

115 AIRLIFT SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

115 Aero Squadron organized, 28 Aug 1917
Redesignated 636 Aero Squadron, 1 Feb 1918
Demobilized, 8 Apr 1919

115 Squadron (Observation) constituted in the National Guard, 1921
Redesignated 115 Observation Squadron, 25 Jan 1923
Organized, Apr 1924
Activated, 16 Jun 1924

636 Aero Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 115 Observation Squadron, 1936.
Consolidated organization designated 636 Aero Squadron
Ordered to active service, 3 Mar 1941

Redesignated 115 Observation Squadron (Light), 13 Jan 1942
Redesignated 115 Observation Squadron, 4 Jul 1942
Redesignated 115 Liaison Squadron, 2 Apr 1943
Redesignated 115 Observation Squadron, 2 Apr 1943
Inactivated, 25 Dec 1945
Redesignated 115 Bombardment Squadron (Light), and allotted to CA ANG, 24 May 1946
Activated, 15 Aug 46
Extended Federal recognition, 8 Oct 1946
Inactivated, 1 Jan 1953
Redesignated 115 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 1 Jan 53
Redesignated 115 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Feb 1955
Redesignated 115 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 10 Dec 1958

115 Tactical Fighter Squadron 1 Oct 58

Redesignated 115 Air Transport Squadron, Heavy, 15 Jan 1960

Redesignated 115 Military Airlift Squadron, 1 Jan 1966

Redesignated 115 Tactical Airlift Squadron, 11 Apr 1970

Redesignated 115 Airlift Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX, 28 Aug 1917

Garden City, NY, 31 Oct-3 Dec 1917

Tours, France, c. 27 Dec 1917

St Nazaire, France, 1 Jan-Mar 1919

Garden City, NY, 25 Mar-8 Apr 1919

Clover Field, Santa Monica, Apr 1924

Griffith Park Airfield, Los Angeles, CA, 16 Jun 1924

Paso Robles, CA, 13 Mar 1941

Morrow Field, San Bernardino, CA, 13 Dec 1941

Ontario, CA, 1 Jun 1942

Laurel, MS, 11 Nov 1942

Esler Field, LA, 30 Mar 1943

Pollock AAFld, LA, 7 Jul 1943

Brownwood AFlD, TX, 21 Nov 1943-14 Sep 1944

Ledo, India, 11 Nov 1944 (detachment at Myitkyina, Burma, after 3 Jan 1945)

Myitkyina, Burma, 21 Jan 1945

Dinjan, India (air echelon at Myitkyina, Burma), 24 Apr 1945

Nagaghuli, India, 9 May 1945

Chengkung, China, 20 Jul 1945

Hsingchiang, China, 23 Jul 1945 (operated primarily from Peishiyi, China, after 11 Aug 1945)

Peishiyi, China, 2 Sep 1945

Luliang, China, 3 Oct 1945

Kanchrapara, India, 13 Oct-19 Nov 1945

Ft Lewis, WA, 19-25 Dec 1945

Van Nuys, CA, 1946

Lockheed Air Terminal Burbank, CA, Apr 1948

Langley AFB, VA, 1 Apr 1951

Van Nuys Airport, CA, 1953-30 Apr 90

Channel Islands ANGS, Port Hueneme, CA, 1988

ASSIGNMENTS

Unkn, 28 Aug-Dec 1917

Second Aviation Instruction Center, Dec 1917-Jan 1919

Unkn, Jan-8 Apr 1919

California NG (divisional aviation, 40 Division), 16 Jun 1924

III Army Corps, 3 Mar 1941

Fourth Air Force, 1 Sep 1941

69 Observation (later Reconnaissance) Group, 3 Sep 1941
II Air Support Command (later II Tactical Air Division), 11 Aug 1943
I (later III) Tactical Air Division, 18 Apr 1944
Tenth Air Force, 29 Oct 1944
Fourteenth Air Force, 6 Jul-25 Dec 1945
126 Bombardment Wing, Medium
111 Bombardment Group
146 Composite Group
126 Bombardment Group
4400 Combat Crew Training Group
146 Fighter-Bomber Group (Later, Fighter Interceptor Group; Tactical Fighter Group; Air Transport Group)
146 Air Transport Wing
146 Air Transport Group (Later, Military Airlift Group; Tactical Airlift Group)
146 Tactical Airlift Wing (Later, Airlift Wing)
146 Operations Group

ATTACHMENTS

1 Liaison Group [Prov], 18 Nov 1944-30 Apr 1945
312 Fighter Wing, 24 Jul-1 Aug 1945

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

JN-4H
PT-1
O-17
TW-3
BT-1
O-2
O-38, 1931
BC-1
DH-4
TW-3
BT-1
O-2
O-49, 1941
L-2, 1942
O-47, 1938
P-40, 1943,
L-4, 1942
L-5, 1943
L-1, 1944
L-4, 1945
B-26, 1946

B-45, Sep 1951
B-26, 1952
P-51
F-86, 1954
C-97, 1960
C-130, Apr 1970

SUPPORT AIRCRAFT

C-47, 1946
AT-6
AT-11, 1948
TB-26, 1948

COMMANDERS

Maj Corliss C. Moseley, 16 Jun 1924
Maj John N. Jeffers, 10 Aug 1928
Maj Eldo A. Peterson 7 May 1931-Mar 1941
Cpt Charles Roberts, Nov 1941-Jan 1942
Cpt Jack Sewall, #1941
LTC Rox M. Moyers, #1974
LTC Kurt V. Holden

HONORS

Service Streamers

Theater of Operations

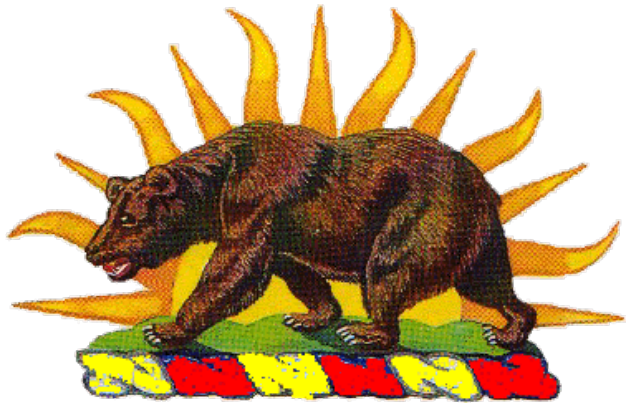
Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater
India-Burma
China Defensive
Central Burma
China Offensive

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



On a wreath or and gules the setting sun behind a grizzly bear passant on a grassy field all proper. (Approved, 26 Dec 1929)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The first Special Order assigning recruits to the 115 Aero Squadron was issued by Headquarters Kelly Field, TX, on 28 Aug 1917. Three main groups of recruits were assigned to the Squadron. The first of these came from Fort McDowell (Santa Rosa), CA, and was made up of men from the Pacific Coast States.

The second group came from Fort Bliss, TX and was composed of representatives of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and other Southwestern States. The third, and largest aggregation reported from Jefferson Barracks MO, and with it came men from States bordering the Mississippi Valley. These three detachments totaled 120 men; raw recruits of whom only three or four had had any previous military training. Slowly these men were taught the school of the soldier and an organization was perfected. An "esprit de corps" was fostered and the individual learnt to lay aside his own interests for the collective good.

The Squadron's first commander was Cadet Goodman, who was succeeded by 1LT Hyman, who in turn was relieved by LT Russell C. Veit. The former two were each in command for only a few days and LT Veit may be considered the Squadron's first C.O. To his untiring efforts may be attributed the efficiency of the Squadron at the time it left Kelly Field.

On 14 Oct 1917, orders were received to move to Mineola. With five other Squadrons, the 115 departed on 26 Oct 1917. Garden City was reached on the morning of 31 Oct 1917, and the Squadron was quartered in one of the new, uncompleted barracks then being constructed at that camp.

The Squadron was equipped for foreign service and a few necessary transfers made. On 18 Nov 1917, 1LT Paul R. Stockton was assigned to the Squadron as Commanding Officer.

On the early morning of the 3 Dec, the Squadron left Garden City for Hoboken, NJ, where embarkation aboard U.S.S. Huron for foreign service was made. Five Officers went with the Squadron; 1Lt Paul R. Stockton, 1Lt. Russell C. Veit, 1Lt Fenton J. Baker, 1Lt. John K. Tilton, and 1Lt John F. Stein, 144 men and four medical personnel attached composed the enlisted strength of the Squadron.

Huron sailed from Hoboken at 12:30 A.M. on 5 Dec 1917 and arrived at St. Nazaire, France, 20 Dec 1917. Very rough weather was encountered during the trip. On 26 Dec 1917, the Squadron disembarked and entrained immediately for Tours.

On 27 Dec 1917 the Squadron suffered its first and only casualty to date. Pvt. Roy E. Mahin, naturally of a weak constitution, was taken off the Huron suffering from the effects of the strenuous sea voyage, and he died at the hospital at St. Nazaire, 27 Dec 1917.

The trip to Tours was made in a box car during very inclement weather. At Tours the Squadron was quartered at the Quartier de Beaumont. Considerable difficulty was encountered in securing supplies and for two nights the squadron slept on the cement floors with only the allotted three blankets to protect them from the cold. The ground was then covered with snow and the rainy, wet winter was at its height. The change in climate tended to aggravate the situation and many of the men developed severe colds, but the situation was mastered and little by little the French barracks were made comfortable.

While at Beaumont the squadron was constantly drilled. Buzzer and telegraph instruments were installed and men trained in the sending and receiving of messages. Wig wagging was also taught and all the training possible under the circumstances was given to the men.

On 15 Jan 1918, 1Lt Paul R. Stockton assumed command of the Signal Corps Section of the Quartier de Beaumont and 1Lt Russell C. Veit was appointed adjutant.

When first organized at Kelly Field, it was understood that the squadron would be known as a Supply squadron, no written orders being given to this effect. When the Squadron left Kelly

Field for Garden City, it was understood that the Squadron had been changed to a Service Squadron, and Special Order 143, Par. 19, Hqrs. Kelly Field, Oct. 14th, 1917, under which orders the Squadron proceeded from Kelly Field to Garden City, referred to this organization as "the 115 Aero Service Squadron." During the month of February, orders (2d. Ind. letter from the Chief Signal Officer of the Army to the Adjutant General of the Army, dated December 29, 1917) were received, changing the number and classification of the Squadron to the 636th Aero Supply Squadron. Changes in organization were made to comply with each order, respectively.

On 7 Feb 1918, LT Stockton was detached from the Squadron and LT Veit again assumed command. During the time which LT Stockton was in command of the Squadron, the men had learned not only to respect him as Commanding Officer, but had become greatly attached to him.

On the 17th of the same month the Squadron moved to Guise Barracks, but were here only a few days when the order was received to move to the 2nd Aviation Instruction Center, the change being accomplished on the 22 Feb.

At the time the Squadron was ordered to move to the 2d. A.I.C., its morale was very high. The men in it were selected and organized to perform the duties of such an organization and the one prevalent idea was to attain efficiency in order that the Squadron might be sent to the Zone of Advance to perform the duties for which it was intended. Each member of the 636th Aero squadron felt a personal pride in the organization, and believed it to be the best in the Air Service.

On 28 Feb the one great discouraging blow of the history of this organization fell. That blow was to shatter the morale of the Squadron and to sow the seeds of discouragement and discontent. On that date orders from Headquarters, 2d. A.I.C., transferred out a large number of the old men and transferred into the squadron every cook on the field, every man doing kitchen police duty, which duty was then permanent at the Consolidated Mess, and a number of men who were in the guard house at that time. Besides these, a great number of men with bad records and whom it was very hard to discipline, were sent to this Squadron. From this date the history of the Squadron is a struggle to regain its proper standing and to perfect another organization; to bring those who had slipped by the wayside to a proper understanding of military requirements, and, to get rid of those who were habitually on the wrong side of duty's ledger. Much of the credit in the success of this work is due to 2LT Roy E. Keeling who was assigned to the Squadron on 28 Feb 1918 and who was consequently made Squadron Adjutant by Cpt Bell on 27 May 1918 and being recommended for his promotion to 1LT on 21 Aug 1918.

On March 16th, 1918, Lieut. Mentzer, relieved Lieut. Russell C. Veit, of command and on May 19th, 1918, Captain Robert R. Bell was placed in command of the Squadron Vice Lieut. Mentzer. Captain Bell is an old army man with more than ten years service. His was the difficult task of bringing about harmony and organization into the squadron. His plan of keeping men healthy and happy and then expecting full co-operation in return has worked wonders for this squadron since he has been in command. Since Captain Bell came to this Squadron a number of the

undesirables have been sent to the prison camp at Gievres on special and General Court Martial Sentences. A number of men who at the time of being transferred into this Squadron were well on the road to a prison camp have been taught how to fulfill their oath of enlistment, and are at present excellent soldiers.

The Squadron has done its full share in bringing the 2d. A.I.C., to its present position among the Aviation Centers of the A.E.F. It has fully recovered from the lowering of Morale resulting from the March transfers, and at present its men are to be found in practically every department on the Field. In a number of departments the N.C.O's. in charge are members of this Squadron.

During the early days of the Camp, its men worked constantly throughout the rigor of a severe winter, digging ditches, laying sewers, constructing buildings. It has seen the transformation of the 2d. A.I.C, from a mere row of Adrian Barracks to a full-fledged Aviation Instruction Center, with its Observers and Aerial Gunnery Schools.

In athletics the 636th has always taken part. Sgts. Lowenstein and Vaughn winning ribbons at the inter-post meet at Blois in July 1918. In Baseball the Squadron has always been among the leaders and in football has always made it most interesting for the other follows.

Disgusted at being left out of the action at the front, the enlisted men, en masse, requested transfers. By the time of the Armistice, all transfer requests had been honored, and not one original member of the unit was left. On March 24, 1919, the 636th sailed for home aboard the S.S. Manchuria and was disbanded at Garden City, New York on April 8, 1919.

115 Observation Squadron was activated in October 1924, but the first aircraft did not arrive until early 1925. The 115 flew out of Griffith Park Airfield which was dedicated as the first California Guard aerofield in January 1925.

The 115's first summer camp was scheduled to begin on July 4th, a day historically given to praising the military and their activities. Two major events were planned for the encampment. The first, "The Battle of Lasky's Ranch", was a week long mobility exercise designed to demonstrate the military efficiency of the unit and its aircraft. The second, a cross-country "Sealed Orders Contest", sponsored by William Randolph Hearst and the Los Angeles Examiner, was intended to show that the airplane was as reliable as the train in maintaining regular route schedules.

To add to the earnest tone of the activities, Moseley invited noted aviators to the base, men who reflected aviation's solid accomplishments. Three well known "round the world" U.S. Army pilots agreed to be the judges for the Sealed Orders Contest, and California's Governor, Friend W. Richardson, and his Adjutant General R.E. Mittelstaedt, were to visit. Col. Billy Mitchell was also to fly in and tour the facilities. The stage was set as dawn broke, July 4th, introduced to the State's first air unit. An imaginary enemy had landed from the sea and was now camped in the San Fernando Valley at the Lasky Ranch, ready to strike at Los Angeles.

It was the task of the 115 Observation Squadron to keep close watch on the hostile force. On the morning of July 4th, 1925, the unit, completely equipped, moved into a location midway

between the enemy and the City of Los Angeles (Griffith Park Airport). By evening, camp had been established and six "Jennies" stood ready for a night reconnaissance flight and a bomb attack on the enemy. In place of actual bombs, each plane was equipped with 24,000 candlepower magnesium flares installed on its wings that would leave a 500 yard long trail of sparks behind when set off. Soon after dark the ships took off and flew low over the cities of Los Angeles, Glendale and Hollywood. Invisible from the ground, it demonstrated how easy it would be for an enemy to attack U.S. cities by night.

Dividing into two groups, the pilots ignited their flares, creating two great tails of fire behind each plane, and headed for different sections of the three cities. Next came loops, spirals and dives, as the pilots simulated aerial combat with the enemy. The sky spectacular lasted 16 minutes and was the highlight of the Los Angeles area July 4th celebration. Returning to their field, all lights were turned off to keep the base hidden from the enemy forces.

Throughout the week, day and night reconnaissance flights kept the enemy under constant surveillance. By Friday, it was assumed that an enemy advance had made it necessary to move the unit to a new site. Moving by convoy to Big Bear Lake the 115 bivouacked beside a meadow selected for use as a runway. Later that evening, the planes arrived after a one and a half hour flight from Griffith Park. After a supposedly long stay, the Squadron broke camp the next day and returned to Griffith Park on schedule, ending the exercise.

The Battle of Lasky's Ranch has been a sobering experience for the many Californians who had stared helplessly into a dark sky that night of July 4th, unable to spot the "enemy" aircraft sent to destroy their cities. Sobering too, had been the efficient response to the simulated threat by the men of the new State air unit. The exercise had served its purpose; it had made the public aware of the implications of military aviation, and it had dramatically emphasized the importance of the role played by the Air National Guard in our Nation's defense.

The chief maneuver of the 115's first summer encampment was a round trip flight to San Francisco under sealed orders to demonstrate the reliability of the airplane in maintaining scheduled routes. Sponsored by William Randolph Hearst and the Los Angeles Examiner, prizes of \$1,000 were offered to the winners. The flight worked like this; sealed orders for the first hop were given to each pilot the morning of departure from Griffith Park Airfield. Then the orders for each following leg were handed them at the next point along the route until they reached San Francisco. Pilots had no foreknowledge of either the route or the times expected of them.

On Friday, July 17, 1925, the first pilot, Lt. C.M. Christian, took off at precisely 5:00 A.M., followed by six more ships at fifteen minute intervals. Following the orders handed them along the route, the pilots made stops at Bakersfield, Fresno, Modesto, Sacramento and finally, San Francisco. Six of the planes arrived on schedule. One, due to engine trouble, was forced to land at Sacramento, putting it out of the race.

Enthusiastically received at Crissy Field, the crews were given a rousing welcome and afforded a motorcycle escort into the city where they were lavishly entertained. The next day the planes took off for Sacramento. the first leg of the return trip, and again remained overnight. Finally, on Sunday, July 19th, the crews returned to Griffith Park where the contest ended in a din of automobile horns touched off by throngs of spectators lining the field. So close were the pilots to the time mapped out days in advance, that two were tied for first place,

Lt. C.M. Christian and Lt. M.F. Graham.

Third place went to Lt. Fred Kelly of Los Angeles, former Olympic gold medal winner. The results of the Sealed Orders Contest were remarkable for their day. Flying the JN4-H at an average altitude of 3,000 feet. the trip covered 1,250 miles in 13 hours 40 minutes of flying time and included ten at strange fields.

One flight of the 115 was called up to support the 184th Infantry which performed riot control duty at the Folsom State Prison 24-29 Nov 1927.

By Sep 1927, all of the JN4-D had been scrapped and the unit flew an assortment of O-2Hs and O-17s. In 1931 the squadron was being equipped with the O-38, an open cockpit, two place observation machine that was to become the workhorse of the unit throughout the thirties. By 1933 the 115 was flying the A,B, and E model O-38.

On October 16, 1936, the Army, "in order to perpetuate the history and traditions of units which had served as part of the American Expeditionary Forces", reconstituted the 115 Aero Squadron and consolidated its service record with that of the 115 Observation Squadron, 40th Division Aviation, California National Guard.

In October, 1938 the 115 Observation Squadron began receiving the O-47A, its first all metal aircraft. It was specifically designed for observation missions with sophisticated camera equipment mounted in a lower compartment. The 115 Observation Squadron was activated in March 1941 and the O-47 began coastal patrol service in support of Army artillery batteries and to search for Japanese submarines.

On August 27, 1940, Congress authorized the induction of the National Guard into Federal service. Seven months later, on March 3, 1941, the 115 was activated and sent to Paso Robles, CA, to begin coastal patrol service in support of the III Army Corps' artillery batteries. Setting up their tents in the rain-soaked fields, the 115 found itself bogged down in a quagmire of mud. The first planes to land at the field became stuck the moment they taxied off the small runway, much to the embarrassment of Jack Sewall and O. D. McKenzie, their pilots.

Unknown to all but top Army Commanders, along the Pacific coast in late 1941 were only forty-five modern fighter planes to defend a 1,200 mile coastline and even this force was hampered by an acute shortage of weapons and ammunition. When the naval defeat at Pearl Harbor suddenly exposed our western coast in December, 1941, the Army's coastal artillery units (without radar) were virtually all that was left to oppose an enemy invasion. The 115's observation services were suddenly of prime importance in the defense of Southern California.

Six days after the destruction of the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor, the 115 was moved to San Bernardino's Morrow Field, where anti-submarine patrols began in earnest and with good reason; America's coastal defenses were acutely weak, while reports of Japanese submarine activity were growing stronger.

On February 22, 1942, 115 pilot Ory Shelton was flying a tow target aircraft for the gunners at Fort MacArthur when he spotted a Japanese submarine in the Catalina Channel. On the 23rd, a Japanese submarine surfaced north of Santa Barbara and shelled the small hamlet of Ellwood, damaging piers and oil wells. And on the evening of the 24th, after a series of alerts, set off by reported sightings of Japanese aircraft, "the air over Los Angeles erupted like a volcano" to the tune of anti-aircraft fire. Later, reports of enemy submarine pens south of the border resulted in 115 crews being sent secretly into Mexico to search for them. None were found.

In May, 1942, the 115 moved to Ontario, California, where the unit was literally "dumped" onto an empty field. Later, the 102nd Observation Squadron moved in and from these two units, a third squadron, the 10th, was formed.

While at Ontario the 115 received its first flight of P-39, but before the unit could complete its changeover to the new airplanes, it was ordered to Laurel, Mississippi. Leaving the P-39s behind, the 115 departed Ontario in November, 1942, aboard a troop train, while six air-crews ferried a like number of unit O-47s to the new station. For the first time, the 115 was to be stationed outside of California.

The Army, in order to expand its Air Corps, drew heavily on the large pool of trained, experienced National Guard personnel, using them as a nucleus around which they formed new fighting units. So heavily did it draw upon the 115 that by the time the unit left for overseas in 1944, not one original member of the unit was left in it. When the war ended in 1945, ex-115 members were serving in almost every major theater of military operations around the world. They had been scattered to the four winds.

Redesignated the 115 Liaison Squadron in April, 1943, the unit participated in maneuvers in Louisiana and Texas. In September, 1944, the 115 was sent overseas and arrived in Bombay, India, on October 30, 1944.

Moving quickly to its first combat station at Ledo, the next two months were spent working with the Chinese Army in India, where vital experience was gained in L-4 and L-5 aircraft operations. In January, 1945, the unit moved to Myitkyina, Burma, and assumed full-scale combat duties.

Split into small detachments along the China-Burma front, planes of the 115 flew reconnaissance and search missions, evacuated 62 wounded, acted as forward artillery observers, and dropped supplies to allied guerilla units operating deep behind enemy lines.

In jungle warfare, battles were usually fought between small, isolated groups of men in extremely difficult terrain. It was rare when 115 pilots did not have to land in rice paddies or small strips hewn from the jungle while under hostile-fire.

The end of the war found the 115 at Hsinching, China, with elements still operating from other bases. Awarded a battle star, the unit returned to the States in December, 1945 and was

inactivated on Christmas Day. It was reactivated at Van Nuys, California, on October 8, 1946, and returned to the California National Guard.

Instrumental in the post-war reconstruction of California's Air Guard was Col Eldo A. Peterman, who had commanded the 115 in the 1930's.

In Apr 1948, the 115 Bombardment Squadron and many other units moved to the Lockheed Air Terminal in Burbank. Used to the broad expanse of ramp space they had enjoyed at Van Nuys, the move to Burbank proved to be an unpopular one for the members of the squadron.

At Burbank, the limited ramp space made especially difficult to park the twelve B-26 four TB-26 and two trainers of the 115. Adding to the congestion was the C-47s of the 146th Air Base Group and the 112th Radar Calibration Flight, as well as two F-51s used by the Wing Commander and the Army Air Corps Advisors. Miracles of maintenance were performed by inventive ground crews in order to meet operational standards and pilots "flew their pants off" to overcome the problems of heavy commercial air traffic in the area.

Mobilized on April 1, 1951 for the Korean Conflict, the 115 was sent in May to Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, and assigned to the 47th Bombardment Group.

In September, the Squadron was refitted with B-45As. Five months later, in February, 1952, while still undergoing transition training into the new aircraft, the unit was suddenly relieved of its assignment to the 47th Bombardment Group and reassigned to the 4430th Air Base Wing as a Combat Crew Training Squadron for B-26 instructors.

The 115 held this assignment until January 1, 1953, when it was inactivated, returned to the control of the State of California, and redesignated the 115 Fighter Bomber Squadron.

The 146th Fighter Wing was called to active duty in March, 1951, and along with its 146th Air Base Group, was sent to Valdosta, Georgia, to open an abandoned WW II airfield known as Moody Air Force Base.

Twenty-one months after being mobilized, the 146th was released to the State of California and returned to set up operations at its present location, the Van Nuys Metropolitan Airport.

By January, 1953, all of the units called to active duty for Korean action had been returned to the control of the State of California and were assigned to the 146th Fighter Bomber Wing at Van Nuys Metropolitan Airport.

The 115 Bombardment Squadron, shed of its B-26s upon release from active duty, was re-designated as the 115 Fighter Bomber Squadron and joined the 195th as one of the two fighter squadrons located at the Van Nuys location. Both units flew the F-51." In February, 1951, the 146th Wing was re-equipped with F-86A. By July, 1955, the transition into the jet age had been so effectively accomplished that the Wing was redesignated a Fighter Interceptor Wing and

charged with the mission of Air Defense for the Los Angeles area.

An intense but friendly rivalry quickly developed between the 115 and the 195th, and gunnery competition during the summer encampments at Gowen ANG Base in Boise, Idaho, became serious duels, much to the benefit of the Wing and the Air Force as each unit "tried harder" to improve its tactical effectiveness. The competitive spirit born of the jet age is still much in evidence at Van Nuys today as the 115 & 195th vie with each other.

Van Nuys was no longer a little country airport. Funded by the Air National Guard, the runway was extended 2,000 feet to a total of 8,000 in anticipation of a bigger, better follow-on aircraft to the F-86. Most assumed it would be the F-100. Considering the noise factor and the growing need for military cargo airlift, a decision was made that would send the 146th into a totally different kind of flying activity and take it into virtually every nook and cranny of the world in the decade of the 60's.

The airplane that would do it was the C-97." Built by Boeing, and used for long range transport of passengers and cargo, the C-97 was considered to be the "Cadillac" of the heavy transports. Four of the biggest piston engines ever built would allow the craft to haul up to twelve tons of cargo on Pacific Ocean routes where it's sometimes a very long way between islands. For the pilots, accustomed to the freewheeling, fast, high flying F-86, the low, straight and level C-97 was quite a comedown. But for those who stuck with the program there were some very substantial rewards. Instead of being limited for the most part to Southern California, the range of operation was now literally the world, and crews would find that missions to Hawaii and the Far East, Europe, the Caribbean and South America were not so very hard to take after all.

With the new aircraft came redesignation as the "146th Air Transport Wing (Heavy)" in January, 1960. The 146th would now be under the control of the Military Air Transport Service (MATS) and would be involved in hauling needed cargo and people wherever in the world there were U.S. Forces stationed.

All the pilots would have to be retrained in the new aircraft and the unit would, in addition, now need navigators, flight engineers and loadmasters. The navigators had to be recruited from former Air Force members who held the rating on active duty and wanted to get back into the game on a part time basis, but the openings for flight engineers and loadmasters provided a bonanza for the airmen already in the Van Nuys unit. Each C-97 required two flight engineers and at least one loadmaster to perform its mission and the talent to fill these crew positions was to be found in the maintenance and supports units.

No time was lost getting a cadre of aircrew and mechanics checked out at Travis Air Force Base near Sacramento. After an eight week course of ground, simulator and flying training, the first group was qualified in the airplane and they returned to Van Nuys in March to instruct the rest. The remainder of 1960 and the first half of 1961 were devoted to local training spiced by regular trips to Tachikawa, Japan starting in October 1960.

Once more families and careers were to be disrupted. For many on the base it was their third activation in twenty years, but this one was to be considerably less disrupting since the unit was slated to remain at Van Nuys. There were problems; for one thing, the full compliment of people, including aircrews, needed to operate a sixteen aircraft MATS C-97 unit were not yet on board and had to be called up on an individual basis to fill the slots. This didn't delay the integration of the 146th into the MATS system and soon a steady stream of airplanes were heading up to Travis for loading and dispatching on their island-hopping route through Honolulu and Wake to Japan.

The 146th's operation took on many of the characteristics of a charter airline with only one customer - MATS. They asked for airplanes to be plugged into the "system" at regular intervals, usually one every day, for a trip that would last from 6 to 10 days. The whole base, from flight operations to the motor pool, was geared to produce that trip each day.

Japan was the destination of most of the unit's sorties during the year, with some later missions going through the Philippines to Thailand and South Vietnam in support of counter-insurgency activities in those countries and in Laos. Ironically, the 115 and 195th each had only one trip to Germany during the year of the "Berlin Crisis".

The Air Guard had supplied an additional 48 aircraft to the airlift force. The impression this made on MATS was tremendous and plans were made whereby the Air Guard units were to be even more closely integrated with the regular establishment after deactivation. Aircrews would no longer pull a 15 day summer camp, but would be utilized in shorter, more frequent tours of duty, to fly trips to the Far East, Europe or South America. Weekends would be taken up in shorter jaunts to Hawaii, Alaska, the Caribbean or shorter stateside destinations; but all trips would be fully utilized for cargo and passengers. In this way, the Defense Department could draw on a very impressive source of airlift and the Guard would be provided with continuous, realistic operational training.

1960 - Two new nose docks built on the west side of the ramp to support C-97 maintenance.

1961 - October, the 115, the 195th, and their parent units were called to active duty because of the Berlin Crisis and assigned to the Military Air Transport Service. Still based at Van Nuys, they conducted operations world wide in support of the Air Force's needs.

1962 - August, the Wing and its squadrons were released from active duty and continued to operate out of Van Nuys.

This holiday gift-lift, more appropriately called an "Errand of Mercy", left Van Nuys on December 30th, 1962 on the first leg of a long 14,000 mile journey, Destination - Salvador, a sister city of Los Angeles in northeastern Brazil Organized by the Los Angeles - Salvador Sister Cities Committee, many agencies and dedicated individuals contributed time, energy and money in an effort to relieve the suffering of the thousands in the "alagados", the slums of Salvador. A total of seven tons of food, toys, farm tools and medical equipment were gathered

at Van Nuys ANG Base, loaded on a 146th Military Airlift Wing's C-97 for the flight to Brazil.

It started as a routine flight in the summer of 1964 from NAS Alameda, California to Florida, carrying 47 bandsmen and their instruments. The "operations normal" portion of the flight lasted until the aircraft had just past the Rockies when suddenly the cockpit was filled with blinding light as lightning struck the left wing. The boom of an explosion was followed by a flash of fire, and a glance showed flames near number 2 engine. In solid weather, co-pilot Ozzie Hurt got a clearance to Grand Junction, Colorado while Aircraft Commander Dick Mills, determining his position relative to the mountains, put the burning C-97 into a steep dive from 17,000 ft. in an effort to blow out the flames. It worked, the fire was blown out! Still in bad weather, Mills maneuvered the crippled ship to a no-flap, high speed landing on the 5400 ft. runway at mile-high Grand Junction. For their "GOOD SHOW", the crew received a "Well Done" from the commander of MATS.

On Good Friday in March, 1964, a devastating earthquake all but leveled Anchorage, Alaska. Within hours, the 146th launched aircraft to the stricken city with tons of irrigation pipe (to rebuild fresh water lines), medical supplies, food and clothing. In the same year, when floods ravaged northern California, a huge airlift was inaugurated out of Van Nuys hauling badly needed supplies into the small community of Arcata. When hurricane "Camille" hit the Gulf Coast in 1968, Van Nuys based crews and aircraft airlifted supplies in and people out of the devastated area. The "Watts" Riots of 1965 had the 146th shuttling Army National Guard troops from their summer field training site to Van Nuys for duty in South Central Los Angeles. Other disasters took the unit aircraft as far away as Chile after a huge earthquake and landslide left thousands homeless. And almost every year finds the 146th airlifting firefighters and equipment to combat the forest fires in the western states.

In response to Defense Department requests, most flying activity of the Wing, from 1965 through 1969, was directed to the "hot" areas of Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay and DaNang. Maintenance put forth a tremendous effort to generate maximum flying hours and crews were called upon for additional tours of active duty. A typical round trip to Vietnam, requiring 10 days and 70 hours of flying, would involve stops at Travis AFB for onload of cargo, fuel and rest stops at Honolulu, Wake or Kwajalein, Guam, Clark AB or Mactan AB, Philippines, then to Vietnam for delivery and onload of return cargo for the homeward run. They were long, hard grinds, but there was satisfaction too ... By 1967, the unit was actually flying more hours than it did in the 1961 Berlin Crisis activation.

In the spring of 1967, the National Center for Atmospheric Research's expedition on the remote Line Islands, far south of Hawaii found themselves living on coconuts and fish; their supply lifeline, a PBY flying boat, was out of commission. An SOS to the Defense Department was bucked to the Guard Bureau, then to the 146th, which was soon winging food, mail and scientific equipment to Christmas, Fanning and Palmyra Islands. Unable to land at Fanning, the 195th airdropped a load of food. The following week, the 115, parachuted a bundle of supplies and mail into the ocean, missing the island completely. But it helped the scientists' morale anyway. Revived with fresh supplies, the project's success was assured.

The Air Force acted promptly and on 11 April, 1970, the 146th Military Airlift Wing was the first Air Guard unit to be converted to the tactical airlift mission under the command of TAC. The lumbering C-97s were quietly, if not ignominiously, retired and the first of twelve C-130s arrived in Van Nuys. The C-130 was the backbone of tactical airlift and with the aircraft came training teams from the Air Force. Two weeks in the classroom and additional time for practical problems, working on the aircraft, and the CAM squadron personnel emerged as C-130 experts. After many months of "round-the-clock" hard work, aided by the expertise of personable C-130 "worshipper" Ben Hall, the Lockheed technical representative, the Vietnam war weary birds, reassigned to the 146th from Okinawa, began to emerge as respectable, clean airplanes.

A cadre of flight crews went to Ellington Air Force Base, Texas, for classroom instruction and flight training. Locally, intensified transition training at Palmdale and day and night use of the newly installed C-130 flight simulator, brought pilots and engineers "up to speed... A heavy schedule of tactical classroom work followed by low level navigation formation flights and airdrop procedures brought the navigators, loadmasters and aerial port personnel to a qualified status and a short time the wing was tactically "combat ready.

As early as 1971, aircrews and a C-130 from the 146th were involved in an operational test and actual missions on a serious fire near Santa Barbara, which proved that the concept was feasible. In August of '73, the system proved its worth when a C-130 and crew from the 463rd TAW at Dyess AFB, the advisory Wing for the 146th, made more than two dozen drops on major fires in Idaho, Montana and California. MAFFS was given credit for saving a string of cabins and a restaurant in California by using its unique low altitude spraying capability. The advantage of the MAFFS lies in the fact that the retardant (which is also a growth-promoting fertilizer) is dispensed by compressed air, and not by a gravity system such as the civilian fire fighting tankers use. Spokesmen for the Forestry Service stated that the system and the aircraft gives them performance and capability that never before existed.

In the last few months, air crews of the 146th have been attending the Forestry Service's National Air Tanker Pilot School at Marana, Arizona, and Van Nuys ANG Base is programmed to be used as a storage facility. The 146th is also one of four Air Guard and AF Reserve units in the country equipped with the Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS), an integral tool for battling large wildfires. Since its inception in 1974, these units have flown over 5,000 aerial firefighting missions in California and across the Western United States.

December 1974. Personnel and C-130s from the Air Guard's 146th Tactical Airlift Wing participated in Operation Gold Bear, a statewide exercise testing the ability of the California National Guard to assist other state agencies in dealing with domestic emergencies.

Operation Southern Angel - Republic of Chile- Nation-building exercise & training of Fuerza Aerea de Chile personnel in aeromedical evacuation techniques and equipment

Coronet Oak – Howard AB, Canal Zone, Panama- Provide airlift for Southern Command

throughout Central and South America. This operation recently moved to Puerto Rico.

Cobra Gold – Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base- Airlift control flight augmented U. S. Air Force managing 44 missions, 1,200 personnel and 201 tons of cargo

146 AW flew 51.5 combat hours during Operation Just Cause in Panama

By March 1990, all but a small remnant of wing personnel had transferred operations to Channel Islands ANG Station. Shortly thereafter, the old Van Nuys facility was closed and turned over to the City of Los Angeles. On April 30, 1990, the flag at Van Nuys ANG Base was lowered for the last time during a special ceremony.

30 April 1992 C-130 aircrews from the 146th Airlift Wing at Channel Islands Air Base, California were alerted at 1:15 AM and began flying cargo, soldiers, equipment, police officers, and vehicles to various locations in the state to deal with riots caused by the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. The first C-130 departed its home station at 5:25 AM that day as part of an operation named "Sudden Response." On that day, the unit flew 57 flight hours, hauled 663 passengers, and carried more than 40 tons of cargo. On 1 May, 125 security police from 4 ANG flying units were activated and deployed to locations in southern California. Arizona and Wyoming ANG units also provided airlift for the operation.

In February 2002 the large double hangar was demolished.

In March 2004 the World War II Machine Shop Building (Bldg. T507) south of the former World War II ramp was demolished.

California Air National Guardsmen from the 146th Airlift Wing at Channel Island ANGB launched two C-130Hs outfitted for aerial firefighting on 5 May to help fight wildfires in Southern California. Twelve missions were flown, dropping more than 32,000 pounds of flame retardant on the region, The unit's C-130s are equipped with the modular airborne firefighting system, or MAFFS, and joined air and ground units fighting wildfires in several Southern California counties. The 146th AW has been flying aerial firefighting missions since the 1970s. Today, three Air National Guard and one Air Force Reserve Command C-130 units fly eight MAFFS-equipped planes to assist federal and state forestry and fire protection agencies to battle wild fires.



115 Tactical Airlift Squadron C-130 (USAF photo)



115 Bombardment Squadron B-26s (USAF photo)



(USAAC photo)

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