

## 916 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON, HEAVY



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

916 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy

### STATIONS

Travis AFB, CA, 1 Sep 1959

### ASSIGNMENTS

47 Air Division

14 Strategic Aerospace Division, 1 Apr 1972

### WEAPON SYSTEMS

KC-135

### COMMANDERS

Col George E. Burch 1 Sep 1959

Col George M. Richmond 2 Jul 1968

Col Vito J. Fierro 15 Sep 1968

Col Bruce C. Keltz 10 Apr 1971

Col William E. Mohr, II 8 Jun 1973

Col Curtis R. Smith 6 Jun 1974

Col Richard K. Kiefer 6 Sep 1974

Col Clinton H. Winne, Jr. 1 Jul 1975

Col Thomas E. Schwietz 7 May 1976

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

### **EMBLEM**

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

SAC decided to establish an air refueling unit at Travis to service the in-flight refueling needs of the three B-52G squadrons located in northern California. Therefore, it organized and activated the 916th Air Refueling Squadron on 1 September 1959. The 916th was assigned to the 5th Bombardment Wing. Its first jet KC-135 Stratotanker arrived on 12 December 1959. Originally authorized ten KC-135s and 19 aircrews, the squadron grew to 15 KC-135s and 25 aircrews by June 1962. Its newly-built alert facilities, located on the far side of the Travis flightline, had opened earlier, on 13 February 1960. The 916th Air Refueling Squadron was declared "combat ready" by the 15th Air Force in May 1960

The imminent arrival of the C-5, which could be refueled in flight, was one of the reasons for retaining the 916th Air Refueling Squadron at Travis. In anticipation of the appearance of the Galaxy, and because of the increasing workload in the Pacific, SAC increased the strength of the squadron in the spring of 1969. Effective 13 May, it received the first of five additional KC-135s. The fifth KC-135 arrived 1 July, bringing the squadron's strength to 20 aircraft and 31 aircrews. Between 25 July 1968 and 1 April 1970, the 916th Air Refueling Squadron reported directly to the 14th Air Division at Beale.

On 30 August 1974, the 916th Air Refueling Squadron began its air refueling partnership with the C-5As when one of its KC-135 crews performed the first test air refueling of a C-5 during Operation COLD JUICE I. This was MAC's first overwater, long-range air refueling of the giant transport. A crew of instructors from Altus flew the C-5 from Dover AFB, Delaware to Clark Air Base in the Philippines, a distance of 10,060 miles. Their aircraft received two air refuelings. The first was over California from a crew from the 916th and the second was over Guam. Between 30 August and the end of the year, the squadron performed 25 air refuelings of C-5s. The

importance of the 916th Air Refueling Squadron to the C-5, and in the Pacific region in general, eventually led SAC to upgrade its organization at Travis.

Therefore, on 1 July 1977, the 15th Air Force organized and activated the 307th Air Refueling Group and the 307th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Travis. Both the latter and the 916th Air Refueling Squadron were assigned to the 307th Air Refueling Group, which became the ranking SAC organization on base. As of 30 September 1980, 541 military and eight civilian personnel were assigned to the group and its two squadrons.

As noted, the last to leave was the 916th Air Refueling Squadron assigned to the 307th Air Refueling Group. Its crews flew 20 KC-135A tankers. On 31 October 1983, the group and all its subordinate squadrons were inactivated and its aircraft were redistributed among other SAC units. The last KC-135A actually departed Travis on 6 October. The group's facilities were turned over to the 60th Military Airlift Wing and some, such as the SAC alert dining hall (building 1175) were closed. It was a bit ironic perhaps that two years earlier, in October 1981, the 60th Wing opened an Air Refueling School on base to train pilots to be qualified for air-refueling.

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Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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

*A History of Travis Air Force Base, 1943-1996.* Gary Leiser. Travis Air Force Base Historical Society. Sacramento, CA. 1996.