

1st SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



LINEAGE

1st Pursuit Squadron [Single Engine] constituted and activated, 1 Aug 1939
Redesignated 1st Pursuit Squadron [Interceptor], 6 Dec 1939
Disbanded, 1 May 1942

1st Liaison Flight constituted, 27 Sep 1949
Activated, 24 Oct 1949
Inactivated, 22 Jul 1952
Redesignated 1st Liaison Squadron, 13 Feb 1953
Activated, 8 Apr 1953
Inactivated, 18 Jan 1954

1st Air Commando Squadron, Composite constituted and activated, 17 Jun 1963
Organized on 8 Jul 1963
Redesignated 1st Air Commando Squadron, Fighter, 15 Aug 1967
Redesignated 1st Special Operations Squadron, 1 Aug 1968

1st Pursuit Squadron [Interceptor] reconstituted and consolidated with 1st Liaison Squadron and 1st Special Operations Squadron, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated unit retains 1st Special Operations Squadron designation

STATIONS

Maxwell Field, AL, 1 Aug 1939
Orlando, FL, 1 Sep 1940
Eglin Field, FL, 29 Jun 1941-1 May 1942

Biggs AFB, TX, 24 Oct 1949-22 Jul 1952
George AFB, CA, 8 Apr 1953-18 Jan 1954
Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 8 Jul 1963
Pleiku AB, South Vietnam, 5 Jan 1966
Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand, 20 Dec 1967
Kadena AB, Japan, 15 Dec 1972 (segment of squadron operated from Nakhon Phanom RTAFB,
15 Dec 1972-28 Jan 1973)
Clark AB, Philippines, 1 Jan 1981
Kadena AB, Japan, 5 Feb 1992

ASSIGNMENTS

23rd Composite Group (later, Air Corps Proving Ground Detachment; Air Corps Proving Ground
Group), 1 Aug 1939-1 May 1942
Twelfth Air Force, 24 Oct 1949
Fourteenth Air Force, 1 Jul 1950
Tactical Air Command, 1 Aug 1950
Ninth Air Force, 10 Aug 1951-22 Jul 1952
Ninth Air Force, 8 Apr 1953-18 Jan 1954
Pacific Air Forces, 17 Jun 1963
34th Tactical Group, 8 Jul 1963
6251st Tactical Fighter Wing, 8 Jul 1965
2nd Air Division, 18 Feb 1966
14th Air Commando Wing, 8 Mar 1966
56th Air Commando (later, 56th Special Operations) Wing, 20 Dec 1967
18th Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Dec 1972
18th Tactical Fighter Group, 1 May 1978
3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Jan 1981
2nd Air Division, 1 Mar 1983
Twenty-third Air Force, 1 Feb 1987
353rd Special Operations Wing (later, 353d Special Operations Group), 6 Apr 1989

ATTACHMENTS

2602nd Tow Target Squadron, 24 Oct 1949-22 May 1950
1st Tow Target Squadron, 27 May 1950-22 Jul 1952
479th Fighter-Bomber Wing, 8 Apr 1953-18 Jan 1954
3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, 21 Nov 1965-8 Mar 1966

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-36, 1939-1942
YP-37, 1939-1940
O-38, 1940
B-12, 1940
C-40, 1940
P-40, 1941-1942
L-13, 1949-1952
C-45, 1952

L-20, 1952
L-20, 1953-1954
H-19, 1953-1954
B-26, 1963-1964
T-28, 1963-1964
U-10, 1963-1966
C-47, 1963-1966
RB-26, 1963-1964
A-1E, 1964
A-1G
A-1H
A-1J
FC-47, 1964-1965
AC-47, 1965
C(later, MC)-130, 1972

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

C-130E
64-0566

F-2
40-686

MC-130E
63-7785

P-36C
38-182
38-184
38-186
38-187
38-187
38-187
38-188
38-188
38-190
38-191
38-203
38-206
38-207
38-210

PR-36A
38-198

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

A1E/G/H/J: TC

UNIT COLORS

COMMANDERS

Maj John C. Crossthwaite 1 Feb 1940-30 Mar 1942

Col George K. Finan, 8 Jul 1963

LTC Jack A. Robinson, 26 Aug 1963

LTC Charles J. Chenault, 11 Apr 1964

LTC John M. Porter, 18 May 1964

LTC William R. Eichelberger, Dec 1964

LTC John J. Knight, 10 May 1965

LTC Eugene P. Deatrick, Jr., 17 Mar 1966

LTC Joseph L. Hart, 22 Jan 1967

LTC Robert A. Madden, 25 Feb 1967

LTC James R. Hildreth, 17 Apr 1967

LTC John A. Saffell Jr., 20 Dec 1967

LTC William B. Canning, Jun 1968

LTC John M. Vargo, Mar 1969

LTC Wallace E. Lowman, 11 Dec 1969

LTC Robert S. Johnson, Jun 1970

LTC William J. Hagan, 15 Dec 1970

LTC Francis J. Kaiser, 17 Jul 1971

LTC Martin W. Barbena, 28 Jul 1971

LTC James C. Harding, Jun 1972

LTC William H. Latham, 23 Oct 1972

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Vietnam: Vietnam Advisory

Vietnam Defensive

Vietnam Air

Vietnam Air Offensive

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III

Vietnam Air/Ground

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV

TET 69/Counteroffensive

Vietnam Summer-Fall, 1969

Vietnam Winter-Spring, 1970

Sanctuary Counteroffensive

Southwest Monsoon

Commando Hunt V
Commando Hunt VI
Commando Hunt VII
Vietnam Ceasefire

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citations (Southeast Asia)

1 Aug 1964-15 Apr 1965

8 Mar 1966-7 Mar 1967

1 Nov 1968-1 May 1969

1 Oct 1969-30 Apr 1970

1 Apr-15 Dec 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

1 Dec 1970-30 Nov 1971

1 Dec 1971-29 Feb 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 May 1963-31 Jul 1964

1 Apr 1974-31 Mar 1976

1 Apr 1976-31 Dec 1977

1 Sep 1978-30 Sep 1979

1 Oct 1979-31 May 1980

15 Feb 1980-30 Apr 1982

1 Feb 1986-31 Jan 1988

6 Apr 1989-5 Apr 1991

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

1 Oct 1967-15 Dec 1972

EMBLEM

On a Blue disc within a narrow Gold border a White pale and over all a Red eagle displayed eye Gold detailed Blue, outlined and detailed White, grasping in its talon in dexter base the end of an arrow bendwise that is banded with two, in saltire with one and one palewise all Gold and grasping in its talon in sinister base a Gold rose compass highlighted White. (Approved, 20 May 1966)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 1st Special Operations Squadron operates the MC-130H in support of joint and allied special operations forces. This aircraft is capable of delivering troops and equipment into denied areas

during adverse weather conditions at night by airdrop or landing. Air crews are specially trained in night, low-level flying using night vision goggles.

Gunnery testing and training, 1939-1942.

Flew administrative flights, 1949-1952 and 1953-1954.

Combat in Southeast Asia, 8 Jul 1963-7 Nov 1972 and 15 Dec 1972-28 Jan 1973. Trained Vietnamese Air Force pilots in counterinsurgency operations, Jul 1963-Nov 1972.

June 1963 marked the end of Farm Gate. The aircraft and personnel of the de-commissioned unit became the 34th tactical group. Under this new structure the 1st Air Commando squadron was activated. During 1963 the Air Commandos would encounter increased ground fire and the resulting losses. In Sept. 1963, .50-caliber ground fire would claim one T-28 during the heavy fighting around Soc Trang airstrip. Then on 19 Oct. 1963 six T-28s were damaged by ground fire while defending the ARVN 21st division. Another T-28 was lost and one was damaged when on 24 Nov. 1963 a mission was attacked by hidden enemy forces equipped with five 7.9 mm guns and a twin .50-caliber weapon.

1964 brought not only more losses by ground fire, but something worse: structural failure. Structural failure in the form of wing separations claimed the lives of two men, Capt. Edwin G. Shank Jr. on 24 March 1964, and Capt. Robert Brumert on 9 April 1964. Because the appearance of North Vietnamese regulars and the heavier weapons they fielded made ground attacks in T-28s very unhealthy, and the fact that structural failure was emerging, the Air Force withdrew the T-28 in 1964-65. The Air Force replaced the T-28 with A-1Es in the Air Commando squadrons and with A-1Hs in VNAF units.

On May 30, 1964, six A-1Es arrived at Bien Hoa for duty with the 1st Air Commando Squadron as replacements for the T-28s and B-26s which had been operating there since 1961. The A-1Es soon showed themselves to be rugged, hard-hitting aircraft, well suited to the counterinsurgency role and rescue escort.

During assignment with the 56th at NKP, December 1967-November 1972, the squadron flew air cover, close support, direct air strike, armed recce, and SAR missions. In October and November 1972, the squadron's A-1s were transferred to the VNAF. The 1st SOS flew their last A-1 missions on 7 November 1972. The 1st SOS and NKP parted company on 15 December 1972 when they moved without personnel or equipment to Kadena AB. The 1st SOS later flew the C-130 and MC-130 on operational unconventional warfare missions.

The A-1s flew their last rescue escort mission on November 7. An Army UH-1 helicopter, with seven persons aboard, had crashed west of Quang Ngai, South Vietnam. With a typhoon closing in, the A-1s took off into heavy rain, wind, and low clouds to fly below 200 feet in an effort to locate the survivors. After finding the men, they strafed the nearby enemy troops, then called in the Jolly Green to make the recovery. Even as this last mission was being flown, the inactivation of the 1st

Special Operations Squadron had begun. On November 3 four A-1s were turned over to the Vietnamese Air Force at Bien Hoa. Twelve days later the final delivery was made.

In Feb 1981, an MC-130E from the 1st Special Operations Squadron crashed into the water with the loss of 23 lives.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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

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