

779 RADAR SQUADRON (SAGE)



MISSION

LINEAGE

779 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron
Redesignated 779 Radar Squadron (SAGE)

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

MONTANA

P-26/2-26 - Opheim

The 779th AC&W Squadron began operations in 1952 with AN/FPS-3 and AN/FPS-4 radars. An AN/GPS-3 radar operated here between 1957 and 1961. In 1958 and 1959 AN/FPS-6 and AN/FPS-6A radars replaced the AN/FPS-4 height-finder radar. The AN/FPS-3 left service in 1960 and was replaced by an AN/FPS-7C FD radar. In 1961 the site was integrated into the SAGE system. In 1963 the 779th Radar Squadron operated the AN/FPS-7C search radar along with AN/FPS-26A and AN/FPS-90 height-finder radars. The 779th was deactivated in September 1979.

MONTANA Del Bonito/Cut Bank

The 779th AC&W Squadron started operating AN/FPS-3 and AN/FPS-4 radars in April 1952. In 1958 an AN/FPS-20 search radar replaced the AN/FPS-3 at this site. In the following year two AN/FPS-6A height-finder radars superseded the AN/FPS-4. In 1961 this site was integrated into the SAGE system. In 1962 the AN/FPS-20A was further upgraded and redesignated as an AN/FPS-66. This site was removed from service on March 1, 1965.

779th Radar Sq (SAGE): activated 1 Mar 51 at Opheim AFS, MT, assigned to 545th AC&W Gp; transferred to 29th AD 6 Feb 52; transferred to Minot ADS 1 Jan 61; redesignated from AC&W Sq to 779th Radar Sq (SAGE) 15 Jul 61; transferred to Great Falls ADS 25 Jun 63; transferred to 28th AD 1 Apr 66; reassigned to 24th AD 19 Nov 69; inactivated 29 Sep 79.

Opheim AFS, MT

Latitude: 48-51-40 N, Longitude: 106-28-40 W

Call Sign(s): Doll

779 Opheim AFS, MT FPS-3; FPS-4; GPS-3; FPS-7C; FPS-6, FPS-6A/-90; FPS-26A FPS-7C; FPS-26A 1952 01-Jun-79 AN/FPS-7C later became AN/FPS-107. Site has been undergoing demolition, and -- at last report -- is no longer extant except for a few foundations.

History of Opheim AFS, MT

The 779th AC&W Squadron began operations in 1952 with AN/FPS-3 and AN/FPS-4 radars. An AN/GPS-3 radar operated here between 1957 and 1961. In 1958 and 1959 AN/FPS-6 and AN/FPS-6A radars replaced the AN/FPS-4 height-finder radar. The AN/FPS-3 left service in 1960, and was replaced by an AN/FPS-7C search radar. In 1961 the site was integrated into the SAGE system. In 1963 the 779th Radar Squadron operated the AN/FPS-7C search radar along with AN/FPS-26A and AN/FPS-90 height-finder radars. The AN/FPS-90 was damaged by a fire in 1966, but was repaired; it was removed some time in the early 1970s. Opheim AFS ceased operations on 1 June 1979. The 779th Radar Squadron (SAGE) was deactivated in September 1979.

The 779th Radar Squadron originally activated on 23 February 1951. The 779th Radar Station sits on the rolling plains of Northeastern Montana, high up in Valley County, located approximately four miles west of the town of Opheim, or fifty miles north of the intersection of U.S. Highway 2 and Montana Highway 247. The Canadian border is fourteen miles north of the station. Radar equipment began arriving in January 1952 and the installation effort began. On 14 March 1952 the first Search Radar became operational. Radar operations personnel maintained a daily average of 12 operational aircraft tracks during the first month of operation. In September 1953 Radar Maintenance personnel began installing the first Height Finder. This effort was completed in October 1953 and the equipment became fully operational and was utilized in the Air Defense Net. All Radar Equipment remained the same until the early part of 1958, at which time a project was begun to update the complete radar system. This phase was completed in December 1959 and the 779th then functioned as a Master Direction Center as part of the integrated Air Defense System.

In May 1961 the 779th was, with the advent of Electronic Digital Data processing equipment which was commissioned by the Air Force on 15 June 1961. The Height Finder Radar underwent another major modification in 1963 with the installation of sophisticated electronic counter-counter measures capability and increased power for detecting aircraft at a higher altitude and longer range. During this period, the 779th underwent yet another change. All inputs from the radars were used in the SAGE system for Air Defense and Direction Center responsibilities were deleted.

In March 1972 the Search Radar underwent major modifications commensurate with changing times and needs. The final stage of modification was completed in September 1972. The electronic digital data processor was replaced by a "State-of-Art" model utilizing all solid state circuitry.

The 779th is located in a wheat growing and cattle raising area four miles west of Opheim and ten miles south of the Canadian border. The squadron is commanded by Maj Brady A. Miracle.

One of the first things done to FPS-7C after it became operational was to install electric motors for both trap doors. These motors were wired so that they could run in either direction. The motor was attached to a gear system that was part of the tower by means of two pulleys and a belt. Attached to the gear assembly is a cable which goes through two pulleys and is anchored to the trap door. To open the trap door it is now a simple matter of flipping a switch and letting the electric motor do the work rather than spend ten or fifteen minutes raising the door by the use of a hand crank.

The Primary function of the Communications and Electronic section is to maintain installed communications and electronic equipment to provide Air Surveillance, height determination data and ground to air communications within our area of coverage to the 24th NORAD Region Control Center located at Malmstrom AFB, MT.

To accomplish this function, the maintenance organization includes GATR, search height and

computer production workcenters. In addition to the production workcenters, quality control and maintenance control workcenters provide the required management and support functions. The maintenance control workcenter operates the station telephone switchboard and performs squadron duty NCO functions during other than normal duty hours.

Station Support Supply procures, stores, issues and returns all items of supply needed for the support of our mission. We provide individual housekeeping and office supplies to all functions on station. We also provide individual equipment and tool issue support to all personnel assigned. We make arrangements for pickup of household goods and delivery of hold baggage to our support base for subsequent shipment to its destination. We also operate housing supply and process housing assignments and terminations.

Civil Engineering is in direct support of the welfare and well being of each individual living at Opheim AFS. They supply the heat that keeps you warm in sub zero temperatures. They supply the air conditioner that keeps you cool during the searing heat of summer. They provide the electricity to protect you from the hours of darkness. They provide the cool clear pure spring water that is available from your faucets. They provide sanitary sewer service to each building and garbage pickup service. They provide you with snow removal enabling you to travel under winter conditions. They provide maintenance on all buildings such as broken windows, painting and upgrading facilities to AF standards. They provide through constant programming such new facilities as the NCO club and bowling alley. They provide proper monitoring for the protection of your personnel property and responsibilities while you are assigned to this installation. All of these services are provided for free.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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