

16th SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

16th Air Corps Ferrying Squadron constituted, 18 Feb 1942

Activated, 16 Apr 1942

Redesignated 16th Ferrying Squadron, 12 May 1943

Disbanded, 1 Apr 1944

16th Combat Cargo Squadron constituted, 9 Jun 1944

Activated, 13 Jun 1944

Inactivated, 29 Dec 1945

Disbanded, 8 Oct 1948

16th Special Operations Squadron constituted, 11 Oct 1968

Activated, 30 Oct 1968

16th Ferrying Squadron and 16th Combat Cargo Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 16th Special Operations Squadron, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated unit retained 16th Special Operations Squadron designation.

STATIONS

Hensley Field, Grand Prairie, TX, 16 Apr 1942

Love Field, Dallas, TX, 8 Sep 1942–1 Apr 1944

Syracuse Army Air Base, NY, 13 Jun 1944

Bowman Field, KY, 16 Aug–9 Nov 1944

Sylhet, India, 7 Dec 1944

Argartala, India, 26 Dec 1944
Chittagong, India, 31 Jan 1945
Namponmao, Burma, 11 Jun 1945
Ledo, India, 3 Sep 1945
Namponmao, Burma, Oct 1945
Ondal, India, Nov–29 Dec 1945
Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, 30 Oct 1968
Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 19 Jul 1974
Eglin AF Aux Airfield #9 (Hurlburt Field), FL, 12 Dec 1975

ASSIGNMENTS

Middle West Sector, Air Corps Ferrying Command (later, 5th Ferrying Group), 16th Apr 1942–1 Apr 1944
4th Combat Cargo Group, 13 Jun 1944
Army Air Forces, India-Burma Theater, 5 Sep 1945
4th Combat Cargo Group, c. Oct–29 Dec 1945
8th Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Oct 1968
Tactical Air Command, 8 Dec 1975
1st Special Operations Wing, 12 Dec 1975
1st Special Operations (later, 16th Operations) Group, 22 Sep 1992

ATTACHMENTS

88th Tactical Fighter Wing, 19 Jul 1974–8 Dec 1975

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-47A, 1944, 1945
C-46A, 1944–1945
C-46D
AC-130, 1968
AC-130A
AC-130H
AC-130J

COMMANDERS

Cpt Clarence S. Chiles, Apr 1942
Maj Edgar A. Robinson, 1943
Cpt Robert L. Minor, 1944
Cpt Clarence J. Jessen, 23 Feb 1944
Maj Leslie W. Bray Jr., Jun 1944-unkn
Unkn, 30 Oct-22 Dec 1968
LTC Garvie S. Fink, by 23 Dec 1968
LTC George J. Liotis, 24 Mar 1969
LTC Thomas Simone, 29 Jul 1969
LTC Berdell P. Brevig, 7 Dec 1969

Maj Ronald P. Hight, 12 Apr 1970
LTC Young A. Tucker, 15 Jul 1970
LTC Kenneth G. Harris, 30 Jan 1971
LTC George A. Fox, 26 Mar 1971
LTC Kenneth G. Harris, 6 Apr 1971
Col Harry G. Canham, 1 Jan 1972
Col John E. Davis, by 30 Sep 1972
LTC Richmond A. Apaka, 7 Apr 1973
LTC Harry W. Williamson Jr., 30 Jun 1973
LTC Bennie Castillo, 4 Oct 1973
Col Harry W. Williamson Jr., 21 Oct 1973
Col Charles O. Hopingardner, 14 Dec 1973
LTC John F. Daughtry, 1 Sep 1974
Col James G. Wyatt, 17 Oct 1974
LTC David R. Mets, 22 Sep 1975
LTC William R. Harms, 9 Dec 1975
LTC Tom W. Jackson, 13 Dec 1975
LTC Peter G. Friedman, 1 Apr 1977
LTC P. J. White Jr., 2 Apr 1979
LTC J. A. Gallagher, 2 Apr 1981
LTC G. F. Shipp, 26 Jul 1982
LTC D. K. Sims, 1 Dec 1982
LTC W. S. Evans, 31 Oct 1985
LTC H. B. Chambers Jr., 29 Jan 1987
LTC B. B. Napier, 20 Jun 1989
LTC Donn P. Kegel, 11 Oct 1990
LTC James B. Conners, 18 Nov 1991
LTC Michael B. Byers, 20 Dec 1993
LTC Raymond L. Killgore, 6 Jul 1995
LTC Bradley A. Heithold, 18 Aug 1997
LTC Mark Transue, 18 Oct 1998
LTC Charles A. Hamilton, 23 Jul 1999
LTC Charles G. McMillan, 27 Jun 2001
LTC Brian P. Cutts, 12 Aug 2002

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II

India-Burma

Central Burma

China Offensive

Vietnam

Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III

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

Southwest Asia

Defense of Saudi Arabia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Panama 1989–1990

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citations

(Southeast Asia), 1 Dec 1969–1 Mar 1970

1 Jan–1 Apr 1971

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device

1 Jan–31 Dec 1970

1 Oct 1971–31 Mar 1972

1 Apr–22 Oct 1972

18 Dec 1972–15 Aug 1973

15 Oct 1974–12 May 1975

13–15 May 1975

1 May 1982–30 Apr 1984

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jan 1976–31 Mar 1977

15 Jul 1979–15 May 1980

16 May 1980–30 Apr 1982

1 May 1985–30 Apr 1987

1 May 1988–30 Apr 1990

16 Apr 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
30 Oct 1968–28 Jan 1973

EMBLEM



16th Ferrying Squadron emblem



16th Combat Cargo Squadron emblem: over and through a light blue disc, border red, piped white, a caricatured brown vulture, proper, resting on small white cloud formation and smoking a cigar, while wearing a radio head set and dropping a large package held by the string in claws of right foot, and tipping a like package off of the edge of the cloud formation with the tip of the left wing. (Approved 23 Aug 1944)



16th Special Operations Squadron emblem: sable, a decrescent bendwise Or, surmounted by a "demi-spectre" issuant from chief descending bendwise sinister Gray habited Azure, langued, pupils and flammant from fingertips Gules armed and eyed Argent; all within a diminished inner bordure Blue and a diminished outer bordure. Blue represents the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow signifies the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The spectre symbolizes the unit's aircraft and the ability of the squadron personnel to attack quickly and then vanish "phantom-like." The flames emitting from the spectre's fingers suggest the unit's weapons systems, power, and accuracy. The crescent denotes the nighttime, covert nature of the unit's mission. (Approved, 15 Nov 1994)

MOTTO
SPECTRE

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Ferried aircraft from factories to units in US and Canada and conducted pilot training Apr 1942–Apr 1944. Combat aerial transportation from India to Burma and China, Dec 1944–Oct 1945.

16th Combat Cargo Squadron's only purpose was to be air-resupply and supply ground units in a combat zone. The squadron's mission was to carry ground troops and auxiliary combat equipment to effective locations in a combat zone; maintain combat reinforcements, supply and resupply units in the combat zone; evacuate casualties and other personnel from such zones.

The "Gunship II" program was started in 1967 when C-130A, 54-1626, was modified to carry four 7.62mm miniguns and four 20mm Galling cannons. The aircraft was also equipped with a Starlite Scope, an infra-red sensor, and a searchlight. After testing at Eglin AFB, the system was tested in Southeast Asia during 1967. After the success of 54-1626, the USAF awarded a contract for seven more JC-130As to be converted to AC-130As and these were delivered to the 16th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) at Nha Trang AB in 1969. The 16th Special Operations Squadron's mission was "to provide firepower offensively and defensively in support of USAF combat support activities and other U.S. sponsored activities in SEA. The 16th Special Operations Squadron may deploy to and maintain continuous alert posture at operating locations [OLs] and designated bases in its area of responsibility."

Operation JUST CAUSE objectives included capturing General Noriega, delivering him to the United States to face drug charges, protecting American personnel and United States interests under the Panama Canal Treaty, and restoring democracy to the Panamanian citizens which had been suppressed by General Noriega. All five 1 SOW flying squadrons, the 8th, 9th, 16th, 20th, and 55th Special Operations Squadrons, plus maintenance and other support personnel saw action in JUST CAUSE. With precise timing, despite very bad weather enroute, the Talons and gunships flew directly to their targets in Panama. This extremely complex joint force operation started in the early morning hours when 16 SOS "Spectre" gunships opened fire on General Noriega's military headquarters. Following the headquarters attack US forces coordinated attacks on other key military targets in Panama.

The Air Force signed the movement directive May 12 that formally authorizes the relocation of the 16th Special Operations Squadron and its eight AC-130H gunships from Hurlburt Field, Fla., to Cannon AFB, N.M. The 16th SOS, formerly a part of Hurlburt's 1st Special Operations Wing, will transfer to the 27th SOW at Cannon, AFSOC's western hub since October 2007. The command anticipates the move of the gunships and associated aircrews and support personnel to be complete by November 2009, with an initial cadre moving this summer and the majority of the squadron in April 2009. The transfer will involve approximately 600 positions.

This month, for the first time since late 2001, the 16th Special Operations Squadron had all of its airmen and AC-130H gunships home from combat. The squadron's last deployed AC-130H touched down at Cannon AFB, N.M., on Dec. 20, marking the first time since after the terrorist

attacks on 9/11 that all of the unit's assets were stateside. "Standing here watching everyone come home as the squadron's commander is an inspiring moment," said Lt. Col. James Mott, 16th SOS boss. "This will be a really nice break for our troops," he added. The squadron transferred from Hurlburt Field, Fla., to Cannon in 2009 when it switched to the 27th Special Operations Wing from the 1st SOW. Despite that move, the squadron never missed a deployment. Jan 2013

The venerable AC-130H gunship bowed-out with an eight ship formation flight marking its last mission with the 16th Special Operations Squadron at Cannon AFB, N. M., this month. "Being able to get all eight of the AC-130H aircraft up is remarkably unique and required everyone to play a vital role," said 16th SOS Commander Lt. Col. James Mott, after the Jan. 16 flight. The unit is retiring the AC-130H as part of Air Force Special Operations Command's transition to the new AC-130J, which is due to begin operational service in 2015. "As we close the books of the C-130H aircraft, we remember how phenomenal this plane was for more than 40 years," Mott said. "Now we transition onto newer models of the C-130 and begin to write new chapters of Air Force history." 2014

Air Force Special Operations Command inactivated the 73rd Special Operations Squadron at Cannon AFB, N.M., and transferred its aircraft and personnel to Cannon's 16th SOS last week. "A squadron with almost 100 years of history does not just get inactivated," 27th Special Operations Group Commander Col. Robert Orris said during the June 12 ceremony. "We will preserve this squadron and its guidon until it begins the next chapter in its phenomenal history," he added. The 16th SOS operated AC-130H Spectre gunships until the unit's final airframe retired last month. The 16th SOS now transitions to the AC-130W Stinger II gunship variant, transferred from the former 73rd SOS. AFSOC retired the AC-130H and is reshuffling its gunships in preparation to transition to the new AC-130J Ghost rider. 2015

Air Force Order of Battle

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Updated: 31 Oct 2015

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.

Unit yearbook. *5 Ferrying Group, Love Field, Dallas, TX*. Army and Navy Publishing Co of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA. Nd.