

859 RADAR SQUADRON (SAGE)



MISSION

LINEAGE

859 Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron
Redesignated 859 Radar Squadron (SAGE)
Inactivated

STATIONS

Red Bluff, CA

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

LTC M. F. Crispen, #1964

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

This site became operational in 1956 under the jurisdiction of the 859th AC&W Squadron. The site used AN/MPS-8 and AN/MPS-11 radars. The AN/MPS-11 remained until 1963. In 1959 the Air Force placed AN/FPS-6 and -6A height-finder radars and removed the AN/MPS-8 from Red Bluff. SAGE operations began in 1960. In 1964 Red Bluff became an FAA/ADC joint-use facility, using the AN/FPS-67 search and AN/FPS-6 and AN/FPS-90 height-finder radars located on site. The 859th was deactivated 30 September 1970. The FAA continues to operate the AN/FPS-67B search radar.

Red Bluff AFS Z-157 consisted of 30.84 acres, was acquired by the Air Force on May 25, 1955, and established as a communications /weather station for the US Air Force. Improvements to the site included buildings, roads a sewage treatment facility, open storm drains, underground storage tanks and pipes for heating fuel and oil, above-ground storage tanks for water storage, a boiler building, a separate containment area possibly used for above-ground fuel storage tanks, a remote transmitter and radar facility, and a Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) facility.

The history of Red Bluff AFS began in 1955 with the acquisition through condemnation proceedings of 24.2 acres of grazing land from Dr. J. Vincent Hagus. By the end of the next year, the station became operational with the 858th Aircraft Control & Warning (AC&W) Squadron as the garrisoning unit. The 858th initially operated the AN/MPS-8 height finder radar and the AN/MPS-11 search radar. Both of these systems were mobile systems as opposed to the more familiar fixed systems that other sites operated at the time.

Red Bluff AFS was unique to California radar stations in that it was the only station that used metal buildings for administration, logistical support and airmen housing. All of the other stations in the state used wood frame construction. While it made construction quicker, easier and more cost effective, it was discovered when the control of the radar was being transferred to the FAA in 1971, that the large number of metal buildings were being picked up on the radar as "ghosts". As a result, almost all of the station's buildings were disassembled and transferred to local, state and Federal government agencies and non-profit organizations by the General Services Administration (GSA).

In 1959, the station received the first of many equipment upgrades when the mobile AN/MPS-8 was replaced by the AN/FPS-6 and AN/FPS-6A height finder radar sets on two separate fixed towers.

1960 saw further major modernization developments at the station. Data from Red Bluff AFS's radar began to be fed directly into the SAGE command and control system which allowed for headquarters at various levels of the North American Air Defense Command to receive sensor inputs from multiple and widely dispersed stations and to detection, identification, and tracking of targets and to provide interceptor direction. SAGE removed the Ground Control Intercept function from the station and reduced its manpower requirements. With this change, the U.S. Air Force garrisoning unit's designation was changed to 859th Radar Squadron (SAGE).

Also that same year was the establishment of three off-site facilities, a Ground to Air Transmitter-

Receiver (GATR) site and two gap filler annexes. The new GATR site was located one mile to the east of the main station . With the transfer of the GATR function, the former on-site building was converted into the station's commissary. The two gap filler annexes that were established in June 1960 were located at Janesville and Hayfork, California. However, these two sites were closed in December of that same year.

In 1962, a third gap filler annex was established at Whitmore, California, but due a storm that same year that toppled the annex's radar tower, it too was closed that same year. In 1963, the Janesville Gap Filler Annex was reactivated and continued to operate until 1967. A major change occurred in 1964 when the radar came under joint control of the FAA and the ADC. Concurrent with this change was another equipment upgrade that saw the mobile AN/MPS-11 finally replaced by the AN/FPS-67 fixed search radar and the AN-FPS-6A was superseded by the more powerful AN/FPS-90 height finder radar.

In 1970, Red Bluff AFS was closed and the 859th Radar Squadron inactivated. In 1971, the GATR site and the operations portion of the main station were transferred to the FAA who continues to operate the AN/FPS-67B search radar as part of the Joint Surveillance System, a joint U.S. Air Force/FAA air sovereignty monitoring system. With the closing of the station, the need for the AN/FPS-90 height finding radar ended and the equipment was dismantled. By the end of 1972, the remainder of the station was transferred to Tehama County, who developed it into a county park. As stated above, most of the station's buildings were disassembled and transferred to government agencies and non-profit organizations. The station's family housing annex, was auctioned off and sold to several private parties.

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|------------|------------------------|------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| SM-157 | Z-157 | 859 | Red Bluff AFS, CA | MPS-8; MPS-11; FPS-67; FPS-6; |
| FPS-6A/-90 | FPS-67B; FPS-6; FPS-90 | 1956 | 30-Sep-70 | FAA site now, still |

operating the FPS-67B.

859th Radar Sq (SAGE): activated 8 Sep 55 at Hamilton AFB, CA, assigned to 28th AD; moved to Red Bluff AFS, CA in spring to 56; transferred to 25th AD 1 Mar 59; transferred to Portland ADS 1 Mar 60; redesignated from ACW Sq to 859th Radar Sq (SAGE) 15 Jul 60; transferred to 26th AD 1 Apr 66; reassigned to 27th AD 15 Sep 69; reassigned to 26th AD 19 Nov 69; inactivated 30 Sep 70.

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Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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

Unit yearbook. *25 NORAD Region*. 1963.