

1198 OPERATIONAL EVALUATION TRAINING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

1198 Operational Evaluation Training Squadron

STATIONS

Norton AFB, CA, 1 Apr 1965-31 Dec 1972

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 1198th OE&TS was active from 1965-1972 and conducted the initial testing of Lockheed C-130 Hercules transports modified for special operations. Discrete C-130 Hercules modification tests were conducted out of Area II at Norton AFB, California in the late 1960s, with the 1198th OE&TS operating four highly-classified C-130E special operations test beds modified at Lockheed Air Services, at near-by Ontario Airport under Projects Thin Slice/Heavy Chain.

Project Heavy Chain was begun to develop special procedures for the delivery of cargo and personnel at night in mountainous terrain so as to avoid detection by hostile defenders. At the same time, plans were made for a C-130 special operations mission as modified C-130E(I)s were purchased to equip a new unit at Pope AFB, NC. A detachment of the modified C-130s deployed to Ching Chang Kuan (CCK) AB, Taiwan as Stray Goose to become part of the 314th Troop Carrier Wing in mid-1966. As Det. 1, 314th TCW, the C-130s operated out of Nha Trang providing airlift for the Fifth Special Forces Group.

MC-130E Combat Talon I - The Combat Talon was initially developed between December 1964 and responsible for modification and sustainment of special mission aircraft. From it two highly classified test bed aircraft (originally serial no. 64-0506 and -0507, but with all numbers sanitized from the aircraft), were assigned to Project Thin Slice to develop a low level clandestine penetration aircraft suitable for Special Forces operations in Southeast Asia.

C-123 Provider – In 1964 Lockheed had modified six C-123B Providers. The C-123 Provider was an American military transport aircraft designed by Chase Aircraft and subsequently built by Fairchild Aircraft for the United States Air Force for unconventional warfare under Project Duck Hook and then been tasked with adapting the C-130E when the Duck Hook aircraft proved inadequate for the newly-launched MACV-SOG. The modifications under Thin Slice and its August 1966 successor Heavy Chain were code named Rivet Yard, and the four C-130Es came to known as Yards.

As the Thin Slice aircraft were being developed, SOG requirements resulted in the procurement of 14 C-130Es in 1965 for similar modification. The first aircraft were production HC-130 s without specialized equipment that were diverted to Lockheed's facility in Marietta, Georgia, in December 1965 for installation of the Fulton STARS (then ARS) system, at the rate of three aircraft per month. While awaiting installation of the ARS equipment, the C-130s were ferried to Greenville, South Carolina , for painting by Ling-Temco-Vought Electrosystems with a low-radar reflective paint that added 370 pounds to their weight. The black and green scheme resulted in the aircraft being nicknamed Blackbirds. As installation was completed, the Blackbirds were returned to Ontario for installation of the electronics package, code-named Rivet Clamp. The aircraft modified became known as Clamps (two of the original 14, 64-0564 and -0565, were diverted to Heavy Chain in August 1966). The aircraft collectively were assigned the designation Combat Talon in 1967.

The Fulton Surface-To-Air Recovery System (STARS) was used to extract personnel and materials via air. A large helium balloon raised a nylon lift line into the air, which was snagged by a large scissors-shaped yoke attached to the nose of the plane. The yoke snagged the line and released the balloon, yanking the attached cargo off the ground with a shock less than that of an opening parachute. A sky anchor secured the line and wires stretched from the nose to both leading wing tip edges protected the propellers from the line on missed snag attempts. Crew members hooked the snagged line as it trailed behind and attached it to the hydraulic winch, pulling the attached person or cargo into the plane through the rear cargo door.

Following a fatality in 1982, the Fulton STARS system on the Clamp aircraft underwent intense maintenance scrutiny and employment of the system for live pickups was suspended. A major effort at upgrading the system, Project 46, was pursued from 1986 to 1989, but at its conclusion, use of the STARS system for live extractions remained suspended. The Fulton STARS equipment of all Combat Talons was removed during 1998.

Rivet Clamp installation began with four STARS-equipped C-130s completed by March 1966, followed by installations in eight further aircraft in July 1966 and January 1967. The Rivet Clamps, originally designated C-130E (I), were equipped with an electronic infrared (IR) countermeasures suite; and the AN/APQ-115 navigational radar. This radar, adapted from the Texas Instruments AN/APQ-99 radar used in the RF-4C Phantom photo reconnaissance aircraft, featured terrain following/terrain-avoidance (TF/TA). Doppler and mapping radar modes, to enable it to operate at low altitudes at night and in all weather conditions and avoid known enemy radar and anti-aircraft weapons concentrations.

The Yank Talons conducted top secret operations worldwide, under the project name Combat Sam, until late 1972. Two of the original Clamps were lost in combat in Southeast Asia and were replaced by two additional C-130Es (64-0571 and -0572). These remained as Combat Talons until 1972, when Heavy Chain was discontinued and the four Yank aircraft were incorporated into the Combat Talon force. The two original Thin Slice aircraft were given the serials of two destroyed C-130s, 62-1843 and 63-7785 respectively, to disguise their classified origins. The replacements had their modifications removed and returned to airlift duties, although known as Swaps; they remained available for future Combat Talon use. Both again became Combat Talons after further losses in the Combat Talon inventory. Heavy Chain Operations - 1198 O E & T Squadron Facts - 1965-1973 -Norton AFB, CA - The 1198th was a highly classified organization created to fly classified missions anywhere in the world. All personnel, aircrew & support, were specially selected for their skills in their field.

The aircraft were C-130E's, some equipped with the Fulton Recover System. They all had the earliest version of the Texas Instruments Terrain Following System, similar to the F-4, but climb-limited as opposed to G limited. The aircrew consisted of two Pilots, one Flight Engineer, two Navigators, two Electronic Warfare Officers, and two Load Masters.