

15th SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

520th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 13 Oct 1942

Activated, 18 Oct 1942

Redesignated 15th Antisubmarine Squadron (Heavy), 29 Nov 1942

Disbanded, 2 Nov 1943

15th Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy constituted, 28 Mar 1944

Activated, 1 Apr 1944

Inactivated, 15 Apr 1946

Activated in the Reserve, 1 Aug 1947

Inactivated on 27 Jun 1949

15th Air Commando Squadron constituted and activated, 13 Feb 1968

Organized, 15 Mar 1968

Redesignated 15th Special Operations Squadron, 1 Aug 1968

Inactivated, 31 Oct 1970

15th Antisubmarine Squadron (Heavy), Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy and 15th Special Operations Squadron reconstituted and consolidated, 19 Sep 1985

Activated, 1 Oct 1992

STATIONS

Jacksonville Muni Aprt, 18 Oct 1942 (air echelon operated from Langley Field, VA, 3 Jun–3 Jul 1943 and from Drew Field, FL, Jul 1943)

Batista Field, Cuba, 25 Jul 1943

Jacksonville AAFld, FL, 1 Oct 1943

Wendover Field, UT, 17 Oct–2 Nov 1943

Dalhart AAFld, TX, 1 Apr 1944

Fairmont AAFld, NE, 15 Aug 1944–7 Mar 1945 (air echelon operated from Boringuen Field, Puerto Rico, c. 9–25 Jan 1945)

Northwest Field, Guam, 14 Apr 1945–15 Apr 1946

Hill Field, (later, AFB), UT, 1 Aug 1947–27 Jun 1949

Nha Trang AB, South Vietnam, 15 Mar 1968–31 Oct 1970

Hurlburt Field, FL, 1 Oct 1992

ASSIGNMENTS

378th Bombardment Group, 18 Oct 1942

26th Antisubmarine Wing, 14 Dec 1942

Second Air Force, 17 Oct–2 Nov 1943

16th Bombardment Group, 1 Apr 1944–15 Apr 1946

445th Bombardment Group, 1 Aug 1947–27 Jun 1949

Pacific Air Forces, 13 Feb 1968

14th Air Commando (later, 14th Special Operations) Wing, 15 Mar 1968–31 Oct 1970

1st Special Operations (later, 16th Operations) Group, 1 Oct 1992

ATTACHMENTS

25th Antisubmarine Wing, 20 Nov 1942-Jul 1943

WEAPON SYSTEMS

O-47, 1942

B-25, 1942–1943

B-34, 1942–1943

B-24, 1943

B-24D

B-17, 1944–1945

B-17F

B-29, 1944–1946

C-130E

MC-130H, 1992

COMMANDERS

Maj Albert J. Wheeler, 18 Oct 1942

Maj Frederick M. O'Neill, 9 Feb 1943-unkn (at least through Sep 1943)

None (unmanned), 1 Apr-10 Jul 1944

Maj William A. Garland, 11 Jul 1944
LTC Richard W. Kline, 1 Mar 1945- c. 27 Feb 1946
None (unmanned), 28 Feb-15 Apr 1946
Unkn, 1 Aug 1947-27 Jun 1949
LTC Dow A. Rogers Jr., 15 Mar 1968
LTC Thomas F. Hines, 29 Apr 1968
LTC Russell A. Bunn, 4 Sep 1968
LTC John R. Dummer, 27 Mar 1969
LTC John F. Newell Jr., 5 Aug 1969
LTC Leo W. Tubay, 23 Feb-31 Oct 1970
LTC William E. Saier, 1 Oct 1992
LTC Charles R. Lovett, 30 Jun 1994
LTC Clarence E. Glausier III, 24 May 1996
LTC Steven K. Weart, 17 Jul 1998
LTC David H. Sammons Jr., 1 Jun 2000
LTC Frank E. Fields, 4 Jun 2002

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Antisubmarine, American Theater
Eastern Mandates
Western Pacific
Air Offensive, Japan

Vietnam
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

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Japan, 29 Jul–6 Aug 1945

Presidential Unit Citation
Southeast Asia, 21 Jun 1968–30 Jun 1969

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device
15 Mar–20 Jun 1968
1 Jul–31 Oct 1970

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award
1 Oct 1992–15 Apr 1994
1 Jun 1995–31 May 1997
1 Jul 1999–30 Jun 2001
1 Jul 2001–30 Jun 2003
1 Sep 2004–31 Aug 2006

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm
15 Mar 1968–31 Oct 1970

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

15th Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy emblem, on a medium blue sphere, marked with white lines of latitude and longitude, within border yellow orange, a red sword winged and hilted white, striking surface of sphere with point, in bomb burst impact mark at dexter base, proper, and casting drop shadow on surface of sphere between five, like bomb bursts arranged two to dexter and three to sinister, all surmounting a large, dark blue aerial bomb, trimmed white, nose to dexter base. (Approved 13 Apr 1945)



15th Special Operations Squadron emblem: azure gridlined as a globe Argent a dagger point to base Argent, hilt Or winged Silver Gray throughout above and between five flames of fire pilewise proper, all within a diminished bordure Yellow. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Blue represents the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow signifies the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The globe reflects the worldwide scope of special operations. The winged dagger is symbolic of the squadron's ability to deliver precision operations anywhere and anytime. The flames allude to bomb blasts and recall the squadron's predecessor unit (15th Bombardment Squadron). They also signify the five theater commands to which the squadron provides support and point out the specialized nature of most special operations missions. (Approved, 27 Nov 1992)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Antisubmarine patrols, Oct 1942–Sep 1943. Combat in Western Pacific, 16 Jun–14 Aug 1945. Combat and combat rescue in Southeast Asia, 15 Mar 1968–31 Oct 1970.

15th ASRON's B-23s was credited with a sub kill on 30 June 1942, and a crew member was decorated for heroism this action.

On 12 Jun 02, at 2124 local time (1654 Zulu)], an MC-130H, S/N 84-0475, crashed near Band E Sardeh Dam, Afghanistan. The MC-130H, assigned to the 15th Special Operations Squadron, 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida was participating in a night exfiltration mission to remove U.S. Army Special Forces troops from the area. The aircraft commander/pilot, co-pilot, navigator, electronic warfare officer, flight engineer, and two U.S. Army passengers ground-egressed the aircraft following impact with the ground. The two

loadmasters and an Army Special Forces NCO were killed instantly upon impact with the ground. One surviving crewmember suffered a badly sprained ankle and chemical (fuel) burns on his face. One passenger suffered a neck injury. Other survivors suffered less serious injuries. The aircraft crashed in a barren area with no discernable property damage. No persons were injured on the ground. A fire that resulted from the crash destroyed the aircraft. The aircraft had just taken off from an unimproved airstrip in the area after unloading U.S. Army equipment and troops when it impacted the ground 2.5 nautical miles from the airstrip. The Accident Investigation Board President found by clear and convincing evidence that the cause of the flight mishap was the excessive cargo weight loaded on the mishap aircraft at the Band E Sardeh Dam landing zone. In particular, the weight was substantially more than the crew had planned for, and, as such, the previously planned, and later executed, takeoff speed was insufficient to support a successful takeoff and sustained flight departure by the aircraft. The Board President also found that a substantially contributing factor to the mishap was the current method of cargo weight planning utilized by the deployed ground forces, and accepted by the aircrews, that relies upon the personal estimations of personnel in the field as to the weight of cargo to be loaded on aircraft in a combat environment.

On 29 December 2004, at 2051 GMT (2351L), an MC-130H, Talon II, S/N 85-000012, crashed assigned to the 15 Special Operations Squadron, 16 Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida, was conducting a nighttime logistics transport mission in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The seven crewmembers sustained either no injury or minor injuries and the four passengers sustained injuries ranging from serious to severe. The MA was landing at the second of several scheduled airfields when it encountered a large, unmarked, construction crater on the southern end of the runway. Approximate size of the construction area was 86 ft 5 in. wide x 73 ft 1 3 in, long x 2 ft. 10 in. deep located approximately 2700' from the southern end of runway 33 in the center of the runway. The MA impacted the construction crater at approximately 80 knots. Following the impact, the nose gear and forward undercarriage of the aircraft were sheared off and driven rearward. The left wing departed the aircraft outboard of the number two engine. A post-crash fire rapidly consumed the right side of the aircraft and was extinguished by local fire fighters. All seven crewmembers egressed safely; however all four passengers required egress assistance from aircrew and ground personnel. The aircraft is considered a total loss due to extensive structural damage and was subsequently destroyed by friendly forces in order to deny access to sensitive equipment within the combat zone. The Board President determined the causes of the accident are; 1) A failure on the part of the mishap site Assistant S-3 (Battle Captain[s]) to disseminate timely Notices to Airmen. (NOTAM) information via the appropriate channels, 2) the failure of the Army project manager for construction at the mishap site to ensure the construction was properly marked and 3) a failure of the NOTAM reporting system, to include oversight and supervision of the NOTAM processes, within the area of responsibility (AOR). Contributing factors in this mishap include: 1) a lack of training on the part of the U.S. Army to effectively prepare their personnel for combat zone airfield management and operations, and 2) the 'failure of the Garrison Commander at the mishap location to assume responsibility' for ensuring safe flight operations at the airfield. The Board President also determined there were numerous opportunities for airfield construction

information to flow to the aircrew, but in each case the information was not properly disseminated prior to the aircrew departing for their scheduled mission.

On August 7, 2002, at 2050 local time, an MC-130H aircraft, serial number 90-0161, assigned to the 15th Special Operations Squadron, 16th Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida, crashed into mountainous terrain near Caguas, Puerto Rico. The aircraft was destroyed. All aircrew and special tactics personnel onboard the aircraft died instantly upon impact. The mishap aircraft departed Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Puerto Rico, at 1745L to accomplish bilateral training with special tactics personnel at Borinquen Airfield and to conduct low-level training at night in mountainous terrain. After accomplishing the bilateral training with the special tactics personnel, the mishap aircraft departed Borinquen and proceeded to fly segments of two low-level routes that are used by the Puerto Rico Air National Guard. The mishap copilot was flying the mishap aircraft during takeoff from Borinquen and for the first 25 minutes of the low-level flight with the mishap Electronic Warfare Officer directing navigation. About two minutes before impact, the MC transferred control of the mishap aircraft to the mishap pilot and the mishap navigator began directing navigation. About twelve seconds before impact, the mishap aircraft crested a ridgeline, the MP reduced power to the engines, and the mishap aircraft began a descent. The mishap crew then received an obstacle warning. Believing the weather was the cause of the obstacle warning, the mishap crew failed to respond to the warning appropriately and they continued to descend. Although the mishap aircraft eventually began a climb, it impacted a ridgeline at 2018 feet MSL. By clear and convincing evidence, the cause of this mishap was an uncharacteristic loss of situational awareness by the entire mishap flight deck crew and the subsequent lack of an appropriate response to obstacle warnings. The Board President further found the following factors substantially contributed to the mishap: overall crew preparation, a misdirected focus on the weather, crew resource management dynamics, and crew judgment as it relates to existing directives.

BARBADOS (AFNS) --Aircrew members with the 15th Special Operations Squadron deployed from Hurlburt Field, Florida, evacuated 19 medical students from the island of Dominica Sept. 23, 2017, after it was devastated by Hurricane Maria. The Air Commandos flew through the night after being tasked short notice, then volunteered again to rush to the aid of the students, one of which was under medical observation for sudden health issues. "That's why we train, and that's what we are here for," said Lt. Col. William Compton, mission commander for the deployment. The aircrew was on the ground in Barbados, unloading crew and gear for less than 20 minutes before taking off for the possible life-saving mission.

"I was so thankful," said Yaadveer Chahal, a resident of Berkley, California who was bed ridden prior to the evacuation. "We were extremely scared and not prepared for the worst. We were all crying and weren't even sure if anyone knew where we were. If it wasn't for the prior military and current service members who showed up and worked around the clock, we would have been lost." The Ross University School of Medicine students described being able to see looters from the airport as they awaited the aid after being without basic amenities for days. "Thank you so much," said. "We are so relieved and thankful for this."

Gabrielle Robinson, a medical student was relieved and thankful following the evacuation. All of the students spoke with exhaustion, describing the conditions of the island as unlivable

and a total loss. Their first thoughts after landing were for a shower, food and a fresh change of clothes.

“I’m beyond thankful to be part of this,” Master Sgt. Michael Wilson, 15th SOS loadmaster. “This being my fourth humanitarian deployment, I’ve seen how urgent help can be critical after seeing the devastation of the hurricane season. This is the perfect time to put in to practice what we train for.”2017

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 19 Nov 2010

Updated:

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.

USAF Accident Investigation Board Reports.