

303rd AERONAUTICAL SYSTEMS WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

303rd Bombardment Wing, Medium established, 27 Aug 1951

Activated, 4 Sep 1951

Discontinued and inactivated, 15 Jun 1964

Redesignated 303rd Tactical Missile Wing, 19 Aug 1986

Activated, 12 Dec 1986

Inactivated, 31 Jan 1989

Reconnaissance Systems Wing established, 23 Nov 2004

Activated, 18 Jan 2005

303rd Tactical Missile Wing and Reconnaissance Systems Wing consolidated, 23 Jun 2006

Redesignated 303rd Aeronautical Systems Wing, 14 Jul 2006

STATIONS

Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ, 4 Sep 1951-15 Jun 1964

RAF Molesworth, UK, 12 Dec 1986-31 Jan 1989

Wright-Patterson AFB, OH, 18 Jan 2005

ASSIGNMENTS

36th Air Division, 4 Sep 1951

12th Air (later, 12th Strategic Aerospace) Division, 15 Mar 1960-15 Jun 1964

Third Air Force, 12 Dec 1986- 31 Jan 1989

Aeronautical Systems Center, 18 Jan 2005

ATTACHMENTS

5th Air Division, 5 Oct-6 Nov 1952

7th Air Division, 4 Mar-5 Jun 1954

3rd Air Division, 4 Jul-4 Oct 1956 and 5 Apr-4 Jul 1958

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-29, 1951-1953

KB-29, 1952, 1952-1953

B-47, 1953-1964

KC-97, 1953-1956, 1956, 1960

BGM-109G, 1987-1988

COMMANDERS

Col Frederick J. Knorre Jr., 4 Sep 1951

Col David Wade, 9 Oct 1951

Col John K. Hester, 14 Feb 1952

Col Manford J. Wetzel, 26 Jan 1953

Col John K. Hester, 30 Mar 1953

Col William J. Wrigglesworth, 12 Jun 1954

Col Donald W. Saunders, 19 Nov 1954

Col Lloyd H. Dalton Jr., 25 Aug 1956

Col William W. Jones, 8 Dec 1956

Col Landon E. McConnell, 6 Oct 1958

Col William C. Bacon, 1 Nov 1958

Col Max W. Rogers, 1 Jan 1962-15 Jun 1964

Col Kent E. Harbaugh, 12 Dec 1986

Col Wendell S. Brande, 18 Aug 1988-31 Jan 1989

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

None

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan 1961-31 Mar 1962

12 Dec 1986-31 Jul 1988

Bestowed Honors

Authorized to display the honors earned by the 303 Bombardment Group prior to 4 Sep 1951.

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Antisubmarine, American Theater
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
(Germany), 11 Jan 1944

EMBLEM



Azure, a diminutive pile between four flashes of lightning, two issuant palewise from chief and one from dexter and sinister chief sides chevron-wise inverted, issuant from base a burst of five rays, all or. (Approved for 303d Group, 9 Jan 1943 and for 303rd Wing, 11 Dec 1951)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Trained for strategic bombardment and air refueling operations to meet Strategic Air Command's global commitments.

Deployed to Sidi Slimane AB, French Morocco, 5 Oct-6 Nov 1952; Greenham Common RAF Station, England, 17 Mar-28 Apr 1954; Fairford RAF Station, England, 28 Apr-5 Jun 1954; and Anderson AFB,

Guam, 4 Jul-4 Oct 1956 and 5 Apr-5 Jul 1958.

Strategic bombardment operations from Davis-Monthan during the early 1960s were handled by the experienced 303rd Bombardment Wing. The unit, flying B-47s, participated in several important exercises and demonstrations during the 1960-1964 period to exhibit its combat readiness. The most notable of those were "Exercise Big Sickle" which began on 18 January 1960, and a presidential fire power display at Eglin AFB, Florida, on 14 May 1962.

During early 1964, the 303rd was notified by Headquarters SAC that it had been selected to participate in a test of MITO (Minimum Interval Take-Off) procedures on 24 February 1964. The MITO was a system for launching more than one tactical aircraft with the shortest possible distance between each. The purpose of this type of operation was to get as many planes as possible airborne in the shortest period of time to prevent destruction in the event of an attack. The 303rd's participation involved eight of the wing's B-47s launched at night under heavy weight conditions.

The MITO take-offs, as scheduled, were in direct conflict with the existing peacetime operational safety rules. The test nature of the event took precedence. Launch of the eight aircraft took place at 1915 on the night of the 24th. As a result of the experiment, existing regulations were later revised and new requirements for subsequent MITO operations were established.

Phaseout of the 303rd's operations and preparation for the turnover of the wing's facilities began early in 1964. On 16 April 1964, SAC Programming Plan 1-64 was published to outline the procedures for transferring the unit's facilities to the new TAC wing which would officially assign responsibility for them on the 15th of June. Procedures were also established for the phaseout of the wing's home alert and "Reflex" alert commitments. Reflex alert was deleted on 1 April when the 40th Bombardment Wing of Forbes AFB, Kansas, took over responsibility for the Alaskan Reflex duty. Normally, the 303rd maintained nine aircraft on alert at Davis-Monthan with 12 (plus one spare) on Reflex alert in Alaska.

Transfer of the unit's 60 aircraft to other wings began on 1 March 1964. The plan called for the reassignment of 15 planes per month through June. On Thursday, 11 June, the wing's last B-47 departed for Pease AFB, New Hampshire. Four days later, the 303rd was officially inactivated and Davis-Monthan lost its sole remaining bombardment unit.

Trained for operation of Ground Launched Cruise Missile in England Dec 1986-Jan 1989.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 12 Apr 2011

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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.