

123 TACTICAL RECONNAISSANCE GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

359 Fighter Group constituted, 20 Dec 1942
Activated, 15 Jan 1943
Inactivated, 10 Nov 1945
Redesignated 123 Fighter Group Allotted to ANG (KY), 24 May 1946
Extended federal recognition, 20 Sep 1947
Redesignated 123 Fighter Interceptor Group
Redesignated 123 Fighter-Bomber Group
Redesignated 123 Fighter Interceptor Group, 10 Jul 1952
Redesignated 123 Tactical Reconnaissance Group
Inactivated, 31 Mar 1960
Activated, 14 Oct 1962
Inactivated

STATIONS

Westover Field, MA, 15 Jan 1943
Grenier Field, NH, 7 Apr 1943
Republic Field, NY, 11 Jul 1943
Westover Field, MA, 23 Aug-2 Oct 1943
East Wretham, England, Oct 1943-Nov 1945
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 9-10 Nov 1945
Standiford Mun Aprt, KY, 10 Oct 1950
Godman AFB, KY, 20 Oct 1950-15 Nov 1951
Mansion RAF Station, England, 10 Dec 1951-10 Jul 1952

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

P-47

P-51

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

Col Avelin P Tacon Jr, Jan 1943

Col John P Randolph, 12 Nov 1944

LTC Donald A Baccus, 8 Apr 1945

LTC Daniel D McKee, 16 Sep 1945-unkn

Col Philip P Ardery, 10 Oct 1950

LTC William J Payne, 26 Oct 1950

LTC Chesley G Peterson, 20 Apr 1951

LTC Delynn E Anderson, 4 Aug 1951-Jul 1952

Cpt Jean W. Constant, 1952-1953

Maj Jack H. Owen, 1953

LTC Roy Osborne, 1953-1954

LTC Lee J. Merkel, 1954-1956

LTC Vern M. Yahne, 1956-1960

Col E. F. KinnXXXX, Jr., 1966-1968

LTC Lawrence A. Quebbeman, 1966-1968

LTC James H. McClure, 1969-1973

Col Carl D. Black, 1973-1974

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

Germany, 11 Sep 1944

EMBLEM



Per chevron, azure and or; in base a star argent over a hurt, between a bar voided per roundle azure; three rays issuing from the hurt to three winged plates argent, over three billets or, in chief; over all a chevron, per chevron, of the last and gules; the shield edged in chief or. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The group insignia was designed during Dec 1943 in a joint effort between the Group Intelligence Officers and Flight Lt Lyne who was the 359th's RAF liaison officer. The unicorn is the symbol of strength and virtue and the Latin phrase CUM LEONE means with lions, signifying the groups association with the RAF. At the top are three white stars with three five and nine points placed on a midnight blue background. Finally, the red on the escutcheon represents the blood of courage and is severed by a gold band of honor. (Approved, 20 Dec 1951)

MOTTO

FORTES FORTUNA JUVAT—Fortune Favors the Bold

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Apparently not manned until Mar 1943. Moved to England in Oct 1943 and became part of Eighth AF. Entered combat in mid-Dec, after some of the pilots had already flown combat missions with another fighter group. Began operations with P-47's; converted to P-51's in Apr 1944. In combat, Dec 1943-May 1945, flew escort, patrol, strafing, dive-bombing, and weather-reconnaissance missions. At first, engaged primarily in escort activities to cover bombers that attacked airfields in France. Expanded area of operations in May 1944 to provide escort for bombers that struck rail centers in Germany and oil targets in Poland.

Supported the invasion of Normandy (Jun 1944), patrolling the English Channel, escorting bombardment formations to the French coast, and dive-bombing and strafing bridges, locomotives, and rail lines near the battle area. During the period Jul 1944-Feb 1945, engaged chiefly in escorting bombers to oil refineries, marshalling yards, and other targets in such cities as Ludwigshafen, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Berlin, Merseburg, and Brux. Received a DUC for operations over Germany on 9 Sep 1944 when the group protected a formation of heavy bombers against large numbers of enemy fighters. In addition to its escort duties, the group supported cam-

paings in France during Jul and Aug 1944, bombed enemy positions to support the airborne invasion of Holland in Sep, and participated in the Battle of the Bulge (Dec 1944-Jan 1945).

Flew missions to support the assault across the Rhine in Mar 1945, and escorted medium bombers that attacked various communications targets, Feb-Apr 1945. Returned to the US in Nov 1945. The 359th Fighter Group and its squadrons departed from South Hampton, England on Nov. 4 aboard the Queen Mary and arrived at the New York Port of Embarkation Nov. 9, 1945. The next day at Camp Kilmer, N.J. the units were inactivated and transferred to control of the War Department. Concurrent with the inactivation the 368th, 369th and 370th Fighter Squadrons were relieved from assignment to the 359th Fighter Group.

First mission: 13 Dec 1943

Last mission: 20 Apr 1945

Total missions: 346

Aircraft missing in action: 106

Enemy aircraft claims: 253 air; 98 ground

The 359th Fighter Group and the 368th Fighter Squadron were redesignated as the 123d Fighter Group and the 165th Fighter Squadron and allotted to the National Guard, effective May 24, 1946.

Having been allotted the colors and battle credits of their predecessors, the 123d (later to become the 123d Wing) and the 165th Squadron are entitled to display these battle honors from World War II, and the men and women assigned to these units of the Kentucky Air National Guard to wear the ribbon of the Presidential Unit Citation.

Assigned to Tactical Air Command. Trained with F-51's until late in 1951. Converted to F-84's in Nov and moved to England to become part of United States Air Forces in Europe. Transferred to the US without personnel and equipment, relieved from active duty, returned to control of ANG (KY).

Ordered into active service, 10 Oct 1950

Extended federal recognition on 20 Sep 1947.

Ordered into active service on 10 Oct 1950. Redesignated 123d Fighter-Bomber Group. Assigned to Tactical Air Command. Trained with F-51's until late in 1951.

Converted to F-84's in Nov and moved to England to become part of United States Air Forces in Europe. Transferred to the US without personnel and equipment, relieved from active duty, returned to control of ANG (Ky), and redesignated 123d Fighter-Interceptor Group, on 10 Jul 1952.

Group was called to active Federal service with the wing on 26 Jan 1968. It was inactivated in

Jul. It was inactivated in July until the release of all KYANG units, 9 Jun 1969.

The story of the Kentucky Air National Guard now began in earnest as Lt Col Philip Ardery and his 123d Fighter Group gained federal recognition. As noted earlier, this status was extended to the Kentucky units Feb. 16, 1947. Unfortunately, there was a shortage of funds for federal support and recognition for the 123d Fighter Group was withdrawn temporarily. A special order from the Kentucky Department of Military Affairs on June 30 reassigned Ardery as commander of the 165th Fighter Squadron and inactivated the Fighter Group headquarters.

The big move came on Oct. 10 when the entire 123d Fighter Group, less Detachment C of the 223d Air Service Group, was recalled to federal service, at the direction of the President, Harry S. Truman. They were ordered up for a period of 21 months unless sooner relieved. Col Ardery announced that the 123d was one of four Air Guard units called to active duty as fighter-bomber groups. Air Force officials also noted that the Kentucky units would be consolidated with the West Virginia Air Guardsmen at Godman Field, Ft. Knox, between Oct. 11-21. Even though there was advance notice of the activation, it must have been hectic for all concerned-orders placing the Kentucky Air Guardsmen on active duty as individuals were published Nov. 29.

"We are proud to be among the first Air National Guard units to be called," Ardery said. The announcement from the Air Force said that nationally 5,000-7,500 men were affected by the recall, together with about 250 aircraft, taken on active duty at the same time as the KyANG. Also included in the 123d Fighter Group were the tactical squadrons from Kentucky (the 165th), Charleston, W.Va. (the 167th), and additionally, the 154th Fighter Squadron from Charlotte, N.C., part of the North Carolina Air Guard.

Other units of the group were the 223d Air Service Group (except Detachment C of Ohio), the Utility Flights, and the 165th Weather Station. Their equipment included 25 F-51Ds, four B-26s, two C-47s, and six T-6s. On Oct. 13 the units of Kentucky were ordered to move with existing strength to Godman Field at the earliest practicable date.

On Oct. 19, amid much fanfare and publicity, the mobilized units were mustered at Standiford Field at 7 a.m. to make the short journey to Ft. Knox. They did not start leaving until 10:05 a.m. when support personnel started loading into trucks or their own automobiles. Some planned to commute daily to Godman Field. The Courier-Journal reported that the men were an odd-looking mixture in their uniforms, some in the new Air Force blues, others in woolen Army uniforms, some in cotton khakis, and still more in fatigues. The pilots, of course, left Standiford Field in their F-51s. Before turning toward Godman Field they flew over the center of Louisville and "buzzed" the field at Standiford. Pilots from the Utility Flight took the C-47s to their new destination. One of the newspaper photographs depicted four members of one family, the Cash brothers, who were all leaving for Ft. Knox. An aspect of the story which was not noticed in 1950 was the fact that they had another brother, an unknown country singer named Johnny Cash.

Effective July 1 1955, the units were redesignated once more as the 123d Fighter-Interceptor Wing and Group and the 165th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron.

The 123d Tac Recon Wing was completely reorganized, effective Oct. 15, into a double-deputy structure, which reinstated the 123d Tac Recon Group with a commander, and under him, a deputy commander for each of the areas of operations and materiel. Also created were a 123d Materiel Squadron (combining the Supply and CAM Squadrons) and a 123d Combat Support Squadron (which merged the A&E Squadron and the Transportation Squadron). At the same time the Wing Headquarters, the 165th Tac Recon Squadron and the 123d Tac Hospital were also reorganized, and the total changes reduced the KyANG strength by 185 spaces. The new group commander was Col Eugene F. Kinnaird Jr.

TAC issued orders effective Dec. 10 which effected a major reorganization of the Kentucky Air National Guard, from top to bottom. The 123d Group Headquarters and the Combat Support Squadron were returned to the control of the National Guard Bureau, and were thus inactivated. The Wing Headquarters was changed so that in addition to the traditional positions for commander and vice commander there were now two additional deputy commander positions-one for operations and the other for logistics. A new 123d Combat Support Group was also created in the alterations.

March 31-April 1 1960... The 123d Tactical Reconnaissance Group and the 123d Maintenance and Supply Group were inactivated as of March 31. On April 1 the 123d Armament-Electronics Maintenance Sq was activated and the 123d Field Maintenance Sq was redesignated as the 123d Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Sq. The 123d Transportation Sq and 123d Air Base Group were assigned to Arkansas but located in Louisville.

June 10 1969... Back at Louisville, the Kentucky Air National Guard resumed its regular responsibilities. Prime among all problems was replacement of the personnel lost during and immediately following the recall period. Headquarters, KyANG had established a holding detachment during the call-up and a large number of recruits were sent to basic military training. No field training was held in 1969. The 123d Tac Recon Group, 123d Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Sq and 123d Supply Sq, as well as other recalled units, were reconstituted as Air National Guard units. The 123d Field Maintenance Sq, created at Richards-Gebaur, was inactivated.

Dec. 10 1974 ... A major structural reorganization of the KyANG inactivated the 123d Tac Recon Group at Louisville and changed the wing command structure extensively. The Combat Support Sq became the 123d Combat Support Gp, and the 189th Tac Recon Group at Little Rock AFB was relieved of assignment to the 123d Tac Recon Wing at the same time. The 123d Reconnaissance Technical Sq at Adams Field was released from the Arkansas group and remained assigned to the 123d headquarters at Louisville.

USAF Unit Histories

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Sources

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