

649 RADAR SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

649 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron activated, Nov 1954
Redesignated 649 Radar Squadron (SAGE), 1 Apr 1959

STATIONS

Roslyn, NY
Bedford AFS, VA, Nov 1954 (2 Dec 1954)

ASSIGNMENTS

Washington Air Defense Sector

COMMANDERS

Maj Howard C. Sharkey, #Mar 1955
Maj James M. Wood, Jr.
Maj Howard K. Grizzle
Maj C. Krupski, #1960

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

FPS-20 On 1 Jul 1958, the squadron became part of the Washington Air Defense Sector. The advent of heavy commercial jet traffic added an additional responsibility on 21 Dec 1959 as a joint use site for the Federal Aviation Agency.

Located atop Apple Orchard Mountain, elevation 4,224 feet, on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the first officers and airmen arrived at the 649th AC&W Squadron, Bedford, Virginia, on 2 December 1954.

Originally composed of three officers and 19 airmen under the command of Captain Richard Solomon, the squadron was under the jurisdiction of the 4710th ADW and the 26th Air Division. Now under the jurisdiction of the 85th Air Division (Defense), the squadron is commanded by Major Howard C. Sharkey and is composed of 14 officers and 150 airmen.

The 649th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron was organized and activated 26 May 1953 at Roslyn, New York. In November 1954, the squadron moved to its present location atop Apple Orchard Mountain, one of the highest peaks on the Blue Ridge Parkway. The two officers and 19 Airmen were charged with developing a radar link for the protection of the Washington, D. C. and Norfolk complexes.

Through a succession of commanders—Majors Howard C. Sharkey, James M. Wood, Jr., and Howard K. Grizzle—the squadron complement increased in number, roads were paved and permanent buildings constructed. In the six months period after May 1958, a new art tower to house the FPS-20 and a transmitter building were constructed. Major Charles A. Krupski took

command in October 1958, and construction was started on a communications received site, and a multi-purpose recreation building to house a snack bar, gymnasium, library, and lounge.

On 1 July 1958, the 649th AC&W Squadron became a part of the Washington Air Defense Sector. The rapid development of a better air defense system, Semi-Automatic Ground Environment, caused the change of the squadron's mission and title on 1 April 1959. Now the 649th RADAR SQUADRON (SAGE). The advent of heavy commercial jet traffic added an additional responsibility on 21 December 1959, as a joint-use site for the Federal Aviation Agency.

Located atop Apple Orchard Mountain, elevation 4,224 feet, on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the first officers and airmen arrived at the 649th AC&W Squadron, Bedford, Virginia, on 2 December 1954. Originally composed of three officers and 19 airmen under the command of Captain Richard Solomon, the squadron was under the jurisdiction of the 4710th ADW and the 26th Air Division. Now under the jurisdiction of the 85th Air Division (Defense), the squadron is commanded by Major Howard C. Sharkey and is composed of 14 officers and 150 airmen.

At the present there is no government housing available for married personnel. The town of Bedford, Virginia, offers ample furnished apartments of 2 and 3 rooms for personnel not having children. For personnel with children, there are a number of 4 room unfurnished apartments. Single airmen living on the base are housed in semipermanent type Quonset huts. The barracks are divided into two bays, each housing from 12 to 16 men. The NCO barracks has two man rooms.

The squadron sports program consists of activities on the base as well as intra-division competition in all sports except football. Off base, Bedford offers personnel of this squadron the facilities of a nine hole golf course located at the Bedford Country Club. Personnel of the squadron are eligible to join the Country Club which has party facilities and features a recently constructed swimming pool.

To supplement the base library, the town library is available to all personnel. It is primarily a recreational library and contains very few professional reference books, but the librarian can and will obtain any book or reference material from the Virginia State Library.

Bedford Air Force Station is located approximately 20 miles from Natural Bridge, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Personnel may avail themselves of the year-round indoor swimming pool maintained at Natural Bridge.

Summer off-duty time is spent by the personnel of this squadron at nearby Bedford County Lake, the many beaches located just a few hours driving time away or in the cities of Lynchburg (50,000), 28 miles to the east, and Roanoke (141,000), 30 miles to the west of the station

649th Radar Sq (SAGE): activated 26 May 53 at Roslyn, NY, assigned to the 26th AD; site redesignated Roslyn AFS, NY
1 Dec 53; transferred to the 4710th Def Wg May 54; moved to Bedford, VA by Dec 54; transferred

to the 85th AD 1 Mar 56; transferred to Washington ADS 1 Sep 58; redesignated from AC&W Sq to 649th Radar Sq (SAGE) 1 Oct 59; transferred to 33rd AD 1 Apr 66; reassigned to the 20th AD 19 Nov 69; re-designated 649 Radar Sq 1 Feb 74; inactivated 30 Jun 75.

The 649th AC&W Squadron achieved beneficial occupancy at this Phase I Mobile Radar site in late 1954. Operational status was achieved in 1956 with the activation of the AN/MPS-8 and AN/MPS-11 radars. By 1958 the AN/MPS-8 had been superseded by a pair of AN/FPS-6 height-finder radars. In 1959 an AN/FPS-20A search radar replaced the AN/MPS-11 set and Bedford joined the SAGE system. In 1960 this site also began performing air traffic control duties for the FAA. In 1963 the search radar was upgraded and redesignated as an AN/FPS-67. The 649th was deactivated in June 1975.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *Washington Air Defense Sector, 1960*. Tiffany Photographers Publishers. 1960

Unit yearbook. *85th Air Division, Defense. 1957*