighters on long-range flights. Strategic bombing became the Wing's primary mission in late 1954. The wing deployed to Andersen AFB, Guam, Jan-Apr 1956. In Jan 1966, it added air refueling capability to its mission. The KC-135 tanker squadron also operated EC-135s in a Post-Attack Command Control System role until 1970. From 1967 until 1974, all wing tactical and maintenance assets, and some support resources, were rotated for various periods to USAF units engaged in Southeast Asian combat operations. From Aug 1989, the 99th conducted tactics and development evaluation and trained combat crews in strategic bombing and electronic warfare. Then in Oct 1995, it became the host wing at Nellis AFB, NV.

Nellis AFB, Nev., was on lockdown for nearly three hours Dec. 9 after a woman drove up to the main gate and said she had a bomb in the car. Security and law enforcement personnel closed the main gate and roads on the base and called the Nellis explosive ordnance disposal team to investigate, according to a base release. They found that the woman did not have a bomb, and all roads and gates were reopened. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police apprehended the woman and took her for a psychological evaluation, police said. "We take all threats to our airmen, families, and installation seriously. We are grateful for the support of local authorities during today's events," said Col. Richard Boutwell, commander of the 99th Air Base Wing. "We are glad the situation terminated uneventfully." 2015

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Air Force Order of Battle  
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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.