

497th AIR EXPEDITIONARY GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

497th Bombardment Group, Very Heavy established, 19 Nov 1943

Activated, 20 Nov 1943

Inactivated, 31 Mar 1946

497th Air Refueling Wing established and activated, 15 Nov 1962

Organized, 1 Jan 1963

Discontinued and inactivated, 15 Sep 1964

497th Bombardment Group, Very Heavy and 497th Air Refueling Wing consolidated, 31 Jan 1984

Redesignated 497th Air Expeditionary Group and converted to provisional status, 12 Jun 2002

Active:

12 Jan 2000 – 31 Jan 2000

2 Jul 2003 – 28 Jul 2003

28 Oct 2003 – 24 Nov 2003

27 Jan 2004 – 15 Feb 2004

14 May 2004 – 10 Jun 2004

29 Oct 2004 – 26 Nov 2004

10 Feb 2005 – 10 Mar 2005

26 Apr 2005 – May 2005

1 Mar 2006 – 25 Mar 2006
26 May 2006 – 25 Jun 2006
13 Oct 2006 – 9 Nov 2006

STATIONS

El Paso Mun Aprt, TX, 20 Nov 1943
Clovis AAFld, NM, 1 Dec 1943
Pratt AAFld, KS, 13 Apr 1944
Camp Anza, CA, 20-29 Jul 1944 (ground echelon)
Herirsgton AAFld, KS, 31 Aug-Oct 1944 (air echelon)
Isley Field, Saipan, 17 Sep 1944-1 Nov 1945 (ground echelon), 1944-Oct 1945 (air echelon)
Mar Field, CA, 26 Nov 1945
MacDill Field, FL, 5 Jan-31 Mar 1946
Plattsburgh AFB, NY, 1 Jan 1963-15 Sep 1964
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 12 Jan 2000 – 31 Jan 2000
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 2 Jul 2003 – 28 Jul 2003
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 28 Oct 2003 – 24 Nov 2003
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 27 Jan 2004 – 15 Feb 2004
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 14 May 2004 – 10 Jun 2004
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 29 Oct 2004 – 26 Nov 2004
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 10 Feb 2005 – 10 Mar 2005
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 26 Apr 2005 – May 2005
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 1 Mar 2006 – 25 Mar 2006
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 26 May 2006 – 25 Jun 2006
Paya Lebar Airfield, Singapore, 13 Oct 2006 – 9 Nov 2006

ASSIGNMENT

73rd Bombardment Wing, Very Heavy, 20 Nov 1943-31 Mar 1946
Strategic Air Command, 15 Nov 1962
820th Strategic Aerospace Division, 1 Jan 1963-15 Sep 1964
Air Mobility Command to activate or inactivate as needed, 12 Jun 2002
13th Air Expeditionary Task Force, 13 Oct 2006 – 9 Nov 2006

ATTACHMENTS

Thirteenth Air Force, 12 Jan 2000 – 31 Jan 2000
Thirteenth Air Force, 2 Jul 2003 – 28 Jul 2003
Thirteenth Air Force, 28 Oct 2003 – 24 Nov 2003
Thirteenth Air Force, 27 Jan 2004 – 15 Feb 2004
Thirteenth Air Force, 14 May 2004 – 10 Jun 2004
Thirteenth Air Force, 29 Oct 2004 – 26 Nov 2004
Thirteenth Air Force, 10 Feb 2005 – 10 Mar 2005
Thirteenth Air Force, 26 Apr 2005 – May 2005
George C. Kenney Headquarters (Provisional), 1 Mar 2006 – 25 Mar 2006
George C. Kenney Headquarters (Provisional), 26 May 2006 – 25 Jun 2006

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1944-1945

B-29, 1944-1945, 1946

KC-97, 1963-1964

COMMANDERS

LTC John P. Veerling, 10 Dec 1943

Cpt Cador O. Smith, 1 Jan 1944

Lt Glenn E. McClure, 16 Jan 1944

Maj Alfred J. Hanlon, Jr., 26 Jan 1944

Col Karl Truesdell, Jr., 6 Mar 1944

Col Arnold T. Johnson, 22 Apr 1944

Col Stuart P. Wright, 26 Apr 1944

Col Arnold T. Johnson, 26 Feb 1945-31 Mar 1946

None (not manned), 15 Nov-31 Dec 1962

Col Fred W. Miller, 1 Jan 1963

Col James O. Frankosky, 12 Mar 1963

Col Vemon K. Cammack, 1 Nov 1963

Col John H. M. Linebaugh, 1 Jul 1964

Col Robert G. Moll, 15 Jul-15 Sep 1964

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Japan

Eastern Mandates

Western Pacific

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1 Jan-30 Jun 1963

Distinguished Unit Citations

Japan, 27 Jan 1945

Japan, 26 Jul-2 Aug 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1 Jan-30 Jun 1963

EMBLEM



497th Bombardment Group, Heavy

497th Air Refueling Wing emblem: Per bend light blue and argent, a bend vert garnished or between two cotises azure fimbriated of the second, in chief a mullet above a cloud formation issuant from sinister fess-wise all of the last, in base 19 stripes palewise of the fifth, on the bend five mullets of the fourth, all within a diminished bordure of the last. (Approved, 7 Feb 1963)

MOTTO

PARATI STAMUS—We stand ready

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Prepared for overseas duty with B-17s and B-29s. Moved to Saipan, Jul-Oct 1944, and assigned to Twentieth AF. Began B-29 operations in Oct 1944 with attacks against Iwo Jima and the Truk Islands. Took part in the first attack (24 Nov 1944) on Japan by AAF planes based in the Marianas. Flew many missions against strategic objectives in Japan; on numerous raids, made its attacks in daylight and from high altitude. Received a DUC for a mission on 27 Jan 1945: although weather conditions prevented the group from bombing its primary objective, the unescorted B-29s withstood severe enemy attacks to strike an alternate target, the industrial area of Hamamatsu. Awarded second DUC for attacking strategic centers in Japan during Jul and Aug 1945. Assisted the assault on Okinawa in Apr 1945 by bombing enemy airfields to cut down air attacks against the invasion force. Beginning in Mar 1945 and continuing until the end of the war the group made incendiary raids against Japan, flying at night and at low altitude to bomb area targets. Returned to the US in Nov 1945. Assigned to Strategic Air Command on 21 Mar 1946 and inactivated on 31 Mar 1946.

The unit was established in late 1943 as the 497th Bombardment Group at El Paso Army Air Base, Texas, a Boeing B-29 Superfortress very heavy bombardment group. The unit's original operational squadrons were the 869th, 870th, 871st, and 872d Bombardment Squadrons.[5] It was also assigned four bombardment maintenance squadrons (one paired with each of its operational squadrons) and a photographic laboratory. The group's initial cadre was drawn

from the 491st Bombardment Group.

In Dec the group moved on paper to Clovis Army Air Field, New Mexico, although its ground personnel moved to Pratt Army Air Field, Kansas, where they were attached to the 40th Bombardment Group to begin training. At Clovis, the group began to man its air echelon by Jan 1944. The 497th drew heavily on aircrews of the 480th Antisubmarine Group who were returning to the United States from duty in England and Africa to fill out its flying squadrons. Aircrew training at Clovis was limited to ground training, although some flying in Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress and Consolidated B-24 Liberator aircraft assigned to the 73d Bombardment Wing was accomplished. Key personnel trained with the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics at Orlando Army Air Base, Florida

In Apr 1944, the group air and ground echelons united at Pratt. Here the 497th finally received newly manufactured Boeing B-29 Superfortresses the following month, although it continued to fly B-17s as well due to continuing engine problems with the B-29s. In May the United States Army Air Forces reorganized its very heavy bombardment units. The 872d Bombardment Squadron and the bombardment maintenance squadrons were inactivated and their personnel absorbed into the remaining three squadrons.

The 497th deployed to Pacific Theater of Operations, with the ground echelon sailing 30 Jul on the SS Fairisle, passing through Honolulu and Eniwetok before arriving at Saipan on 20 Sep. Upon arrival the group's personnel were engaged in construction. By mid-Oct most personnel were able to move into Quonset huts from the tents which they were assigned on arrival. The aircrews began departing Kansas on 6 Oct, ferrying their aircraft to Saipan via a 6500 nautical mile route, with the last B-29 arriving on 30 Oct. The headquarters and staff elements flew to Saipan aboard Air Transport Command Douglas C-54 Skymaster aircraft. At Saipan the group became part of the XXI Bomber Command at Isely Field.

The group began operations on 28 Oct 1944 with a night attack against the submarine pens at Truk Island and attacks against Iwo Jima in early Nov. The group took part in the first attack on Japan by AAF planes based in the Marianas. On 24 Nov 1944 Major Robert Morgan led the first mission of the XXI Bomber Command to bomb Japan, with wing commander Brigadier Gen. Emmett O'Donnell, Jr. as co-pilot. 110 aircraft of the 73rd Bombardment Wing bombed Tokyo on this mission. The group also suffered its first combat loss on this mission, when a B-29 of the 870th squadron was shot down over the target area. However, this was not the first flight by a 497th aircraft to Japan. Major Morgan and his crew had flown a solo mission on 10 Nov using radio countermeasures equipment to obtain information on the disposition of Japanese early warning and gun control radars. During Dec four group aircraft were destroyed in Japanese bombing raids against Isely Field. The 497th flew missions against strategic objectives in Japan, originally in daylight and from high altitude. It was also tasked with "Weather Strike" missions which were single ship flights flown nightly to obtain weather information for target areas in Japan while also making incendiary attacks on various targets.

The group received a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for a mission on 27 Jan 1945. Although

weather conditions prevented the group from bombing its primary objective, the unescorted B-29s withstood severe enemy attacks to strike an alternate target, the industrial area of Hamamatsu. It was awarded a second DUC for attacking strategic centers in Japan during Jul and Aug 1945. The group assisted the assault on Okinawa in Apr 1945 by bombing enemy airfields to cut down air attacks against the invasion force. Beginning on 19 Mar and continuing until the end of the war the group made incendiary raids against Japan, flying at night and at low altitude to bomb area targets. The group released propaganda leaflets over the Japanese home islands,[18] continuing strategic bombing raids and incendiary attacks until the Japanese surrender in Aug 1945.

After V-J Day, the 497th dropped supplies to Allied prisoners.[19] In Nov 1945 the unit returned to the United States where it was initially assigned to Continental Air Forces's (CAF) Fourth Air Force at Mar Field, California. At Mar the 513th Bombardment Squadron, a former Fifteenth Air Force B-24 Liberator squadron, joined the group. The 513th was undergoing B-29 very heavy bomber upgrade training. In Jan 1945, the 497th was reassigned to the CAF Third Air Force at MacDill Field, Florida. In Mar 1946 CAF became Strategic Air Command (SAC), and the group was one of SAC's first bombardment groups. Demobilization was in full swing and the group turned in its aircraft and was inactivated on 31 Mar.

In Jan 1961, SAC separated the two air refueling squadrons of the 380th Bombardment Wing at Plattsburgh AFB, New York into a separate wing, the 4108th Air Refueling Wing. In addition to the 26th and 380th Air Refueling Squadrons, flying Boeing KC-97 Stratotankers, the wing was assigned three maintenance squadrons. It was assigned to the Eighth Air Force's 820th Air Division

4108th was replaced by the newly constituted 497th Air Refueling Wing, which assumed its mission, personnel, and equipment on 1 Jan 1963. The 26th and 380th Air Refueling Squadrons were reassigned to the 497th. Component support units were replaced by units with numerical designation of the newly established wing.

The wing supported global air refueling missions of SAC and other USAF needs, as required, earning an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for its performance of the mission. In Jun 1964 the 380th Air Refueling Squadron became non-operational while it began to convert to newer Boeing KC-135 Stratotankers. The 497th was discontinued and inactivated on 15 Sep 1964. Its subordinate units were also inactivated with the exception of the 380th Air Refueling Squadron, which was reassigned to the 380th Bombardment Wing.

In 2000, the consolidated unit was converted to provisional status and assigned to Pacific Air Forces to activate or inactivate as needed. It was redesignated as the 497th Air Expeditionary Group. Between 2000 and 2006 the group was periodically activated for Commando Sling exercises, using the 497th Combat Training Squadron as its cadre, augmented by deployed personnel and equipment from Pacific Air Forces fighter squadrons.

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 28 Aug 2010

Updated: 12 Nov 2012

Sources

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

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