

# **252<sup>nd</sup> COMBAT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP**

## **LINEAGE**

Hq. 252nd Communications Group

Hq. 252d Comm. Group (Mobile) Oct 1960

Redesignated 252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Communications Group

Redesignated 252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Information Systems Group, 1 Jul 1985

Redesignated 252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Communications Group

## **STATIONS**

*Spokane International Airport*

*F-37 NIKE site, Four Lakes, Washington, 9 March 1962*

*Paine Field, Everett, WA*

*Camp Murray, Washington*

*Tacoma, WA*

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

*Col Ray Wilson*

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

## **Decorations**

AFOUA

1 Jan 1983-31 Aug 1984

1 Jan 1987-30 Dec 1988

## **EMBLEM**

Light blue, in base a globe per pale or and azure, with grid lines counterchanged surmounted by a radio tower of the third, issuing from its apex four signal flashes saltirewise throughout gules,

all within a diminished border of the second. (Approved, 17 Nov 1959)

### **EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE**

The emblem is symbolic of the group and its communications mission. The ultramarine blue and golden yellow globe reflects the Air Force colors and indicates night and day operations. The light blue background represents air space around the earth and the radio signal tower indicates the group sending its signals in all directions.

### **MOTTO**

### **OPERATIONS**

Combat Communications provides mobile communication capabilities at home during state emergencies and while deployed around the world. A wide range of exciting electronics-based career opportunities exist working with Satellite, Radio and other land mobile communications systems. Also there are multiple opportunities in the network management or administration career fields. There are two units at Camp Murray and two at Fairchild AFB.

MT. ST. HELENS 1980: The entire state was virtually paralyzed by the eruption of Mt St Helens, and the 252 CCGP was called upon to set up a dedicated communications system supporting statewide search and rescue operations. Overcoming monumental logistics problems, personnel and equipment were convoyed and necessary communications set up overnight. For a period of a week and a half, over 200 communicators provided around-the-clock assistance in support of what has been described as one of the worst catastrophes ever to hit the North American continent. The heroic effort of the 252 CCGP contributed immeasurably to saving countless lives.

Units of the 252 CCGP won the AFCC Civic Achievement Award in 1985. This was based largely on time donated to delivery of food for emergency foodnetworks/distribution programs. Food network officials have stated, "Without the assistance received from the Air National Guard, the emergency food program would cease to exist." Group personnel have also acquired surplus telephone company and Western Union teletype machines and through voluntary effort and at personal expense, rehabilitated them and provided them to the deaf. Over thirty teletypes have been provided. The Group has provided frequent and diversified support during state emergencies. Relief and rescue have been provided during flooding.

Wiesbaden, Germany. Despite the fact it has become unfashionable to use the phrase "Total Force Policy," I would like, for nostalgia's sake, to toss it up one more time. The phrase once highlighted special working relationships in the U.S. Air Force, both military and civilian. It spoke to ideas of cooperation and teamwork in pursuit of a single goal - defense. The concept remains; the name has changed. But to this day I am struck by the aptness of the phrase. Simple, yet meaningful. Enter the Air National Guard's 252nd Combat Communications Group. When they arrived, they were taking advantage of an opportunity to gain experience and knowledge from an active unit. With only two weeks allotted, there are probably few choices better than placing Guard members in real-world positions. It seemed natural to see them as "trainees" and us as "trainers," it wasn't long before it was difficult to determine who was training whom. Both were benefiting, And National Guard troops were taking more than an academic interest in daily

operation frequently, much to the surprise of members of the 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Communications Group. "Over the years, thirty 2-1/2 ton trucks have ended up in the salvage yard here as excess vehicles," said Sgt. Kristofer Nicklaus, vehicle maintenance specialist for the 1st, "The Air Force recently decided to bring 21 back into service," With an all-too-temporary five-person manning increase from the 252nd, it was thought to be the "perfect" time to take on the task. Attacking like a swarm of ants, 1st and 252nd specialists ripped out and pounded back into shape everything from engine housings and wheel cylinders to transmissions and alternators. "We have only four mechanics with more than 460 vehicles to take care of," Nicklaus said. "Without the assistance of the Guard, we would not have been able to get those trucks back in service, let alone in a timely fashion. "In many areas," he said, "Guard mechanics are more knowledgeable. Many are mechanics in their civilian jobs. They taught us a lot while they were here!" Those words echoed throughout the 1st wherever Guardsmen, were "lending a hand," From complete administrative file overhauls to updating outdated publication sets, the Guard made its presence known not only through official activities, but those considered slightly unofficial Self-help projects enhance working atmosphere and living conditions, allowing members, during both on- and off-duty time, to shape their environment in a personal yet practical manner, It's somewhat difficult to fathom why individuals not permanently assigned would be interested in helping. But that is precisely what two Guard members did. Tapping civilian skills, Tech, Sgts, Orian Buchholz and Vic Plaza worked on benches and the "cornerstone" of the power production maintenance section's breakroom a large wood-carved unit "1." "We were fortunate to have a person like Sergeant Buchholz, who is a carpenter in his civilian job," said Master Sgt, Eddie Gibson Jr., section NCOIC. And yet more tales of teamwork, Gibson related an instance where Airman 1st Class Robert DeWitt braved inclement weather, with veterans of the 1st, to help set up, on short notice, a generator for a remote weather station. For both units, it seemed a satisfying experience. And, as Tech. Sgt, Debra Hanshew said before leaving. "The memories of our days together will remain for years."

Members of the Washington air National Guard 252nd Combat Communication Group spent April 1 through April 4 practicing emergency response procedures During the exercise Soundshake 1995, units of the 252<sup>nd</sup> installed and operated satellite communications and microwave Network Systems linking the emergency management division's Olympia emergency coordination Center and the emergency operations center in several Washington counties with a link to the civilian communication network in Spokane Washington. The 252nd like other National Guard units is charged with dual responsibilities its federal mission is to support and augment active-duty forces in the event of war; the state mission is to at the request of the governor assist civilian authorities during local emergencies. Whether performing its federal or state mission the focus and responsibility of the 252<sup>nd</sup> remains the same restoring communication linkages and providing other support services as needed including food services and medical assistance. Long before January's devastating earthquake struck Kobe Japan, the 252nd Combat Communication Group's leaders were aware of the possibility of an earthquake hitting Washington. As possible scenarios associated with earthquakes were researched, the group leaders recognized that in the event of worldwide destruction, communication lines would be inoperable as seen in the critical hours and days before the Kobe earthquake. Loss of communications with the affected area severely hampers relief efforts. Armed with the knowledge of the Puget Sound earthquake potential, members of the 252nd set out to construct and implement a plan to restore communication links in the case of a natural disaster or other

emergency. April's exercise marked the start up of the 252<sup>nd</sup> emergency response plan. Members of the group built a link between military communication lines in Western Washington to civilian lines on the east side of the state. The result was disaster relief authorities in eastern Washington could communicate directly with officials in affected areas to efficiently formulate emergency services. Soundshake 1995 allowed the 252<sup>nd</sup> to validate their emergency response plan and to see if it really works According to Col. Stephen Peterson commander of the 252<sup>nd</sup> "the exercise sharpened the 252<sup>nd</sup> Combat Communication Group skills in providing emergency communications in case of a state disaster. Our mission is to extend the information superhighway to our customers whether the customer be deployed as a war fighter or emergency response manager.

Korat Thailand customer service is what counts for the men and women who handle all official radio satellite and telephone communications to the military exercise Cobra Gold 95. When a troop picks up the phone to make a call or send a fax they expected it to work said LTC William Canavan commander of Washington Air National Guard combat communications in Thailand. Canavan also commands the 143<sup>rd</sup> Combat Communication Group at Boeing Field. Military communicators are riding the wave of computer-chip technology and all enabling them to reach around the globe. The size and scope of message traffic is staggering during the exercise due to the advent of digital and satellite communications. In one three-hour block we processed more than 12,000 phone calls said Canavan. More than 26,000 Thai and US military troops participated in the exercise designed to bolster Thai defense capability. The US contingent numbers more than 17,000 service members representing all branches of the active military and reserve forces according to chief Master Sgt. Lawrence D. Taylor, headquarters Pacific Air Forces. The business of managing huge electronic communications networks during the exercise is a joint effort which relied heavily on people and equipment from all services active and reserve. We work with air National Guard a lot. Much of the equipment used here is theirs. Exercises like Cobra Gold gives us a chance to use our equipment in a joint combined military scenario both active and guard get pointers from each other and we work together like this. The equipment, location, and missions of the military communicators in Thailand for Cobra Gold are as varied as the people supporting them. Scattered in various locations throughout this hot humid Southeast Asian country known for its friendly people and spicy cuisine, 450 military communicators keep the official network up and alive. Some work in steamy remote villages linking civil affairs medical teams with higher headquarters via radio and portable satellite devices. Other communicators can be found near the exercise center. Other communicators can be found exercise center; people like technical Sgt. Rob Womack who is an electrical maintenance technician with the Washington air National Guard's 242 combat communication group. He keeps equipment running that routes all of the official message traffic in the nerve center best described as a switch linking customers to an intended destination to digital and analog signals. Advanced electronic technologies such as fiber optics pulse code signals and satellites all help get messages to and from exercises in Thailand. Traffic-wise it's busy, repairs slow and maintenance is steady, said Womack a resident of Spokane Washington. We've learned good maintenance keeps us out of the repair business he said. For Staff Sgt. Gregory P. Denton and the 17 member crew of the US Space Command at Colorado Springs Colorado it was business as usual setting satellite links for weather forecasting. Denton and fellow space team member staff Sgt. Neal F. Payne used their expertise to assist in cutting edge medical imaging exercise. Thanks to these gentlemen from Space Command we're able to send still images back

to Tripler Army hospital in Hawaii said Capt. Jeff Gaylord, I Corps surgeon's office. This emergency technology is known as telemedicine. In the future said Gaylord, medical personnel in remote sites will be able to use this technology to perform consultations without having to resort to costly and time-consuming medical evacuations. Once developed, the system will save lives and money.

Nearly 300 members of the 252nd Combat Communications Group on Camp Murray participated in the largest peacetime signal exercise of its kind in the world. The July exercise, Grecian Firebolt (GF) '99, was a joint service communications exercise involving both active duty and reserve components. The role of the 252nd Combat Communications Group (CCGP) was to support the deployment of a combat-ready theater signal force, installing, operating and maintaining communications-computer equipment in support of U.S. ground and air forces participating in the exercise. During GF '99, communication and signal units deployed to 21 sites throughout the world, including Korea, Puerto Rico, and 14 states within the continental United States. Approximately 2,000 soldiers, airmen and civilians participated in the exercise. The participants included the Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, Army Reserve, and the Army and Air National Guard. GF '99 personnel handled large volumes of voice, data and video traffic. A wide variety of communications equipment was used including tactical and long-haul satellites, computers, video teleconferencing, mail servers, routers and network equipment, tactical telephones, wideband, and HF and FM radio communication services. The exercise was designed connect different types of communications equipment ensuring that all participants would be familiar with the procedures required for successful use. One of GF's primary hubs were at North Fort Lewis, where a battle simulation center acted as a gateway to the Defense Information Infrastructure for units in Hawaii, California, Oregon, Virginia and Washington. The 252nd CCGP was located with the U.S. Army 29th Signal Battalion and the 142nd Signal Brigade, providing long-haul satellite communications. Approximately 25 members from the 143rd Combat Communications Squadron (CBCS), Seattle; 242nd CBCS, Spokane; 256th CBCS, Cheney, and 262nd CBCS, Bellingham, together with 10 members from the 252nd CCGP assisted in installing and operating that communications site. Over 50 people from the 262nd CBCS deployed to Ft. Hunter-Liggett, Calif., to support the 422nd Signal Battalion, Army National Guard, in Nev. The 111th Air Support Operations Squadron Center on Camp Murray assisted the 244th CBCS from Portland, Ore., with wide-band equipment and personnel. The 244th's mission was to provide voice and data communication services to their admin-logistic operation center sites. From an Air Guard perspective, GF '99 was an opportunity to venture into new-areas of communications opportunities. Col. William Canavan, deputy commander of the 252nd CCGP, said he considered it an outstanding success overall. "It challenged us more and stretched us further than ever before." Lt. Col. Gary Phillips, commander of the 262 CBCS, echoed similar sentiments regarding the opportunity to train with the 422nd Signal Battalion. He lauded the spirit of cooperation between the two units. In addition, despite the extreme heat, he said he found working in a different field environment a benefit, lending a high level of realism to the operation. Along with the training opportunity, the exercise reflected part of the Army's new Total Force integration, which allows reserve units to train directly with their active-duty counterparts, something akin to the Air Force's Total Force Concept, which has been in place since Desert Storm. As former Army signal command member and managing director of Grecian Firebolt, Lt. Col. Mike Thompson put it: "What we did in Grecian Firebolt was to peel away the mystery of how the reserve and active forces will fight and win on the information battlefield of

the next century."

TEAM SPIRIT 1986 - 1989

SENTRY VIGILANCE 1986-1989

BRIM FROST (NORAD EXERCISE (25TH AIR DIVISION MAFB)) 1986 - 1987

RED FLAG 1986 - 1988

COMBAT CHALLENGE 1987 - 1989

BRAVE SHIELD 1988

EAGLE STRIKE ONE 1990

BOLD VENTURE - 1988

DESERT SHIELD & DESERT STORM 1991

GALLANT EAGLE 1988

HEALTHY MEASURE 1991

BALIKATAN 1986

---

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 7 Sep 2010

Updated:

Sources