

916 AIR REFUELING WING



MISSION

The peacetime mission of the 916th ARW is to develop and maintain the operational capability of its subordinate units and to train more than 800 reservists for worldwide duty. In the event of a war or a national emergency, the 916th ARW will fall under the direction of the Air Mobility Command at Scott AFB, IL. The Wing has 11 subordinate units, the 916th Communications Flight, the 916th Medical Squadron, and three groups of squadrons and flights: 916th Logistics Group, 916th Operations Group and 916th Support Group.

LINEAGE

916 Troop Carrier Group, Heavy established and activated, 28 Dec 1962
Organized in the Reserve, 17 Jan 1963
Redesignated 916 Air Transport Group, Heavy, 1 Dec 1965
Redesignated 916 Military Airlift Group, 1 Jan 1966
Inactivated, 8 Jul 1972
Redesignated 916 Air Refueling Group, Heavy (Associate), 10 Jul 1986
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Oct 1986
Redesignated 916 Air Refueling Group (Associate), 1 Feb 1992
Redesignated 916 Air Refueling Wing, 1 Oct 1994

STATIONS

Donaldson AFB, SC, 17 Jan 1963
Carswell AFB, TX, 1 Apr 1963-8 Jul 1972
Seymour Johnson AFB, NC, 1 Oct 1986

ASSIGNMENTS

Continental Air Command, 28 Dec 1962

435 Troop Carrier Wing, 17 Jan 1963
433 Troop Carrier Wing, 18 Mar 1963
442 Troop Carrier Wing, 1 Jul 1963
512 Troop Carrier (later, 512 Air Transport; 512 Military Airlift) Wing, 8 Jan 1965
433 Military (later, 433 Tactical) Airlift Wing, 21 Apr 1971-8 Jul 1972
452 Air Refueling Wing, 1 Oct 1986
434 Air Refueling Wing (later, 434 Wing; 434 Air Refueling Wing), 1 Jul 1987
Twenty-Second Air Force, 1 Oct 1994
Fourth Air Force, 1 Apr 1997

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-124, 1963-1972
KC-10, 1986-1995
KC-135, 1995
KC-46, 2020

COMMANDERS

Col Ben J. Mangina, 21 Feb 1963
Lt Col Walter S. Blythe, Jr., 25 Mar 1964
Col Stanley V. Rush, 12 Oct 1964
Lt Col Walter S. Blythe, Jr., 8 Jan 1965
Lt Col William F. Keaster, 1 May 1965
Lt Col Walter S. Blythe, Jr., Jun 1966
Col Robert W. Creamer, Dec 1967
Col George H. Bergmark, Jr., Jul 1969
Lt Col Thomas N. Boothe, 25 Sep 1970
Col Claude G. Lawson, Mar-8 Jul 1972
Lt Col Russell T. Olson, 1 Oct 1986
Lt Col Paul W. Bishop, 1 Nov 1987
Lt Col John J. Batbie, Jr., 10 Apr 1988
Col Peter K. Sullivan, 13 Jul 1991
Col John O. Miller, 14 Nov 1992
Col Alfred E. Cronk, Jr., 15 Feb 1997
Col James L. Melin, 23 Sep 2000
Col Ronald A. Rutland, 11 Jan 2003
Col Paul J. Sykes, 1 May 2004
Col Stephen J. Linsenmeyer Jr., 14 Jul 2007
Col Randall A. Ogden, 11 Apr 2010
Col Currin
Col Craig McPike
Col Stephen Lanier
Col Eric R. Jenkins, 1 Oct 2016

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Aug 1967-25 Oct 1968

1 Aug 1990-31 Jul 1992

2 Aug 1992-1 Aug 1994

1 Jun 2000-31 May 2002

1 Jun 2002-31 May 2003

10 Oct 2004-11 Oct 2006

1 Aug 2007-31 Jul 2009

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

1 Apr 1966-19 May 1972

EMBLEM

On a shield the upper right portion of which is Air Force blue a cluster of five white stars, the lower left portion Air Force Yellow, from upper left to lower right a light blue truncated triangle diagonally having in the lower portion a white globe gridded and outlined Air Force Blue and issuant from the upper left of globe a white wing detailed Air Force blue, the globe encircled by an Air Force blue ring all within a diminished white border. Below the device a white scroll inscribed "Maximo Conatu" in Air force Yellow am scroll outlined Air Force yellow.
SIGNIFICANCE: The encircled globe depicts the world girding with capabilities with the wing representing strength and speed of flying. The triangle alludes to expanding missions and the stars the around the clock accomplishment of missions.



Per bend sinister Azure and Or, a ray issuant from sinister chief Celeste charged with a globe winged bendwise sinister Argent gridlined and garnished of the first enfiling an orbit ring bendwise sinister of the like, in dexter chief three mullets fesswise above two bendwise sinister White; all within a diminished bordure of the second. Attached below the shield a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed 916TH AIR REFUELING WING in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Blue and yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The Light Blue ray suggests the refueling mission of the Wing. The winged globe with orbit wing symbolizes the unit's ability to perform its mission anywhere in the world to keep the aircraft flying in the defense of peace. The stars represent the Wing's personnel and their commitment and dedication to perform their duty functions any time anywhere. (Approved, 4 May 1964)

MOTTO

MAXIMO CONATU-By Our Greatest Effort

OPERATIONS

As a reserve unit, the 916th conducted air and ground training activities, airlifting personnel and cargo in support of active duty forces worldwide. Support missions included military airlifts to South Vietnam beginning in 1965 and to U.S. forces in the Dominican Republic during a 1965 crisis. Also participated in numerous humanitarian airlift missions. Since Oct 1986, flew air mobility operational and training missions within and beyond the United States. Refueled aircraft and airlifted passengers and cargo for various training exercises and contingency and humanitarian operations around the world.

916 AREFG was an associate of 68 Air Refueling Wing, as such was to integrate during contingency operations. In 1994, 916 AREFG converted from an associate unit to a self equipped organization and received KC-135Rs.

The 916th Troop Carrier Group with two C-124 Globemasters and a potential manpower of 683, became the newest addition to the Alamo Wing in March. Colonel Ben J. Mangina, commander of the 916th greeted the new group at Carswell AFB, Ft. Worth in April. Donaldson AFB, South Carolina was the home of the 916th until it moved to Carswell AFB. The 916 TCG flew over 5,000 accident free air hours during the Berlin reserve recall. They flew missions in such places as North Africa, Spain, France and the Vietnam Saigon area. The C-124s were the first assigned to the Alamo Wing.

BRAC Changes on Horizon for NC Refueling Wing. An air refueling squadron formerly based at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., will make history next year when it becomes an active associate unit with the 916th Air Refueling Wing at Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C. The association will mark the first time a regular Air Force unit, the 911th Air Refueling Squadron Red Eagles, has partnered with an Air Force Reserve Command air refueling wing that owns KC-135 aircraft. "This is the first tanker active associate unit in the Reserve Command, so we are going to ensure it's done right," said Col. Fritz Linsenmeyer, 916th ARW commander. "It's a great

package that includes the necessary maintenance, support and ops pieces to ensure we and the active-duty forces can work side by side."

The association will come about as a result of recent base realignment and closure actions, which caused the inactivation of the 911th ARS in June 2007. An advance team of 19 people from the 911th traveled to North Carolina in October to help prepare for the transition. "While significant numbers will arrive in February and March 2008, the majority of the new personnel will not arrive here until the summer of 2008," said Lt. Col. Eric A. Jorgensen, chief of 916th ARW plans. The 911th ARS will officially activate at Seymour Johnson in April 2008, Colonel Jorgensen said. Eight new KC-135R Stratotankers and the rest of the 911th ARS people are scheduled to be in place by September 2008. The arrival of the aircraft will double the 916th's fleet to 16, but parking space won't be a problem, Colonel Jorgensen said. "We already have space for all of the aircraft," he said. "What we don't have is office and back-shop space for the 260 additional active-component personnel who will be arriving here to form the 911th. To make room for them, we're beginning a \$26 million construction project."

The colonel said the 911th hopes to break ground on the project this month. The transition may be new to the current staff, but the 911th's move to Seymour Johnson represents a homecoming of sorts for the unit. The squadron was originally formed at the base as the 911th ARS, Heavy, in 1958. It was part of the 4241st Strategic Wing, flying tankers as well as B-52 bombers. After some reassessments in the early 1960s and supporting global operations throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, the 911th ARS returned to Seymour Johnson in 1991.

Colonel Linsenmeyer flew KC-10s with the 911th for three years when the squadron was part of Seymour Johnson's 4th Operations Group. "It is exciting to have the 911th Red Eagles back at Seymour Johnson," Colonel Linsenmeyer said. "We are all anxiously awaiting the arrival of the leadership and initial cadre later this year and then to having the main body in place by the summer of 2008." 2007

In 2005, a Base Realignment and Closure Commission recommendation changed the way the Air Force Reserve at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base did business, and the 916th Air Refueling Wing took its place in U.S. Air Force history as the first KC-135R unit to enter into an active association partnership with a regular Air Force organization, the 911th Air Refueling Squadron. Over the next three years, eight aircraft and more than 280 regular Air Force Airmen would align themselves under a concept that had been tested but never implemented to its true potential. Today, the 916th ARW is not only ready to show the active duty, Air National Guard and Reserve that this concept works, but that it can have remarkable results for all involved.

Capt. Carmen Thompson, a pilot and the executive officer for the 911th, said that initially regular Air Force officers were hesitant to take a tour of duty at a unit that they believed would stifle their career. Joining the squadron meant they'd see plenty of time in the cockpit and overseas, but they would get little opportunity to work in key jobs occupied by 916th ARW Reservists. As a result, when it came time for them to meet a promotion board, their records wouldn't stand out against their counterparts in bigger wings with a larger active-duty presence. That changed in June 2010 with the arrival of Col. Randy Ogden as the 916th ARW commander and Lt. Col. Phil Heseltine as the 911th ARS commander.

Together, they implemented a vision that called for pushing the status quo envelope. "There was an inherent fear that the active-duty member couldn't work for a Reservist," Colonel Heseltine said. He explained that in a wartime environment, having an active-duty Airman supervised by a Reservist wasn't a problem. But, somehow, when that scenario played out stateside, eyebrows were raised. Leadership examined the needs of the wing, called the Air Force Personnel Center to ask a few questions and then established a benchmark that allowed a select group of 911th ARS captains to serve as executive officers at the wing and group levels.

"It's a huge professional development opportunity to have our folks working directly for a full colonel," Colonel Heseltine said. "Because of the limited leadership positions within the 911th, it is more difficult for them to compete well with their active-duty peers at the 6th Air Mobility Wing. This opportunity is impressive. People should want to come here." Even though the squadron's 285 active-duty Airmen fly and maintain KC-135 aircraft alongside their Reserve counterparts on a day-to-day basis, they still report administratively to the 6th AMW located at MacDill AFB, Fla. As of the first of January, 11 active-duty officers filled jobs within the 916th ARW, including executive officer, wing plans, operation plans, safety and air-crew flight equipment positions. There's even an active-duty member filling a coveted command billet in the 916th Operations Support Squadron.

Maj. James Barker, 911th pilot and interim OSS commander, was called from the desert to fill a critical vacancy that opened when the Reserve squadron commander left for a new position on the West Coast. "I got a message that said to call Colonel Heseltine about a leadership position," Major Baker said. He knew the 916th ARW was preparing for a major inspection followed closely by a deployment, and the major thought he would be needed to help prepare crews. Little did he know a larger opportunity awaited. "It surprised me once we got through the greetings when he said, 'Do you want to be the OSS commander?'" Major Barker said.

"This is an opportunity I never thought I'd get." While the major fills the command position on a daily basis, he currently does not have official command authority granted by G-series orders, but that doesn't change the way he views the job. "The data is going to be there that I was the commander, whether or not my duty title at the top of my performance report reflects it," he said. "This is a great experience." Colonel Heseltine said most officers wouldn't get total force integration experience until after they completed Air Command and Staff College at the rank of major or above. "We have earned the trust of 916th leadership with our execs," he said. Capt. Nick Alcocer, 911th pilot and 916th Mission Support Group executive officer, stepped into a huge void that originally was only filled on drill weekends.

As the full-time group executive officer over five squadrons and flights, he has not only been tapped to serve a key role during the wing's upcoming operational readiness inspection, but he's also learning about policies, acronyms and procedures of the Reserve world that were once like a foreign language to him. "It's been a huge learning curve," he said. For a young pilot, getting an insider's look at how a mission support group functions is rare. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for my career," Captain Alcocer said. "It's taught me to appreciate what everybody brings to achieve mission accomplishment." The captain said there have been challenges along the way in finding a compromise between how the regular Air Force conducts business versus the Reserve, but ultimately it's about finding the most effective and efficient way to get things done.

"I work with some of the most experienced people who are willing to teach me," he said. "There's no better person to learn from than someone who's been doing the job for 15 years. That will serve me well if I'm ever lucky enough to become a commander." Working to find more commonality between how the regular Air Force and Reserve conduct business is a task for Col. Carolina Evernham, 916th Operations Group commander. She said that while the model of placing active-duty officers throughout the Reserve wing is a huge success, there are still many areas within the TFI model that could be more effective. "Awards and decorations have been a huge issue," Colonel Evernham said.

Another issue, Colonel Evernham said, is there isn't a means for accurately reflecting the true job duties of these cross-over officers in their personnel records. While active-duty yearly performance reports will soon be written by the Reserve supervisor, personnel records help paint a complete and accurate account of one's career. The wing's air expeditionary force rotation is another area that could be improved, the colonel said. Currently, the 916th is tasked with two different AEF rotations: one designated for 916th Reservists and one designated for those in the 911th.

When needed, leadership has successfully found a way to swap active-duty and Reserve aircrew members for activations, since their deployment time is the same. However, swapping out maintenance personnel hasn't proven as easy, since active-duty maintainers deploy for 120 days and Reserve maintainers have traditionally been tasked with 60-day rotations. This may be changing due to a new Air Force Central Command rotational policy that allows active-duty Airmen in an associate unit to rotate on the same schedule as the host unit. Colonel Evernham said she plans to bring these and other issues up at a TFI summit this month. "We should be able to communicate with higher headquarters so that other units can learn from this," she said. Even with these hiccups, the overwhelming feedback from junior and senior leaders within both organizations is that something great is happening at Seymour Johnson. "Reservists offer so much corporate knowledge," Colonel Evernham. 2011

The Air Force will test a new Total Force organizational construct called the "integrated wing," or I-Wing, later this year, Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James told the Senate Appropriations Committee's defense panel on Wednesday. The I-Wing, which will be located at Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C., is "designed to leverage the strengths of each component, reduce organizational redundancy, and meet mission demands more efficiently," James said. The first I-Wing will be Air Force Reserve's 916th Air Refueling Wing, but if the organizational construct is effective, the Air Force will "look to apply it more broadly in the future," James said.

The concept evolved from the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force Review and is expected to reach initial operational capability in Fiscal 2017, according to a release. "We are excited about this opportunity to test our highly successful active association at the 916th [Air Refueling Wing] with a new integrated wing model," said Lt. Gen. James Jackson, the chief of Air Force Reserve. "This pilot program will determine whether additional synergies can be garnered at this unit during the test and whether any lessons learned are repeatable at other locations in the Air Force." 2016

The history of the 916th Air Refueling Group, Heavy (Associate) includes a variety of geographical and organizational changes. The 916th was organized as a Troop Carrier Group, Heavy on 17 January 1963 at Donaldson AFE, South Carolina. Just under three months later, on 1 April, the unit moved to Carswell AFB, Texas where it remained until inactivation on 8 July 1972. During its time at Carswell AFB, the 916th was redesignated as an Air Transport Group, Heavy, in December 1965 and military airlift group in January 1966. The 916th was activated on 1 October 1986 as an Air Refueling Group, Heavy (Associate) at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina. On 1 October 1994, the 916th was redesignated as an Air Refueling Wing, still residing at Seymour Johnson AFB.

The 916th Troop Carrier Group's organization in 1963 evolved as part of the Continental Air Command (CONAC) reorganization in that year of its fifteen troop carrier wings. Because of difficulties encountered during the Berlin mobilization in 1961, the gaining Tactical Air Command sought through the reorganization to have greater flexibility in recalling units. Individual flying units could now be recalled without having to involve other units from the group or wing. Under each wing were self-supported groups, each of which had its own troop carrier squadron, combat support squadron, material squadron, and aerial port flight.

The first six months of the flier's existence were characterized by geographic relocation and organizational change. The 916th and its collocated 77th Troop Carrier Squadron, Heavy, equipped with C-124s, were first stationed at Donaldson AFB, South Carolina. The parent wing was the 435th Troop Carrier Wing. On 18 March 1963, the 916th and 77th were reassigned to the 433rd Troop Carrier Wing, Medium, and on 1 April 1963 moved to Carswell AFB, Texas. However, on 1 July 1963 as part of an action consolidating all Reserve C-124 groups under one wing, the 916th was reassigned to the 442nd Troop Carrier Wing. Concurrently, the gaining command changed from the Tactical Air Command to the Military Air Transport Service.

During the 916th formative years, limited flying operations were carried out. Not only did the geographical relocation interrupt recruiting and retention efforts, but the group's flying squadron also had only four aircraft (or half the number of authorized aircraft). Accordingly, the available C-124s were heavily used with resulting scheduling and maintenance problems. Another difficulty the 916th encountered was the rapid turnover of group commanders, in the second half of 1964, the 916th had three different commanders.

In 1965, the operational and manning programs of 916th showed marked gains. The year began with the unit being reassigned on 8 January to the 512th Troop Carrier Wing which had relocated from Willow Grove NAS, Pennsylvania, to Carswell AFB. At the end of June 1965, the 916th had 97 officers assigned for 74.3 percent of authorized levels and 556 airmen for 91.4 percent. In August 1965, the 916th was designated by the Defense Department as a Beef Broth unit. This term referred to selected Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units which were to stand ready to respond on short notice to any requirement. Reflecting the unit's special nature, they were authorized to recruit to their manning document levels and had supply priority.

In September, aircrews from the 916th and other 512th personnel participated in flying humanitarian missions to New Orleans, Louisiana, following Hurricane Betsy. The next month, the 916th participated in Operation Power Pack. In response to civil disorder in the Dominican Republic, President Lyndon B. Johnson dispatched American armed forces to quell the conflict and protect American lives. Due to the active force's heavy worldwide airlift commitment, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units participated heavily in the operation. Later, in November, the 916th along with other Reserve units took part in Operation Christmas Star and airlifted gifts to American servicemen in the Republic of South Vietnam.

By the end of the 1965, the 916th had its full authorization of eight C-124s. The 916th ARW and the 77th TCS were also redesignated on 1 December when the two units became an air transport group, heavy, and air transport squadron, heavy, respectively. The action took place as part of the general redesignation of all C-124 troop carrier wings, groups, and squadrons gained by the Military Air Transport Service. The unit designation, however, only lasted one month. On 1 January 1966, concurrently with the renaming of the Military Air Transport Service as the Military Airlift Command, the same units were redesignated as military airlift wings, groups, and squadrons. During the months of July through September 1966, the 916th participated along with other 512th airlift groups in Operation Combat Leave. The operation consisted of transporting personnel on leave to and from Southeast Asia during labor strikes at five major airlines. Aircrews from the 916th flew such routes as Carswell AFB, Texas, to Charleston AFB, South Carolina, to Travis AFS, California.

In 1967, an all-Fort Worth, Texas crew from the 916th flew a rescue operation for flood victims in Alaska. Approximately 15,000 pounds of charcoal and portable latrines were airlifted into the disaster struck area. On the return leg of the flight from Eielson AFB, Alaska, to Texas, the aircrew picked up an unusual cargo of two experimental lunar vehicles at Fairchild AFB, Washington. The vehicles were transported to Luke AFB, Arizona, for later receipt by the United States Geographical Survey Center of Astrogeology at Flagstaff, Arizona.

Reflecting the turbulence of the Vietnam era, the 916th participated in numerous domestic and overseas missions. As an example, in early 1968, following the Pueblo incident, the 77th Military Airlift Squadron transported supplies and equipment into Southeast Asia to support the Military Airlift Command's airlift mission. In April, the 77th played a role in the Air Force Reserves support of Operation Garden Plot. The squadron airlifted Army troops and equipment to different areas of the United States to help control civil disorders.

In August 1969, the 916th and other 512th flying units participated in major disaster relief efforts. From the 21st through 26th of that month, aircrews from the 916th flew 51.7 hours and airlifted 55.7 tons of cargo to Gulfport and Keesler AFB, Mississippi, following the destruction wrought by Hurricane Camille. A year later, the 916th again joined other 512th units in hurricane relief efforts. In early August 1970, because of high winds and heavy rains caused by Hurricane Celia, thousands in Corpus Christi, Texas were left homeless. The 77th Military Airlift Squadron airlifted 73 children from the damaged Texas Department of Mental Health and Retardation School in Corpus Christi to Bergstrom AFB, Texas. During the flight,

members of the 62nd Aeromedical Evacuation Flight provided care for the children. Later that year, when the school was rebuilt, the 77th returned the children to Corpus Christi.

The 916th also assisted by airlifting from Gulfport, Mississippi, trucks, water purification units, and electrical generators to the disaster struck Texas coast. Other assistance rendered included bringing U.S. Army Corps of Engineer personnel to inspect the damaged areas, evacuating naval midshipmen to Kelly AFB, Texas, and transporting heavy equipment used in clean up operations to Ft. Hood, Texas. On 1 April 1970, the 916th was reassigned to the 433d Tactical Airlift Wing. The action took place because of the Inactivation of the 512th Military Airlift Wing. On 15 February 1972, the 916th was attached to the Central Air Force Reserve Region for operational control and administrative and logistic support but still remained assigned to the 433.

The 916th maintained operational readiness and carried out a variety of missions until it was inactivated on 8 July 1972 as one of the last C-124 units in the Air Force Reserve. During its time at Carswell AFB, the 916th received two unit awards; the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm for the period 1 April 1966 through 19 May 1972, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 August 1967 through 25 October 1969.

On 1 October 1986, the 916th Air Refueling Group, Heavy, (Associate) was activated at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina. It was assigned to the 452nd Air Refueling Wing, March AFB, California. The Sieg's flying unit, the 77th Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy (Associate), did not have any assigned KC-IOAs, but rather flew them through the associate program. The host unit was the 68th Air Refueling Wing. With the activation of the new group, the Air Force Reserve improved command and control of its expanding air refueling mission as part of the Total Force Concept.

The 916th Air Refueling Group (AREFG) began with the 77th Air Refueling Squadron, the 916th Medical Clinic, and the 916th Civil Engineering Squadron. 1986 and 1987 were filled with training the new aircrews, using real world special missions such as Joint Airborne/Air Transportability Training (JA/ATT), and MAC Channel runs as well as numerous local training missions. The 916th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron (CAMS) was activated and began working side by side with the 68th CAMS to maintain the aircraft. By the end of 1987, the 916th had been reassigned to the 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom AFB, Indiana. This created a closer relationship with the refueling units of the Eastern part of the United States.

In 1988, the 916th CAMS completed its integration with the 68th CAMS and the 916th Civil Engineers (CE) were able to receive excellent training by constructing the necessary offices and shops to establish themselves in their own building. The group grew to be fully manned by the end of the year. Since its inception, the 916th AREFG had been involved in every major world conflict and had flown over 17,991 accident -free hours. In 1988 alone, the 916th had hauled 3 million pounds of cargo, 2,000 passengers, and transferred over 20 million pounds of fuel to every type of receiver in the United States Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. For these accomplishments, the unit was awarded the National Safety Council's President's Letter.

In 1989, the 916th AREFG supported Operation Just Cause (18-20 December) by flying over 30% of the KC-IOA's air refueling missions. At that time, there were more than six KC-10A units. The 77th Air Refueling Squadron's Boom Operators received the prestigious Albert L. Evans Memorial Trophy for their efforts. This was justified by the 3 million pounds of fuel offloaded in 380 flying hours to a variety of receivers. By June 1990, the Group had expanded to 5 squadrons and one flight. The following eighteen months involved Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and Proud Return, a new headquarters building, new commander, and changing from Strategic Air Command (SAC) to Tactical Air Command (TAC). The change from SAC to TAC was to allow for the Objective 'Wing Concept to be implemented.

During the war, the 916th had more than 450 reservists serving in two Middle East bases, three European countries, several stateside locations, and on three separate islands; one in the Atlantic, one in the Pacific and one in the Indian Ocean. The crews of the 916th flew 347 sorties and offloaded over 42 million pounds of fuel for the war, and then remained activated for another sixty days to redeploy the troops back to the United States. The maintenance personnel were deployed to help not only the 916th crews, but also KC-10A aircraft from other units. All aircraft under the 916th CAMS care launched without maintenance failure. This record resulted in 110 million pounds of fuel offloaded, more than 12,000 hours flown and more than 2,400 sorties flown. There were two Distinguished Flying Crosses, and over 80 Air Medals, Commendation Medals, Meritorious Service Medals, and Achievement Medals awarded for efforts put forth during the war. In 1992, the 916th was realigned to be under the new Air Combat Command and in 1993 was realigned to the 22nd Air Force's chain of command.

With 1994 came the announcement that the Active Duty 68th Air Refueling Wing's twenty KC-10A aircraft and personnel were going to be sent to other bases and that ten KC-135Rs were coming to Seymour Johnson AFB, making the 916th Unit Equipped (UE). The 916th became a Wing on 1 October 1994 and the organization was realigned internally to have three groups and several squadrons and flights. Naturally, the missions declined somewhat during the conversion from KC-IOAs to KC-135Rs. The conversion entailed a change in aircrew structure, new maintenance requirements, parts supply, training for everyone, more facilities, and new wartime plans as well as peacetime plans. The first UE KC-135RS to arrive (late 1995) were tail numbers 0349 and 3542.

1996 and 1997 were marked with the unit growing to over 800 personnel strong and over 8000 flying hours to its credit. It was realigned under the 4th Numbered Air Force and became operationally ready in April 1997. Even while this was occurring, the 916th was still able to support Operation Restore Hope (resupplying Somalia), humanitarian efforts in several locations, and perform other real world missions. As the 916th Air Refueling Wing has met its challenges in a constantly changing environment, it will continue to do so even more in the future.

The history of the 916th Air Refueling Group, Heavy (Associate) includes a variety of geographical and organizational changes. The 916th was organized as a troop carrier group,

heavy on 17 January 1963 at Donaldson AFB, S—tb Carolina. Just under three months later, on 1 April, the unit moved to Carswell AFB, Texas where it remained until being inactivated on 8 July 1972. During its time at Carswell AFB, the 916th was redesignated as an air transport group, heavy, in December 1965 and military airlift group in January 1966. The 916th was activated on 1 October 1986 as an air refueling group, heavy (associate) at Seymour Johnson AFB, Carolina.

The 916th Troop Carrier Group's organization in 1963 came about as part of the Continental Air Command (CONAC) reorganization in that year of its fifteen troop carrier wings. Because of difficulties encountered during the Berlin mobilization in 1961, the gaining Tactical Air Command sought through the reorganization to have greater flexibility in recalling units. Individual flying units could now be recalled without having to involve other units from the group or wing. Under each wing were self-supported groups, each of which had its own troop carrier squadron, combat support squadron, material squadron, and aerial port flight.

The first six months of the 916ths existence were characterized by geographic relocation and organizational change. The 916th and its collocated 77th Troop Carrier Squadron, Heavy, equipped with C-124s, were first stationed at Donaldson AFB, South Carolina. The parent wing was the 435th Troop Carrier Wing. On 18 March 1963, the 916th and 77th were reassigned to the 433d Troop Carrier Wing, Medium, and on 1 April moved to Carswell AFB, Texas. However, on 1 July 1963 as part of an action consolidating all Reserve C-124 groups under one wing, the 916th was reassigned to the 442d Troop Carrier Wing. Concurrently, the gaining command changed from the Tactical Air Command to the Military Air Transport Service.

During the 916th*'s first years, limited flying operations were carried out. Not only did the geographical relocation interrupt recruiting and retention efforts, the group's flying squadron had only four aircraft or half the number of authorized aircraft. Accordingly, the available C-124s were heavily used with resulting scheduling and maintenance problems. Another difficulty the 916th encountered was the rapid turnover of group commanders. In the second half of 1964, the 916th had three different commanders.

In 1965, the 916th's operational and manning programs showed marked gains. The year began with the unit being reassigned on 8 January to the 512th Troop Carrier Wing which had relocated from Willow Grove NAS, Pennsylvania, to Carswell AFB. At the end of June 1965, the 916th had 97 officers assigned for 74.3 percent of authorized levels and 556 airmen for 91.4 percent.

In August 1965, the 916th was designated by the Defense Department as a Beef Broth unit. This term referred to selected Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units which were to stand ready to respond on short notice to any requirement. Reflecting the unit's special nature, they were authorized to recruit to their manning document levels and had supply priority.

In September, aircrews from the 916th and other 512th personnel participated in flying humanitarian missions to New Orleans, Louisiana, following Hurricane Betsy. The next month,

the 916th participated in Operation Power Pack. In response to civil disorder in the Dominican Republic, President Lyndon B. Johnson dispatched American armed forces to quell the conflict and protect American lives. Due to the active force's heavy worldwide airlift commitment. Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units participated heavily in the operation. Later, in November, the 916th along with other Reserve units took part in Operation Christmas Star and airlifted gifts to American servicemen in the Republic of South Vietnam.

By the end of the year, the 916th's 77th Troop Carrier Squadron had its full authorization of eight C-124s. The 916th and the 77th were also redesignated on 1 December when the two units became an air transport group, heavy, and air transport squadron, heavy, respectively. The action took place as part of the general redesignation of all C-124 Troop carrier wings, groups, and squadrons gained by the Military Air Transport Service. The unit designation, however, only lasted one month.

On 1 January 1966, concurrently with the renaming of the Military Air Transport Service as the Military Airlift Command, the same units were redesignated as military airlift wings, groups, and squadrons. During the months of July through September 1966, the 916th participated along with other 512th airlift groups in Operation Combat Leave. The operation consisted of transporting personnel on leave to and from Southeast Asia during labor strikes at five major airlines.

Aircrews from the 916th flew such routes as Carswell AFB, Texas, to Charleston AFB, South Carolina, to Travis AFB, California. In 1967, an all-Fort Worth, Texas crew from the 916th flew a rescue operation for flood victims in Alaska. Approximately 15,000 pounds of charcoal and portable latrines were airlifted into the disaster struck area. On the return leg of the flight from Eielson AFB, Alaska, to Texas, the aircrew picked up an unusual cargo of two experimental lunar vehicles at Fairchild AFB, Washington. The vehicles were transported to Luke AFB, Arizona, for later receipt by the United States Geographical Survey Center of Astrogeology at Flagstaff, Arizona.

Reflecting the turbulence of the Vietnam era, the 916th participated in numerous domestic and overseas missions. As an example, in early 1968, following the Pueblo incident, the 77th Military Airlift Squadron transported supplies and equipment into Southeast Asia to support the Military Airlift Command's airlift mission. In April, the 77th played a role in the Air Force Reserve's support of Operation Garden Plot. The squadron airlifted Army troops and equipment to different areas of the United States to help control civil disorders.

In August 1969, the 916th and other 512th flying units participated in major disaster relief efforts. From the 21st through 26th of that month, aircrews from the 916th flew 51.7 hours and airlifted 55.7 tons of cargo to Gulfport and Keesler AFB, Mississippi, following the destruction wrought by Hurricane Camille. A year later, the 916th again joined other 512th units in hurricane relief efforts. In early August 1970, because of high winds and heavy rains caused by Hurricane Celia, thousands in Corpus Christi, Texas, were left homeless. The 77th Military Airlift Squadron airlifted 73 children from the damaged Texas Department of Mental Health and

Retardation School in Corpus Christi to Bergstrom AFB, Texas. During the flight, members of the 62d Aeromedical Evacuation Flight provided care for the children. Later that year, when the school was rebuilt, the 77th returned the children back to Corpus Christi.

The 916th also assisted by airlifting from Gulfport, Mississippi, trucks, water purification units, and electrical generators to the disaster struck Texas coast. Other assistance rendered included bringing U.S. Army Corps of Engineer personnel to inspect the damaged areas, evacuating naval midshipmen to Kelly AFB, Texas, and transporting heavy equipment used in clean up operations to Ft. Hood, Texas.

On 1 April 1970, the 916th was reassigned to the 433d Tactical Airlift Wing. The action took place because of the inactivation of the 512th Military Airlift Wing. On 15 February 1972, the 916th was attached to the Central Air Force Reserve Region for operational control and administrative and logistic support but still remained assigned to the 433d. The 916th maintained operational readiness and carried out a variety of missions until it was inactivated on 8 July 1972 as one of the last C-124 units in the Air Force Reserve.

During its time at Carswell AFB, the 916th received two unit awards; the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm for the period 1 April 1966 through 19 May 1972, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 August 1967 through 25 October 1969.

USAF Unit Histories

Created: 29 Jul 2020

Updated: 18 Mar 2023

Sources

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

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.