

17th RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON



LINEAGE

17th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron constituted, 14 Jul 1942
Activated, 23 Jul 1942
Redesignated 17th Photographic Squadron (Light), 6 Feb 1943
Redesignated 17th Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron, 13 Nov 1943
Inactivated, 19 Apr 1946
Redesignated 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo-Jet, 1 Apr 1951
Activated, 2 Apr 1951
Redesignated 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 1 Oct 1966
Inactivated, 1 Jan 1979
Redesignated 17th Reconnaissance Squadron, 4 Mar 2002
Activated, 8 Mar 2002

STATIONS

Colorado Springs AAB, CO, 23 Jul-24 Oct 1942
Camp Deptha, Noumea, New Caledonia, 2 Dec 1942
Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, 16 Jan 1943 (detachments operated from Munda, New Georgia, 13 Oct 1943-31 Jan 1944, 9 Mar-1 Apr 1944; Bougainville, 11 Dec 1943-Feb 1945; Noemfoor, 8-23 Oct 1944; Sansapor, New Guinea, 13 Oct-4 Nov 1944)
Wama Airfield, Morotai Island, 4 Nov 1944 (detachment operated from Dulag, Leyte, 9 Feb Oct 1945)
Puerto Princesa, Palawan, 11 May 1945-19 Apr 1946
Shaw AFB, SC, 2 Apr 1951-10 May 1959
Laon AB, France, 10 May 1959
RAF Upper Heyford, England, Sep 1966
Zweibrucken AB, Germany, 12 Jan 1970-1 Jan 1979

Indian Springs AFAF, NV, 8 Mar 2002

ASSIGNMENTS

4th Photographic (later, 4th Photographic Reconnaissance and Mapping; 4th Photographic; 4th Reconnaissance) Group, 23 Jul 1942
Thirteenth Air Force; 5 Dec 1945
XIII Fighter Command, 10 Dec 1945
85th Fighter Wing; 1 Feb 1946
Pacific Air Command, U. S. Army, 1-19 Apr 1946
363rd Tactical Reconnaissance Group; 2 Apr 1951
432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 8 Feb 1958
66th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 10 May 1959
86th Tactical Fighter Wing, 12 Jan 1970
26th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 31 Jan 1973-1 Jan 1979
57th Operations Group, 8 Mar 2002

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-38/F-5, 1942-1946
B-25, 1944-1946
F-6, 1946
RF-80, 1951-1955
RF-84, 1954-1958
RF-101, 1957-1969
RF-4, 1969-1978

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

F-6D
44-84531

RF-101C
56-0063
56-0110
56-0113
56-0116
56-0202
56-0062
56-0073
56-0074
56-0076
56-0077
56-0082
56-0100
56-0103
56-0111
56-0113
56-0118

56-0200
56-0205
56-0208
56-0209
56-0213

RF-4C
68-563
72-153

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

RF-4C: ZR

UNIT COLORS

RF-101C: Blue band

COMMANDERS

Maj John E. Murray, Feb 1943
Cpt Harris C. Andrews, 28 Jul 1943
Cpt Albert C. Mathias, 19 Nov 1943
Cpt Homer A. Baker Jr., 14 Mar 1944
Cpt Walter M. Bartman, 23 May 1944
Cpt William A. Stanton, 10 Jan 1945
Cpt Otto C. Leipski, 12 Mar 1945
Cpt Eston E. Balsiger, 28 Aug 1945
Maj James M. Campbell, Nov 1945
Maj Jesse H. Lochausen, 2 Dec 1945
Cpt Keith P. Eubanks, 24 Dec 1945
1Lt Robert V. Blucher, 14 Jan 1946
None (not manned), 1-19 Apr 1946
Maj Edward H. Taylor, 2 Apr 1951
Maj Charles E. Scott Jr., 27 Aug 1951
Maj Clyde B. East, 12 Oct 1951
Cpt James C. Martin, 3 Mar 1952
Cpt William W. Brothers Jr., 6 Mar 1952
Cpt John B. Perry, 14 Mar 1952
Cpt William W. Brothers Jr., 21 Mar 1952
Maj Clyde B. East, unkn
LTC George W. Holmquist, unkn
Cpt Ralph Findlay, 24 Apr 1955
LTC Harold M. Miller, 27 Apr 1955
Maj Bruce B. Fish, 7 Mar 1956
Cpt Howard M. Davis, 1 Jul 1956
LTC William H. Nelson, 13 Feb 1957
Maj Thomas E. Anton, 17 Jul 1957
LTC William H. Laseter, 14 Nov 1958

Maj Hiawatha Mohawk, 9 Jan 1961
LTC William H. Laseter, 1961
Maj Thomas D. Alexander, Jan 1962
Col William H. Hathaway Jr., 6 Mar 1963
Maj Lovic P. Hodnette Jr., 2 Aug 1965
LTC Paul B. Nelson, Jun 1968
LTC Arthur R. Gould, 25 Aug 1969
LTC David A. Nelson, 1 Aug 1970
LTC Clarence R. Autery, 25 Aug 1972
LTC Larry D. Krull, 11 Jun 1973
LTC Gary D. Cool, 17 Jun 1975
LTC Richard H. Slye, 22 Apr 1977-1 Jan 1979

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Guadalcanal
New Guinea
Northern Solomons
Bismarck Archipelago
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
Central Burma
China Offensive
Air Combat, Asiatic-Pacific Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
1 Jan-31 Dec 1962
1 Jul 1973-31 May 1975

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

EMBLEM

Approved, 28 Feb 1957, newest rendition approved, 4 Jan 2008

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Combat in South, Southwest, and Western Pacific, 5 Feb 1943-13 Aug 1945. Primarily replacement training, 1952-1959.

1959 was heralded by the not unexpected news that the 302nd and 303rd TRS were to be deactivated and their places in the 66th taken by the 17th and 18th TRS from Shaw AFB. These two units arrived at Laon in May, 1959, with the 302nd and 303rd officially deactivated on the 20th June. All the RF-84s were ferried to the IRAN facility at Naples for eventual distribution to NATO forces. Many of the pilots of both these squadrons were transferred to the new Voodoo squadrons; converting at Nouasseur. The passage of the 17th from the USA, code named *Fox Able 89* was a considerable contrast to the long and time consuming route taken by the RF-80s and RB-26s when the 66th had originally deployed in 1953. The RF-101s flew direct from Shaw refuelling en route. There was a minor hiccup when one flight of eight aircraft was prevented from making a refueling rendezvous because of a thunderstorm and had to divert to Bermuda.

The 17th and 18th squadrons had temporarily detached to Toul when the runway at Laon was closed for resurfacing. The codename for this detachment was *Dim View*. Whether this somewhat unusual name reflected the attitude of the personnel to the prospect of spending a long time at Toul.

The 17th and 18th TRS' flew 36 Voodoos to RAF Upper Heyford on September 11th 1966 and soon settled into their routine. Missions from Upper Heyford were very different from those out of Laon. Indeed the pilots had to fly further in order to exercise efficiently. Controls for missions over Europe came under the jurisdiction of Heathrow, and subsequently, Southern radar. Most practice missions not flown over the UK but were flown over Germany and the Low Countries; the French being characteristically uncooperative in allowing low level training and imposing many alarming restrictions on entry into their airspace.

In April 1970, lightning twice struck an RF-4C assigned to the 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, but through the "outstanding airmanship and professionalism" of the crew, a multi-million dollar aircraft was saved. Capt. Robin M. Lake, aircraft commander, and 1st Lt. Benny C. Watkins, navigator, were the crewmen. Following is the account of the incident as related by Lieutenant Watkins: "It all started with a routine mission out of Zweibrucken AB. After takeoff and on climb out, the aircraft was struck by lightning on the right side of the nose. "This strike rendered the navigation system and communication system between Robin and myself inoperative. We immediately actuated the standby attitude system and emergency generator and continued the climb in order to get above the clouds. "About this time, another RF-4C of the squadron joined us to look for damage. Only a slight discoloration was seen on our radome. Even so, we aborted the mission and requested an immediate recovery at Zweibrucken AB. "On the approach, a second and much more violent strike occurred which caused the aircraft to go into a 91-degree bank. We were able to right the plane and begin a climb by using the afterburner and the standby attitude system. If I hadn't had a great deal of confidence in Robin's ability, I think I might have left the plane at that point "On surveying the damage inside the cockpit, we noted

that the airspeed indicator and angle of attack system were both out. The altimeter and vertical velocity indicators were fluctuating wildly and were useless. On reaching VFR conditions above the clouds, we made a 'Mayday' call and were again joined by the other 17th TRS aircraft. At that time, we were told that part of the nose and the top of the tail were missing. "The 86th (TFW) Command Post advised us to recover at Ramstein since the weather was better there. Ramstein was then called and told to prepare for a barrier engagement. We were going to make a 'no-flap' approach at a pretty high airspeed since a lot of buffeting and shaking were felt at normal landing speeds. We flew this approach on the wing of the other aircraft that had joined us earlier." A successful landing and barrier engagement were made at Ramstein and the aircraft was saved. Damage included a shattered radome; all but one of the sensor windows were blown out; a sizeable portion of the tail was missing; and there was some structural damage to the tail fin. Upon landing, Captain Lake and Lieutenant Watkins were met and congratulated by Maj. Gen. Royal N Baker 17th Air Force commander, who praised them for a job well done.

The 17th Reconnaissance Squadron was activated March 8, 2002, because of increased mission requirements. The 17th RS was the first armed Predator squadron in the Air Force. Their mission is to provide theater commanders with deployable, long-endurance, near-real-time reconnaissance, surveillance and target acquisition to close the sensor-to-shooter timeline. When armed with Hellfire missiles, the unit can independently strike targets without risk to aircrew.

USAF will move all Predator UAV operational and support functions to Indian Springs AFAF, NV beginning late next year, according to Inside the Air Force. The 15th and 17th Reconnaissance Squadrons and the Predator Operations Center are operating out of Nellis AFB, NV because Indian Springs lacked the communications capability to handle ongoing combat operations. USAF plans to spend up to \$200 million to improve the communications infrastructure at Indian Springs, now host to the UAV Battlelab, which moved there from Eglin AFB, Fla. Officials said space was a concern at Nellis, which conducts advanced training, tactics development, and weapons testing. 2007

RF-101C attrition

56-0209 - Crashed, landing/weather, on Phalsbourg AB, France, 22 JAN 58, no fatalities.

56-0213 - Crashed, control loss, on Torrejon AB, Spain, 23 DEC 58, no fatalities.

56-0062 - Crashed, gear failure, 14nm SE of Nouasseur AB, Morocco, 28 FEB 59, no fatalities, ejected.

56-0074 - Crashed, on take-off, on Phalsbourg AB, France, 13 APR 59, 1 fatality.

56-0208 - Crashed, pitch-up, 9nm SE of Reims, France, 4 NOV 59, no fatalities, ejected.

56-0073 - Crashed, weather/go-around, on Phalsbourg AB, France, 10 MAR 60, no fatalities, ejected.

56-0076 - Crashed, collision on night take-off, on Toul AB, France, 22 MAY 60, 1 fatality.

56-0077 - Crashed, collision on night take-off, on Toul AB, France, 22 MAY 60, 1 fatality.

56-0082 - Crashed, GCA/weather, 13nm S of Phalsbourg AB, France, 22 SEP 60, no fatalities, ejected.

56-0103 - Crashed, mid-air/weather, 2nm NW of Reully, France, 29 APR 61 , no fatalities, ejected.

56-0118 - Crashed, mid-air/weather, 2nm NW of Reully, France, 29 APR 61 , no fatalities, ejected.

56-0111 - Crashed, GCA/weather, 1.5nm E of Landouzy la Cour, France, 10 DEC 61, 1 fatality.
56-0205 - Crashed, cause unknown, at Douzillac (Dordogne), France, 8 FEB 62, 4 fatalities.
56-0100 - Crashed, hit mountain in weather, 2.2nm E-SE of Treminis, France, 25 APR 63, 1 fatality.
56-0113 - Crashed, cockpit fire, 18nm SE of Toul AB, France, 17 APR 64, no fatalities, ejected.
56-0200 - Crashed, gyro failure/weather, 10nm N of Schladern, W. Germany, 14 MAY 64, no fatalities, ejected.



Air Force Order of Battle

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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.