

650 AERO SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

131 Aero Squadron (Supply) organized Sep 1917
Redesignated 650 Aero Squadron (Supply), Feb 1918
Demobilized, May 1919

STATIONS

Kelly Field, TX
Camp Morrison, VA, Feb 1918
Port of Embarkation, Newport News, VA, Mar 1918
AEF Mar 1918
Mitchel Field, NY,

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

September 5, 1917, a long train load of recruits from Ft. George Wright, WA arrived at Kelly Field, San Antonio. Texas. A motley crowd they were, dressed in all sorts of costume from

picturesque cowboy garb to brand new olive drab. Amid the heat and dust of a burning Texas day they were called out, alphabetically until 93 were left, These were taken down to the tents among the weeds in charge of acting sergeants, Perkins and King, two members of the 84th Aero Squadron who were awaiting their commissions. September 6, these recruits were organized as the 131st Aero Squadron, with C. M. Smith, L.C. Terry, F. J. Sommerhauser and H.A. Thompson as sergeant major, first sergeant, supply sergeant and mess sergeant respectively.

In a few days enough more recruits from Forts McDowell, and Serevens were assigned to bring the squadron to its authorized strength, enough, more noncoms were chosen to make the necessary duty sergeants and corporals, and then began the daily routine of learning the rudiments of being a soldier. The squadron remained under the direction of Perkins and King with 1st Lieut Lyman S. Byrd in command of it and three other squadron until September 26, 1918, when 1st Lieut. F H. Hartwig was assigned in direct command September 27, he led the, squadron in review before Col. W. D. Chitty the commanding, officer of Kelly Field.

During the latter part of September and all through the month of October the squadron passed through many changes in its personnel. A total of 153 men were transferred to other squadrons who were scheduled to leave the field, and enough others transferred in to bring the strength to a little over 100 men. Lieut. Hartwig was relieved of command by 1st Lieut. J. T. Potter and he in turn by 1st Lieut. J. W. Davis. November brought still more changes in personnel, and a new commanding officer in the person of 1st Lieut. H. L. French. Nov. 26, the strength of the organization was 66 men and on that date it designated as Transportation Squadron for the Supply, Department of the Field.

Until this time, the squadron had spent the time in drill and organization, with a non-commissioned officers school in progress and a goodly percentage of the men also attending the Enlisted mechanics School. Beginning with December 1, 1917, the strength of the squadron gradually increased to 228 men, as more chauffeurs were transferred in, practically the entire strength was engaged in transportation work. December 27, 1917, the squadron was relieved of its transportation duties, 133 men were transferred out to form a new squadron and the remainder under the command of 1st Lieut. F. W. Gilland, moved into barracks.

Officially designated as a supply squadron, steps were immediately taken to complete the organization and authorized personnel. January 16, 1918, 96 recruits were assigned to the squadron, and two days later, it was moved to the Second Training Brigade camp and placed under quarantine, with orders to complete all preparations for departure without delay. January 27, with 150 men, a medical detachment of 4 men, and with 1st Lieut. F. W. Gilland as Commanding Officer, 1st Lieut. W. P. Clyce as Supply Officer and 1st Lieut. B. O. White as Medical Officer, the Squadron entrained for Aviation General Supply, Depot and Concentration Camp, at Morrison, VA arriving at that place February 2. On February 1, the number of the squadron was changed from 131 to 650, under authority of second endorsement of letter from the Chief Signal Officer to the Adjutant General of the Army dated Dec 29, 1917.

The month of February and most of March was spent in a routine of fatigue duty and preparations for overseas service. As often as possible practice hikes with full pack were taken, and every opportunity was used for drill. The final, medical and other inspections were held and on March 29, 1918, the squadron with 1st Lieut Orville P. Adney in command, 1st Lieut Albert Cross as Supply Officer 1st Lieut W. T. Vandament as Medical Officer, 1st Lieut. G. L. Feicher as Dental Officer, and Lieuts. W. P. Glyce, H. D. Davis, J. M. Shackelford and G. T. Vierling, Jr. embarked on the U.S.S. DeKalb, the converted, German liner Prinz Eitel Friedrich, for France.

After a stormy but otherwise uneventful voyage, the squadron arrived at St. Nazaire on April 13, 1918. They debarked the following day and were taken to Cantonment Number 1. April 19, 1918, they entrained for Orly Seine and arrived at American Aviation Acceptance Park at that place, April 21st. It was the second organization to arrive at this field, and but little in the nature of buildings or equipment was found

During the weeks that followed the majority of the men were engaged in construction work. Hangar after hangar, barrack after barrack went up and all the time there was an ever increasing amount of planes and all sorts of equipment arriving. Gradually the men were assimilated by the rapidly growing departments of the field, until practically every man was engaged in some special work. Chauffeurs mechanics, machinists, clerks laborers all of them rapidly adapted themselves to the work at hand.

When the German offensive in July and the Allied counter offensive that immediately followed it, produced an ever increasing and more insistent demand for planes at the front the men of the 650th proved themselves fully equal to the emergency. Holding positions of authority and great responsibility in the various departments of the field they met the test with great credit to themselves and to the uniform, they wore. As a result, there was an almost continuous procession of planes leaving the field during the more critical phases of the fighting, and these planes played an important role in bringing about the final victory. At the time of the signing of the armistice the squadron, numbered 141 men and six officers representing all but six States of the Union. With the slackening up of aerial activities drill was again added to the regular schedule and the men began preparing for the homeward trip.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

Created: 16 Jun 2020

Updated:

Sources

US Army Order of Battle 1919-1941. Steven E. Clay. Combat Studies Institute Press. US Army Combined Arms Center. Fort Leavenworth, KS. Nd.