

126th AIR REFUELING WING



LINEAGE

126th Composite Wing, 1 Nov 1950
Redesignated 126th Bombardment Wing (Light), 1 May 1951
Redesignated 126th Fighter Bomber Wing, 1953
Redesignated 126th Fighter Interceptor Wing, 1955
Redesignated 126th Air Defense Wing, 1958
Redesignated 126th Air Refueling Wing, 1 Jul 1961

STATIONS

Location O'Hare International Airport Park Ridge, Illinois
Langley AFB, VA
Bordeaux AB,
Bordeaux-Merignac.France
Laon AB, Laon, France
O'Hare International Airport Chicago, IL
Midway Airport Chicago, IL
O'Hare IAP, Park Ridge, IL
Scott AFB, IL

ASSIGNMENTS

National Guard Bureau, 1 Sep 1950
State of Illinois, 1 Nov 1950
Continental Air Command, 1 Apr 1951
10th Air Force, 1 Apr 1951
Tactical Air Command, 2 Apr 1951
12th Air Force, USAFE, 16 Dec 1951
National Guard Bureau, 1 Jan 1953
State of Illinois, 1 Jan 1953
Air Defense Command, 1 May 1953
30th Air Division, ADC
Tactical Air Command, 11 Jul 1961
Strategic Air Command, 1 Jul 1976

WEAPON SYSTEMS

1927 PT-1
1930 O-2H
1935 O-38
1940 O-47
1946 B-26
1946 C-47
1953 P-51
1954 T-33
1955 F-84
1957 F-86L
1961 KC-97
1976 KC-135A
1983 KC-135E
2008 KC-135R

COMMANDERS

Col William Kennedy, 4 Feb 1952
Col Wilson V. Newhall, 1 May 1953
BG Howard T. Markey, 1 Jan 1956
BG Warren E. Bristow, 1 Jun 1970
BG Harold G. Holesinger, 19 Jun 1978
BG Harold C. Keistler, #1993
Col. Peter Nezamis, #2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

Azure, a bend nebule between four spears points to base, two and two Inflamed proper.

The original emblem was approved on 9 January 1943 and the modified version was approved on 24 Nov 1953.

This motto was replaced by the unit designation, 126th Bombardment Wing (then Fighter-Bomber) and subsequently as the Wing was redesignated Fighter-Interceptor and the mission changed until the present 126th Air Refueling Wing. The original emblem was approved on 9 January 1943 and the modified version was approved on 24 November 1953.

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

The ultramarine blue color of the shield is representative of the sky and of Air Force operations. The four flaming spears descending symbolize the destruction brought upon the enemy. The nebule bend is a heraldic symbol for clouds. It is also a heraldic bearing of high honor and represents the scarf of a military commander indicating protection to our forces. The three divisions of the shield indicated the three squadrons assigned to each Group. The four flaming spears denoted the four Groups assigned to the Wing.

Basically unchanged, only minor modifications to the emblem have taken place over the years. They are: the significance of the numerical designation originally the three divisions of the shield, the four nebule arms of the bend and four flaming spears descending, represented the 344th.

As a Fighter-Bomber Wing, the three divisions of the shield indicated the three squadrons assigned to each Group. The four flaming spears denoted the four Groups assigned to the Wing. Currently as a Refueling Wing, they signify the three Groups, four operational squadrons, in four separate states.

MOTTO

WE WIN OR DIE

This was based upon a quotation by General Douglas MacArthur -- "We Shall win or we shall die". The motto was symbolic of the personnel's determined effort of facing danger with courage and efficient knowledge to carry destruction to the enemy.

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

By April 1954, the 126th Fighter-Bomber Wing and most of its assigned and support units relocated from Midway Airport to Chicago's fast-growing O'Hare International Airport, near Park Ridge, Illinois.

1968 200 members of the 126th Air Refueling Wing are ordered to federal active duty to aid federal troops to quell civil disturbances in response to the Vietnam War.

1990, Aug Colonel Harold E. Keistler assumed command of more than 700 guard, active duty and reserve personnel in Moron Air Base, Spain in support of Operation Desert Shield.

1990, Dec The entire fleet of KC-135's and 260 personnel from the 126th formed the 1712th Air Refueling Wing (Provisional) in the United Arab Emirates, commanded by Colonel Harold E. Keistler, in support of Operation Desert Storm.

1993 Over 700 personnel from the 126th Air Refueling Wing served on active duty to support the Illinois National Guard's flood control mission in Southern Illinois.

1997 The 126th Air Refueling Wing picks up host responsibility at O'Hare Air Reserve Station after the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decision to disband the 928th Airlift Wing and relocate the 126th Air Refueling Wing to Scott Air Force Base in July of 1999.

1999 On July 28th, the last KC-135E departed for the final time from O'Hare Air Reserve Station to its new home at Scott Air Force Base. More than 2.5 million tons of cargo was moved over the road and in the air without any major accidents.

23 Oct 1999 Construction on the 126th Air Refueling Wing, Illinois Air National Guard facilities at Scott began on 4 Apr 1998. On 28 July 1999, the 126th held a farewell ceremony at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. On 23 October, the 126th Air Refueling Wing officially raised the United States Flag, marking Scott AFB as its new home.

2003 250 members and eight aircraft were deployed to Lajes Air Base in Portugal to form the 492nd Air Expeditionary Group, commanded by Brigadier General Harold E. Keistler, to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

2004 Deployed Expeditionary Combat Support personnel from Security Forces, Transportation, Civil Engineering and the Chaplain Corps to CENTCOM to support ongoing war on terrorism.

2005 Deployed approximately 50 personnel to the Middle East to support the Global War on Terrorism.

2005 Deployed approximately 250 personnel to the Gulf Coast region to support Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

2006, Aug Deployed approximately 250 personnel in support of the Pacific Tanker Task Force. Deployed members in support of OPERATION JUMP START - border patrol missions.

2006, Nov Deployed approximately 230 personnel to EUCOM in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. Deployed Expeditionary Combat Support (ECS) personnel from Civil Engineering, Security Forces, Services and Communications to CENTCOM to support ongoing war on terrorism.

2007, Sept Deployed to Manta, Ecuador in support of USSOUTHCOM Counter-drug and Humanitarian Missions. Deployed Operations, Maintenance and Logistics personnel.

2008 In February, the Wing received the first of its total of eight KC-135R The aircraft were transitioned to the 126 ARW from the 107th Air Refueling Wing in Niagara, NY, as part of a 2005 BRAC-directed action.

2008 Over 400 personnel from the 126th Air Refueling Wing served on state active duty to support the Illinois National Guard's flood control mission, Mississippi Western Response, in Western and Southern Illinois.

Guard Units Get New Missions: The Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing and 183rd Fighter Wing will take on three new non-flying missions. Army Maj. Gen. William Enyart, the state adjutant general, announced June 30. Springfield's 183rd FW, which under BRAC 2005 is scheduled to relinquish its F-16s before the end of the year—even though Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has been resisting the loss of the aircraft mission—will stand up an air and space operations center designated as the 183rd Air Operations Group and a centralized intermediate repair facility for the General Electric F110 engine, Enyart said. The repair facility will support five ANG F-16 flying units across the country. Conversion to the new missions will begin in Fiscal 2009; both should be fully operational two years later. The 126th ARW at Scott AFB, Ill., will add a "global logistics or regional supply squadron" that will be designated as the 126th Regional Supply Chain Squadron, according to the release. No stand-up date was given.

ANG Tanker Wings Gain Active Duty Airmen: The Air Force announced yesterday that three Air National Guard KC-135 wings will become active associate units beginning next summer, and are expected to assume full operations under the new construct by September 2011. Under this Total Force initiative, active duty airmen will be assigned to the 117th Air Refueling Wing in Birmingham, Ala., the 126th ARW at Scott AFB, Ill., and the 157th ARW at Pease ANGB, N.H. These airmen will start reporting in July 2009. The Guard units will act as the host organization. The active duty aircrews and maintenance and support personnel will work side-by-side with their Guard counterparts in operating the ANG tankers at home and on overseas deployments. The Air Force says the associate unit construct provides greater day-to-day mission capability by increasing full-time manning, while reducing duplication of effort. "Partnering with regular Air Force counterparts is a win-win for the Air Force," said ANG Acting Director Maj. Gen. Emmett Titshaw. He added, "It allows our highly experienced citizen-airmen to share their knowledge and experience with their regular Air Force teammates, and it provides the regular Air Force KC-135 force with additional opportunities for training and deployments."

2011 Two aircraft and four aircrews, nearly 50 members from operations and maintenance, deployed to a forward operating location in support of Operation Odyssey Dawn. Operation Odyssey Dawn is the United States' participation in the enforcement of the current Libyan no-fly zone.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources