

273rd CYBERSPACE OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

273rd Engineering Installation Squadron
Redesignated 273rd Information Operations Squadron
Redesignated 273rd Cyberspace Operations Squadron

STATIONS

Beaumont, TX
San Antonio, TX

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The Texas Air National Guard's 273rd Engineering Installation Squadron was recently redesignated as the 273rd Information Operations Squadron to cement its role as part of USAF's new cyber operations arm led by 24th Air Force at Lackland AFB, Tex. "We went from a long history as an engineering installation squadron to the Air Force's premier ANG IO unit tasked with providing analysis, reporting, expertise, and capability to planners and decision-makers," said Lt. Col. Marie Elliott, who heads the unit. It is teamed at Lackland with the active duty 688th Information Operations Wing. "We can't succeed in this domain without their skilled workforce and teamwork," said Col. Robert Skinner, 688th IOW boss.

Senior leaders from the Texas Air National Guard were invited to provide U.S. Rep. Will Hurd, Texas, an update on the 273rd Information Operations Squadron while visiting Washington on March 2.

The 273rd Information Operations Squadron is a subordinate unit of the 149th Fighter Wing, headquartered at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, and has been selected to become an Air National Guard Cyber Protection Team, which will expand the organization's mission and designate it as a cyber operations squadron.

Last year, Hurd joined U.S. Reps. Joaquin Castro, Henry Cuellar, and Lamar Smith, who all represent portions of San Antonio, in penning a letter to the National Guard Bureau and the Air National Guard in support of the 273rd IOS' selection.

"The TXANG is a logical and cost-effective means to defend America in the cyber realm," according to the letter. "The TXANG is unique in its diverse ability to perform cyber operations in State Active Duty, Title 32 and Title 10 status. The relationship with 24th Air Force and the TXANG has already been established by a signed agreement, which provides Texas Guard members secure and non-secure positions for current and further growth requirements..."

Brig. Gen. Dawn M. Ferrell, Texas' deputy adjutant general for air, and Brig. Gen. David M. McMinn, commander of the Texas Air National Guard, were joined by Col. Kurt Leslie and

Command Chief Master Sgt. George B. Longoria, both representing the 149th Fighter Wing.

"The activation of the cyber protection team will take Texas cyber to the next level," Ferrell said. "We're proud of what we've accomplished and the cyber mission we perform, but stand ready to give even more. As we say in Texas, "we're open for business."

A big part of the Texas Air National Guard's success has to do with the organization's ability to retain and recruit cyber talent.

"We've been very successful at retaining this critical talent for the Air Force – bringing in those transitioning from the active duty to stay in the cyber fight," McMinn said. "We have maximum cyber capacity for our current cyber mission and have to regularly turn away fully-qualified cyber warriors seeking to continue their service (in the guard)."

A planning team from the Air National Guard's Readiness Center, headquartered at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, recently completed a site activation visit to determine the unit's suitability to accept the new mission requirements as a cyber operations squadron.

"They looked at several areas to include: manpower, communications, Total Force Initiatives and logistics," said Maj. Kristy Leasman, the squadron's commander. "Our ability to recruit is exceptional and our communications support is ideal, with our active duty relationships."

The unit is working toward hitting all of the benchmarks before Fiscal Year 2017.

"Going forward, we are refining our strategy to maintain our Total Force relationships, to continue our requirements through an updated agreement – a bigger agreement plan – and will implement new logistics processes for mobility," Leasman said. "We are on a very fast track to meet all initial operation capability requirements. We expect to have them completed well before the FY17 target."

Leasman is very proud of the squadron she leads and their role within the Department of Defense. "We're leading-edge cyber security professionals for the Air Force and DOD," she said. "We're extremely well-suited, a natural fit, to accept this mission." While the Air Guard cyber unit is located near the 23rd Congressional District of Texas, their mission is an area of personal and professional interest for Hurd, who is a former CIA officer and civilian cyber security professional. "When both the public and private sectors take notice of a growing industry in a city, you know something real is happening," Hurd said. A graduate of Texas A&M University, Hurd also chairs the Information Technology Subcommittee of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

"It was a pleasure to work with the Air National Guard to bring the 273rd Cyber Operations Squadron to San Antonio," Hurd said. "I'm excited about the impact they will have on education opportunities and job growth in my hometown." The future looks bright for Texas Airmen to continue defending America in the cyber realm. "Texas – San Antonio, in particular – is perfectly situated to meet the long-term needs of any cyberspace mission," Ferrell said. "We appreciate our congressional delegation's strong support of the Texas Air National Guard."

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.