

## 344<sup>th</sup> AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

344<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 28 Jan 1942  
Activated, 3 Feb 1942  
Redesignated 344<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, 1 Jul 1943  
Redesignated 344<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy, 23 May 1945  
Inactivated, 27 Mar 1946  
Activated, 1 Jul 1947  
Redesignated 344<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, Medium, 28 May 1948  
Discontinued and inactivated, 25 Jun 1966  
Redesignated 344<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy, 7 May 1986  
Activated, 1 Oct 1986  
Redesignated 344<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Squadron, 1 Jul 1992

#### STATIONS

MacDill Field, FL, 3 Feb 1942  
Barksdale Field, LA, 9 Feb 1942  
Ft Myers, FL, 30 Mar 1942  
Drane Field, FL, 17 May-3 Jul 1942  
Ramat David, Palestine, 25 Jul 1942  
St Jean, Palestine, 21 Aug 1942  
Kabrit, Egypt, 11 Nov 1942  
Lete, Libya, 4 Mar 1943  
Hergla, Tunisia, 24 Sep 1943  
Brindisi, Italy, 18 Nov 1943  
Manduria, Italy, 19 Dec 1943

Lecce, Italy, 18 Jan 1944-19 Apr 1945  
Fairmont AAFld, NE, 8 May 1945  
McCook AAFld, NE, 25 Jun 1945  
Merced AAFld, CA, 10 Nov 1945-27 Mar 1946  
Andrews Field, MD, 1 Jul 1947  
Spokane AAFld (later, Spokane AFB; Fairchild AFB), WA, 24 Sep 1947  
Yokota AB, Japan, 15 Aug 1953-22 Jul 1954  
Lincoln AFB, NE, 24 Jul 1954-25 Jun 1966  
Seymour Johnson AFB, NC, 1 Oct 1986  
McConnell AFB, KS, 29 Apr 1994

### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Kadena AB, Okinawa, 22 Aug-7 Dec 1948  
Sculthorpe, England, 25 May-29 Aug 1949  
Yokota AB, Japan, 5 Aug 1950-14 Aug 1953)  
Lakenheath RAF Station, England, 12 Nov 1955-28 Jan 1956

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

98<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, 3 Feb 1942  
444<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, 10 Nov 1945-27 Mar 1946  
98<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, 1 Jul 1947  
98<sup>th</sup> Bombardment (later, 98<sup>th</sup> Strategic Aerospace) Wing, 16 Jun 1952-25 Jun 1966  
68<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, 1 Oct 1986  
4<sup>th</sup> Operations Group, 22 Apr 1991  
22<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group, 29 Apr 1994

### **ATTACHMENTS**

98<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing, 1 Apr 1951-15 Jun 1952

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-24, 1942-1945  
B-24D  
B-24G  
B-24H  
B-24J  
B-29, 1945  
B-29A  
B-29, 1947-1954  
B-47, 1954-1966  
KC-10, 1986-1993  
KC-135, 1994

### **COMMANDERS**

LTC John R. Kane, 18 Feb 1942

Cpt Robert R. Sewell, 27 Dec 1942  
Maj John E. Carmack, 9 Jan 1943  
Maj William C. Bacon, 15 Mar 1943  
Cpt William D. Banks, 19 Sep 1943  
Cpt Charles D. Huckleberry, 22 Sep 1943  
LTC John C. Osgood Jr., 27 Feb 1944  
Maj Wendell M. Van Sickle, 11 May-2 Nov 1944  
Unkn, 2 Nov 1944-Jun 1945  
Maj John A. Desportes, Jun 1945-unkn  
LTC Richard D. Dick, 1947  
LTC Roland A. Campbell, unkn  
LTC Edward M. Nichols Jr., Apr 1951  
LTC John P. Wolfe, Sep 1951  
Maj James W. Welsh, Dec 1951  
LTC Russell F. Ireland, Jan 1952  
LTC Frederick W. Grindle Jr., 14 Mar 1952  
LTC William F. Crowley, Oct 1952  
LTC Keith A. Whitaker, Nov 1952  
LTC Lowell B. Fisher, Aug 1954  
LTC Frank J. Puerta, Feb 1955  
Maj Valley J. Voyles, Oct 1956  
LTC Robert M. Munson, 1 Feb 1958  
LTC Lin Parker, Sep 1958  
LTC Robert M. Murphy Jr., Nov 1958  
Maj Walter J. Brown, 24 Feb 1959  
Maj Dwight E. Carnahan, 25 Sep 1959  
LTC Lyle F. Knight, Jul 1962  
Cpt Thomas C. Kuhn II, Mar 1966-unkn  
LTC Gene C. Detwiler, 1 Oct 1986  
LTC Gary D. Garland, 1 Jul 1988  
LTC Daniel P. Ballard, 8 Jun 1990  
LTC Paul Williams, 12 Jun 1992  
LTC Joseph M. Drobezko, 29 Apr 1994  
LTC Janet A. Therianos, 19 Jul 1995  
LTC Cathy Clothier, 30 Jan 1997  
LTC Richard M. Chavez, Jun 1998  
LTC Scott A. Brumbaugh, 9 Jul 1999  
LTC Mark A. Lane, 17 Aug 2001

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

World War II

American Theater

## **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

Egypt-Libya

Air Offensive, Europe

Tunisia

Sicily

Naples-Foggia

Anzio

Rome-Arno

Normandy

Northern France

Southern France

North Apennines

Rhineland

Central Europe

Po Valley

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Korea

UN Defensive

UN Offensive

CCF Intervention

First UN Counteroffensive

CCF Spring Offensive

UN Summer-Fall Offensive

Second Korean Winter

Korea Summer-Fall, 1952

Third Korean Winter

Korea, Summer 1953

Southwest Asia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

## **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

North Africa and Sicily, Aug 1942-17 Aug 1943

Ploesti, Rumania, 1 Aug 1943

Korea, 1 Dec 1952-30 Apr 1953

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1964-1 Jun 1965

[1 Oct 1986]-30 Jun 1987  
2 Apr 1989-1 Apr 1991  
23 Apr 1991-31 Mar 1993  
1 Jun 1994-31 May 1996  
24 Mar-10 Jun 1999  
1 Aug 1999-31 Jul 2000  
1 Aug 2000-31 Jul 2001  
1 Aug 2002-31 Jul 2004  
1 Aug 2004-31 Jul 2005  
1 Aug 2005-31 Jul 2006  
1 Aug 2011-31 Jul 2012

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation  
[7 Aug 1950]-27 Jul 1953

**EMBLEM**





Celeste, a raven in flight, grasping in both feet an air refueling boom. (Approved, 17 Oct 1994)

#### **MOTTO**

ANYTIME – ANYWHERE

#### **NICKNAME**

#### **OPERATIONS**

Combat in Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO) and European Theater of Operations (ETO), Aug 1942-Apr 1945.

Combat in Korea, Aug 1950-Jul 1953.

Air refueling in support of operations in Panama, Dec 1989.

Provided air refueling and airlift support to and in Southwest Asia Theater, Aug 1990-Mar 1991.

Provided in-flight refueling services and airlift to American and allied forces globally, 1994.

Crews delivered the first two KC-46A Pegasus aircraft to McConnell Air Force Base. The 22nd Air Refueling Wing and 931st ARW marshalled in the newest addition to the Air Force's strategic arsenal. "This day will go down in history as a win for Team McConnell and the Air Force as a whole," said Col. Josh Olson, 22nd ARW commander. "With this aircraft, McConnell will touch the entire planet."

Since being selected as the first main operating base in 2014, McConnell Airmen have been preparing to ensure their readiness to receive the Air Force's newest aircraft. Contractors constructed three new KC-46 maintenance hangars, technical training dormitories, an air traffic control tower, fuselage trainer and many other facilities specifically for the Pegasus' arrival. These projects brought \$267 million to the local economy by employing Kansas workers and using local resources. Aircrew members simulated KC-46 flights, boom operators practiced cargo loading and the 22nd Maintenance Group created a training timeline for the enterprise.

Working with aircraft manufacturer Boeing, McConnell maintenance Airmen have been developing new technical orders for three years. They streamlined processes and got hands-on exposure to the jet in Seattle. "Some of us have been involved in this program for years and it has

given us time to become experts as far as the technical data goes,” said Staff Sgt. Brannon Burch, 22nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron KC-46 flying crew chief. “Knowing it is one thing, but having hands-on experience on our flightline is what we all crave. We’re just happy the wait’s over and we finally get to get our hands dirty on the Pegasus – it’s almost surreal.”

The KC-46 team at McConnell AFB is comprised of Airmen with a variety of backgrounds from other aircraft who bring different aspects of expertise to the multifaceted new tanker. “Every Airman who was transferred to the KC-46 team was hand-selected specifically to bring this airplane to the fight,” said Lt. Col. Wesley Spurlock, 344th Air Refueling Squadron commander. “They are versatile maintainers, pilots and boom operators who are prepared for any learning curve that comes with a new aircraft.”

The active duty 344th ARS and Air Force Reserve 924th ARS, will be the first units in the military to operationally fly the KC-46. “This airplane has a wide variety of capabilities that we haven’t seen here before,” said Spurlock. “We’re going to get our hands on it, then expand on those abilities and see how we can employ them operationally.”

Once Airmen in the Total Force squadrons have perfected their craft on the new aircraft, they will pave the way for the entire KC-46 enterprise and other bases receiving the aircraft in the future by developing tactics, techniques and procedures to share with those units. “I have never been a part of a unit that is more excited about the mission before them and the legacy they’re going to leave,” said Spurlock. Today, the waiting ends and integration begins for the next generation of air mobility that will be a linchpin of national defense, global humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations for decades to come.

“For those of us who have spent years watching this process happen, it’s enormously humbling to finally see it come to a close,” said Col. Phil Heseltine, 931st ARW commander. “We are grateful to everyone who is joining us as we fulfill the potential of this amazing new aircraft. “We are honoring the rich culture that we have been gifted by those who came before us,” said Heseltine. “That culture continues today. For example, the forward fuselage section of the KC-46 is built by Spirit AeroSystems right here in Wichita. This aircraft literally came home today.” With the KC-46 on the ground at McConnell AFB, the Air Force will begin the next phases of familiarization and initial operations testing and evaluation. 2019

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Air Force Order of Battle  
Created: 7 Dec 2010  
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#### Sources

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