

42 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

542 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 28 Oct 1942

Activated, 3 Nov 1942

Inactivated, 1 Apr 1944

42 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy constituted, 29 Nov 1954

Activated, 18 Jan 1955

542 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) and 42 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy consolidated, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated squadron designated 42 Air Refueling Squadron, Heavy.

Redesignated 42 Air Refueling Squadron

Inactivated, 30 Apr 1994

STATIONS

Salt Lake City Army Air Base, UT, 3 Nov 1942

Rapid City AAB, SD, 12 Nov 1942

Pierre Muni Aprt, SD, 13 Dec 1942

Rapid City AAB, SD, 5 Apr 1943

Geiger Field, WA, 20 Jun 1943

Peterson Field, CO, 26 Oct 1943-1 Apr 1944

Loring AFB, ME, 18 Jan 1955

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Thule AB, Greenland, 2 Nov-28 Dec 1955
Sidi Slimane AB, French Morocco, 6-19 Mar 1956
Thule AB, Greenland, 28 Dec 1956-7 Mar 1957
Goose AB, Labrador, 1 Jul-5 Oct 1959

ASSIGNMENTS

383 Bombardment Group (Heavy), 3 Nov 1942-1 Apr 1944
42 Bombardment Wing, Heavy, 18 Jan 1955

ATTACHMENTS

Thule Task Force, 2 Nov-28 Dec 1955
5 Air Division, 6-19 Mar 1956
Thule Task Force, 28 Dec 1956-7 Mar 1957
4082 Strategic Wing, 1 Jul-5 Oct 1959

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1943
B-24, 1943-1944
KC-97, Feb 1955-Sep 1957
KC-135, Dec 1957

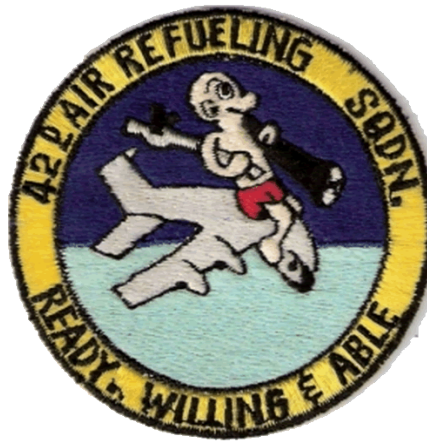
COMMANDERS

Lt Col James E. Maxwell, #1963

HONORS**Service Streamers**

WWII American Theater

Campaign Streamers**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers****Decorations****EMBLEM**



On a blue disc gridlined yellow, a brown stylized eagle, wings displayed, detailed dark brown, head and tail white, beak, eye, and legs yellow, grasping a silver gray stylized refueling boom; overall a white star shaded silver gray and all within a narrow yellow border. Attached above the disc a blue scroll bordered yellow, inscribed with the unit motto in yellow letters and attached below the disc a blank blue scroll bordered yellow, intended for the unit designation. Blue and yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of operations for the Air Force. Yellow refers to the sun and, with the star, represents the excellence required of the 42d Air Refueling Squadron. The eastern bald eagle reflects the squadron's location in Maine and symbolizes the Air Force traditions of courage, honor, and duty. The air refueling boom in the eagle's talons denotes the squadron's mission. (Approved, 20 Jul 1984)

MOTTO

READY WILLING ABLE

OPERATIONS

Served as a B-17 operational training unit until about October 1943, and as a B-24 aircrew replacement training unit thereafter until inactivated on 1 Apr 1944. Activated in February 1955

as an air refueling squadron, one of two assigned to the 42d Bombardment Wing, Heavy, at Loring AFB, ME.

On January 18, 1955, SAC increased the wing's mission through the activation of the 42nd Air Refueling Squadron. This added 21 KC-97s to the wing aircraft inventory and 30 additional aircrews to the manning roster. The B-36 did not possess air refueling systems at that time. Because of this, SAC and 8th Air Force directed tanker missions to support other units.

The first KC-97G arrived on February 15, 1955, and was followed by six more in the next four days. The 42nd ARS received another 14 in March, bringing the total to 21 aircraft. On March 8 1955, the new squadron completed its first in-flight refueling mission. One of two air refueling squadrons assigned to the 42nd Bombardment Wing, the 42nd deployed as a unit four times with their KC-97, twice to Thule AB, Greenland, once to North Africa, and once to Labrador.

On 27 April, the 42d deployed for the first time, flying 11 KC-97s to refuel bombers and recover at Ernest Harmon AB, Newfoundland, where they operated for six days. In November, the entire 42 AREFS deployed in 20 KC-97s to Thule AB, Greenland, for a 60-day tour of duty taking a total of 485 personnel. Operating from this forward location, the squadron provided daily refueling support to SAC Airborne Alert Aircraft overlying Thule. The squadron returned to Loring on 28 December 1955.

Ceased KC-97 refueling operations in August 1957 and transferred aircraft the next month. Began receiving KC-135s in December 1957. Conversion planning began in January when SAC informed the wing officials of the impending July transfer of their KC-97s. Supposedly, new KC-135s would begin arriving in August with a full complement of 20 tankers promised by year's end. The KC-97s began leaving in July according to plan; the wing did not receive its first KC-135 until October. By December 31, only two had arrived. Major Willie H. Sonntag, Commander of the 42 AREFS, landed the first KC-135, number 140, at Loring on 16 October. During the ceremonies that followed, his wife christened it the "Aroostook Queen." Its missions included electronic reconnaissance, airborne command and control, electronic warfare, military airlift, and aerial refueling of bombers under all conditions. By 6 December 1957, all KC-97 had left Loring AFB; 20 KC-135 tankers arrived by April 1958; and the 42nd Air Refueling Squadron attained combat-ready status 1 month later.

Two months later, the last KC-97, number 3192, departed Loring. In June 1958, 42 AREFS KC-135s assumed alert status in support of the wing's B-52, a commitment.

On November 25, 1958, a KC-135 had returned from a refueling mission and was making a touch-and-go landing. The aircraft lost power upon taking off again due to fuel control icing problems, and crashed approximately 3,000 feet from lift-off. Seven crewmembers were aboard; only two survived the crash. Two years later, another KC-135 crashed while landing at Loring. In this case a very hard touch down caused the nose gear to fail and fold up. A ruptured fuel tank set fire to the aircraft. Seventeen personnel were aboard the flight and all but one escaped the burning plane.

In 1959, the 42 AREFS began forward alert operations at Goose Bay AB, Canada, another Squadron first.

On 9 May 62, a KC-135A crashed and burned after takeoff, killing all six crew members.

While the wing was busy supporting airborne alert missions, Cold War tensions between the United States and Russia came to a head. In October 1962, President John F. Kennedy informed the American public of offensive nuclear-capable missile sites in Cuba. As a result, Strategic Air Command canceled normal flying activity and increased the size of its airborne alert forces. The 42nd Bombardment Wing launched four B-52s on Chrome Dome and Hard Head VI missions, established the Loring Tanker Task Force, and placed all aircraft on full combat-alert status. Chrome Dome was designed to deter enemy forces from a surprise attack on the United States because it demonstrated Strategic Air Command's nearly immediate retaliatory capability. The 42nd flew fully combat-configured bombers along a route that covered parts of Western Europe and North Africa. Under the name Hard Head VI, the wing flew similar airborne alert operations which were designed to monitor the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System located at Thule, Greenland. The wing launched two combat-ready B-52s every 20-23 hours for the duration of the 30-60 day operation. To support this effort, the wing ended all military education courses, canceled leave for those not already off the base, delayed temporary duty assignments to other bases, and placed many on 12-hour shifts, seven days a week. Both the command and the wing maintained this posture until late November when tensions began to ease. During the 40-day crisis, wing bomber crews flew 132 airborne alert missions. Tanker crews from the 42nd Air Refueling Squadron flew 214 air refueling missions, transferring almost 24 million pounds of fuel to the B-52s.

In February 1965, the 42nd Air Refueling Squadron began support for Young Tiger operations in Southeast Asia. From then on, aircrews deployed for Young Tiger missions regularly.

In 1965, the 42nd ARS began support for Young Tiger operations in Southeast Asia. In the mid-1960s the wing underwent a change in tactical squadrons, effectively trading 15 B-52s for 15 KC-135s.

F-4E enroute to Germany was rescued from certain crash and crew death by 42 AREFS Crew E-113 who towed the stricken aircraft to safety. In recognition of their extraordinary airmanship, the crew was awarded the Mackay Trophy for the "Most Meritorious" USAF flight of 1983, the Kalberer Trophy for the "Most Outstanding Single Feat of Military Airmanship" by a SAC crew and decorated with Distinguished Flying Crosses and air Medals.

The squadron provided support for the military operation in Panama. The 42 AREFS converted from KC-135A to KC-135R in 1989. The first "R" model KC-135 arrived in May of 1989. The conversion took around 12 months.

Then Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Desert Calm ensued. Squadron deployed to Lajes Airfield,

Azores supplying all aircrew and aircraft for the first three weeks of the Air Bridge. We then had personnel deployed to France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Diego Garcia. At times during the Desert Deployments the only aircraft that were flyable at home station were pulling SIOB Alert. Training ground to a halt.

The last KC-135R left Loring on 2 Mar 1994.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit yearbook. *42nd Bombardment Wing (H), Loring AFB, ME*. 1963.

The United States Air Force in Maine, Progeny of the Cold War. John C. Garbinski. The Maine Aviation Historical Society. Bangor Maine. 2000.