

582nd AIR RESUPPLY AND COMMUNICATIONS WING



LINEAGE

Established as 582nd Air Resupply and Communications Wing, 3 Sep 1952
Activated, 24 Sep 1952
Inactivated, 14 Aug 1953

STATIONS

Mountain Home AFB, ID, 24 Sep 1952
Great Falls AFB, Mont, 1 May-14 Aug 1953

ASSIGNMENTS

Air Resupply and Communications Service, 24 Sep 1952-14 Aug 1953

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-119, 1953
B-29, 1953
SA-16, 1953

COMMANDERS

Col Robert W. Fish, 24 Sep 1952
Col Earl J. Livesay, 8 Jul-14 Aug 1953

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

None

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

None

EMBLEM

Per fess indented or and azure, the silhouette of a transport plane sable and in base a broken chain of three links proper below two lightning bolts points conjoined argent, on a chief gules a wreath surmounted by a sword fesswise, hilt to dexter both of the first (Approved on 14 Apr 1953.)

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

LIBERTAS PER VER-ITATEM—Freedom through truth

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Performed psychological warfare and unconventional operations.

The Air Force then activated, equipped, and trained the 580th, 581st, and 582nd Air Resupply and Communication Wings specifically for unconventional warfare and counterinsurgency operations. These wings possessed tremendous capabilities using a variety of aircraft such as C-47, C-54, C-118, C-119, B-29, SA-16, and H-19. This revitalization of special operations included the ability to recover downed airmen and the full spectrum of covert air operations. However, while three wings were activated, only one saw action in Korea. After the war, all three were inactivated by late 1953.

To the 582d ARC Wing goes the honor of being the last of the breed. Activated on 24 September 1952 at Mountain Home AFB, the 582d carried the scarlet and gold colors of the ARC “stable.” Before it could deploy overseas it, along with the other two ARC wings already deployed, was downsized to group status in September 1953. The reduction took authorized strength levels down from 1,200 overall to 137 officers and 463 airmen.

As with the 580th ARC Wing, the reduction in size from wing to group took place despite a substantial increase in ARC support to the Army’s Special Forces units. In fact, the downsizing took place during the same period in which the 582d was providing around-the-clock support to stateside-based elements of the 10th Special Forces Group during Exercise Cleo, a massive, joint-service unconventional warfare exercise conducted in Georgia’s Chattahoochee National Forest. During Cleo, the 582d’s B-29s, SA-16s, and C-119s parachuted over 600 personnel and nearly 300 containers for a combined total of over 1,000 tons of airdrop support.

Like the other ARC wings, the 582d was initially assigned 12 B-29s, four C-119s, and four SA-16s. With the reduction to group status, its initial requirement for four helicopters was dropped for good. In February 1954, the 582d Air Resupply Group deployed these aircraft along with its Air Materials Assembly Squadron and support staff to RAF Molesworth, their operational base in England.⁶ With this deployment, control of the group was transferred from the Military Air Transport Service to Third Air Force, itself based in England. From RAF Molesworth, the 582d provided the bulk of air support given to the 10th Special Forces Group following the latter’s complete transfer from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Bad Tolz, Germany. Night flying was emphasized as usual to include amphibious training with the reliable SA-16. But the ARC “experiment” was clearly winding down in the face of tighter defense budgets, the costly expansion of the Strategic Air Command within

USAF, and the eventual Defense Department decision to give the Army the bulk of the unconventional warfare mission.

Third Air Force General Order 86, dated 18 October 1956, deactivated the 582d Air Resupply Group effective 25 October of the same year. With its deactivation (and that of the other two ARC groups), USAF further distanced itself from peacetime involvement in unconventional warfare. From the seven ARC wings envisioned in 1951, only three had been activated and, as has been seen, all three were subsequently reduced to airlift support-only groups in less than 36 months.

The month before the 582d was deactivated, another unit was activated at RAF Molesworth with little fanfare. Oddly enough, it had two of the same aircraft types flown by the 582d, with two flights of C-119s and one of SA-16s; long range C-54 four-engine transports later replaced the C-119s. The new unit was designated the 42d Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium) (Special). Personnel attached to the 580th's AMA Squadron at Wheelus when both groups (580th and 582d) were deactivated soon began arriving at Molesworth to continue doing what they did best with the 42d. Even so, a small detachment of AMA specialists remained active at Wheelus.

*MATS had taken over the headquarters supervision of the 582d, the only ARC unit remaining in the continental US following deactivation of the Air Resupply and Communications Service.

On the other side of the world, much of the same was going on at the 581st's final base on Okinawa, where the Air Force activated the 317th Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium) (Special).

Two Air Force Albatrosses were involved in unusual incidents, both of which lend credence to the epithet "Grumman Ironworks." Based upon experiences in World War II, the Central Intelligence Agency planned the development of classified air units during the early 1950s. One such brainchild, designed for integral Air Force operations, evolved into the 580th, 581st and 582nd Air Resupply and Communication Wings Formed to operate in the Far East, Europe, and Africa, these clandestine units, under Central Intelligence Agency auspices, could penetrate foreign borders to infiltrate agents and equipment. The 581st, which compiled an impressive record of covert activities using Albatrosses behind enemy lines in Korea, operated both SA-16A and surplus B-29 aircraft. The B-29s flew long range missions with heavy loads while the SA-16A's amphibious abilities made it ideal for covert insertions and pickups. Danger became a byword as missions were usually flown at night and at extremely low altitudes to avoid radar detection. At least three B-29s were lost and one SA-16A, serial number 51-001 of the 580th ARCW, met a similar fate.

Wing Heraldry
Air Resupply Sq
Airborne Material Assembly Sq
Communications Sq
Holding & Briefing Sq
Maintenance Sq
Motor Vehicle Sq
Reproduction Sq

The 582nd Air Resupply and Communications Wing was activated on 14 September 1952 at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. With their training partially completed, they were relocated to Great Falls AFB, Montana.

On 14 August 1953, the Wing was reduced to Group strength and the Communications Squadron, Holding & Briefing Squadron, Maintenance Squadron, Motor Vehicle Squadron and Reproduction Squadron were deactivated.

Upon completion of their training, in February 1954, the Group was deployed to Molesworth RAF Station in England.

The 580th ARC Wing, commanded by Col. John R. "Killer" Kane of World War II Ploesti fame, deployed to Wheelus Field, Libya, and the 581st, under Col. John K. Arnold, Jr. moved to Clark Field, Philippine Is. In September 1952 Brig. Gen. Monro MacCloskey, whose World War II special air warfare experiences have been mentioned, took command of ARCS, replacing Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Millard C. Young. 4 The 582nd ARC Wing formed, Col. Robert J. Fish, Commander, destined for RAF Molesworth, England, and at least one more, the 583rd, was planned, supposedly to move to Annecy, France in the Haute-Savoie.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources