

203rd AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



LINEAGE

203rd Air Refueling Squadron, Feb. 12, 1993

STATIONS

Hickam AFB, HI

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

KC-135

Support Aircraft

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

The aircraft tail flash further depicts the hoku theme, with a large white star displayed on its tail, accompanied by spears depicting aggressive direction and leadership, and Hawaii as its point of origin. The red and yellow colors further exemplify the royal colors of Hawaii.

COMMANDERS

Lt. Col. Walter K. Kaueakua

Lt. Col. Kurt W. Lajala

Lt. Col. Earl Alameida

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

The squadron patch proudly displays Kuka'ilimoku, the favored deity of King Kamehameha, reflecting the heritage of the unit and its location. The black background over the waves symbolizes the night sky indicating the long distances the unit must fly to carry out its mission. The seven stars represent the populated islands where the unit is located and allude to the constellation pleiades used by Polynesian navigators when traveling between the islands. The contrails of the stars reflect the unit's ability for aggressive airborne movement throughout the world. It's no wonder why they use "hoku," star, as their call sign.

MOTTO

A 'OLE MAMA O LOA--never too far

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Lt. Col. James 'Kimo' M. Hussey was appointed project officer for the activation of the 203rd ARS. By the end of September 1991, Lt. Col. Walter K. Kaueakua had resigned from the active Air Force and joined the fledgling 203rd ARS as its first full time commander.

The first KC-135 trainer aircraft arrived at Hickam AFB soon after the hurricane hit the islands. This marked the beginning of a long activation period for the 203rd ARS. Due to world events and major budget constraints, the Pentagon announced that all military units would have to downsize. For the Air Force, this also meant that a major reorganization effort would soon be put in place. Mission uncertainty, job loss, deactivation of flying units were all part of the reorganization process, and the HIANG took on the task head-on.

Options for a USAF beddown were uncertain. Due to of force structure and budget limitations, the option of having reserves or the guard acquire the mission was more appealing. In 1989, PACAF/PACOM validated the request, and the Hawaii Air National Guard assumed the tanker mission. With this validation, the HIANG, possessing an F-15A Squadron, and a C-130 support aircraft took on the challenge of erecting a KC-135 squadron. A site survey was completed in 1991, followed by public announcement in 1992. The 203 Air Refueling Squadron was conceived.

On 4 December 1992, aircraft # 64-14832, "HOKU PA'A," made its maiden voyage from Tinker AFB. OK to a new home in the Pacific. Given the Hawaiian name for the north star, HOKU PA'A was the very first tanker received by the 203rd ARS. With its arrival, the dedicated men and women of the 203rd ARS eagerly prepared it for its stay.

Operations personnel concentrated on laying out their plans, striving to hire and train the best. The same goals drove the maintenance personnel, already working hard with the Field Training Team (FTT).

"The reality;" the 203 Air Refueling Squadron received federal recognition on 12 February 1993. The unit was designated a 4 PAA (primary assigned aircraft) unit. The unit structure was unique in that maintenance and operations were combined under one squadron. This was created with the intent of it becoming a group one day. Lt. Col. Walter Kaneakua was the squadron commander, Lt. Col. James "Kimo" Hussey was the squadron operations officer, and Lt. Col. Bruce Minato was the maintenance officer. Together they led the 203rd ARS on its way to excellence.

On 12 March 1993, the first locally generated training mission was flown. The first operational mission was logged the following month, April 1993.

203rd ARS was operational as a 4 PAA unit six months early, 1 July 1994.

On July 16, 1995, Lt. Col. Edwin "Skip" Vincent, Jr. assumed the position of squadron commander. The 203rd ARS became operational as an 8 PAA unit on 30 September 1995. October 14, 1995, two short weeks later, the 203rd ARS participated in its first operational contingency, "Operation Deny Flight" in Pisa, Italy.

203 ARS DEPLOYED ONE AIRCRAFT TO KEFLAVIK AIR BASE (AB), ICELAND TO STAND ALERT DUTY. DURING OPERATION DESERT STRIKE, KC-135 AIRCRAFT AND CREWS STOOD TWENTY-FOUR HOUR ALERT DUTY TO ASSIST WITH RAPID MOVEMENT OF UNITED STATES AIR FORCE (USAF) AIRCRAFT TO PERSIAN GULF REGION. 1996

203 ARS DEPLOYED ONE TANKER AIRCRAFT TO PERTH ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE BASE, AUSTRALIA IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION VECTOR FLASH SPECIAL OPERATIONS TRAINING MISSION. 1996

DEPLOYED TANKER AIRCRAFT TO THAILAND FOR COMMANDO SLING, JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF EXERCISE. 203 ARS AND 169 ACWS DEPLOYED TO EIELSON AFB AK FOR DEFENSE EXERCISE COPE THUNDER. 1996

WHILE RETURNING FROM SINGAPORE EXERCISE COMMANDO SLING, KC-135 TANKER AIRCRAFT FROM 203 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON (ARS) RESPONDED TO MAY DAY CALL FROM C-5 AIRCRAFT ENROUTE TO ANDERSON AIR FORCE BASE (AFB), GUAM; COMMANDER, TANKER AIRLIFT CONTROL CENTER CITED ACTION AS SAVING C-5 AIRCRAFT, CREW AND PASSENGERS. 1997

All the aircraft bear the names of Hawaiian navigational stars and symbols:

64-14832 HOKU PA'A: Polaris (north star), lit. "fixed star." Used by Polynesian voyagers for navigation to and from Tahiti when north of the equator.

60-8030 MAKAHA: A star near Aldebaran. Used in conjunction with Makohilani for navigation. These stars are said to be the patrons of fighters.

61-0290 HOKU LELEA shooting star, meteor, or any moving star.

62-3514 HOKU LEA: Arcturus, lit. "the clear star." Used by Polynesian navigators to mark northern destinations when traveling from the Marqueses and Tahiti.

60-0329 KAPE'A: One of several names given for the southern cross. Used by Polynesian navigators when south of the equator.

60-0323 MAKALI-I: Pleiades, lit. "little eyes." This is one of the most thoroughly documented of the Polynesian navigational stars. It was also important as an indicator of the start of the calendar year.

59-1472 MAKA-'IO LANI lit. "Eye of the royal hawk."

60-0318 HINA-LH: Shortened version of Kai-a-ka-hina-ali'i, lit. "Sea of the chiefs." Used as a time reference (in August) and refers to a significant tsunami (real or mythical is not clear) that marked some of the earliest migrations to Hawaii.

57-1508 HOKU-KEA: One of several names for the southern cross.





Air Force Order of Battle

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Updated:

Sources

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

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.