

193 SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

Squadron provides the only airborne psychological operations platform in the Department of Defense with the EC-130 Commando Solo. The system can broadcast live or recorded products on AM and FM radio, and TV images over any frequency.

LINEAGE

193 Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron, 17 Sep 1967
Redesignated 193 Electronic Combat Squadron, 6 Oct 1980
Redesignated 193 Special Operations Squadron, 15 Nov 1983

STATIONS

Middletown, PA

ASSIGNMENTS

193 Special Operations Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

C-121
EC-121
EC-130

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

LTC Derle M. Snyder

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The development of the Coronet Solo mission came about as a result of events which took place in the international arena and changes in the United States defense policy. The first occurrence that had a bearing was the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 when the United States was threatened by a build-up of medium range ballistic missiles by Soviet Russia in its client state of Cuba. The United States and Soviet Russia along with Cuba came perilously close to an outbreak of war as the U.S. demanded and was prepared to follow up that demand with force that the missiles be removed. In preparing for this action, provisions for psychological warfare were established as a requirement, and responsibility for this capability was delegated to the U.S. Navy. After the emergency subsided little further effort was made in regard to developing any capability in the field of airborne psychological warfare. The idea of using radio and television broadcasting in support of military or paramilitary activity therefore lay largely dormant until the revolution in the Dominican Republic. In April 1965, the United States airlifted military forces to that country in an attempt to stabilize conditions on the island and prevent a takeover by Marxist-oriented rebels who were attempting to seize control. U.S. paratroopers and other military forces were operating alongside Dominican Republic governmental troops in trying to maintain order, but were frustrated by a rebel operated radio station which was continually broadcasting to resistance forces and contributing measurably to the difficulties of U.S. forces in their efforts to pacify the island. After the conclusion of this military action, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) resolved to develop an airborne psychological warfare capability and directed the Air Force to come up with a program.

Along about this time, the Secretary of Defense set about realigning and reequipping the strategic airlift forces which were contained in the Military Air Transport Service, the gaining command of the 168th Military Airlift Group. The planning and programming of the new force (to be named the Military Airlift Command) would consist of an all-jet fleet: C-141s just coming off

the line, the new C-5A then in the design stages, and the C-9 Nightingale, all backed up by the Civil Reserve Air Fleet. All conventional powered transport aircraft in the active, reserve, and national guard forces were to be phased out over a three to five year period. The 168th Military Airlift Group, because it was located at Olmsted Air Force Base (which the Department of Defense ordered closed in November 1964) was one of the first three Air National Guard airlift units programmed for inactivation to occur in fiscal year 1967. Other Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve transport units were to be similarly treated. Therefore, in the beginning of 1965, the 168th was in double trouble. The first order of business was to secure a home for the organization, and intense effort was immediately directed toward securing Olmsted Air Force Base as a commercial-civil airport. The first plan to accomplish this goal was developed by the Headquarters Pennsylvania Air National Guard in coordination with 168th personnel. This was presented to the Adjutant General who was also the Chairman of the Pennsylvania Aeronautics Commission, the agency which operated five state owned airports. From there, the plan went to the Governor who gave his approval for the state to seek ownership of Olmsted Air Force Base and operate it as a commercial airport. The initial transfer effort was begun early in 1965 and involved long and complicated negotiations with several different departments and agencies of the federal and state governments, the airlines servicing Harrisburg, the Harrisburg Chamber of Commerce, and congressional representatives. Successful conclusion of the campaign came on July 1, 1967 when Governor Raymond P. Shafer accepted the deed to the airport from the federal government and Olmsted State Airport was born. During the intervening period another international event had a bearing on the mission of the 168th Military Airlift Group — the entrance of U.S. combat forces into the Vietnam War. Congress was never too happy with the Secretary of Defense's plan to inactivate Air National Guard units. When the ANG C-121 and C-97 were called into service for airlifting supplies to U.S. forces in Southeast Asia, remedial legislation was soon enacted. Beginning in fiscal year 1966, Congress mandated in the Appropriation Act that the Air Force maintain 25 airlift squadrons. This legislation continued for two more years. By 1966 the Air Force was making progress in developing its plan for the Coronet Solo psychological warfare capability. The Air Force operated RC-121 for use as early warning and control purposes and the Navy-modified C-121 was being used to broadcast to American forces in Vietnam. Therefore attention was actively given to the C-121 for use as a psychological warfare airborne platform. In 1967 the 168th MAG was very high on the operational capability list and the National Guard Bureau volunteered this unit for the new Coronet Solo mission. the cost of modifying four C-121s to the electronic warfare mission was \$8 million, and the approval for this program change was held in abeyance by the Defense Department although the concept was widely accepted. The last episode in this long chain of events took place in June 1967 at the outbreak of the Israel-Arab War. With the need for a psychological warfare and intelligence monitoring capability, the Deputy Secretary of Defense contacted the Air Force and requested the status of Coronet Solo. The reply was that the program change request "is on your desk for approval." It was soon forthcoming, and in the summer of 1967 the last wheels began to turn. Approval was given to convert the 168th Military Airlift Group to the 193 Tactical Electronic Warfare Group with TAC as the gaining command. Olmsted Air Force Base had become Olmsted State Airport . . . four C-121s were scheduled for modification to EC-121 configuration by Lockheed Aircraft Company, and plans were made for training of ground and aircrew personnel on the new equipment. The blue and white Super Constellations became a reality. The first EC-121 was

delivered to the 193 TEW Group in the summer of 1968. A new mission with a capability unlike any other in the free world finally came to be.

17 Sep 1967: The 193 TEWS and its parent 193 TEWG were extended federal recognition at Olmsted State Airport (later renamed Harrisburg IAP) as TAC-gained units and took over the C-121Cs of the 140th MAS, 168th MAG. During the summer of 1968, it received its first five modified EC-121s aircraft configured as flying radio and television stations to perform the "Combat Solo" mission. The unit had been "volunteered" for that mission by the NGB after the Air Force had turned to the Air Guard for help in developing an airborne psychological warfare and intelligence gathering capability.

Summer 1968: The first of five C-121Cs modified by Lockheed Air Service to the EC-121S configuration as airborne radio/television stations entered service for the Coronet Solo mission.

26 Jul 1970-24 Dec 1970: In support of the Southeast Asia War, volunteers manned two EC-121S electronic warfare aircraft and deployed to Korat RTAFB, Thailand, for Operation Commando Buzz, while others flew C-121C support missions to and from Thailand.

December 1970. Personnel and two EC-121 aircraft from the Pennsylvania Air Guard's Tactical Electronic Warfare Group completed a six-month deployment to Southeast Asia.

One thing for sure it was originally a Navy project. The initial manuals delivered to the 193 were written for the Navy using port and starboard instead of left and right. Another issue that arrived with the aircraft was that the weight of the equipment prevented the full loading of gas thus severely limiting the range of the aircraft. The initial weight reduction included the removal of the LF transmitter and 23,000 ft of wire from the spool that fed the vertical antenna leaving 2,000ft thus aligning the equipment to broadcast on both civilian frequencies and HF/VHF/UHF tactical military nets.

Other C-130Es were converted for additional roles such as the EC-130E (CL) for the 193 Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron of the PA ANG. These were later modified into EC-130E (RR) to accommodate the large blade antennas required for the Rivet Rider program. These are now operated by the 193 SOS.

EC-130 used to broadcast radio or television messages from the air, were even more vulnerable than their MC-130 special operations counterparts because they were heavier and slower, and because they remained aloft over the same area for a longer period. The Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 193d Special Operations Squadron, serving the Air Force Special Operations Command, operates all of the EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft. Commanders were reluctant to risk the loss of such aircraft by flying them directly over hostile territory because of their expense and small number.

Electronic Security Command Spanish linguist MSgt. Scott Birnel served as the TV broadcaster

aboard a Commando Solo EC-130E during Operation Just Cause asking Panamanians to keep off the streets during the U.S. invasion of Panama.

On Thanksgiving Day 1990, the 193 SOG began broadcasting "Voice of America" into the Kuwaiti theater of operations, helping to prepare the battlefield psychologically by offering the Iraqi soldiers food, bedding and medical care if they surrendered and reminded them of the consequences if they did not. These broadcasts combined with the PSYOP leaflet and loudspeaker broadcast programs were major motivating factors to the estimated 100,000 soldiers who surrendered or deserted by the war's end,

Commando Solo aircraft did not need to fly directly over their target audiences, but they did have to remain within range. EC-130s broadcast psychological messages to Iraqi soldiers during Operation DESERT SHIELD, but they remained over Saudi Arabia instead of flying over Iraq because of the enemy's air force and anti-aircraft systems. President Saddam Hussein specifically instructed his anti-aircraft artillery crews to target the Commando Solo airplanes.

If the enemy could broadcast no contradictory information, coalition broadcasts carried greater weight. The same was true in reverse. In the spring of 1993, the United States did not conduct psychological operations in Somalia. This allowed warlord Mohammed Aideed's radio station in Mogadishu to incite violence against United Nations forces in the country. In the summer of 1993, a U.S. AC-130 gunship silenced the station.

EC-130 radio broadcasts were effective during Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti in 1994 partly because the aircraft were able to fly with less restriction.

Commando Solo airplanes could broadcast radio messages into Serbia before Operation ALLIED FORCE in 1999 by flying beyond the boundaries of that country, but only because the country was so small. 1 April 1999. An EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft from the 193 Special Operations Wing, Pennsylvania ANG, flew south from Ramstein AB, Germany and began broadcasting radio and television programs to northern Serbia as part of Operation Allied Force, the air war for Bosnia.

During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, less than half of the target population could be reached by EC-130 radio signals because the aircraft did not fly over enemy territory deemed too dangerous for them. When USAF Commando Solo airplanes began broadcasting radio messages into Iraq in December 2002, in preparation for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, they avoided flying over Iraq, including the no-fly zones. Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) 11-202, which described how EC-130s should be employed, told pilots to "avoid all known threats."

To reach the people north of Baghdad with radio broadcasts, the coalition used ground-based broadcast stations in Kurdish-held territory in northern Iraq.

Even before Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, the Defense Science Board recommended the development of longer-range dissemination systems. It also suggested replacing EC-130 Commando Solo with unmanned aerial vehicles and leased aircraft for the same aerial broadcast

mission. The wisdom of this is debatable. No unmanned aerial vehicle yet designed contains the sophisticated systems aboard a Commando Solo airplane. The EC-130 sometimes broadcasts live messages that require an onboard linguist. Also, selective use of the EC-130s prevented any from falling to enemy fire between 1990 and 2003.

Air and cruise missile strikes in Operations DESERT STORM in 1991 and ALLIED FORCE in 1999 silenced enemy radio broadcasts by targeting stations, transmission towers, and power plants in Belgrade and Baghdad. Early in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, a cruise missile destroyed the "Voice of Sharia," the Taliban's main radio station in Kabul.

Coalition forces in Operation IRAQI FREEDOM did not immediately destroy Iraqi broadcasting facilities, possibly because they wanted to learn about the fate of Saddam Hussein or to use the information infrastructure in case of a quick military coup. Instead they used EC-130 broadcasts to drown out Iraqi radio on the same frequencies, fooling some reporters into thinking that Iraqi radio had been targeted with precision guided munitions. It was not until March 29, 2003, that coalition cruise missiles struck the Ministry of Information in Baghdad, largely destroying its transmission facilities. By that time, EC-130s were broadcasting their own television messages on the old Iraqi frequencies. Targeting enemy broadcast facilities deprived the enemy of his propaganda voice, impeded his ability to communicate with his own forces, and enhanced alternate broadcasts.

During Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Commando Solo airplanes could overpower Iraqi broadcasts, but only when they used the same frequencies. Iraqi radio changed frequencies to stay on the air. To jam Iraqi transmissions and disrupt enemy communication, the Air Force also used Compass Call airplanes, another version of the EC-130. Depriving the enemy of his voice could be as effective as transmitting one's own.

The 193 Special Operations Wing at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, rolled out its first EC-130J during formal ceremonies last September to the theme song from Star Wars. The aircraft, used to conduct psychological warfare missions and civil affairs broadcasting, is the first special operations variant of the C-130J. The Pennsylvania Air National Guard unit is scheduled to receive three Commando Solo aircraft and two Super Js, which are standard C-130J containing specialized equipment and modified for air refueling.

The Air Force has identified units that participated in the attacks against Libyan military targets in the opening salvos of Operation Odyssey Dawn this past weekend. In addition to B-2 stealth bombers from the 509th Bomb Wing at Whiteman AFB, Mo., the Air Force sent F-15Es from the 492nd Fighter Squadron and 494th FS at RAF Lakenheath, Britain, as well as F-16CJs from the 480th FS at Spangdahlem AB, Germany. The B-2s struck combat aircraft shelters at Ghardabiya Airfield in Libya, and, based on post-strike photos that the Pentagon displayed, precisely hit them. The F-15Es and F-16CJs attacked ground forces loyal to Libyan ruler Muammar Gadhafi that were advancing on opposition forces in Benghazi and threatening civilians. KC-135s of the 100th Air Refueling Wing at RAF Mildenhall, Britain, refueled the strike aircraft en route to an unnamed forward air base. C-130Js from the 37th Airlift Squadron at Ramstein AB, Germany, moved

ground equipment and personnel to the forward base, as did theater-based C-17s. Pentagon officials also said EC-130 Commando Solo psychological operations aircraft participated. The Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 193 Special Operations Wing in Middletown operates these aircraft. 2011

USAF Unit Histories

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