

## 13 BOMB SQUADRON



### MISSION

#### LINEAGE

13 Aero Squadron organized, 14 Jun 1917  
Demobilized, 29 Mar 1919

104 Aero Squadron organized, 25 Aug 1917  
Redesignated 13 Squadron, 14 Mar 1921  
Redesignated 13 Attack Squadron, 25 Jan 1923  
Inactivated, 27 Jun 1924  
Activated, 1 Nov 1929

13 Aero Squadron and 13 Attack Squadron, consolidated, 16 Oct 1936

Redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron (Light), 15 Sep 1939  
Redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron (Dive), 28 Sep 1942  
Redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron (Light), 25 May 1943  
Redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron, Light, Night Intruder, 25 Jun 1951  
Redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, 1 Oct 1955  
Discontinued and inactivated, 15 Jan 1968  
Activated, 8 Feb 1969  
Redesignated 13 Fighter Squadron, 1 Jul 1973  
Inactivated and redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, 30 Sep 1973  
Redesignated 13 Bomb Squadron, 1 May 2000  
Activated, 14 Jun 2000

## **STATIONS**

13 Aero Sq

Camp Kelly, TX, 14 Jun 1917

Wilbur Wright Field, OH, 8 Jul 1917

Garden City, NY, 1 Nov-3 Dec 1917

St Maixent, France, 1 Jan 1918

Issoudun, France, 27 Jan 1918 (detachment at Meucon, France, 6 Apr-11 May 1918, and Haussimont, France, 11 May-24 Jun 1918)

Colombey-les-Belles, France, 5 Jun 1918

Toul, France, 28 Jun 1918

Belrain, France, 23 Sep 1918

Souilly, France, 23 Sep 1918

Colombey-les-Belles, France, 16 Dec 1918

Port of embarkation, 6 Feb-3 Mar 1919

Garden City, NY, 13-29 Mar 1919

104 Aero (later, 13 Attack) Sq

Kelly Field, TX, 25 Aug 1917

Garden City, NY, 4-22 Nov 1917

Winchester, England, 8 Dec 1917

Upavon, England, 24 Dec 1917 (detachments at Salisbury and Andover, England, 24 Dec 1917-6 Jun 1918

Yatesbury, England, 24 Dec 1917-9 Jul 1918)

Netheravon, England, 24 Mar 1918

Salisbury, England, 6 Jun 1918

Winchester, England, 10-18 Jul 1918

St Maixent, France, 22 Jul 1918

Epiez, France, 4 Aug 1918

Luxeuil-les-Bains, France, 8 Aug 1918

Souilly, France, 8 Sep 1918

Foucaucourt, France, 20 Sep 1918

Parois, France, 4 Nov 1918 (flight operated from Barricourt, France, 10 Nov 1918-unkn)

Belrain, France, 30 Nov 1918

Colombey-les-Belles, France, 14 Jan 1919

St Denis de Pile, France, 29 Jan 1919

Libourne, France, 3 Feb 1919

Bordeaux, France, 10-18 Apr 1919

Roosevelt Field, NY, 28 Apr 1919

Mitchel Field, NY, 1 May 1919

Ft Bliss, TX, 15 May 1919

Kelly Field, TX, Jun 1919

Ft Bliss, TX, 6 Nov 1919 (flight operated from Marfa, TX, 6 Nov 1919-3 Sep 1920; Post Field, OK, 10 Sep-4 Nov 1920; Marfa, TX, 17 Nov 1920-Jun 1921)

Kelly Field, TX, 2 Jul 1921-27 Jun 1924  
Langley Field, VA, 1 Nov 1929  
Ft Crockett, TX, 17 Nov 1929  
Barksdale Field, LA, 27 Feb 1935-consolidation

#### Consolidated Sq

Barksdale Field, LA, from consolidation  
Savannah, GA, 10 Oct 1940-19 Jan 1942  
Oakland, CA, 23-31 Jan 1942  
Brisbane, Australia, 25 Feb 1942  
Charters Towers, Australia, 10 Mar 1942 (detachment operated from Del Monte, Mindanao, 12-14 Apr 1942)  
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 3 Nov 1942  
Charters Towers, Australia, 25 Nov 1942  
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 16 Dec 1942  
Dobodura, New Guinea, 22 May 1943  
Nadzab, New Guinea, 1 Feb 1944  
Hollandia, New Guinea, c. 21 May 1944  
Dulag, Leyte, 20 Nov 1944  
San Jose, Mindoro, 30 Dec 1944  
Okinawa, 7 Aug 1945  
Atsugi, Japan, 10 Oct 1945  
Johnson AB, Japan, 10 Mar 1950  
Iwakuni, Japan, 2 Jul 1950  
Kunsan AB, South Korea, 15 Aug 1951  
Johnson AB, Japan, 2 Oct 1954  
Yokota AB, Japan, 17 Nov 1960  
Clark AB, Philippines, 10 Apr 1964-15 Jan 1968  
MacDill AFB, FL, 8 Feb 1969-15 Sep 1970  
Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, 28 Sep 1970  
Clark AB, Philippines, 24 Dec 1972-30 Sep 1973  
Dyess AFB, TX, 14 Jun 2000  
Whiteman AFB, MO

#### DEPLOYED STATIONS

Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 5 Aug-3 Nov 1964, 17 Feb-16 May 1965  
Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam, 16 May-21 Jun 1965  
Da Nang AB, South Vietnam, 16 Aug- 16 Oct 1965, 16 Dec 1965-17 Feb 1966, 17 Apr- 17 Jun 1966 [operated from Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam, 15-22 May 1966], 14 Aug-9 Oct 1966  
Phan Rang AB, South Vietnam, 10- 13 Oct 1966, 12 Dec 1966-11 Feb 1967, 11 Apr-8 Jun 1967, 1 Aug- 26 Sep 1967, 21 Nov 1967-15 Jan 1968

#### ASSIGNMENTS

13 Aero Sq  
Unkn, 14 Jun 1917-Jun 1918  
2 Pursuit Group, 28 Jun-Dec 1918  
Unkn, Dec 1918-29 Mar 191

104 Aero (later, 13 Attack) Sq  
Unkn, 25 Aug 1917-Aug 1918  
V Corps Observation Group, Aug-Dec 1918  
Unkn, Dec 1918-30 Jun 1919  
Army Surveillance (later, 1 Surveillance; 3 Attack) Group, 1 Jul 1919-27 Jun 1924  
3 Attack Group, 1 Nov 1929-consolidation

Consolidated Sq  
3 Attack (later, 3 Bombardment) Group, from consolidation  
3 Bombardment Wing, 25 Oct 1957  
41 Air Division, 8 Jan 1964  
Thirteenth Air Force, c. 10 Apr 1964  
405 Fighter Wing, 18 Nov 1964-15 Jan 1968  
15 Tactical Fighter Wing, 8 Feb 1969  
Pacific Air Forces, 15 Sep 1970  
8 Tactical Fighter Wing, 31 Oct 1970  
405 Fighter Wing, 24 Dec 1972-30 Sep 1973  
7 Operations Group, 14 Jun 2000

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

3 Bombardment Wing, 13 Aug 1956-24 Oct 1957  
41 Air Division, 1 Sep 1963-7 Jan 1964  
405 Fighter Wing, 10 Apr- 17 Nov 1964  
2 Air Division, 5 Aug-3 Nov 1964 and 17 Feb-21 Jun 1965  
6252 Tactical Fighter Wing, 16 Aug-16 Oct 1965 and 16 Dec 1965-17 Feb 1966  
35 Tactical Fighter Wing, 17 Apr-17 Jun 1966, 14 Aug-13 Oct 1966, 12 Dec 1966-11 Feb 1967, 11 Apr-8 Jun 1967, 1 Aug-26 Sep 1967, and 21 Nov 1967-15 Jan 1968  
8 Tactical Fighter Wing, 15 Sep-30 Oct 1970

#### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

13 Aero Squadron  
Spad XIII, 1918

104 Aero (later, 13 Attack) Squadron  
Salmson 2, 1918  
DH-4, 1919-1922, 1923-1924  
XB-1A, 1921-1922  
GAX (GA-1), 1922-1923  
A-3, 1929-1934

A-12, 1934-1936  
A-17, 1936

Consolidated Squadron

A-17, 1936-1939  
B-12, B-18, 1939-1941  
A-20, 1941, 1944-1945  
B-25, 1942-1944  
A (later, B)-26, 1945-1956  
B-57, 1956-1968  
B-57, 1969-1972  
B-1, 2000-2005  
B-2, 2005

**COMMANDERS**

13 Aero Sq  
Capt Maxwell Kirby, 14 Jun 1917  
1st Lt Charles T. Trowbridge, 18 Sep 1917  
1st Lt Raymond C. Sunborn, 26 Jan 1918  
1st Lt Hugh O. Ellis, 19 Mar 1918  
Capt Charles J. Biddle, 24 Jun 1918  
1st Lt Dickinson Este, 24 Oct 1918-Unkn

104 Aero, (Later, 13 Attack) Sq  
Lt B. L. Corson, 25 Aug 1917  
1st Lt Edward A. Waters, 25 Sep 1917  
1st Lt J.M. Rhodes, 17 Jun 1918  
1st Lt Edward A. Waters, 2 Jul 1918  
Capt Clearton H. Reynolds, 22 Jul 1918-Unkn  
Capt William R. Holcombe, Aug 1919  
Capt Dogan H. Arthur, Nov 1919  
1st Lt Lloyd L. Harvey, Mar 1921-Unkn

Consolidated Sq  
1st Lt Edward W. Raley, Jan 1920  
Capt Lloyd L. Harvey, Nov 1920  
1st Lt Edward D. Jones, 28 May 1924  
Inactive, 27 Jun 24-May 1928  
Unknown, May 28-1 Nov 1929  
1st Lt George A. Mchenry, 1 Nov 1929  
1st Lt Ralph F. Stearley, 9 Jun 1930  
Maj Earle L. Naiden, 16 Sep 1933  
1st Lt Walter L. Wheeler, 27 Feb 1934  
1st Lt Ralph F. Stearley, 26 Jun 1934

Maj Edward M. Morris, 13 Aug 1934  
1st Lt Richard H. Lee, 10 Jul 1937  
1st Lt Frank A. Armstrong, 22 Aug 1937  
Maj Auby C. Strickland, 20 Sep 1937  
1st Lt Richard H. Lee, 4 Apr 1939  
Capt Frank A. Armstrong, 7 May 1939  
1st Lt Karl E. Baumeister, Aug 1939  
Maj Bernard J. Thompson, 16 Nov 1939  
Capt Frank A. Armstrong, Feb 1940  
Capt Wycliffe E. Steele, 5 Oct 1940-Jan 1941  
Unkn, Jan 1941-Jan 1942  
Capt James Orr, 19 Jan 1942  
Maj Herman F. Lowery, 2 Apr 1942  
Maj Alexander G. Evanoff, 25 May 1942  
Maj Harold V. Maull, 25 Nov 1942  
Maj David M. Conley, 4 May 1943  
Maj Arthur Small, 13 Oct 1943  
Capt Theodore G. Fitch, 21 Dec 1943  
Maj Alfred E. Baucom, 4 Mar 1944  
Capt Richard L. Walker, 27 Aug 1944  
Capt Ansel L. Boiter (Acting), 19 Mar 1945  
Maj Donald J. Maclellan, 27 Mar 1945  
Capt Melville W. Fisher, 12 Sep 1945  
Capt Howard W. Knudsen, 19 Nov 1945  
1st Lt John W. Bryden, 27 Dec 1945  
Capt F. M. McMullen, 28 Mar 1946  
Capt W. F. Maughan, 1 Jul 1946  
Maj Arnold P. Burris, 28 Aug 1946  
Maj T. J. Price, 21 Apr 1947  
Lt Col J. P. Crocker, 22 Sep 1947  
Maj C. H. Gross, 21 Jun 1948  
Lt Col Robert E. Jarrell, 12 May 1949  
Lt Col Walter S. King, 17 Oct 1950  
Maj John J. Davis, 21 Feb 1951  
Lt Col Joseph H. Belsler, 1 Mar 1951  
Lt Col Alvin R. Fortney, 14 Dec 1951  
Lt Col Estes B. Sherrill, Jul 1952  
Maj Vincent R. Laberge, Nov 1952  
Lt Col David W. Allerdice, 1953  
Lt Col Stanley D. Kline, By Jul 1953  
Lt Col Richard D. Salter, By Dec 1953  
Maj John E. Rees, 16 Jan 1954  
Maj Edward F. Taylor, 1 Jul 1954  
Maj John E. Rees, 9 Jul 1954

Maj Edward F. Taylor, 16 Aug 1954  
Lt Col Robert A. Sedgwick, 22 Aug 1954  
Lt Col Arthur Small, 1 Mar 1955  
Lt Col William D. Miner, 8 Apr 1955  
Lt Col Marcus H. Worde, 14 Jun 1955  
Maj Howard W. Ice, 14 May 1958  
Lt Col Richard A. Christenson, 9 Jun 1959  
Lt Col William W. Sams, 20 Aug 1960  
Lt Col Donald A. Luttrell, Aug 1963  
Lt Col Billy A. Mcleod, Oct 1963  
Maj Howard F. O'neal, 26 Sep 1964  
Maj Billy J. Gregory, 2 May 1965  
Maj Floren B. Nelson, 4 Jul 1965  
Lt Col William J. Amos, 19 Jan 1966  
Lt Col George W. Cap, 13 Feb 1967-15 Jan 1968  
Unkn (Not Manned), 8 Feb-22 Apr 1969  
Lt Col Paul R. Pitt, 23 Apr 1969  
***Lt Col Edward K. Matthews***  
Lt Col David D. Brandt Jr., 23 Apr 1972-Unkn  
Lt Col Edward K. Matthews, 1 Aug 1971  
Lt Col David D. Brandt, 23 Apr 1972-30 Sep 1973  
Lt Col Robert S. McCormack, 14 Jun 2000  
Lt Col Gerald P. Plourde, 27 Jul 2001  
Lt Col Karl J. Shawhan, 8 Jul 2003  
Lt Col Thomas A. Bussiere, 3 Jun 2005  
Lt Col William G. Eldridge, 13 Jun 2006

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War I  
St Mihiel  
Meuse-Argonne  
Lorraine

World War II  
Antisubmarine, American Theater  
Philippine Islands  
East Indies  
Papua  
Bismarck Archipelago  
New Guinea

Leyte  
Luzon  
Southern Philippines  
Western Pacific  
Air Offensive, Japan

Korean War  
UN Defensive  
UN Offensive  
CCF Intervention  
1st UN Counteroffensive  
CCF Spring Offensive  
UN Summer-Fall Offensive  
Second Korean Winter  
Korea, Summer-Fall 1952  
Third Korean Winter  
Korea, Summer 1953

Vietnam  
Vietnam Advisory  
Vietnam Defensive  
Vietnam Air  
Vietnam Air Offensive  
Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II  
Southwest Monsoon  
Commando Hunt V  
Commando Hunt VI  
Commando Hunt VII  
Vietnam Ceasefire

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations  
Philippine Islands, [12-14 Apr] 1942  
Philippine Islands, 11-14 Apr 1942  
Papua, 23 Jul 1942-23 Jan 1943  
New Guinea, 17 Aug 1943  
Korea, 27 Jun-31 Jul 1950  
Korea, 22 Apr-8 Jul 1951  
Korea, 1 May-27 Jun 1953

Presidential Unit Citations (Southeast Asia)



10 Oct 1966-10 Apr 1967  
6 Jun 1967-18 Jan 1968  
1 Jan-1 Apr 1971

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with the Combat "V" Device  
19 Feb 1965-19 Feb 1966  
15 Sep-31 Dec 1970  
1 Oct 1971-31 Mar 1972

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards  
1 Jun 1958-30 Jun 1960  
1 Jul 1960-31 Mar 1962  
5 Aug 1964-31 Mar 1965  
8 Feb-31 Dec 1969  
1 Jun 2002-31 May 2004

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation  
27 Jun-31 Jul 1950

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm  
1 Apr 1966-9 Feb 1967  
[28 Sep] 1970-24 Dec 1972

## EMBLEM



One Hundred Fourth: Insignia: Figure of winged sphinx, placed in a large circle.





13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical



Azure, a human skeleton contourné at stride Argent grasping in both hands a scythe bendwise sinister blade to base, hafted Brown, poll Or, blade Gules embued by five drops of blood of the like, all within a diminished bordure Sable. Attached below the disc a White scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "13 BOMB SQ" in Black letters. 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 white skeleton reflects the purity and truth of the Squadron's mission. The yellow blade of the scythe suggests the honor of the unit's heritage and the commitment to future excellence. The brown handle of the



scythe represents the earth from which all missions begin and end. The scythe is stained and dripping with blood signifying the courage and patriotism of every mission, past, present and future and the sacrifice of blood spilled on both sides. (Approved, 14 Feb 1924)

The 13 Bomb Squadron Grim Reaper logo -- affectionately known as "Oscar" -- first rode into combat on the side of a SPAD XIII of the 13 Aero Squadron in 1917 or 1918. The official emblem description is "Against a dark, blue field a white skeleton mowing with a yellow scythe with a reddened blade." The Secretary of War approved it 14 February 1924.

In Oscar's first appearance on the SPAD he was running to the left. In the official emblem Oscar is running to the right. Through the years Oscar has been jazzed up and toned down, depending upon the talents and inclination of various artists.

In the 1930s Oscar ran to the left on various Curtiss and Northrop aircraft.

The design seemed to stabilize during WWII when Oscar became the symbol for the 3rd Attack Group, consisting of the 8th, 13, 89th and 90th Squadrons.

Oscar was redone to stand upright, facing to his right on the squadron stationery sometime after 1950.

In early 1951 a new Oscar flag waved from a flag atop a flagpole at Iwakuni, Japan. The logo sported streamers from the left and right sides announcing the existence of the 13 Bomb Squadron -- as if anyone needed to be told. The streamered Oscar emblem also appeared on the red shirts of the squadron personnel.

]

## **MOTTO**

Grim Reapers

## **OPERATIONS**

The 13 Aero Squadron was a pursuit squadron. It was assigned to the Second Pursuit Group, First Army, on June 28, 1918, reaching the Front the same day. It engaged in the operations in the Toul Sector, at Chateau-Thierry, St. Mihiel, and the Argonne-Meuse first and second offensives. During this period it made 179 patrols and war missions, fought 89 combats and received official confirmation for 29 victories. It ceased operations on December 5, 1918. The Thirteenth suffered 13 casualties, consisting of 5 killed, 1 wounded and 7 prisoners.

The 104 Aero Squadron was a Corps Observation squadron. It was assigned to the Fifth Corps Observation Group, First Army, August 7, 1918, and reached the Front at Souilly on September 8, 1918. It was engaged in the operations at St. Mihiel and the Argonne-Meuse first and second offensives. This squadron made many reconnaissance missions over the lines, fought 25

combats, was officially accredited with one victory and suffered four casualties, consisting of 2 killed, 1 wounded and 1 taken prisoner. The squadron ceased operations December 19, 1918.

Stationed at Kelly Field, TX, as of June 1919 as the 104 Aero Squadron. Assigned on 1 July 1919 to the 1st Surveillance Group. Transferred on 6 July 1919 to Scott Field, IL. Transferred on 6 November 1919, less one flight, to Biggs Field, TX. One flight operated from Camp Marfa, TX, until 3 September 1920. Another flight operated from Post Field, OK, 10 September-4 November 1920. Participated in the Mexican Border Patrol November 1920-June 1921. Redesignated as the 13 Squadron (Attack) on 14 March 1921. Transferred on 2 July 1921 to Kelly Field. Redesignated as the 13 Attack Squadron on 25 January 1923. Inactivated on 27 June 1924 at Kelly Field. Designated Active Associate was the 8th Attack Squadron 1924-27. Allotted to the Eighth Corps Area on 28 February 1927. Organized May 1928 with Organized Reserve personnel as a RAI unit in the Eighth Corps Area. Conducted summer training at Fort Crockett, TX, with units of the 3rd Attack Group. Activated on 1 November 1929, less Reserve personnel, at Barksdale Field, LA, and assigned to the 3rd Attack Group. Reorganized and redesignated 13 Bombardment Squadron on 1 December 1939 and assigned to the 3rd Bombardment Group. Transferred on 10 October 1940 to Savannah, GA acquiring A-20s as replacements for its B-18s and B-12s.

When war came to the nation in December 1941, the Reapers embarked on an accelerated training program while also engaged in anti-submarine patrols against German U-boats along the Atlantic coast. When the unit arrived in Australia in January 1942, they were without airplanes. While waiting for aircraft, the Reapers learned there were 24 brand new B-25s sitting on the ramp in nearby Melbourne, but the planes were earmarked for the Dutch. Soon after, 24 Reaper pilots arrived in Melbourne, presented a confused Officer of the Day with an authorization letter, and nonchalantly flew away with the airplanes before anyone realized the mistake. The Reapers used those planes, and later A-20s, to attack bridges, transports, airfields, troop installations, seaplanes, docks, warehouses and enemy targets. At the end of the war, the squadron had earned four Distinguished Unit Citations for actions over the Philippine Island, Papua and New Guinea, and also took home the Philippine Presidential Unit Citation.

From the end of World War II to 1950, the 13 BS remained in Japan as part of the Army of Occupation. When North Korea invaded the south in 1950, the squadron, Flying A and B-26s, conducted interdiction missions during daylight raids on enemy troops and lines. On June 25, 1951, the squadron was redesignated the 13 Bombardment Squadron (Light-Night Intruders) to reflect the unit's "Hoot Owl" night missions. Following the end of the Korean War, the 13 remained forward deployed to Kunsan Air Base, Korea until ordered to Johnson Air Base, Japan, in 1954 to begin conversion to the B-57. On October 1, 1955, the unit was redesignated the 13 Bombardment Squadron Tactical.

Rotating deployed crews flew combat operations in Southeast Asia, May 1964-15 Jan 1968.

Based at Johnson Air Base in Japan, the 13 Bomb Squadrons, Tactical, in January 1965 moved their B-57s to Clark Air Base in the Philippines for possible action in Southeast Asia. Small

numbers of the aircraft flew missions from Bien Hoa and Da Nang Air Bases in South Vietnam.

The Air Force chose the 13 as the unit to test the B-57G in Southeast Asia and flew selected B-57C aircraft from Clark Air Base to Baltimore for conversion to the Tropic Moon III configuration. Meanwhile, the systems project office steered the project through conferences on design, ground equipment, training, handbooks, and munitions. Air Force headquarters moved B-57 combat crew training from Clark Air Base to MacDill AFB, Florida. Air Force Systems Command planned to test the new Hayes bomb dispenser on the rotary bomb bay door of the B-57G. In November 1968, the project office predicted that Tropic Moon III would reach Southeast Asia in December 1969, early enough to take part in the next Laotian interdiction campaign.

Recurring sensor problems made it obvious by late March 1969 that the B-57G was well behind schedule and could not possibly be ready for combat by December. Maj. Gen. John L. Zoeckler, Deputy Chief of Staff for Systems at Systems Command on 21 April formally asked Air Force headquarters to approve a 6-month delay in deploying the B-57G squadron. Representatives of all concerned commands and agencies agreed on 5 June, and the Air Staff approved a new deployment date of June 1970.

Although the slippage of the deployment date generated no formal change in the B-57G mission, there appeared to be some change in the Air Force attitude toward the system. In April 1969, Dr. Foster asked the Assistant Secretaries for research and development of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to describe each service's efforts to improve its night air operational capability. The Air Force stressed the emphasis being placed on sensor technology' and described the B-57G as one of the Air Force's largest efforts toward creating a weapon system specifically tailored to night and limited adverse weather attack . . . ." A year earlier, the Air Force had emphasized the combat potential of the B-57G in its truck killing role, but as the delays continued, the Air Force seemed to be thinking of the B-57G as a test vehicle declaring that: The B-57G program itself, important it is, is only an evolutionary step in the ultimate development of a high-speed, fully integrated, self-contained night/all-weather weapon system, The Air Force's approach is to draw on the technology and operational lessons of programs like the B-57G and the F-111D with its Mk II avionics, to arrive at an effective weapon delivery system for the inventory aircraft.

By the end of June 1969, the 13 Squadron had 29 officers and 135 airmen, but not a single aircraft. The extended waiting period could have been disastrous to the morale of the personnel, but the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing and higher echelons took advantage of the lull to increase the proficiency of both flying and nonflying personnel. During July and August, the squadron sent selected flying crews and aircraft maintenance personnel to the Westinghouse Technical Training Center at Baltimore, Maryland, for special factory training in the use and maintenance of the new equipment. Aircraft maintenance personnel also attended special

training courses at Hill Air Force Base and later worked on the B-57s of the 4424th Combat Crew Training Squadron. In addition to receiving basic B-57B training with the 4424th at MacDill Air Force Base, the flying crews attended basic survival school at Fairchild Air Force Base, water survival school at Homestead Air Force Base, and air-ground operations school at Eglin Air Force Base. A Link simulator for the B-57G arrived at MacDill Air Force Base in mid-December to provide an additional training device for the flying personnel"

Until the B-57Gs arrived, the pilots and navigators needed every bit of training help they could get. They flew in the B-57s of the 4424th as often as possible, but the 4424th's heavy training schedule limited such flights. Some navigators managed to log flying time in the base's C-47 aircraft, but that hardly contributed to their flying proficiency. Trying to accumulate the flying time required by Air Force Manual 60-1, many pilots and navigators went on cross-country flights at their own expense, there being no temporary duty finds available. Work on the base runway between 30 July and 24 September closed the field to flying for 4 days each week, a further impediment. Before the end of the year, the Air Force added three B-57E aircraft to the 4424th Combat Crew Training Squadron's inventory and earmarked them for proficiency flying by the 13 Bombardment Squadron. The Air Force provided no additional maintenance or support personnel to care for the added aircraft, so it was fortunate that the 4424th could borrow such personnel from the 13. By the end of the year, the 13 Bombardment Squadron had 13 pilots and 20 navigators fully qualified in the B-57C and was flying three sorties per day with B-57Es.

Delayed delivery of the modified aircraft had forced the Air Force to slip the departure date to June 1970, but the growing number of problems began to make even that date seem more improbable. Air Force headquarters on 11 March 1970 announced that the 13 Bombardment Squadron would go to Southeast Asia on 15 September 1970, a further slippage of 3 months. The squadron took delivery of its first B-57G on 26 May and received three more before the end of the month, but the continuing problems and the substantial unfulfilled training requirements again made the departure date appear unrealistic.

When representatives of Air Force headquarters, Air Force Systems Command, and Tactical Air Command met on 9 July 1970 to discuss the 13 Bombardment Squadron, they agreed that it was highly unlikely that the squadron could be combat-ready by 15 September. General Ferguson, Systems Command commander, and General Momyer, Tactical Air commander, agreed and said they would rather delay the departure a full year than send a squadron to Southeast Asia with an aircraft weapon system that was not combat-ready. They formally recommended that the Air Force Chief of Staff slip the 13 Bombardment Squadron's departure date to 15 October 1970. Should the squadron not be able to meet even that date, they proposed delaying until the 1971-72 Laos dry season. General Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff, terming such a delay "inconsistent with the total improvement we are endeavoring to get into Southeast Asia for the next interdiction campaign," directed the formation of an Air Staff team to proceed at once to MacDill Air Force Base to review the program and take whatever remedial action was necessary. The team, headed by Brig. Gen. Carroll H. Bolender, was composed of key Air Staff personnel from operations, development, the inspector general,

supply, and maintenance engineering.

Matters beyond Air Force control threatened further delays and problems. A noncommissioned officer of the 13 Squadron complained to his congressman that his unit was "unprepared" for the pending move to Southeast Asia because the aircraft were not ready. The General Accounting Office investigated and announced that readiness was a judgment decision that only the U.S. Air Force could make.

Tactical Air Command also told the committee to refer matters beyond its competence to the commanders of TAC or Systems Command. The appropriate command then could initiate action to preclude further adverse impact on the B-57G departure date. The committee met through the summer of 1970 and effectively solved several major problems before disbanding early in September.

With committees and teams proliferating, Air Force Systems Command on 10 August called, for a general officer review of the B-57G program on 13 August. As a result, the commanders of Tactical Air, Systems, and Logistics Commands recommended that eleven B-57Gs leave on 15 September as scheduled. The Chief of Staff approved that recommendation.

Just as things seemed to be moving smoothly at last, an aircraft accident ended all hope of meeting the June deployment date. The systems project office had planned to use four aircraft on an interim basis for Category II and munitions testing, but on 8 December 1969, Westinghouse pointed out that they could not update those aircraft for final acceptance if the Air Force was to test them 1,500 miles away while this problem was being discussed, one aircraft (No. 53-3905) crashed into the Sassafraz River near Baltimore on 6 December, killing both Martin crew members.

When the B-57G program managers met at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base on 22 January 1970, the situation seemed worse than ever, Bad weather continued to prevent completion of both Category I test flights in Baltimore and Category II flights in Florida. Category III test flights had not begun, nor had munitions tests. The 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, was training with B-57C and B-57E aircraft, but without the B-57G special sensors they accomplished little. The systems project office expected the first operational B-57G to be ready by March and the remainder by June, but that schedule obviously left no time for training the aircrews for a June deployment. The project office stated that it would be necessary to slip the deployment date, and Air Force headquarters on 11 March announced that the B-57G would deploy to Southeast Asia in September 1970, a further delay of 3 months.

September 1970 became a firm deployment date and everyone struggled to meet it. The Armament Development and Test Center performed Category II and munitions compatibility tests while the Tactical Air Warfare Center carried out Category III tests and the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing's 4424th Combat Crew Training Squadron trained the B-57G aircrews. When Categories II and III tests revealed major deficiencies in the performance of the forward looking radar, TAC and the Air Force Systems Command proposed a further deployment delay, but the



Air Force Chief of Staff was adamant--the B-57G would enter combat in September.

Although responsible for providing aerospace ground equipment for all B-57G testing and operational evaluation, the Air Force had in fact furnished only two sets. By May 1970, Westinghouse was modifying aircraft in Baltimore, the Tactical Air Warfare Center and the Armament Development and Test Center were testing B-57Gs at Eglin Air Force Base, and the 13 Bombardment Squadron was ready to begin training at MacDill Air Force Base once it received aircraft. Two sets of ground equipment for three widely separated locations meant that one site would have to improvise.

Possibly as a result of Air Force threats to invoke contractual penalties for late delivery, Westinghouse delivered four B-57Gs at the end of May. Lt. Col. Paul R. Pitt, Commander of the 13 Bombardment Squadron flew the first B-57G to MacDill Air Force Base, and the squadron began training on 26 May. By 8 June, the Tactical Air Warfare Center was using three B-57Gs to develop tactics, the squadron trained with five, the Armament Development and Test Center continued Category II testing with one, and Westinghouse continued work on the remaining six.

To provide a squadron to take the B-57G aircraft to Southeast Asia, TAC on 23 January 1969 activated the 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, at MacDill AFB, Florida, and assigned it to the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing. The newly reactivated unit had planned to fly to Southeast Asia in December 1969 to use the new sensors against enemy truck convoys during the dry season in Laos, and to develop the necessary tactics and techniques and evaluate the sensors and special equipment. By the end of June 1969, the 13 Squadron had 29 officers and 135 airmen, but not a single aircraft.

The extended waiting period could have been disastrous to the morale of the personnel, but the 15th Tactical Fighter Wing and higher echelons took advantage of the lull to increase the proficiency of both flying and nonflying personnel. During July and August, the squadron sent selected flying crews and aircraft maintenance personnel to the Westinghouse Technical Training Center at Baltimore, Maryland, for special factory training in the use and maintenance of the new equipment. Aircraft maintenance personnel also attended special training courses at Hill Air Force Base and later worked on the B-57s of the 4424th Combat Crew Training Squadron. In addition to receiving basic B-57B training with the 4424th at MacDill Air Force Base, the flying crews attended basic survival school at Fairchild Air Force Base, water survival school at Homestead Air Force Base, and air-ground operations school at Eglin Air Force Base. A Link simulator for the B-57G arrived at MacDill Air Force Base in mid- December to provide an additional training device for the flying personnel"

Until the B-57Gs arrived, the pilots and navigators needed every bit of training help they could get. They flew in the B-57s of the 4424th Training Squadron as often as possible, but the 4424th's heavy training schedule limited such flights. Some navigators managed to log flying time in the base's C-47 aircraft, but that hardly contributed to their flying proficiency. Trying to accumulate the flying time required by Air Force Manual 60-1, many pilots and navigators went on cross-country flights at their own expense, there being no temporary duty funds available.

Work on the base runway between 30 July and 24 September closed the field to flying for 4 days each week, a further impediment. Before the end of the year, the Air Force added three B-57E aircraft to the 4424th Combat Crew Training Squadron's inventory and earmarked them for proficiency flying by the 13 Bombardment Squadron. The Air Force provided no additional maintenance or support personnel to care for the added aircraft, so it was fortunate that the 4424th could borrow such personnel from the 13. By the end of the year, the 13 Bombardment Squadron had 13 pilots and 20 navigators fully qualified in the B-57C and was flying three sorties per day with B-57Es.

By June 1969, 16 Canberras had been withdrawn from Phan Rang and returned to Baltimore, Maryland. There, under a joint contract, Martin modified the nose sections of these aircraft, and Westinghouse, the prime contractor, installed newly developed sensing and tracking systems. While these aircraft were in the various stages of completion, the first 'G' model accepted by the Air Force was flown from the factory in May 1970 by Lt Col Paul R. Pitt, to MacDill AFB, Florida. Pitt was the newly appointed Commander of the 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, that was reactivated on 8 February that year at MacDill. Lt Col Charles R. (Chuck) Strain came aboard shortly thereafter as Operations Officer. After intensive and accelerated training, the 13 Bomb Squadron deployed to Ubon, Thailand, in September 1970, and became part of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing with 11 B-57Gs. Follow-on training for replacement crews was handled by the 4424th Combat Crew Training Squadron at MacDill which retained four of the 'Gs' and the four 'Cs'. One B-57G, 905, was lost the previous December in an unfortunate fatal accident during the single engine test phase while being flown by Martin test pilot Bob Turner.

Ferry range limitations continued to be a problem as the squadron neared deployment, TAC wanted to increase the B-57 range by redesigning the nose and chin to reduce drag caused by the sensors, but the necessary engineering and contracting would take months. The systems project office recommended removing all sensors and nonessential components for shipment to Southeast Asia aboard cargo aircraft. Special teams could be sent to the overseas base to reinstall the components and sensors, and ready the B-57s for combat.

As Categories II and III testing progressed, other serious deficiencies appeared. Category III testing did not end formally until 27 July, and Category II testing finished on 28 September 1970, but as early as May the program managers set about trying to resolve arising problems. The Tactical Air Warfare Center and the Armament Development and Test Center agreed that the B-57G could carry out the self-contained night attack mission from detecting and tracking targets to automatically delivering weapons, but the installed forward looking radar, the low light level television, and the weapon delivery computer failed repeatedly after a very few hours of operation.

When Category II tests uncovered weak performance in the forward looking radar's ground map, terrain following/avoidance, and moving target indicator modes. Texas Instruments hurriedly reconfigured, tested, and reinstalled a system in the Category II aircraft. The modification improved the ground mapping presentation 9 July. Westinghouse agreed to rush

delivery of the three additional B-57Gs needed for crew training and to expedite repair of the forward looking radar. General Ferguson decided that once Category III tests had been completed, he would move all Category II activity to MacDill Air Force Base to ease the aerospace ground equipment shortage. He also proposed weekly meetings of senior staff officers from Systems, Tactical Air, and Logistics Commands to expedite decision making and problem solution. Despite General Momyer's argument that it would be best to wait until the next dry season in Laos to deploy completely ready aircraft, General Ryan refused to delay further. He said "As long as a possibility exists to make the IOC (initial operating capability) on or about 15 September, we must continue to target for it." The pressure was on and time was growing short.

As the day of decision neared, the 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, had received 11 aircraft, but it could not complete all the required training by 4 September. The forward looking infrared sensor worked more dependably, but there appeared to be no improvement in the low light level television capability. The forward looking radar was not working well, and there was no significant increase in spare parts availability.

Noting that the aircraft performance was nearing that originally specified, General Ryan ordered the squadron to move to Ubon on 15 September. Only 11 of the fifteen B-57G aircraft would go, leaving three at MacDill Air Force Base for training replacement crews and one to complete Category II and to serve as a test-bed for improvement efforts.

To ready its B-57Gs for the flight to Thailand, the squadron stopped all flying in the United States by 4 September. On 24 August, Gen. John C. Neyer, Vice Chief of Staff, asked that the general officers reconvene on 1 September for a final evaluation of the decision to transfer the B-57Gs on 15 September. The group found that the squadron had made slow but gradual progress toward readiness, but had not completed its training requirements. The general officers again recommended a 15 September 1970 departure.

Having completed most of the required training, the squadron began final preparations to leave. To allow the aircraft to carry as large a fuel load as possible, the manufacturer, as noted earlier, removed all nonessential sensors and equipment and shipped them to Southeast Asia as air freight. The movement plan divided the aircraft into three flights of three, and one flight of two aircraft. The carefully planned route took the aircraft north to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, thence to Adak, Midway, Wake, Guam, Okinawa, and the Philippines. Under average wind conditions at the worst time of the year, the leg from Adak to Midway left the aircraft with only about a 30-minute fuel reserve, making good weather forecasting particularly important. Each crew and aircraft flew at least two cruise-control missions just before leaving to ensure that the ferry tanks worked and that the crews could accomplish the precision flying and navigation needed for the long overwater flights.

With little fanfare, the B-57Gs flew from MacDill Air Force Base to Tinker Air Force Base on 15 September 1970, a short first leg to allow the crews and aircraft to ease into the longer days ahead. Thunderstorms the next morning delayed the takeoff, forcing the squadron to remain

overnight at Mountain Home Air Force Base rather than continuing on into Canada as scheduled. The crews made up lost time the next day by refueling at Comox Airfield, Canada, and flying on to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. All aircraft arrived without incident.

Because Adak could handle only half of the squadron at a time, two flights of three aircraft each flew to that Aleutian base while the five other aircraft remained at Elmendorf Air Force Base. Headwinds along the route to Midway caused a 1-day delay, but five of the aircraft from Adak made the flight to Midway on 20 September. Four of the five B-57Gs at Elmendorf Air Force Base moved to Adak that day, leaving behind one aircraft with an oxygen system problem. One of the three maintenance teams accompanying the flight in C-130 aircraft repaired a minor engine problem in a B-57G at Adak and another worked on the defective oxygen system at Elmendorf Air Force Base. Nine of the B-57Gs hopped on into Wake and Guam, where they spend 3 days waiting for the two B-57Gs with maintenance problems to catch up.

Three flights of three aircraft took off from Guam on 28 September to fly to Kadena Air Base, but one aircraft in the third cell turned back with a leaking tip tank. The eight B-57Gs spent the night on Okinawa, and the next day seven of them flew to Clark Air Base, refueled, and landed at Ubon that afternoon. The one aircraft left at Kadena Air Base for maintenance work was joined on 29 September by the three aircraft from Guam. All four flew to Clark Air Base the next morning and reached Ubon by evening.

In addition to three C-130s carrying the enroute support teams, twelve C-141s carried the squadron equipment and personnel and a reinstallation team of Aeronautical Systems Division and Texas Instrument technicians.

The maintenance personnel arrived in Thailand as a group in September 1970. Most were new, inexperienced, and suffering from the psychological shock of finding themselves in Southeast Asia. More important to the squadron's long-term operation was the fact they would be eligible to rotate as a group back to the United States in only one year. To preclude such a complete maintenance personnel turnover, the squadron began working with the maintenance squadrons at Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base which was being closed. By exchanging 20 maintenance specialists, the 13 Bombardment Squadron managed to stagger the rotation dates from June through November 1971, gaining some breathing room. Because replacements normally arrived on or after the scheduled rotation dates, the squadron maintenance force diminished to very dangerous levels. At one time, the squadron had only 26 maintenance personnel assigned against 60 authorized, forcing the maintenance force to work 12-hour shifts, 7 days a week.

Part of the maintenance problem also stemmed from the maintenance concept followed in Southeast Asia. Under the Tactical Air Command's self-contained maintenance concept, the 13 Bombardment Squadron arrived with all of the personnel needed to keep its aircraft flying. PACAF operated under the wing maintenance concept (AFM 66-21) which required most of the specialists to remain with a wing maintenance squadron. This meant that the 13 had to transfer a number of its specialists to the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing maintenance complex. It also meant

that problems once solved locally and quickly, now had to await the arrival of wing specialists.

Most of the problems ironed themselves out for example working hours, except for the brief period where they worked 12 hour shifts, 7 days a week, the squadron worked 12 hours each day for 5 days, and then had a day off, But morale and safety suffered so much that the squadron changed the schedule to six, 8-hour days followed by a day off--a schedule better suited to the temperament of the workers.

During the first 12 days of October, the reinstallation team unpacked and reinstalled the sensors and other equipment to prepare the B-57Gs for combat. Meanwhile, the crews attended orientation briefings on rules of engagement and local flying procedures. All flying personnel ultimately attended the Pacific Air Forces' jungle survival school, and Task Force Alpha personnel at Nakhom Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base briefed them on the sensors, computers, and other components of the electronic infiltration barrier. Before it could be classified combat ready, each crew had to complete one local flight over Thailand, one high altitude daylight flight with F-4D escort over a reasonably safe portion of Laos, and six unescorted combat sorties in relatively low threat areas of Laos. As soon as they became combat-ready, the crews began flying scheduled night sorties over the eastern portion of the Laos panhandle.

With almost clockwork precision, the monsoon wind shift each October brought cool northeast breezes to Laos, drying the muddy roads and clearing away the clouds. North Vietnam sent its trucks pouring southward through the panhandle of Laos, and the United States simultaneously increased its aerial strikes against both the roads and the trucks. Beginning with the Laos dry season of 1968-69, the Air Force nicknamed the interdiction campaigns Commando Hunt. The Air Force estimated that Commando Hunt I destroyed or damaged 6,000 trucks and permitted only about 20 percent of the supplies entering Laos to reach South Vietnam. During the 1969-70 dry season, Commando Hunt had destroyed an estimated 20,000 trucks and allowed approximately one-third of the supplies to reach South Vietnam. Following the deposition of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia closed its seaport of Kompong Som to the North Vietnamese, leading U.S. planners to expect an even heavier flow of trucks and supplies through eastern Laos during the 1970-71 dry season. Commando Hunt V planned to restrict that flow with a force of fighters augmented by an enlarged gunship force and the eleven B-57Gs.

Many of the B-57G maintenance problems, discussed earlier, had not been solved prior to the flight to Thailand, and they continued to plague the squadron at Ubon. Tactical Air Command had arranged for a team of civilian contractor specialists to remain at Ubon, and Pacific Air Forces was expected to modify the size and composition of the team as the squadron gained experience with the B-57G maintenance needs.

While the maintenance function worked itself into shape, the squadron began combat missions in Commando Hunt V. This activity called for searches along roads and waterways at night to detect, recognize, and destroy or assist in destroying targets normally concealed by the night.

The squadron flew its first armed combat mission on the night of 17/18 October 1970, but low clouds obscured the ground in the target area and all of the B-57Gs brought their bombs back to base. Flights continued, but it was a week later before a B-57G destroyed the first truck credited to the 13 Bombardment Squadron.

From this point on, the B-57G lost little time in proving its ability to kill trucks. This was brought out in the report of a special team which evaluated the 13 Squadron during the first 3 months of combat (17 October 1970-15 January 1971). On 543 sorties, the B-57G crews sighted 759 trucks, attacked 565, and destroyed 363. Although this 0.67 trucks destroyed per sortie fell below the predicted 6.9 kill per sortie ratio, the statistics included many sorties on which no trucks were seen. Unusually poor weather through the end of November 1970 kept the number of trucks moving through Laos at a surprisingly low level. When targets were available, the B-57G could find and destroy them despite a number of handicaps.

The squadron flew all of its missions in the eastern part of the so-called Steel Tiger area of Laos which extended along the borders of North and South Vietnam from the Cambodian border to north of the Mu Gia Pass. The Seventh Air Force had divided Steel Tiger East into 14 visual reconnaissance areas, designated VR-1 through VR-14, and scheduled the B-57Gs into specific VR areas on each mission. While large numbers of trucks moved through Laos during this period, they were not evenly distributed but often were concentrated along certain roads, The B-57G could remain in the area less than an hour and carried a maximum of six bombs, while the gunships (against which they were compared) could hunt trucks for up to 4 hours and carried enough ammunition to attack several targets. Because the AC-130 and AC-119 gunships reported spectacular results, the Seventh Air Force scheduled them into the more lucrative target areas and used the B-57Gs to fill gaps in gunship coverage and to cover visual reconnaissance areas where fewer trucks could be expected. Consequently, the B-57Gs encountered a scarcity of targets, particularly early in the evaluation period when the truck flow was a mere trickle.

Despite a number of equipment problems and the scarcity of targets, the kill statistics gradually improved until by the end of Commando Hunt V, the B-57Gs in 1,202 sorties had attacked 2,841 trucks and damaged or destroyed 1,931. Again, this 1.6 truck per sortie kill ratio fell below the 6.9 design goal, but the B-57Gs were establishing a record not too far behind that of the AC-130 computer continued to present steering information to the pilot throughout the attack and could release the weapons automatically.

On the first missions, the B-57Gs carried only three types of weapons--the M-36 fire bomb, the Mk-82 laser-guided bomb, and the Hayes PW4/4A modular bomb dispenser. Normal bomb loads were four 11-36s carried internally with two 21 -82s on the wing pylons, or a Hayes dispenser with 22 canisters of BLU-26 bomblets. When the air temperature at Ubon became too high for a safe takeoff with a full bomb load, the squadron reduced the internal bomb load by one or two bombs. Released at 6,000 feet above ground level, the M-36 firebomb canisters opened at 1,500 feet, giving a satisfactory dispersion of the bomblets. Over high threat areas a higher release altitude was more desirable for both aircraft safety and bomblet dispersal, but

the altitude was limited by the sensors and the available light. The crew released the Mk-82 ballistically and guided it to the target with the B-57G laser ranger-illuminator.

Enemy anti-aircraft defenses quickly developed tactics to counter the night flying bombers. The crews found it desirable to avoid preplanned ("canned") headings and altitudes when entering the search areas because the enemy massed anti-aircraft weapons along such routes. B-57G pilots frequently became engrossed in killing a truck and made several passes, even though they knew such a procedure to be highly dangerous. Quite frequently they found that by the third or fourth pass, they were turning into anti-aircraft fire that had not been there earlier. Enemy gunners often held their fire until the B-57G dropped a bomb in their vicinity at which time they opened up. Some pilots also reported that enemy gunners at times seemed to be firing at random, possibly at the aircraft sound. In any event, the growing enemy anti-aircraft defenses constituted a serious threat to the night attack aircraft.

Exactly how serious a threat existed was forcibly demonstrated to the 13 Bombardment Squadron on 12 December 1970. The squadron commander, Lt. Col. Paul A. Pitt, and Lt. Col. Edwin A. Buschette, senior sensor operator, took off from Ubon to fly a search mission in the Steel Tiger area between Tchepone and the South Vietnam border. The crew destroyed one truck with an M-36 fire bomb and moved to another area to search for more moving trucks. A forward air controller vectored the B-57G to moving trucks along Route 9, but clouds obscured the target on the first two passes. Just before weapon release on the third pass, something struck the aircraft and caused it to roll violently to the right. For a brief moment, Colonel Pitt thought he might have collided with the O-2 forward air controller aircraft, but Colonel Buschette was certain that the enemy anti-aircraft defenses had made a lucky hit. With the aircraft out of control, the crew ejected and landed without injury. Both downed airmen used their survival radios to make voice contact with rescue aircraft and made plans for a dawn pickup. Colonel Buschette was concerned when dawn showed that he had chosen an unoccupied enemy shelter for his hiding place, but he neither saw nor heard enemy troops. Bad weather was forecast in the area that morning, but shortly after dawn the skies unexpectedly cleared so the helicopter could pick up both crew members and return them to Thailand. Fighter aircraft destroyed the B-57G wreckage with napalm to keep the sensors from falling into enemy hands.

As the crews flew more operational missions, they began to isolate and define the equipment problems. Some involved highly technical equipment that could only be improved through better engineering and extensive modification, but many problems were as basic as cockpit lights that were too bright and could not be dimmed. To correct that particular problem, the pilots covered portions of each light with tape or grease pencil, crude but effective improvisations.

Because political arrangements forced the Joint Chiefs of Staff to restrict the Air Force presence in Thailand to a specified number of units and people, General Ryan on 4 August 1971 asked that the 13 Bombardment Squadron be returned to the United States to make room in Thailand for other units which the Air Force considered more essential. General Ryan argued that the 13

had completed its combat evaluation of the B-57G and could hand over its truck killing mission to the AC-130 gunship squadron. In a meeting with Defense Secretary Laird on 10 August 1971, Air Force Secretary Seamans suggested that the 13 Bombardment Squadron remain at Ubon until all 18 AC-130 gunships were operational, probably in January 1972. Secretary Laird on 4 September approved Secretary Seamans' request for a waiver of the Thailand manpower ceiling to allow the Air Force to introduce the scheduled new units while retaining the 13 Bombardment Squadron at Ubon until January 1972. With the manpower ceiling problem resolved, General Ryan withdrew his request for authority to transfer the 13.

In late November, PACAF alerted the 13 Bombardment Squadron to be ready to return to the United States in December 1971 under Project Corona Condor II. The Air Force consequently held replacement crews at MacDill Air Force Base and diverted replacement maintenance personnel to other units, gradually diminishing the effectiveness of the 13. The squadron continued to fly its scheduled night attack missions over Laos.

Combat operations continued on a routine basis when orders for the anticipated December return to the United States failed to arrive. PACAF again alerted the squadron in late February to be ready for return to the United States during May 1972 under Project Pacer Tent. Once more, the Air Force delayed or diverted replacement personnel, causing extremely adverse effects in the maintenance and supply areas. Cracked tailpipes, defective wing fuel cells, and inoperative air-conditioning equipment created high maintenance requirements, further aggravating the maintenance personnel shortage. An acute shortage of spare parts during January forced the squadron to cannibalize one aircraft to keep the others flying, but all aircraft were back in the air during February after the arrival of a shipment of spare parts. Depot-level engine repairs at Clark Air Base were so poor that one aircraft had four different engines installed before engine performance was acceptable for flying. Despite the best efforts of the squadron supply and maintenance personnel, the number of fully operational aircraft declined.

Orders came at last directing the squadron to move its aircraft to Forbes AFB, Kansas, on 10 April 1972. The squadron flew 69 night attack sorties in the Steel Tiger portion of Laos between 1 and 10 April, destroying 12 trucks in its final days of combat. The B-57Gs left Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base on 12 April 1972, en-route to Clark Air Base on the first Leg of the return to the United States.

Although all aircraft, equipment, and personnel had been transferred, the 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical, on paper remained at Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base. Pacific Air Forces moved it to Clark Air Base on 24 December and assigned it to the 405th Fighter Wing, still without personnel or equipment. The Air Force redesignated the squadron the 13 Fighter Squadron on 1 July 1973, but before finally inactivated it on 30 September 1973, PACAF first redesignated it the 13 Bombardment Squadron, Tactical.

On 14 June 2000 after more than 26 years in hibernation, the Grim Reapers returned to the active Air Force as part of the 7th Bomb Wing at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. Shortly after September 11, 2001, the Reapers deployed with the 9th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron and



performed notably in Operation Anaconda to Afghanistan in early 2002. Upon returning the Reapers were named the 7th Bomb Wing's executive agent for support of the B-1 Test program. Additionally, the Reapers were responsible for supporting the B-1 Weapons Instructor Course. This relationship put the 13 in the enviable position of being the first in the operational bomber community to train on the latest upgrades, and often with the Air Force's premier instructors.

The Reapers were deployed in early 2003 as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom to Andersen AFB, Guam. Upon returning from Guam, the 13 BS was charged with devising and running the first Iron Thunder, an audacious plan calling for the scheduling of 120 missions over three days with the stated objective of the execution of 75 sorties flying 90%, or 108 sorties. The crews began flying sorties on October 7, 2003 and continued round the clock until late on October 9. Starting in the fall of 2003, the B-1 fleet initiated a transformation with major computer and software upgrades and the Reapers were at the forefront. The 13 BS was the first operational unit assigned to fly Block E B-1s, a revolutionary upgrade which allowed a mixed load of GPS guided and unguided weapons, as well as a new air-to-air radar capability to increase the combatant commander's options and flexibility. As the initial cadre, the Reapers were responsible for training the core of the wing's bomber crews.

The 13 Bomb Squadron was deployed in early 2004, again flying missions over Afghanistan. Upon returning, the squadron was tasked with leading Iron Thunder 04-4 with the goal of delivering massive concentrated firepower in another bomber surge, which carefully integrated limited range space, jet availability, and realistic threat and target scenarios. The plan resulted in 77 effective sorties in less than 68 hours. More astounding was the fact that 47 of the sorties released a record 383 training weapons. In December 2004, for the fourth time in less than four years, the B-1s answered the call to war with all Reaper crew members and most enlisted support staff deployed as members of the 40th Air Expeditionary Group.

In 2005, the Air Force announced the 13 Bomb Squadron would replace the 325th Bomb Squadron at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, and fly a new aircraft, the B-2.

Among its first assignments as a unit of the only stealth bomber wing in the United States Air Force, the 13 Bomb Squadron was deployed to Andersen AFB, Guam, in June 2006, to take part in the ongoing rotation which provides the U.S. Pacific Command a continuous bomber presence necessary to maintain stability and security for the Asia-Pacific region. Notable squadron achievements during this period was the first ever B-2 deployment on the continent of Australia. The historic event took place July 25-27, 2006 and featured training sorties on Australia's Delamere Air Weapons Range and a B-2 Engine Running Crew Change at RAAF Darwin – the first time the B-2 landed on Australian soil.

Three B-2s and 225 airmen from Whiteman AFB, Mo., recently returned from a deployment to Andersen AFB, Guam, where they participated in a series of training sorties and a complex 32-hour mission in support of Red Flag-Alaska 15-3. The airmen exercised B-2 operations in a deployed setting, completing more than 25 sorties and chalking up approximately 300 flying

hours in the stealth bomber from Aug. 7 to Aug. 28. The deployment also featured a unique support mission to Exercise Red Flag-Alaska 15-3. Three B-2s launched from Andersen to participate in the exercise while two more launched from Whiteman to join the training, said Lt. Col. Robert Makros, the 13 Bomb Squadron commander. All five bombers hit their targets and then returned to their respective station during the 32-hour mission, which Makros said "presented flyers with challenges similar to those they will experience during combat." The B-2 "familiarization training" deployment is part of Air Force Global Strike Command's efforts to hone bomber operations and skills in deployed locations. 2015

---

USAF Unit Histories

Created: 5 Sep 2010

Updated: 8 Jul 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.

*The B-57G—Tropic Moon III, 1967-1972. The Air Force in Southeast Asia.* Richard Pfau and William H. Greenhalgh, Jr. Office of Air Force History. 1978.