

4717 GROUND OBSERVER SQUADRON

MISSION

The 4717 GOS is responsible for the organization and operation of 1,890 observation posts located in an eleven states area. The primary mission of a Ground Observer Squadron is to supplement the vast air defense network by reporting all low flying aircraft that escape radar detection.

In order to accomplish the assigned task the 4717 GOS has detachments strategically located within the area that are constantly organizing posts and training volunteers to operate them during any air defense emergency that may arise. Each of the assigned detachments is within itself, a filter center that processes and evaluates aircraft movements within its area and passes them to an associated radar site thereby filling any gaps in the radar system.

LINEAGE

4717 Ground Observer Squadron

Activated, 8 Sep 1955

Inactivated, 1 Sep 1958

STATIONS

Wright Patterson AFB, OH

ASSIGNMENTS

58 Air Division

30 Air Division, 1 Sep 1958

COMMANDERS

Maj Harry C. Shaw, #1957

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The Headquarters of the 4717th Ground Observer Squadron is located at Wright - Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Detachment #1 of the 4717th Ground Observer Squadron, is located in an area well known for civil enthusiasm.

With its Filter Center and Detachment Headquarters in Terre Haute, Indiana, three sub-detachments are located in Casey, 111., Watseka, 111., and Lebanon, Ind.

Aircraft flash calls from hundreds of observation posts in central and western Indiana and eastern Illinois come into the Filter Center. There civilian volunteers process this information into tracks and moves, and relay everything of importance to the 782d Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron at Rockville, Indiana.

Detachment #2 of the 4717th GOS has its filter center and detachment headquarters in the state capital of Ohio, the city of Columbus.

The work of this detachment is in keeping with the mission of the squadron—to provide aircraft spotters for low flying aircraft out of range of the radar network.

To accomplish this, sub-detachments and training units tour the state and western Indiana, procuring volunteers and teaching them the vital work of air defense.

Detachment #4 of the 4717th Ground Observer Squadron, with its headquarters at Lexington, Kentucky, encompasses an area of approximately 55,000 square miles. This area of responsibility includes parts of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Virginia and Kentucky.

To administer proper training and supervision to an area this size, sub-detachments have been organized in Prestonsburg, Ky; Louisville Ky; Owensboro, Ky; and Harrisburg, IL.

Within these sub-detachments are assigned mobile training units whose duty is to organize and train volunteers for manning of observation posts.

At the present time 8,000 volunteers in 388 organized observation posts report all aircraft activity

in this area to the Lexington Filter Center volunteers. The Lexington center has been in continuous operation since 1951 on a reserve status

Detachment 5, 4717th Ground Observer Squadron is located in the State Capitol City of Charleston, West Virginia. The detachment is responsible for the organization of Ground Observer Posts in portions of West Virginia, Virginia, Ohio, and Kentucky. In conjunction with this, officers and airmen are responsible for recruiting and training civilian volunteers for the program.

Civilian volunteers of the Charleston Filter Center receive and record incoming aircraft flash messages and relay important aircraft data to the 783d Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron at Guthrie Air Force Station, located just outside Charleston. The Charleston Filter Center is performing this mission with a present assigned staff of 3 officers and 19 airmen, and is commanded by Captain Richard S. Becker.

Headquarters for the 6th detachment and the filter center are located in the YMCA building in the shadow of the state capital building in Nashville, Tennessee, the Athens of the South.

The detachment is responsible for the organization and operation of Ground Observer posts over some 50,000 square miles extending in middle and western Tennessee, southwestern Kentucky, northern Mississippi and northwestern Alabama. To accomplish this, subdetachments were organized in Nashville, Paris and Memphis, Tennessee and Florence, Alabama, from which 13 airmen operated.

The detachment changed from a standby status and began "Operation Skywatch," the 24 hour per day operation, on 1 February 1956.

Because of improved air defense capability this detachment is consolidating its iteration with Knoxville in April 1957.

Detachment Seven of the 4717th Ground Observer Squadron is located in Knoxville, Tennessee at the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Detachment Seven is in charge of the Knoxville Air Defense Filter Center. This detachment has an area of responsibility of approximately 33,000 square miles, extending from the western part of North Carolina to the central part of Tennessee. Parts of Alabama, Georgia, and Kentucky are included in this area.

The mission of Detachment Seven is to organize and train civilian volunteers in the Ground Observer Corps and to maintain and operate the Filter Center on a 24 hour basis.

Three officers and twenty-three airmen carry out the mission of Detachment Seven

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 29 Jul 2020
Updated:

Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *58 Air Division (Defense) Wright Patterson AFB, Dayton, OH. 1957.* Army and Navy Publishing Co.

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