

373rd STRATEGIC MISSILE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

373 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), constituted, 28 Jan 1942
Activated, 15 Apr 1942
Inactivated, 7 Jan 1946
Redesignated 373 Reconnaissance Squadron, Very Long Range, Weather, 16 Sept 1947
Activated, 15 Oct 1947
Inactivated, 21 Feb 1951
Redesignated 373 Bombardment Squadron, Medium, 4 Oct 1951
Activated, 10 Oct 1951
Discontinued and inactivated, 25 Jun 1961
Redesignated 373 Strategic Missile Squadron and activated, 29 Nov 1961
Organized, 1 Apr 1962
Inactivated, 18 Aug 1987

STATIONS

Gowen Field, ID, 15 Apr 1942
Davis-Monthan Field, AZ, 20 Jun 1942
Alamogordo, NM, 23 Jul 1942
Davis-Monthan Field, AZ, 28 Aug 1942
Wendover Field, UT, 1 Oct 1942
Pueblo AAB, CO, 30 Nov 1942-2 Jan 1943
Yangkai, China, 20 Mar 1943
Luliang, China, 14 Sep 1944
Yontan, Okinawa, 21 Jul-19 Dec 1945

Vancouver, WA, 4-7 Jan 1946
Kindley Field, Bermuda, 15 Oct 1947-21 Feb 1951
Forbes AFB, KS, 10 Oct 1951
Hunter AFB, GA, 17 Apr 1952
Plattsburgh AFB, NY, 15 Jul 1959-25 Jun 1961
Little Rock AFB, AR, 1 Apr 1962

ASSIGNMENTS

308 Bombardment Group, 15 Apr 1942
494 Bombardment Group, 21 Jul 1945
11th Bombardment Group, 11 Oct 1945-7 Jan 1946
8 Weather (later 2108 Air Weather) Group, 15 Oct 1947-21 Feb 1951
308 Bombardment Group, 10 Oct 1951
308 Bombardment Wing, 16 Jun 1952-25 Jun 1961
Strategic Air Command, 29 Nov 1961
308 Strategic Missile Wing, 1 Apr 1962

ATTACHMENTS

21 Air Division, 10 Oct 1951-17 Apr 1952

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-18, 1942
B-24, 1942-1945
TB-17, 1947-1948
B/RB/WB-29, 1947-1951
B-29, 1951-1953
B-47, 1954-1959
LGM-25C Titan II, 1963

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Robert G. David, 15 Oct 1947
Maj John N. Hawley, 8 Jan 1948
Lt Col Clyde A. Ray, 17 Aug 1948
Lt Col Stanley I. Hand, 24 Apr 1950
Lt Col Arnold E. Hurst, Jr.

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

India-Burma
Air Offensive, Japan
China Defensive
New Guinea

Western Pacific
China Offensive
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

East and South China Seas, Straits of Formosa, and Gulf of Tonkin, 24 May 1944-28 Apr 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

1 Nov 1956-1 Apr 1957

EMBLEM



373 Bombardment Squadron, Medium emblem: A brown bear, front view, wearing brown flight boots lined in yellow and a green parachute harness with white buckles and carrying a black bomb in his right paw, a blue aerial bomb in his left, and cartridge-belt over his right shoulder; all on a white disc. (Approved, 19 May 1953)

373 Strategic Missile Squadron emblem: On a blue disc edged white, a vertical gray missile between four red lightning flashes, two and two, all emerging from a cloud (thunderhead) issuing from base and outlined blue beneath an arc of nine stars, four yellow, one white, four yellow, the white star larger than the equally-sized yellow stars. Motto: Below the disc on a yellow scroll, the motto CUSTODES PACIS (Guardians of the Peace) in blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The squadron's mission is indicated by the missile emerging from a cloud, the lightning flashes signifying constant readiness and instantaneous striking power, and the nine stars referring to the nine missile complexes of the squadron. (Approved, 2 July 1963)

MOTTO

CUSTODES PACIS--Guardians of the Peace

OPERATIONS

Combat in CBI and Western Pacific, 4 May 1943-3 Jun 1945 and 21 Jul-14 Aug 1945.

The 373 BS, transferred to the 494th near the end of the war (July 21, 1945) from the 308th BG. There were 17 crews of 8 men trained in LAB (low altitude bombing). They had 12 planes, painted black with H2X radar. When they flew weather recon, they normally carried six 1,000 pound bombs to drop on shipping. Besides weather recon, they laid mines and flew into the eye of a typhoon as well as dropped leaflet at night in Japan after the first Bomb.

Not manned, 15 Jul 1959-25 Jun 1961.

The first Titan II missile was delivered to Little Rock Air Force Base by a C-133 on February 6, 1963. This missile was installed at site number four (373-4) at Albion, northwest of Searcy, on February 28, 1963. The missile in silo 373-4 was activated on May 16, by the Site Activation Task Force and placed under the authority of 308th SMW personnel

The Albion site (373-4), the first of the 308th SMW's sites to be activated, was the scene of a tragic disaster on August 9. Originally planned as a Titan I silo, the site was being modified to Titan II standard by a work crew of fifty-five. Its missile, a Titan II, had been removed for the reconstruction. At 1:30 p.m., a high pressure hydraulic line ruptured after being pierced by a welder's torch, spraying its flammable contents throughout the work area. The torch then ignited the fluid, with the resulting fire damaging the controls to the silo's 750 ton blast door and cut off power to the lights. With the door failing to open, smoke built up in the silo and began suffocating the workmen. The power outage prevented the use of the silo's elevators. As a result, only two of the fifty-five workmen managed to escape from the underground control room. In the darkened pandemonium the remaining workmen struggled to escape, their lungs straining for every breath. Gathered around the escape ladder that led from their position on Level 2 to the surface, the workers fought to escape, but the ladder was only built to handle one man at a time - and two lifeless bodies already blocked the exit. Smoke inhalation claimed the lives of these 53 workmen, who were later found huddled together near the base of the ladder.

Launch Complex 373-8 was taken off alert on May 5, 1987 with the following entry: This concludes the last twenty-four hour alert in Titan II history. For the last twenty-four years, the men and women of the 308th, 381st and 390th Strategic Missile Wings had endured the elements and boredom to stand as the guardians of peace for the free World.

Nine silos under the 373 SMS

Mt. Vernon (373-1)

Rosebud (373-2)

Heber Springs (373-3)

Albion (373-4)

Morris (373-5)

Antioch (373-6)
Velvet Ridge (373-7)
Judsonia (373-8)
Hamlet (373-9)



USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

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Unit history. Little Rock AFB, AR. *Heartland, The History of Little Rock AFB*. Timothy Burford and Stephanie Burford. WireStorm Publishing. Las Vegas, NV. 2002.