

873 TACTICAL MISSILE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

873 Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy constituted, 19 Nov 1943
Activated, 20 Nov 1943
Inactivated, 4 Aug 1946
Redesignated 873 Tactical Missile Squadron and activated, 16 Sep 1960
Organized, 8 Feb 1961
Discontinued and inactivated 8 Jul 1965

STATIONS

Clovis AAF, NM, 20 Nov 1943-7 Apr 1944
Great Bend AAFld, KS, 13 Apr-16 Jun 1944
Isley Field, Saipan, 7 Sep 1944-2 Nov 1945
March Field, CA, 7 Dec 1943
MacDill Field, FL, 5 Jan-4 Aug 1946
Kadena AB, Okinawa, 8 Feb 1961-8 Jul 1965

ASSIGNMENTS

498 Bombardment Group, 20 Nov 1943-4 Aug 1946
Pacific Air Forces, 16 Sep 1960
498 Tactical Missile Group, 8 Feb 1961

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1944
B-29 1944-1946

MGM-13 Mace, 1961

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Japan

Eastern Mandates

Western Pacific

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Japan, 13Dec 1944

Japan, 1-7 Jun 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award

8 Feb 1961-29 May 1963

EMBLEM



873 Bombardment Squadron, Very Heavy emblem

873 Tactical Missile Squadron emblem: On and over a medium blue globe, grid lines Air Force blue, a stylized missile bendwise, its nose pointing upward and extending beyond the globe, Air Force golden yellow, shaded Air Force blue; the missile passing through a white gimbal fimbriated red; radiating from the common center of the earth, missile and gimbal, four red arrows; flanking the nose of the missile, four white stars, two on either side; outlines and

details Air Force blue throughout. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The emblem is symbolic of the squadron and its mission, which is the operational use of inertially guided missiles. On a globe and located at its imaginary center, a missile, from the emblem of this unit's parent organization, the 498th Tactical Missile Group is displayed in operation. It is surrounded by a gimbal (to indicate an inertial guidance system) and its nose, piercing the sky above the earth, is flanked by four stars, to suggest the Guided Missile insignia. The arrows radiating from the common center of the earth, missile, and gimbal, represent the navigational geometry necessary for accurate guidance of a missile from launch to target. Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. (Approved, 11 Sep 1962)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Combat in Western Pacific, 28 Oct 1944-13 Aug 1945.

In February of 1961, the second generation U.S. Air Force tactical missile to be deployed to the Far East was announced with the formation of the 498th Tactical Missile Group at Kadena, Okinawa. The new missile group would be equipped with the TM-76B Mace. In addition, the TM-61C Matadors would be removed from both Korea and Taiwan.

The officer Manpower authorization is 75 with 76 assigned, and the airmen authorization is 588 with 630 assigned. This figure does not include the 35 Martin Company personnel and the 40 military personnel who are assigned solely for the IC&V (Installation, Checkout and Verification) effort. When fully operational, the unit will be responsible for operating and maintaining four hardened missile sites containing 32 operational missiles. The unit equipment authorization is 36 missiles.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara directed in early 1962 that the existence of the TM-76B weapons system on Okinawa "was not to be publicized in any way." He directed that the "missile, warhead section, and nose sections be transported to and from the launch sites under a canvas cover." Fearing political maneuvering and protests from Communist sympathizers on Okinawa and in Japan, the 498th TMG was directed to be identified by initials only. The island of Okinawa at the time was under the administrative control of the United States and technically not a part of Japan, which specifically prohibits the stationing of nuclear weapons on its soil. The U.S. military had used Okinawa as a major staging area for conflict in Asia since renegotiating a U.S.-Japanese peace treaty in 1951 that gave the U.S. administrative control over the Ryukyuan island chain. The U.S. referred to the islands as Japanese "residual sovereignty," and on May 15, 1972, three years after the shutdown of the last Mace missile, returned control of Okinawa to Japan. All U.S. nuclear weapons were removed from all military bases on Okinawa well in advance of the return of Okinawa as a prefecture of Japan.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.