

55 WING



MISSION

55 Wing mission is to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, employ precision electronic attack capabilities, enable secure and survivable command and control, provide global presidential support, enable national treaty verification activities and deliver precision situational awareness across the spectrum of war -- any time, any place.

LINEAGE

55 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, established, 29 Jun 1948
Activated, 19 Jul 1948
Inactivated, 14 Oct 1949
Redesignated 55 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Medium, 27 Oct 1950
Activated, 1 Nov 1950
Redesignated 55 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, 16 Aug 1966
Redesignated 55 Wing, 1 Sep 1991

STATIONS

Topeka (later, Forbes) AFB, KS, 19 Jul 1948-14 Oct 1949
Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico, 1 Nov 1950
Forbes AFB, KS, 5 Oct 1952
Offutt AFB, NE, 16 Aug 1966

ASSIGNMENTS

311 Air Division, 19 Jul 1948-14 Oct 1949
Second Air Force, 1 Nov 1950
21 Air (later, 21 Strategic Aerospace) Division, 1 Oct 1952
810 Strategic Aerospace Division, 1 Sep 1964
12 Strategic Aerospace Division, 2 Jul 1966

14 Strategic Aerospace (later, 14 Air) Division, 30 Jun 1971
4 Air Division, 1 Oct 1976
57 Air Division, 1 Apr 1980
12 Air Division, 1 Oct 1982
14 Air Division, 1 Oct 1985
Second Air Force, 1 Sep 1991
Twelfth Air Force, 1 Jul 1993
Eighth Air Force, 1 Oct 2002

ATTACHMENTS

5 Air Division, 18 May- 16 Aug 1955

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B/RB-17, 1948-1949
B/RB-29, 1948-1949
RC-54, 1948
B/RB-29, 1950-1951
RB-50, 1950-1954
EB/RB-47, 1954-1967
Atlas, 1964-1965
EC-135, 1966
KC-135, 1966
RC-135, 1967
E-4, 1975
C-135, 1977-1994
NKC-135, 1983-1994
TC-135, 1988
T-38, 1992-1995
WC-135, 1992
C-21, 1993-1997
OC-135, 1994

COMMANDERS

Col Alfred F. Kalberer, 19 Jul 1948
Col William R. Yancey, 20 Oct 1948
Col John H. Davies, 17 Aug-14 Oct 1949
Col Richard T. King, 1 Nov 1950
Brig Gen Sydney D. Grubbs Jr., 20 Dec 1950
Col Alfred F. Kalberer, 18 Feb 1952
Brig Gen Joseph D. C. Caldara, 1 Oct 1952
Col Clayton Stiles, 24 Dec 1952
Col Adam K. Breckenridge, 26 Jan 1953
Col Olbert F. Lassiter, 1 May 1955
Col James K. Johnson, 16 Feb 1957
Col Norton H. Van Sicklen, 1 Aug 1959
Col William D. Kyle Jr., 2 Jul 1960

Col John G. Glover, 1 Jun 1961
Col Marion C. Mixon, 9 Jun 1963
Col William E. Riggs, 29 Aug 1966
Col Anthony Martinez, 17 Jul 1970
Col Marvin N. Morss, 30 Jun 1971
Col George D. Miller, 31 Aug 1972
Col Joe L. Church, 23 Jul 1974
Col Guy H. Winstead Jr., 5 Mar 1976
Brig Gen Regis F. A. Urschler, 26 May 1978
Col Donald G. Krause, 4 Aug 1980
Col W. John Soper, 19 Mar 1982
Col Merlin F. Stevens, 29 Nov 82
Col Mark J. Heller, 17 Oct 1984
Col Richard F. Vara, 26 Jun 1985
Col Lawrence A. Mitchell, 3 Jun 1986
Col Daniel R. Peterson, 31 May 1988
Col Thomas F. Atkinson Jr., 28 Jun 1990
Col William G. Manire, 1 Jul 1991
Brig Gen Thomas J. Keck, 10 May 1993
Brig Gen Michael S. Kudlacz, 17 May 1995
Brig Gen Gary A. Ambrose, 30 Dec 1996
Brig Gen Ronald F. Sams, 9 Nov 1998-Unkn
Brig Gen John C; Koziol, Oct 2003
Brig Gen Jonathan George, 28 Sep 2005
Brig Gen James J. Jones, Mar 2007
Col John N. T. Shanahan, 29 Apr 2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Southwest Asia

Defense of Saudi Arabia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Grenada, 1983

Decorations

Meritorious Unit Award

1 Jun 2002-31 May 2004

1 Jun 2004-31 May 2006

1 Jun 2006-31 May 2007

1 Jun 2007-31 May 2008

1 Jun 2008-31 May 2009

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

Jul 1956-Nov 1957

1 Jul 1963-30 Jun 1964

1 Jul 1966-30 Jun 1967

1 Jul 1972-30 Jun 1974

1 Jul 1974-30 Jun 1976

1 Jul 1976-30 Jun 1978

1 Jul 1978-30 Jun 1980

1 Jul 1987-30 Jun 1989

1 Jul 1989-30 Jun 1991

1 Aug 1993-31 Jul 1995

1 Jun 1997-31 May 1999

1 Jun 1999-31 May 2001

Bestowed Honors

Authorized to display honors earned by the 55th Fighter Group prior to 19 Jul 1948

Service Streamers

World War II

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

ETO, 3-13 Sep 1944

Germany, 19 Feb 1945

EMBLEM





Approved for 55th Group, 18 Feb 1942 and for the 55th Wing, 20 Nov 1951; reinstated, 15 Jun 1994

MOTTO

Fightin' Fifty-Fifth

OPERATIONS

Provided precise mapping and photographic reconnaissance, 1948-1949. Performed strategic reconnaissance, charting photography, precise electronic geodetic mapping, and electronic reconnaissance, 1950-1954.

On 20 Sep 1952, the 55th Air Base Group, with its Operations, Supply, Motor Vehicle, Air Police, Food Service, and Installations Squadrons, and the 55th Medical Group, were reduced to "paper" unit status, and all personnel were absorbed by similarly designated units of the 72nd Air Base and 72nd Medical Groups. These 72nd Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Heavy units were then attached to the 55th Wing for control. Transfer of excess personnel of the 55th Wing to the 72nd Wing commenced at this time, bringing the 72nd Wing into actual existence for the first time since its arrival at the base. The 55th Wing's headquarters and units began their movement to Forbes AFB, Kansas. Through October, at staggered intervals, the 55th Wing's headquarters, maintenance units, tactical units, medical group, and computations squadron moved from Ramey AFB. The 55th AB Group remained, in a "paper" unit status. All excess personnel of the 55th Wing units were used by the 72nd Wing units in manning themselves. On 16 Oct the 55th AB Group and its Operations, Supply, Motor Vehicle, Air Police, Food Service, and Installations Squadrons were inactivated, and on the 27th, the first two RB-36 aircraft for the 72nd SR Wing arrived at Ramey, starting a steady flow of such aircraft to the base. In 1952, the wing returned to Forbes AFB, Kansas and converted to RB-50s. The wing formally assumed a global strategic reconnaissance mission in 1954 and transited to the RB-47E.

When mapping and charting functions transferred on 1 May 1954, wing assumed mission of global strategic reconnaissance, including electronic reconnaissance, weather reconnaissance (to Jun 1963), and photographic reconnaissance (to May 1964).

Deployed at Ben Guerir AB, French Morocco, May-Aug 1955. Responsible for an Atlas missile complex, Aug 1964-Mar 1965.

Became responsible for SAC's airborne command post and post-attack command and control operations, Aug 1966.

The 55th SRW moved to Offutt AFB, NE, in Aug 1966. That same year the 55th's 38th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron assumed responsibility for SAC's airborne command and control system. The 2nd Airborne Command and Control Squadron inherited this mission after activation on 1 Apr 1970. The 1st Airborne Command and Control Squadron, flying E-4A, transferred to the 55th on 1 Nov 1975, bringing with it the National Emergency Airborne Command Post, now called the National Airborne Operations Center. On 1 Mar 1986, the 55th SRW became the host unit at Offutt after the inactivation of the 3902nd Air Base Wing.

The mission of the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing is to conduct global-scale strategic reconnaissance missions independently or in cooperation with other forces; to fulfill requirements for strategic reconnaissance as directed by higher authority; to operate, maintain, and support an airborne command post continuous operation which will be responsive to peacetime and emergency war order requirements levied by Headquarters, Strategic Air Command; to operate, crew, and maintain the Advanced Airborne Command Post as a part of the National Military Command Control System in support of the National Command Authority; to provide receiver air refueling training for RC/EC/KC-135 aircraft pilots as directed by higher headquarters; to fulfill administrative airlift requirements levied by Headquarters, Military Airlift Command; to maintain all aircraft assigned to Offutt AFB.

In addition, flew SAC logistic support missions after Sep 1971. Conducted K/E/RC-135 pilot training as required.

Became responsible for the National Emergency Airborne Command Post E-4 aircraft fleet in 1975.

Began Airborne Launch Control operations in 1978 using EC-135Cs as flying launch/control platforms for Minuteman, and later, Peacekeeper strategic missile systems.

Operated from bases in the US, Mediterranean, Europe, and the Pacific. Provided reconnaissance for contingencies in Grenada, 1983; Libya, 1986; and Southwest Asia, 1990-1991.

Ended nearly twenty-five years of continuous Airborne Command Post operations in 1990, assumed a modified alert posture, and continued worldwide reconnaissance.

The wing deployed to the Persian Gulf on 8 Aug 1990, and began 24-hour-a-day reconnaissance of the region for Central Command Commander Gen Norman Schwarzkopf, under Operation DESERT SHIELD. At the start of Operation DESERT STORM, 18 Jan 1991, the wing continued to provide real-time information to theater commanders and remains there yet today.

Provided crews and aircraft for enforcement of no-fly zones over southern Iraq, 1992 and Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1992-1996. Subordinate units operated in England, Japan, Greece, and southwest Asia.

Flew global reconnaissance and air-sampling missions during the 1990s, including Open Skies Treaty flights to monitor the military activities of other nations.

In 1994, the airborne command post mission was altered to include support for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for response to natural disasters.

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, Virginia.