

966 AIRBORNE AIR CONTROL SQUADRON



MISSION

The 966 Airborne Air Control Squadron is the formal training unit for all Airborne Warning and Control System aircrew initial qualification training and upgrade training.

The mission of the 966 AACS is to conduct combat crew flight training in tactics, techniques and operations of assigned aircraft and associated equipment. The unit also maintains the readiness state of personnel and equipment for dispersal and augmentation of tactical forces as directed by higher authorities.

The unit trains flight and mission crews for the air expeditionary force aligned squadrons of the 552ACW and for members of the 970th AACS under Air Force Reserve Command, as well as operational AWACS squadrons in the Pacific theater of operations based at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan, and Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska.

Instructors provide training utilizing sorties and flight/mission crew simulators.

What the unit is composed of: Today, the 966 AACS is Air Combat Command's largest programmed flying training unit. The squadron trains 500 initial qualification training students annually in 13 crew positions and conducts upgrade training for an additional 200 students in 17 positions, executing 30 different aircrew syllabi.

The 180 elite men and women of the squadron consist of the best trained AWACS instructors, evaluators, and support personnel. The squadron is assigned four training-coded AWACS aircraft.

LINEAGE

466 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 9 Jul 1942
Activated, 15 Jul 1942
Inactivated, 1 Apr 1944

166 Liaison Squadron (Commando) constituted, 9 Aug 1944
Activated, 3 Sep 1944
Inactivated, 3 Nov 1945

966 Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron constituted and activated, 18 Dec 1961
Organized, 1 Feb 1962
Inactivated, 31 Dec 1969
Redesignated 966 Airborne Warning and Control Training Squadron and activated, 1 Jul 1976

466 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 166 Liaison Squadron (Commando) and 966 Airborne
Warning and Control Training Squadron consolidated, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated
Organization designated 966 Airborne Warning and Control Training Squadron

Redesignated 966 Airborne Air Control Squadron, 1 Jul 1994

STATIONS

Topeka, KS, 15 Jul 1942
Dalhart, AAFld, TX, 22 Feb 1943–1 Apr 1944
Asansol, India, 3 Sep 1944
Yazagyo, Burma, 13 Nov 1944
Inbaung, Burma, 12 Dec 1944
Asansol, India, 19 Dec 1944 (detachment operated from Arakan, Burma, 29 Dec 1944–23 Jan
1945)
Sinthe, Burma, 4 Feb 1945
Asansol, India, 14 Mar 1945
Ondaw, Burma, 29 Mar 1945
Meiktila, Burma, 5 Apr 1945
Toungoo, Burma, 27 Apr 1945
Asansol, India, 14 May–6 Oct 1945
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 1–3 Nov 1945
McCoy AFB, FL, 1 Feb 1962–31 Dec 1969
Tinker AFB, OK, 1 Jul 1976

ASSIGNMENTS

333 Bombardment Group, 15 Jul 1942–1 Apr 1944
1 Air Commando Group, 3 Sep 1944–3 Nov 1945
Air Defense Command, 18 Dec 1961
551 Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing, 1 Feb 1962;
552 Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing, 1 May 1963
551 Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing, 1 Jul 1969

552 Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing, 15 Nov–31 Dec 1969
552 Airborne Warning and Control Wing (later, 552 Airborne Warning and Control Division;
552 Airborne Warning and Control Wing; 552 Air Control Wing), 1 Jul 1976
552 Operations Group, 29 May 1992
552 Training Group, 17 Aug 2018

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17, 1942
B-24, 1942–1943
C-64, 1944–1945
L-5, 1944–1945
C-64
RC-121, 1962–1963
TC-121, 1962–1963
EC-121, 1963–1969
WC-135, 1977–1979
E-3, 1977

COMMANDERS

Unmanned, 15 Jul 1942 - 26 Aug
Unknown, 26 Aug 1942 – 15 Feb 1943
1lt Jeremiah W. Zuckerman, 15 Feb 1943
Maj Boris Zupko, 1 Apr 1943
Maj James G. Ellis, 1 Sep 1943
1lt Fred A. Van Wagoner, 3 Sep 1944
Cpt Julius Goodman, 1 Mar 1945
1lt Saxon, 18 Jun 1945
Lt Col Doy W. Herrin, 1 Feb 1962
Lt Col Max Sansing, 1 Jun 1962
Lt Col Theodore R. Greer, Mar 1964
Lt Col Linn E. Wilde, Jr., 30 Jun 1964
Lt Col Henry L. Timmermans, 16 Aug 1966
Col Richard A. Naldrett, 18 Jun 1968
Lt Col John R. Farrington, 1 Jul 1976
Lt Col Howard T. Cariveau, 31 Jul 1978
Lt Col Arthur D. Kerr, 20 Aug 1979
Lt Col Raymond A. Hamilton, 23 Jan 1981
Lt Col John H. Morris, 18 Mar 1982
Lt Col Thomas F. Bliss, 1 Aug 1983
Lt Col Thomas P. O’neill, 1 Aug 1985
Lt Col Danny T. Keahey, 27 Aug 1987
Lt Col David M. Rose, 22 Sep 1989
Lt Col John P. Potter, 10 Jan 1992
Lt Col Dennis M. Matthews, 15 Apr 1994

Lt Col Gerald D. Allen, 21 Jun 1996
Lt Col Timothy L. Johnson, 17 Mar 1998
Lt Col Donald D. Somerville, 21 May 2000
Lt Col George C. Carpenter, 7 Jun 2001
Lt Col William S. Tully, Jr., 16 May 2003
Lt Col Mustafa R. Koprucan, 12 May 2005
Lt Col Ronald L. Henry, 4 May 2007
Lt Col Greg A. Kent, 7 May 2009
Lt Col Daniel E. Brant, 18 May 2011
Lt Col John V. Bartoli, 10 May 2013
Lt Col Christian J. Egan, 13 Apr 2015
Lt Col Lonzo Wallace, 14 Apr 2017

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II

India-Burma

Central Burma

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device

[15 Nov 1969]–31 Dec 1969

1 Dec 1989 - 1 Dec 1991

1 Jun 2002 - 31 May 2003

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1961–30 Jun 1963

20 Oct–30 Nov 1962

15 Apr 1965–1 Jul 1966

2 Jul 1966–1 Jul 1968

1 Jul 1977–30 Jun 1978

1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1980

1 Jul 1982–30 Jun 1984

1 May 1985–30 Apr 1987

1 May 1987–30 Apr 1989

1 Dec 1989–1 Dec 1991

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Jul 1961 - 30 Jun 1963
20 Oct 1962 - 30 Nov 1962
15 Apr 1965 - 1 Jul 1966
2 Jul 1966 - 1 Jul 1968
1 Jul 1977 - 30 Jun 1978
1 Jul 1978 - 30 Jun 1980
1 Jul 1982 - 30 Jun 1984
1 May 1985 - 30 Apr 1987
1 May 1987 - 30 Apr 1989
1 Apr 1992 - 31 Mar 1994
1 Jun 1994 - 31 May 1996
1 Jun 1996 - 31 May 1998
1 Jun 1998 - 31 May 2000
1 Jun 2003 - 31 May 2004
1 Jun 2007 - 31 May 2008
1 Jun 2010 - 31 May 2011
1 Jun 2011 - 31 May 2012
1 Jun 2012 - 31 May 2013
1 Jun 2013 - 31 May 2014

Meritorious Unit Award
1 Jun 2006 - 31 May 2007
1 Jun 2008 - 31 May 2009
1 Jun 2014 - 31 May 2015
1 Jun 2015 - 31 May 2016

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm
1 Apr 1966–31 Dec 1969

EMBLEM





Per bend Celeste and Sable a lightning flash issuant from sinister base bendwise throughout Gules fimbriated Or surmounted by an eagle proper and grasping in both feet a telescope Argent garnished Yellow above a wreath of laurel of the last; all within a diminished bordure of the second. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The eagle in flight represents the organization, the telescope refers to its aerial long-range detection capabilities, the blue and black background indicate its day and night around-the-clock vigilance, and the red lightning flash alludes to the swiftness, sureness and power of airborne warning and control. The gold laurel branches (wreath) are symbolic of honor, triumph and fame. (Approved, 15 May 1989; replaced emblem approved, 14 Jun 1963)

MOTTO

Protection by Professionals

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Replacement training, Aug 1942–Nov 1943. Evacuation and light transport services for ground forces in Burma, 13 Nov 1944–10 May 1945.

Activated on December 18, 1961, as the 966 Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron. Two months later the unit was organized at McCoy Air Force Base, Fla., and assigned to the 551st Airborne Early Warning and Control Wing at Otis Air Force Base, Mass. There it flew propeller driven EC-121 Super Constellation radar surveillance aircraft. The first missions of the 966 were flown by TDY crews in late 1961. PCS crews were moved into McCoy in January of 1962, originally assigned to the 551st. the 966 was flying AAD missions south of Key West from January on. On 1 May 1963, the 966 was transferred to the 552AEW&C because the 551st was converting their D-model Connies to the H-models.

The unit supported Strategic Air Command and Military Airlift Command operations, assisted in anti-submarine patrols and developed weather information. It also furnished airborne radar surveillance and technical control in support of global air defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff contingencies. Aircrews frequently deployed to distant operational locations including Southeast Asia.

The 966 Airborne Early Warning and Control Squadron (966 AEW&C) was one of the units assigned to the 552AEW&C Wing at McClellan AFB, CA. The 966, comprised of over one-hundred men and approximately eleven aircraft furnished by the 552Wing, was located at McCoy AFB, FL (now known as Orlando International Airport). The 966 existed from 18 Dec 1961 - January 1, 1970. The squadron flew the EC-121D model Super Constellation on several type missions.

Missions were flown by the 966 for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to "chase" the rocket boosters as they fell back into the ocean after they separated from the rockets being shot into space. The 966 flew Active Air Defense (AAD) missions monitoring the movement of Cuban aircraft off the Florida Keys and performed AAD missions off Iceland - monitoring Soviet aircraft that often attempted to penetrate the air defenses of North America.

The prime mission of the 966 was to monitor and track the arrival of U-2 aircraft that frequently flew photograph missions over Cuba. It was these Gold Digger missions that reminds one of the early barnstorming days of flying. These huge Super Constellations flew Gold Digger missions at or near, or lower than fifty feet in altitude creating large rooster tails on the Gulf off the Florida Keys from their prop wash. George Merryman was a pilot and aircraft commander who flew those missions and now he tells you about them.

A typical Gold Digger Mission went something like this: First of all, Gold Digger missions were flown over water between Cuba and the Florida coast. The purpose of the mission was to continuously track- the U-2 camera aircraft which came down from the north, (Washington,

D.C.) area. We kept track of the U-2 in case it had problems and the pilot had to bail out. We could pinpoint the recovery. The U-2 usually showed up shortly after daybreak over the straits.

Initially, four EC-121Ds were converted to EC-121Qs. The only major difference was the APS-45 radar unit which was upgraded to the APS-103. It looked about the same outside, but the radar range was increased from 120 miles to 160 miles and the transmitter power for the radar was doubled. There were a few other minor changes. The EC-121Q became the aircraft utilized for Gold Digger missions.

Three of the EC-121Q aircraft were overhauled at McClellan AFB, CA., in 1973 - 1974. The aircraft had the skin removed from the wings and extensive repair was made due to corrosion, apparently from flying so low over the salty Florida Gulf. Just as the 552 was downgraded from a wing to a group, the Q-models were sent to Davis-Monthan AFB at Tucson, AZ., to the aircraft graveyard. George Merryman recalls that he flew escort for four of the aircraft from his unit being delivered to AZ.

Around 1968 pressure mounted for the 551st Wing to assume some of the College Eye deployments to Southeast Asia. There was even more pressure when the 552nd Wing had to deploy to Itasuki, Japan, after a US Navy EC-121M was shot down by MIGs over the China Sea. Soon afterwards some of the EC-121H aircraft used by the 551st Wing were modified for Gold Digger duty. The modification consisted of putting a radar scope behind the APS-103 radar, where the positions for the plotter and the teller were located. That modification gave the H-model a total of three radar scopes.

On January 1, 1970, both the 551st AEW&C Wing and the 966 AEW&C Squadron were inactivated. Some time later a Cuban MIG landed at Homestead AFB, FL., and parked near Air Force One. Detachments 1 and 2 were activated at McCoy AFB and Homestead AFB to fly "Family Man" support missions. Those missions were flown whenever President Nixon was in Florida, which meant there were always several crews deployed over the Holidays while Nixon was in office.

The above additional information was provided by Retired Master Sergeant Dean Boys, a former Radar Technician with the 551st and 552nd who flew as a crew member on several models of the Connies. He also flew numerous combat support missions on College Eye. Additionally, he had temporary duty assignments to Korea and Iceland and ended his Air Force career as a crew member on the Boeing E-3 AWACS aircraft.

On August 15, 1973, the College Eye Task Force flew its last active combat mission in Southeast Asia. The Super Connie has had a distinguished career of combat participation in support of air operations in the combat zone. The College Eye Task Force (CEMF), whose Lockheed EC-121D Warning Stars have provided daily airborne radar coverage and surveillance in support of other aircraft flying combat missions in Southeast Asia (SEA), is a unit of the 552nd AEW&C Wing here at McClellan, AFB.

In April 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff directed the Aerospace Defense Command (ADC) to provide an airborne radar platform employing standard configured EC-121D aircraft plus VHF voice capability for use in SEA. The mission was to extend ground based radar coverage for early warning and to missions in Vietnam and adjacent areas. The 552Wing was selected to activate a Task Force under the project name Big Eye, with the main support base located at Tainan AB, Taiwan, and the forward operating base located at Tan Son Nhut. Airdrome, Republic of Vietnam. In February 1967, the forward operating base was relocated at Ubon RTAFB, Thailand. In July 1967, Big Eye, now redesignated College Eye, again transferred its forward operating base to Udorn RTAFB, Thailand. In October 1967, College Eye forward operating base was relocated at its [then] present site at Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

The flight crew designated for the last combat mission was a mix of experienced and newly assigned personnel from the following units:

Col. Harold P. Knutty - Aircraft Commander - HQ 552AEW&C
Capt. John N. Lyke - First Pilot - 963rd AEW&C Squadron
1st Lt. Merrill W. Tank - Copilot - 964th AEW&C Squadron
MSGT Ray H. Williams - Flight Engineer - 963rd AEW&C Squadron
TSGT. Marlin L. Stewart - Flight Engineer - 964th AEW&C Squadron
Maj. Ronald A. Heggen - Navigator - 964th AEW&C Squadron
1st Lt. Paul A. Bolissonneault - Weapons Controller - 964th AEW&C
Capt. John H. Dailey - Weapons Controller - 963rd AEW&C Sqdn.
CMSGT. David A. Austin - Radar Supv. - Det 1, 552AEW&C Wg.
SGT. Robert B. Cabral - Scope Operator - 963rd AEW&C Squadron
MSGT. Paul T. McDaniel - Scope Operator - 963rd AEW&C Sqdn.
TSGT. Willie Woods Jr. - Radar Technician - 552AM Squadron
MSGT. John E. Kisse - Radar Technician - Det 1, 552AEW&C
CMSGT. Loren C. Bates - Radio Operator - 963rd AEW&C Squadron
SGT. Edward R. Johnson - Crew Chief - 552OM Squadron
SSGT. Floyd R. Olonia - Engine Repairman - Det 1, 552AEW&C
SSGT. Claude V. Morin - Scope Operator - 964th AEW&C Squadron
SGT. Irvin G. Chatoff - Engine Repairman - 552FM Squadron

With the advent of thermonuclear and long range bombers to deliver those weapons it was realized that the ability of the Strategic Air Command to deliver its retaliatory punch relied greatly upon this country's air defense, especially the radar detection system upon which it relies for vital advance warning of an enemy attack. Out of this realization has grown the North American Air Defense Command, or NORAD as it is commonly known. The implementation of the 966 Sq. completes a vital link in the NORAD chain, that of Airborne Early Warning. NORAD, made up of the United States Air Force Air Defense Command, the United States Army, the United States Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force Air Defense Command, has the prime responsibility for defense of the North American Continent and alerting SAC of an impending enemy air attack.

Since 15 November 1961. RC-121D Super Constellation aircraft have taken off daily from McCoy AFB, flying an actual combat-type mission as the 966's part in adding to the seaward extension radar wall of NORAD. Maintaining this 24-hour radar surveillance, the 966 Sq. falls under the operational control of Montgomery Air Defense Sector (SAGE) at Gunter Air Force Base, Alabama, an integral part of 32nd Air Division, headquarters at Oklahoma City Air Force Station, Oklahoma.

The RC-121D "Flying Radar Station," carrying six tons of complex electronic equipment, is not good looking as airplanes go, but what it lacks in aerodynamic beauty it makes up for in the reach of its long range radar ability. Every eight hours one of the planes with a crew of 16, takes off on an average 12-hour mission. Because the plane searches out, tracks and alerts the United States about approaching aircraft, it is appropriately dubbed the "Warning Star".

Monitoring the air approaches to the United States is a tedious and seemingly unrewarding job to many people. However in the event of an enemy advancing toward America's coastline: the U.S. Air Force radar aircraft of the 966 AEW&C Sq., with its team of skilled radar technicians, would "see" the invaders long before they could reach the surface based detection zones, thus giving the entire nation, especially the coastal areas, additional time to prepare for an enemy attack.

When a "blip" indicating an aircraft, appears on any one of the five radar scopes in the RC-121D, its exact geographical location is fixed within 30 seconds and this information is relayed to the coastal radar where an identification officer is given one minute to decide whether this target is a friendly aircraft which had filed a flight plan or an unidentified or "questionable" track.

If the target is declared "unidentified", supersonic fighters of either the Navy or Air Force are "scrambled" to take a closer look. As the fighters leave the coast, their control is handed over to the officer Director in the "Connie", who gives them directions to meet and identify the questionable, or "Bogey" aircraft. If the "Bogey" is an enemy, the fighter engages it in battle: if the aircraft is friendly, identification information is relayed to the appropriate channels on ground.



966 AEW&CS headquarters, McCoy AFB, FL.

In July 1976, a C-5 aircraft airlifted new E-3 flight and mission simulators to the unit, expanding its training capability. The flight simulator was built by Boeing Aerospace Company.

The flight simulator is an exact replica of the E-3 flight deck, which enables instructors to provide a realistic environment, including in-flight emergencies, with absolute safety at minimum cost. The mission simulator has the same computer operator display consoles as the E-3 aircraft. Every situation possible on an E-3 mission can be duplicated in simulators, including two flight and three mission simulators.

In December 1983, the 552 Training Squadron was formed to share AWACS training responsibilities with 966 AWACTS. The 552TS provides academic and simulator training for all E-3 mission crewmembers. It also acts as the initial unit of assignment and as their administrative student squadron for all new and returning E-3 aircrew members undergoing Air Combat Command Programmed Flying Training (PFT).

In April 1984, implementation began for a \$29.7 million civilian contract for the academic, simulator and flight training of flight crew members. In addition to the four E-3s assigned to the 966 AWACTS, an additional two Boeing 707s are flown by 966 instructor pilots to train new pilots, reducing the number of E-3 pilot proficiency sorties. The contractor teaches academics to pilot and flight engineer students. Navigators are given part-task training and academic instruction. By using proven commercial aircrew training practices, the contractor reduced the course length required to train E-3 pilots, navigators and flight engineers.

In May 1996, the 966 AACS moved in to a new training facility. Here, students plan and debrief actual flight missions while undergoing PFT. The 552ACW PFT program is the largest training program of its kind in the Air Combat Command, and provides training to over 450 initial qualification and 300 upgrade training aircrew personnel each year. With instructors for every

aircrew position, the 966 AACS trains about 24 crews annually to carry out the operational mission. Once they graduate, newly qualified crew members move on to their final assignments in operational E-3 flying squadrons at Tinker AFB, Okla., and overseas at Kadena AB, Japan, and Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.

In 2006, the squadron flew 467 sorties, accumulating 3,224 hours. It graduated 667 students and conducted 834 evaluations as part of its programmed flying training and continuation training mission.

Air Force Unit Histories

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Sources

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

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.