

## 601<sup>st</sup> TACTICAL CONTROL WING



### **MISSION**

The Wing's mission is to provide radar surveillance and to direct NATO aircraft to their targets. Wing commander is Brig Gen David E. Rippetoe, Jr

To accomplish its mission, the Wing uses a highly mobile tactical air control system to guide aircraft in support of ground forces and a network of stationary radar sites that maintain a 24-hour watch on the skies over the Iron Curtain.

The 407 tactical air control system is used for air defense and to guide US and other NATO aircraft in support of friendly ground forces. It consists of 3 heavy radar units (601st, 602nd and 603rd TCS) 6 light radar units (611th, 612th, 621st, 622nd, 631st, 632nd TCF) a Direct Air Support System

The DASS consists of two direct air support centers, each collocated with an Army corps (601st DASC, 602nd DASC). Subordinate tactical air control parties (TACP) are located with Army combat battalions, brigades and divisions throughout West Germany.

The 412 air weapons control system constantly surveys the skies over the Iron Curtain. It consists of 6 fixed radar sites (two of them are operated by USAFE units; four are operated by German Air Force units)

All six 412L sites are under NATO operational control.

### **LINEAGE**

601<sup>st</sup> Tactical Control Wing

## **STATIONS**

Sembach AB, Germany

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

## **EMBLEM**



## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

601st Tactical Control Wing was organized at Sembach Air Base on 1 July 1968. The new wing assumed the missions of the 601st TCG and 603rd Air Base Wing which were discontinued and returned to the control of the Department of the Air Force. The latter unit had primarily been a housekeeping and support organization charged with the operation and maintenance of Sembach AB and five nearby former missile and missile support sites (MACE sites of the former 38th TMW). The new wing, under the command of Col Jack R. Best, was organized in the dual deputy concept with a deputy commander for operations and a deputy commander for maintenance.

For the most part, the wing continued to function as normal going into 1970. But, on 15 February, the wing acquired yet another mission with the arrival of three Cessna O-2A aircraft. The wing was notified in early January of its tasking to develop an airborne forward air controller capability. Specific goals assigned to the wing included the development of airborne FAC techniques and training policies and procedures. An airborne FAC meeting was conducted at Seventeenth Air Force on 15 January 1970. It was decided that the 601st TCW would be assigned operational control of FAC aircraft, but that the 26th TRW would be responsible for their maintenance/ground support. As such, for the next three years, all FAC aircraft assigned to the 601st TCW would fly out of Ramstein AB. However, this situation would change once the wing relocated to Wiesbaden in 1973. In any event, on 2 March 1970, Colonel Roy Peterson, 601st TCW Deputy Commander for Operations, made the first operational flight of a wing-controlled O-2A aircraft. The wing's airborne FAC capability was further developed from 20 through 26 May via the employment of an O-2A aircraft in support of the Army at the 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment's Annual Training Tests at the Hohenfels tank gunnery range. This marked the beginning of a new concept of operations for tactical air forces in Europe. Nine days later, the 601st TCW deployed its entire fleet of three O-2A aircraft to Italy in support of Dawn Patrol '70. The operational capabilities of the airborne FACs were displayed to great advantage during both deployments.

On 21 June 1974, the wing's first two OV-10A aircraft arrived at Wiesbaden AB from Hurlburt AFB. The airplane parts had been loaded aboard a LASS (Lighter Aboard Ship) barge at a stateside port and shipped across the ocean on the SS Almeria Lykes to Rotterdam, Netherlands. The barge was then floated off and sent down the Rhine River to the inland water port at Mainz, near Wiesbaden. On 12 July 1974, OV-10A flying operations officially commenced at Wiesbaden AB and three months later, on 10 October 1974, the 20th TASS flew the first OV-10A sortie involved with airborne FAC coverage of an exercise (Certain Pledge).

The wing's first two helicopters arrived on 15 January 1975, and flying operations for this newest addition to the 601st TCW's aircraft inventory commenced on 6 February. Five additional CH-53Cs were received during the last two months of the year. Also, 12 additional OV-10A9 arrived at Wiesbaden in August 1975, followed by 10 more two months later. However, all these events were overshadowed by the fact that, on 8 August 1975, Project Creek Swap was announced wherein the wing was notified it would again have to pack its bags and move back to Sembach. Thus, in January 1976, after a two year stay at Wiesbaden, the wing began its move en masse back to Sembach AB. The first OV-10A aircraft from Wiesbaden landed at Sembach on 7 January 1976, and Col Fleetwood Pride Jr., the 601st TCW commander, landed another the next day to officially mark the wing's return to Sembach. By 31 March 1976, the wing's move back to Sembach was largely completed. During the relocation, approximately 67,236 line items valued at 618,341,174 were moved.

With the exception of the arrival of nine newly assigned OV-10As, which made yet another transoceanic crossing on 22 July 1978, things remained relatively quiet for the aircraft side of the house during 1978 and most of 1979. In one of the several significant events of the latter

year, the 601st TCW sent its first CH-53C helicopter to the Fokker Plant at Speyer for a major Analytical Condition Inspection (ACI). Also, the wing fully implemented the production oriented maintenance organization (POMO) concept on 30 April 1979 whereby the 601st CAMS was inactivated with the simultaneous activations of the 601st Aircraft Generation Squadron (601st AGS) and the 601st Component Repair Squadron (601st CRS). The POMO concept, originally called the tactical aircraft maintenance system (TAMS), was designed to increase sortie generation production rates and increase aircraft readiness rates. For the 601st TCW, which was the third USAFE wing to convert to POMO, it took six months to fully implement the program. Also, the first two wing OV-10As to receive camouflage painting returned to Sembach on 14 August 1979 from Alverca, Portugal, where the work was performed.

In the fall of 1973 the 601st TCW had been formed at Wiesbaden AB. They had broken the Wing into three groups when it moved to Wiesbaden AB. The Tactical Air Control Group was colocated on the AB with the Wing. They were responsible for the 407L and the 412L sites. We had operational and maintenance responsibility.

In November 1975, the wing moved to Sembach AB; the 601st TCS and the 612th TCF and 621st TCF moved to Pruem Air Station.

Det 1 601st TCW comprised US Air Force personnel who worked at the Tactical Air Control Center in Mehlingen, Germany, in the late 1960s.

Det 2 601st TCW comprised US Air Force personnel who worked at the Air Defense Operations Center, 4th ATAF in Kindsbach, Germany, in the late 1960s.

Det 3 601st TCW is stationed in Freising, Germany. With billets at Vimy Kaserne in Freising, the detachment personnel work at the CRC bunker "FRIDOLIN" north of the town. 10 men are assigned to the detachment, 7 officers and 3 non-commissioned officers. Det 3 was formed in 1967 when the German Air Force took over operations of the bunker from the 604th AC & Sq. It's mission is to assist the GAF unit operating the CRC as well as maintain the US-owned 412L Aircraft Warning & Control System.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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