

21st EXPEDITIONARY RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE¹

21st Observation Squadron (Light) constituted, 5 Feb 1942

Activated, 2 Mar 1942

Redesignated 21st Observation Squadron, 4 Jul 1942

Redesignated 21st Reconnaissance Squadron (Bomber), 2 Apr 1943

Redesignated 21st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 11 Apr 1943

Disbanded, 1 May 1944

1st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron constituted, 5 Nov 1945

Activated, 6 Dec 1945

Inactivated, 1 Apr 1949

Redesignated 1st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night-Photo, 25 Jun 1952

Activated, 10 Jul 1952

Redesignated 1st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night-Photo-Jet, 15 May 1959

Redesignated 1st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 1 Oct 1966

21st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 1st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated squadron designated 21st Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron.

¹ 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.

Inactivated, 15 Jan 1988

Redesignated 21 Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron and converted to provisional status,
10 Aug 2007

Activated, 8 Oct 2007

Inactivated, 9 Sep 2008

STATIONS

Langley Field, VA, 2 Mar 1942

Kellogg Field, MI, 9 Mar 1942

Will Rogers Field, OK, 30 Aug 1942

William Northern Field, TN, 12 Mar 1943

Key Field, MS, 19 Aug 1943-1 May 1944

Creil, France, 16 Dec 1945

Istres, France, 13 Jan 1946

Compiègne, France, 30 May 1946

Furth, West Germany, 12 Sep 1946- 20 Jun 1947

Langley Field, VA, 25 Jun 1947

Lawson Field, GA, 8 Sep 1947

Pope Field (later, Pope AFB), NC, 29 Sep 1947-1 Apr 1949

Toul-Rosieres AB, France, 10 Jul 1951

Spangdahlem AB, West Germany, 8 May 1953

RAF Alconbury, England, 25 Aug 1959-15 Jan 1988

Souda Bay, Greece, 8 Oct 2007–9 Sep 2008

ASSIGNMENTS

Air Force Combat Command, 2 Mar 1942

Army Air Forces, 9 Mar 1942

75th Observation (later, 75th Reconnaissance; 75th Tactical Reconnaissance) Group, 12 Mar
1942-1 May 1944

10th Reconnaissance (later, 10th Tactical Reconnaissance) Group, 16 Dec 1945-1 Apr 1949

10th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, 10 Jul 1952

10th Tactical Reconnaissance (later, 10th Tactical Fighter) Wing, 8 Dec 1957-15 Jan 1988

United States Air Forces in Europe to activate or inactivate at any time on or after 10 Aug 2007

401st Air Expeditionary Group, 8 Oct 2007

100th Operations Group (attached), 9 Sep 2008

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-47, 1942

A-20, 1942-1943

B-25, 1942-1943

P-39, 1942-1943; 1943-1944

P-40, 1942-1943; 1943-1944

P-51, 1942-1943; 1943-1944

L-4, 1943
C-47, 1945-1946
UC-64, 1945-1946
C-45, 1946
P-51/F-6, 1946-1947
F-6, 1947-1948
P-51B, 1947
AT-6, 1947-1949
RB-26, 1952-1956
RB-57, 1954-1957
RB-66, 1957-1965
RF-4, 1965-1987

COMMANDERS

Unkn, 2 Mar 1942-1 May 1944
Maj Walter W. Dickson, 16 Dec 1945
Maj James L. Wrathall, 2 Feb 1946
Capt John D. Walker, 3 Apr 1946 (Temporary)
Maj James L. Wrathall, 9 Apr 1946
Lt Col Harrison R. Christy Jr., 11 Apr 1946
Capt John D. Walker, 5 Jul 1946 (Temporary)
Lt Col Harrison R. Christy Jr., 9 Jul 1946
Maj James M. Williams, 30 Dec 1946 (Temporary)
Lt Col Harrison R. Christy Jr., 9 Jan 1947
Capt Charles I. Davis Jr., 20 May-20 Jun 1947
Maj James M. Williams, 26 Sep 1947
Capt Lewis A. Forman, 5 Oct 1947
Lt Col Robert T. Simpson Iv, 6 Oct 1947
Lt Col Harrison R. Christy Jr., 24 Mar 1948
Lt Col James L. Rose, 1 Jun 1948
Capt Willard L. Burghoff, Jan 1949
Capt David F. Thwaites, Jan 1949
Lt Col James L. Rose, Feb 1949
Capt David F. Thwaites, 11 Feb-30 Mar 1949
Lt Col Steven R. Wilkerson, Jul 1952
Maj William H. Laseter, 22 Sep 1953
Lt Col Steven R. Wilkerson, By Mar 1954
Lt Col John K. Graham, By Jul 1955
Maj Robert T. Hoyt, 8 Jul 1957
Lt Col Edward Ellis, May 1959
Maj Harrison Lobdell Jr., 10 Feb 1961
Maj Edward L. Scott, 19 Feb 1962
Maj Paul W. Von Wiedenfield, 23 May 1963
Maj Gerald D. Martini, 10 Jun 1964

Lt Col Charles M. Sargen, 19 Apr 1965
Lt Col John E. Buchanan, Jul 1966
Lt Col Robert R. Heaton, 16 Aug 1969
Maj Emery S. Wetzel Jr., 1 Jun 1970
Lt Col Richard H. Wolf, Jun 1973
Lt Col Donald D. Karges, 9 Jul 1974
Lt Col Leonard Andrews, 1 Jul 1975
Lt Col Lawrence W. Foley, 1 Jun 1977
Lt Col Steven J. Whittenberger, 1 Jun 1979
Lt Col Dale O. Wiener, 15 Jun 1981
Lt Col Donald S. Pickard, 1 Jul 1982
Lt Col Carl Loveland, 2 Jul 1984
Lt Col Steven A. Bryan, 18 Feb 1986-30 Jun 1987
Unknown, 1 Jul 1987-15 Jan 1988

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

31 Dec 1959-1 Jan 1962

15 Jul 1968-15 Jul 1969

1 Jun 1972-1 Jun 1973

15 Nov 1977-14 Nov 1979

1 Jun 1985-31 May 1987

EMBLEM



21 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron emblem, approved, 12 Jun 1943.



On a red disc, bordure white, a pair of binoculars in silhouette black, surmounted by a silhouette aerial bomb white, falling bend sinisterwise. (Approved, 12 Jun 1943)



21st Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron emblem: On a disc Azure, a stylized firefly Argent, eye, antennae, tail and exaggerated tail outline Or, nose Gules, grasping a camera to base of the third, all within a narrow bordure Yellow. Attached below the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "21 EXPEDITIONARY RECON SQ" in Yellow letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** 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. The firefly holding a camera symbolizes the unit's primary mission of reconnaissance. Its glowing tail is representative of the crew's ability to highlight enemy capabilities and weaknesses. The firefly's look of concentration symbolizes the crew's determination and commitment to the mission. (Approved, 20 Jul 1954, modified, 2 Nov 2010.)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Served as a replacement training unit, Dec 1942-Apr 1944. During 1945-1949, provided photographic reconnaissance for Army and Air Force agencies; photographed national cemeteries.

Provided ground, air, and naval forces with visual and photographic information concerning disposition, movement, and activity of friendly and hostile forces, 1952-1965.

Maintained combat readiness to accomplish visual, photographic, and electronic reconnaissance in support of United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Royal Air Force (RAF), 1965-1987.

RB-66B 54-421 Crashed on, take-off due to engine failure, near Skeffingham, England on 12 Dec 1959, with 4 fatalities.

RB-66B 54-430 Crashed into the North Sea during Royal Flush on 16 Mar 1961 with 3 fatalities.

RB-66B 54-460 crashed on take-off due to engine failure, at RAF Chelveston, UK, on 7 Feb 1962, with 4 fatalities, 3 survivors.

RB-66B 54-451 was shot down near Gardelegen, East Germany, on 10 Mar 1964, all crew survived.

On 6 May 1970, RF-4C 64-1018, crashed in woods at Unthank, near Dronfield in Derbyshire, England. Crew ejected over Curbar Edge in Derbyshire. The pilot, Maj Don Tokar, 37, of Colorado Springs, CO, suffers a compound leg fracture after landing in rocks. The weapons systems officer Maj Peter Dunn, 34, of Salem, Illinois, escaped with minor cuts and lacerations sustained on landing.

On 25 Aug 1977, RF-4C 66-0424, crashed in a field at Thuine, Germany, 9 nm north of Rheine-Hopsten Air Base, from which it had just departed. Both crew perished and Capt. Alan Aertker, weapons systems officer is credited with remaining with the aircraft rather than ejecting to avoid devastation of the village. No civilians were injured or killed in the crash and citizens of Thuine erected a monument near the crash site.