

# **580<sup>th</sup> HOLDING AND BRIEFING SQUADRON**

## **MISSION**

### **LINEAGE**

580<sup>th</sup> Holding and Briefing Squadron  
Inactivated, 8 Sep 1953

### **STATIONS**

Mountain Home AFB, ID, 16 Apr 1951-9 Sep 1952

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **COMMANDERS**

Maj James B. Foran

#### **HONORS**

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

### **EMBLEM**

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

### **OPERATIONS**

In January 1952, the 580th sent nine officers to New York City for 75 days of on-the-job training

in propaganda dissemination at the US government's Voice of America (VOA) radio station. This original group was later augmented by 13 other graduates of the Georgetown University program, who likewise delivered VOA's foreign language broadcasts into Communist-controlled Eastern Europe. A list of the tongues spoken by the 580th's foreign-language specialists clearly indicates the wing's wartime area of operations.

They included Armenian, French, German, Greek, Italian, Lithuanian, Spanish, Tatar, and Turkish. Seven months more would pass before the foreign-language specialists would get the chance to practice their proficiency closer to their target areas.

January 1952 was also of note for a bizarre event happening a long way from the bright lights of New York City's VOA offices. During a night training mission over southern California's Death Valley, one of the 580th's twin-engine Albatrosses encountered a combination of bad weather and even worse luck. With the Albatross steadily and involuntarily descending due to severe icing conditions and the subsequent loss of one engine, the crew made the prudent decision to bail out before the aircraft collided with something much harder than ice.

As the first of the air resupply and communications wings to be established, the 580th frequently found its activities the center of debate in the acrimonious Army-Air Force-CIA bureaucratic struggle for "ownership" of the nation's unconventional warfare mission. This proved especially true for the Holding and Briefing Squadron, which, despite its bland name, put Air Force officers in roles nearly identical to those claimed by the Army's Special Forces and the USI's guerrilla warfare specialists.

Air support for unconventional warfare was one thing, but the 580th's Specialized Warfare Course for its H&B officers was breathtaking in its brashness. Not only was the Air Force seemingly going for a piece of the "ground action" of the unconventional-warfare mission, it was actually going to its bureaucratic antagonists in this competition (the Army and USI) for the training necessary to accomplish this goal!

This was the bureaucratic turf battle ongoing in Washington when Maj Edward Joseph reported to Mountain Home AFB in the summer of 1951 for his yet-to-be-determined assignment in the 580th. With two heavy-bomber combat tours in the Pacific in World War II under his belt, he had every reason to believe another flying tour lay ahead or perhaps a staff position following his completion of the demanding psywar course at Georgetown University. It didn't exactly work out that way.

The USI compound at Fort Benning, designated "Training Center One" (TC-One), had buildings that were used as hospitals in earlier days. In addition to intelligence personnel, TC-One housed Air Force H&B officers who were also undergoing unconventional-warfare training by a cadre of Green Beret instructors housed elsewhere on the post. During the morning, both USI and H&B officers attended parachute training at Benning's well-known jump school. In the afternoon and evening, they returned to TC-One for Special Forces and USI training in weapons, demolitions, communications, and guerrilla warfare tactics. The training was intensive because H&B officers

were expected to provide similar training to the guerrillas they were “holding and briefing.” For example, ARCS Individual Training Standard 50-2-2, dated 15 January 1952, demanded that H&B officers be proficient in: (1) the instruction of light machine guns, heavy machine guns, rifles, carbines, pistols, mortars, bazookas, recoilless weapons, and grenades; (2) the instruction of demolition procedures and field expedients used in demolition activities; (3) performing the duties of an aerial delivery technician (jumpmaster); and (4) performing duties as members of a reception committee and as parachutist members of a reception committee when qualified.

The H&B Squadron had deployed to Libya with the rest of the wing in the summer and fall of 1952 and soon began working closely with the Green Berets stationed in Germany. The Army Special Forces troopers would frequently come to Wheelus for joint weapons and demolition training, as well as for the previously mentioned desert survival training in the barren wastelands south of the airfield.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

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