

7 SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

7 Special Operations Squadron operates the MC-130H Combat Talon II. 7 SOS execute night, adverse weather, intercontinental insertion, extraction and resupply operations into hostile, denied or politically sensitive areas. The 7 SOS also supports noncombatant evacuation and humanitarian relief operations. The Combat Talon II is employed using a combination of terrain-following radar, high precision avionics and sensors, as well as electronic countermeasures.

LINEAGE

27 Observation Squadron constituted, 1 Jul 1942

Activated, 17 Jul 1942

Redesignated 27 Reconnaissance Squadron [Fighter], 2 Apr 1943

Redesignated 27 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 11 Aug 1943

Disbanded, 30 Nov 1943

167 Liaison Squadron activated, 19 Feb 1945 by special authority prior to constitution, 1 Mar 1945

Inactivated, 3 Oct 1946

7 Air Commando Squadron, Composite constituted and activated, 14 May 1964

Organized, 1 Jul 1964

Redesignated 7 Special Operations Squadron, 15 Jul 1968

27 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron reconstituted, 19 Sep 1985

27 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 167 Liaison Squadron and 7 Special Operations Squadron consolidated, 19 Sep 1985. Consolidated squadron retains 7 Special Operations Squadron designation.

STATIONS

Godman Field, KY, 17 Jul 1942
Alamo Airfield, TX, 15 Oct 1942
Abilene Airfield, TX, 9 Apr 1943
Esler Field, LA, 13 Sep 1943
Birmingham AAB, AL, 14–30 Nov 1943
Vittel, France, 19 Feb 1945
Kaiserslautern, Germany, 5 Apr 1945
Pfaffengrund, Germany, 14 Apr 1945
Darmstadt, Germany, 10 Jun–2 Jul 1945
Drew Field, FL, 4 Aug 1945
Muskogee AAFld, OK, 1 Sep 1945
Marshall Field, KS, 1 Nov 1945–3 Oct 1946
Sembach AB, Germany, 1 Jul 1964
Ramstein AB, Germany, 15 Aug 1968
Rhein-Main AB, Germany, 15 Mar 1973
RAF Alconbury, England, 1 Oct 1992

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Incirlik AB, Turkey, 13 Jan–18 Mar 1991 and 6 Apr–14 May 1991
Rhein-Main AB, Germany, 22 Feb–22 Mar 1993

ASSIGNMENTS

77 Observation (later, 77 Reconnaissance 77 Tactical Reconnaissance) Group, 17 Jul 1942–30 Nov 1943
Ninth Air Force, 19 Feb 1945 (attached to Sixth Army Group to 14 Jun 1945)
XII Tactical Air Command, 20 May 1945
US Forces, European Theater, 15 Jul 1945
Third Air Force, 4 Aug 1945
XIX Tactical Air Command, 21 Jan 1946
Tactical Air Command, 21 Mar 1946
Ninth Air Force, 28 Mar–3 Oct 1946
United States Air Forces in Europe, 14 May 1964
Seventeenth Air Force, 1 May 1967
26 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 17 Nov 1972
86 Tactical Fighter Wing, 31 Jan 1973
322 Tactical Airlift Wing, 15 Mar 1973
Seventeenth Air Force, 30 Jun 1975

601 Tactical Control Wing, 15 Oct 1975
7575 Operations Group, 1 Jul 1977
2 Air Division, 1 Mar 1983
39 Aerospace Rescue & Recovery (later, 39 Special Operations) Wing, 1 Feb 1987
352 Special Operations Group, 1 Dec 1992

ATTACHMENTS

Joint Special Operations Task Force, 13 Jan–18 Mar 1991 and 6 Apr–14 May 1991
Joint Special Operations Task Force, 22 Feb–22 Mar 1993

WEAPON SYSTEMS

O–47
L–1
L–4
P–39, 1942
L–4, 1945
L–5, 1945
C–47, 1964
C–123, 1964
U–10, 1964
C–130, 1968
UH–1, 1971
MC–130, 1977
MC-130H

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Colonel Albert M. Elton II, 2005-2007

HONORS

Service Streamers

World War II American Theater

Campaign Streamers

World War II

Rhineland

Central Europe

Southwest Asia

Defense of Saudi Arabia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device
14 Jan–23 Mar 1991

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

15 Sep 1964–15 Aug 1966

16 Aug 1966–15 Jul 1968

17 Mar–30 Jun 1972

1 Aug 1976–30 Jun 1978

1 Jul 1978–30 Jun 1979

1 Jul 1981–30 Jun 1983

1 Jul 1983–30 Jun 1985

1 Jul 1985–30 Jun 1986

1 Jul 1989–30 Jun 1991

24 Mar 1991–31 Jul 1992

1 Aug 1992–31 Jul 1993

EMBLEM



27 Observation Squadron emblem approved, 28 Dec 1942



7 Special Operations Squadron emblem: On a Light Blue disc within a Brown border, issuing from base a Blue demi-sphere grid lined and rimmed White, surmounted by a Yellow lightning flash and sword forming a saltire and supporting a Yellow eagle displayed with wings inverted, White head and tail, all detailed Brown. (Approved, 11 Jan 1965)

On a disc Celeste, issuing from base a demi-sphere Azure, edged and gridlined Argent, surmounted by a stylized eagle displayed wings inverted Or, head and tail of the third, grasping a lightning bolt and sword saltirewise of the fourth, points to base, all fimbriated and detailed Brün (Gold Brown); all within a narrow border Brown.

Attached below the disc, a White scroll edged with a narrow Brown border and inscribed “7 SOS” in Brown 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 eagle with wings spread over the globe signifies flight and mission capability to any point in the world. The sword and lightning bolt (from Special Forces) suggests that the 7 Air Commando Squadron (Composite) is the wings for Unconventional Warfare. Alone, the sword denotes strength, power and righteousness. (Approved, 3 Oct 2018)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Aerial support for training ground forces, Jul 1942–Nov 1943.

Courier operations in ETO, 10 Mar–May 1945.

Special operations training, May 1964.

On 3 April 1969 the squadron experienced the loss of one of its two C-47 43-39540 and its crew. Maj Paul C. Jones was the instructor pilot, Capt Randolph S. Crammer was the copilot, and SSgt Donald J. Bissell was the flight engineer. The aircraft was on an instrument training flight and had departed Sembach AB for Ramstein AB when the accident occurred. From eyewitness accounts, the plane entered a steep nose low spin at approximately 1,700 feet and impacted the ground. Post-crash investigation revealed that the vertical stabilizer on the C-47 had collapsed, thus putting the aircraft into a condition from which the crew could not recover.

26 April 1982 SFC Clifford Wilson Strickland is picked up by an MC-130 of the 7 Special Operations Squadron at CFB Lahr, Germany, during Flintlock 82 exercise, using Fulton STARS recovery system, but falls to his death reportedly due faulty equipment. This will be the last ever attempt to utilize the Skyhook system.

Supported Coalition forces in Southwest Asia conflict, Jan–Mar 1991; later resupplied Kurds in Northern Iraq.

On 31 March 2005, at approximately 1805Z, an MC-130H, S/N 87-00127, crashed in a remote location approximately 50 nautical miles southeast of Tirana, Albania. The aircraft, assigned to the 7 Special Operations Squadron, of the 352nd Special Operations Group, RAF Mildenhall, UK, was on a training mission as part of a Joint Combined Exercise Training authorized by Special Operations Command Europe. All nine crewmembers on board the aircraft were killed in the mishap. There were no passengers. The aircraft and all associated equipment were damaged beyond repair. Since the crash occurred in a remote location, there were no civilian injuries and no damage to other government or private property. The Mishap Aircraft, call sign WRATH 11, was one of 2 MC-130Hs and one MC-130P flying training missions in Albanian airspace. The

planned mission profile included training in night mountainous NVG (Night-Vision Goggle) and Terrain Following/ Terrain Avoidance low-levels, airdrops, Self-Contained Approaches and NVG landings at Gjader Airfield in northern Albania. While conducting NVG low-level operations at an altitude of approximately 1100 feet above sea level over 800-foot-high terrain, the Mishap Crew did not identify and utilize what would have been the necessary start climbing point to climb over a 5500 foot saddle that was the controlling terrain along that leg of their flight. At approximately 1 minute and 20 seconds before impact, the Mishap Navigator (MN) pointed out the terrain and expressed his concern about their ability to climb over it. The Mishap Pilot (MP) then initiated a climb with a reduced power setting. During this period, despite realizing their situation, the Mishap Crew did not utilize all available power. The Mishap Co-Pilot (MCP) turned on the Terrain Following (TF) system and immediately received an obstacle warning. While still in a low power management condition, in an attempt to fly out of the situation, the Mishap Pilot began to turn the aircraft to the right, continuing to lose speed, ultimately stalling the aircraft approximately 200 feet above the terrain. The Mishap Aircraft impacted the ground near a ridgeline at approximately 5700 feet above sea level. The Accident Investigation Board (AIB) President found by clear and convincing evidence that the accident was caused by a loss of situational awareness on the part of the entire Flight Deck Crew that placed the aircraft in a low energy climb situation with respect to the surrounding mountainous terrain. In responding to this situation, the Mishap Crew failed to use all available power and stalled the aircraft during the final turning climb, resulting in a loss of aircraft control and almost immediate impact with the terrain. The AIB President further found that additional factors contributed to the mishap, including the Mishap Crew's failure to identify, brief, and fly appropriate start climb points, as required by standard NVG low-level procedures; the MP and MCP's focus on terrain masking, vice terrain avoidance; the transfer of navigation duties from the MN to the Mishap Electronic Warfare Officer and the failure of the MN to make timely navigation inputs during the crucial leg of the flight; the overestimation of the aircraft's climb capabilities based upon negative transference by the crew of their experiences in less severe terrain; and low visibility due to unexpected and unpredicted clouds and the very low level of illumination.

Cpt Todd Bracy, 34, of Murphysboro, IL

Cpt James Cronin, 32, of Elk Grove Village, IL

Cpt Gil Williamson, 31, of Dike, TX

Cpt Surender Kothakota, 30, of Fayetteville, NC

1LT Ray Owens Jr., 32, of Birmingham, AL

Chief Master Sgt. Lawrence Gray, 40, of Chester, SC

Tech. Sgt. James Henry, 30, of Valparaiso, FL

Tech. Sgt. Glenn Lastes, 39, of Southington, CT (Detachment 2, 25th Intelligence Operations Squadron)

Staff Sgt. Patrick Pentico, 32, of Hanksville, UT

Air Force Special Operations Command sent a CV-22B from the United States to Mildenhall AB, Britain, for beddown there as part of the 7 Special Operations Squadron. This CV-22 is the first of 10 that the squadron will operate. All 10 are scheduled to be in place by the end of 2014. The vehicle left for Mildenhall on June 21. Also on that day, Mildenhall officials held the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the base's new CV-22 simulator facility. 2013

The Air Force no longer has any of its MC-130H special-mission aircraft based in Europe following the departure earlier this month of the last MC-130H that was assigned to the 7 Special Operations Squadron at RAF Mildenhall, Britain. This Combat Talon II aircraft, tail number 0195, left Mildenhall on Jan. 8. "It's a somber occasion. What you'll see today is a real quiet and respectful departure because we understand the mission will never be the same as the 7 evolves into a new aircraft," said Col. Matthew Powell, vice commander of the Joint Special Operations Air Component–Europe. That new airplane is the CV-22 tiltrotor platform. The MC-130Hs that left Mildenhall are joining the 15th SOS at Hurlburt Field, Fla. The Defense Department earlier this month announced plans to close Mildenhall. As part of the move, Mildenhall's 352nd Special Operations Group, which includes the 7 SOS, is set to relocate to Germany. 2015

USAF Unit Histories

Created: 19 Nov 2010

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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.

USAF Accident Investigation Board Reports.