

135 AIRLIFT GROUP



MISSION

Provides world-class humanitarian contingency and combat support through all aspects of the tactical airlift mission in response to taskings anywhere in the world. Supports the 175th Wing's mission through service as community leaders and fostering a culture of continuous improvement in all we do. Officers: 5 Enlisted: 13

LINEAGE

135 Air Resupply Group, 1955-1958
Inactive status, 1958-1962
Activated 135 Troop Carrier Group (Medium), 1962
Redesignated 135 Air Commando Group, 1963
Redesignated 135 Special Operations Group, 1968
Redesignated 135 Tactical Air Support Group, 1971
Redesignated 135 Tactical Airlift Group, 1977
Redesignated 135 Airlift Group, 1992
Inactivated, 1996
Activated, 135 Airlift Group, 1999
Inactivated

STATIONS

Warfield ANGB, Middle River, MD

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-130
C-27

COMMANDERS

Maj Stanley Souders, 1955
Maj Victor F. Kilkowski, 1956
Col Richard T. Lynch, 1957
Col Robert D. Cardwell Jr., 1977
Col Vernon A. Sevier, 1989
Col David A. Beasley, 1993
Col David W. Arnett II
Col. Thomas Hans
COL Vernon A. Sevier

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award
1989
1992
1995

EMBLEM



Celeste, a base wavy Azure fimbriated Gules, overall a pegasus volant forcene Argent, in chief a stylized flight symbol fesswise of the like, all within a diminished bordure Or. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "135 AIRLIFT GROUP" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the

sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The divided shield denotes the mission of the Group. The red fimbriation symbolizes the unit's personnel willing to sacrifice for the mission. The pegasus alludes to the unit's mobility and swiftness. The flight symbol signifies the aircraft used by the Group.

Designed by Lt Wes Derr and approved by the Air Force for the 135 Tactical Airlift Group in 1979. Redesignated for the 135 Airlift Group in 1992. Design and description revised in 1999.



The two blues behind the steed represent the durability of the unit's mission with the resolve to be ready in times of emergency and are bound together by a single red stripe symbolizing the lifeblood and willingness sacrifice. The gold border around the shield speaks of value integrity, and honor. When the 135 AG was reactivated in 1999, the patch was slightly modified, with the charging Pegasus now rampant, and the wings white instead of gold.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The organization of the 135 differed from the organization of the 104th. The 104th essentially stood alone as a squadron with attached support units. Many years later, the 175th Tactical Fighter Group was formed to provide the 104th with a Headquarters element. The 135 was set up from the start as a standalone Group with assigned subordinate squadrons. The Group operated completely independently of any other organization only reporting to the Guard Bureau. The 104th and the 135 operated independently of each other, except for the coordination of the state headquarters element formed later in the decade. The unit consisted of the 135 Air Resupply Squadron (ARS), commanded by Maj. Victor Kilkowski and the 135 Airborne Materiel Assembly Squadron (AMAS), commanded by Lt. Col. John Rose. The 135 AMAS was the forerunner of today's Aerial Port.

Following the death of 135 Group Commander Sam Souders, in a 1956 Albatross accident, Maj. Victor Kilkowski was named Group Commander and Maj. Wilford "Wimpy" Davis was selected as 135 Squadron Commander. In Dec. 1957, Lt. Col. Victor Kilkowski was moved into the 104th Fighter Squadron as Squadron Commander and Maj. Dick Lynch assumed command of the 135

Air Resupply Group. Lynch would remain in command of the 135 for the next 20 years.

Sam Souders, the first commander of the 135, was only able to see the initial development of his unit as he and two other crew members were killed in the crash of their Albatross into the Chesapeake Bay during a water landing attempt. Landing on water under hazy skies and calm water conditions is an extremely hazardous operation and the height above the water is very difficult to judge. This appeared to be the cause of this accident in which the aircraft hit the water at too high a rate of descent. The impact on the water caused the nose gear doors to open and the resulting forces split the aircraft open. Maj. Souders, Capt. Paul Shelton and Arnn. Louis Florey were killed as the plane sank into the waters of the bay. TSgt. Merrick Stecker and Arnn. Robert Szczechowiak, were able to escape the sinking plane through the rear of the fuselage, but despite heroic efforts were unable to pull the front crew out of the craft before it disappeared under the surface of the Chesapeake Bay. T

The 135 was reorganized on October 10, 1958. The 135 ARG was split into two squadrons: the 135 Troop Carrier Squadron and the 135 Air Base Squadron. Maj. Lynch, as the senior commander, assumed the Squadron Commander Position of the 135 TCS, and Lt. Col. Rose remained Commander of the 135 ABS. The Group structure was abolished for the time being. This reorganization created a degree of chaos as many positions were rearranged. At the time there were 67 officers and 429 airmen assigned, but luckily, the unit was still growing so the loss of this headquarters element did not result in a net headcount reduction.

From the start the 135 worked closely with Special Operations Forces. The Green Berets loved the Albatross and the Guard crews that flew them. It was much more exciting for them to jump out of the smaller Albatrosses or to be inserted by water landing than to jump from the larger transports.

By the end of 1958, many members of the 135 were concerned about the future at Harbor Field, as the lease for the location was to run out in 1960 reverting the airfield to the Dundalk Marine Terminal. There were no facilities for the unit at Martin State and little money available to build more. As has been the recurring theme through the years of the Maryland Air National Guard, the lack of space and runways again threatened the very existence of one of its units.

But in December 1959, General Reckord announced that the 135 would make its new home at Martin Airport the next year. This was a bittersweet announcement as the 135 enjoyed their location at Harbor Field. The accommodations were adequate and the camaraderie superb, but the writing was on the wall as the airport was in its final years. The future at Martin State was unknown for the 135. While the 104th had the premier location and facilities, the 135 was to move to the other side of the runway into older, more spartan quarters. As the fifties ended, the 135 closed out its first five years of existence at Harbor Field with mixed feelings. Although they had suffered two devastating accidents, they had built themselves into a first class outfit with great potential. The next decades were to reveal just how great this unit would become.

In August 1956, the 135 traveled to Savannah, Ga. for their first summer encampment. This was

a familiar spot for the former 104th unit members and required a minimum of planning due to the unit's knowledge of the local area. All three of the new Air Resupply Squadrons on the east coast were also at Savannah for their first camps. They integrated the support functions for efficiency but the ops, maintenance, and intelligence shops operated separately. The 135 underwent its second annual federal inspection by the Air Force, and the group was rated satisfactory.

In July 1957, the 135 attended camp at Stewart AFB in Smyrna, Tenn., with 378 officers and airmen, four SA-16s and five C-46s. During this encampment, the support units (except maintenance) were integrated with the regulars on base.

The unit traveled to Otis AFB, Mass. in 1958 with 441 officers and airmen and ten SA-16s. Although a few sections were integrated, the unit was essentially on its own. The training site was well equipped, a water training area was available, and except for a hurricane alert the last two days, the weather was favorable. The unit felt it had "come of age" at this encampment.

In July 1959, the 135 again camped at Otis with 471 officers and airmen. During this camp the 135 began flying its long range low level missions. Taking off from Otis, the crews would fly out over the Atlantic to Nova Scotia then re-enter the Maine coast at low altitudes (below 500 feet) to stay under the coastal radars and make simulated resupply drops on isolated special operation sites. These 8-10 hour flights were conducted at night often in adverse weather conditions.

The 135 group structure at this time included the 135 Operations Squadron, 135 Materiel Squadron, the 135 Combat Support Squadron, and the 135 USAF Dispensary. The name of the 135 group and the operations squadron changed several times during the decade.

In April 1960, the 135 was physically relocated to Martin State Airport, at 601 Wilson Point Road. Although now sharing the same base with its sister unit, the 135 was positioned on the opposite side of the runway (across the field from its present location).

Several reorganizations took place over this decade but the basic mission of Air Commando and Special Operations stayed the same. In 1958, the former 135 Group had been deactivated with the 135 Troop Carrier Squadron and the 135 Air Base Squadron operating as stand alone units. The group headquarters was incorporated into the squadron headquarters element, and Lt. Col. Dick Lynch moved from his Group Commander position to the new Troop Carrier Squadron Commander position. These changes reflected an effort by higher headquarters to align the unit's structure with those of similar units in the Air Force. In January 1962, the 135 Group element was reactivated as the Troop Carrier Group and Lynch again assumed the Group Commander position. Maj. Warren Schutte was named 135 Troop Carrier Squadron Commander and Lt. Col. John Rose remained commander of the 135 Air Base Squadron. In May, the 135 Tactical Hospital was federally recognized with two officers and two airmen assigned. TSgt. Al Sklar, Sr., was named NCOIC.

Another reorganization of the 135 was undertaken in February 1963. The new Group structure consisted of the 135 Troop Carrier Group (Medium) Headquarters, the 135 Troop Carrier Squadron, the 135 Materiel Squadron, 135 Combat Support Squadron, and the 135 USAF Dispensary. This was mostly a paper shuffle and there was no change in mission or location.

The 135 changed missions twice: from Special Operations to Tactical Air Support and then again to Tactical Airlift. The 175th dropped their "air-to-air" mission in favor of a pure "air-to-ground" one. The state Adjutant General position was filled by a blue-suiter for the first time and the unit broke ground on a new \$16 million complex at Martin State Airport, bringing an end a two-decade fight for adequate facilities.

In June 1971, the 135 changed from Special Ops to Tactical Air Support, from insertion of troops and equipment to the control of fighter aircraft attacking enemy targets. The group was reorganized and renamed the 135 Tactical Air Support Group with the following assigned units: 135 Tactical Air Support Squadron (MASS), 135 Direct Air Support U-10s to California

In April 1975, the 135 TASG converted its support aircraft slot from T-29 to C-131A.

135 Summer Camps

- 1970 Marana Ariz.; Homestead AFB, Fla.: Leadville. Colo.
- 1971 Home Station to convert to O-2s
- 1972 Travis Field. Savannah. Ga
- 1973 Travis Field. Savannah, Ga
- 1974 Travis Field, Savannah, Ga
- 1976 Split summer camp: Travis Field/Home Station - last formal camp

Approximately 130 members of the 135 TAS, Mobile Aerial Port Flight, Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Weapons Systems Security Flight, Combat Support Squadron and the Fire Protection Section of the Civil Engineering Flight participated in SENTRY COWBOY III held at Gulfport, Miss. in March 1985. Sentry Cowboy was a composite force air/land exercise made up of over 2,000 members from 22 military units involving Air Guard, Air Reserve, active duty Air Force, Army Guard, Army Reserve, active duty Army (Ranger and Airborne), and Navy SEAL personnel. The 1351h, acting as co-host for the second week, played an active role in planning, coordinating, and commanding the exercise.

When Hurricane Hugo blasted the Caribbean in mid-September 1989, the 135 TAG, previously scheduled to fly support missions in the region, diverted from its normal training schedule and flew continuous relief missions into the afflicted areas of St. Croix, St. Thomas, Antigua and Puerto Rico. The 135 flew 34 relief missions, ferrying more than 40,000 tons of medical and construction supplies, a water tanker and bottled water plus relief personnel into the area — over 205 passengers and 79.8 tons of relief supplies in all. They also flew 30 stranded American citizens from St. Croix into BWI airport.

When the Loma Prieta earthquake demolished the city of Santa Cruz, the San Francisco Bay

Bridge, and the Cypress Overpass near Oakland on October 17, 1989. the 135 mounted humanitarian relief to earthquake-stricken areas of San Francisco, transporting a variety of household goods donated by St. Clare's Catholic Church in Essex. Their pastor accompanied the flight as a free-lance journalist to report the events to the local community.

The nineties began with an acceleration of the trend for high operations tempo and a high level of real world operational deployments. The Gulf War with Iraq put a tremendous demand on the Air Force and put the Maryland Air National Guard on a war footing. The fighter unit was told to expect an imminent call-up. The 135 Tactical Airlift Group deployed almost a hundred unit members during Oct. 1990 to Rhein- Main Air Base. Germany and prepared for an expected call- up to support the extensive DESERT SHIELD operation. DESERT SHIELD turned into DESERT STORM on Jan. 16, 1991.

Initially inactivated with the merging of fighter and airlift operations under the 175th Wing, the 135 AG was reactivated in 1999, Although the 175th Wing is an ACC asset, the 135 AG is an AMC-gained unit. The unit is structured using a Deputy Commander for Operations (DCO) and a Deputy Commander for Logistics (DCL). The DCO and DCL, along with the Group's subordinate elements report directly to the Group Commander. In addition, several offices report directly to the Group headquarters element.

Maryland Air National Guard marked its 90th year of operation in 2011. The year saw big changes for the unit with the transition from C-130J Hercules to the new C-27J Spartan Joint Cargo Aircraft that will allow the unit to continue airlift transport capabilities around the world The unit saw the completion of the \$7.9 million 12 bay fire station, now centrally located on base to handle any aircraft emergencies. 2011.

Maryland Air Guard Airlift Group Inactivated The Maryland Air National Guard's 175th Wing in Baltimore inactivated its 135 Airlift Group as part of the changes following the wing's loss of the C-27J flying mission. The inactivation ceremony took place on Sept. 27 at the wing's home at Warfield ANG Base. Some of the group's airmen will remain with the wing to be part of the wing's newly forming network warfare squadron, said wing officials. Other members of the now-defunct group have relocated to different bases to continue their careers in other airlift squadrons, they said. The wing was one of the first Air Guard units to transition to the C-27J, but lost the airplanes after the Air Force decided to divest the C-27 fleet as a cost-saving move. 2013

USAF Unit Histories

Created: 19 Feb 2021

Updated:

Sources

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

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

Unit history. *Maryland National Guard, A history of Maryland's Military Forces, 1634-1991.*