

6987th SECURITY SQUADRON

1977 A longtime USAFSS unit, the 6987 SS at Shu Lin Kou AS, Taiwan, inactivated on 1 April.

Two years of negotiations between the U.S. and the Turkish governments failed to reach an agreement to reopen the 6933 SG at Karamursel. On 1 October, the unit inactivated. 1977

On 26 August, USAFSS sent a unit to Taiwan to augment the 6987th Radio Squadron, Mobile located at Shu Lin Kou Air Station, Taiwan, due to the increased tension in the Taiwan Straits created by the Chinese shelling of Quemoy. 1958

6987th Shulinkou AS, Taiwan (Deact 4-1-77)

LINEAGE

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

USAFSS Far East Major Reorganization — 1958-59

Organizationally, USAFSS forces in the Far East were relatively stable in 1957; then came some major modifications. After two brief years, in 1958 the 6925th Radio Group Mobile reverted back to being 6925th Radio Squadron Mobile, reporting to the 6922nd ROM, Ashiya Air Base. In a related action,

Det 1, 6925th RGM became the 6987th Radio Squadron Mobile. Other squadrons that USAFSS activated in the Far East in 1958 included: 6989th Radio Squadron Mobile and 6989th Support Squadron (Misawa), 6986th RSM (Wakkanai), 6918th RSM (Brady Air Base, Japan), and 6929th RSM (Osan AB, Korea). Concurrent with the stand-up of the 6986th, Wakkanai-based Det 2, 6921st RGM deactivated. The 6986th and 6989th RSM's and 6989th Support Squadron reported to the 6921st Radio Group. In 1959, Air Force Security Service returned Ashiya and Shiroy Air Bases to Japanese control— dispersing affected resources to other USAFSS units per a negotiated Japanese-American agreement.²¹⁴ Operations at Misawa was discussed earlier.

On 1 November 1958, the 6920th Security Wing relocated from Shiroy AB to Wheeler AFB, Hawaii.²¹⁵ Two days later, the wing's 6922nd Radio Group Mobile ceased operations at Ashiya. On 15 January 1959, the wing reactivated the 6922nd RGM on Kadena Air Base with one officer and one airman assigned. Additional resources arrived in the new 6922nd RGM later in the year.²¹⁶ In May 1959, some of the 6922nd personnel, equipment and mission (intercept and first echelon reporting functions) relocated from Ashiya to the 6927th RSM, Onna Point, Okinawa. Other Ashiya-based USAFSS resources transferred to the new 6918th RSM on Kyushu and 6989th RSM at Misawa.

The 6902nd Spec Comm Group (second echelon analysis and reporting) mission split regionally. The Southeast Asian mission moved into 6922nd Quonset huts by the golf course on Kadena, while the Soviet mission relocated into a former old mess hall on Misawa Air Base as part of the 6921st Radio Group Mobile. This latter group moved up to Security Hill on Misawa after contractors completed the new 6921st operations building in late 1959.²¹⁷ Reconstituted at Kadena, the 6922nd functioned there until 1965.

By November 1959, the 6902nd comm group had vacated Shiroy. Former traffic analyst Philip Kivett was among 6902nd analysts and Chinese and Korean linguists who relocated to Kadena in October. Still assigned to the 6902nd with a permanent change of station, they reported for duty with the 6922 RGM at Kadena.²¹⁸ Upon arrival on Okinawa, new military orders officially transferred the men to the 6922nd RGM.²¹⁹ Combining the 6922nd and 6902nd missions, the 6920th Security Wing deactivated the 6902nd Special Comm Group on 1 December 1959.²²⁰

Meanwhile, the 6925th RSM at Clark Air Base was acquiring expanded capabilities to keep abreast of increased air activity in Southeast Asia. An addition to the 6925th operations building in 1959-1960 accommodated a gradual buildup in unit resources and tasking.

FAR EAST USAFSS REORG IN 1962

On 1 October 1961, Air Force Security Service initiated a global reorganization with the elevation of its 6900th Security Wing in Germany to the European Security Region. Similar actions occurred in the Far East on 1 September 1962 when the 6920th Security Wing became Pacific Security Region at Wheeler AFB, Hawaii. Creation of ESR and PSR made possible multiple USAFSS wings in Europe and the Far East. Thus, on 1 September 1962 the 6921st and 6922nd Security Wings stood up at Misawa, Japan, and Kadena, Okinawa, respectively. A month later, the 6921st Security Wing activated the 6986th Radio Group Mobile at Wakkanai, while inactivating the 6986th RSM. Likewise, the

6922nd Security Wing elevated the 6925th and 6987th RSM's to groups (6925th ROM and 6987th RGM).

6987 RSM — SHU LIN Kou, TAIWAN

Bernard Ardisana (Brig. Gen. USAF, retired) and Paul Tisdale (Col. USAF, retired)—both deceased—had direct roles in creating Shu Lin Kou Air Station. In late 1953, Tisdale located a suitable site and obtained diplomatic approval from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to set up a "radar station" on an abandoned airfield near Nan Szu Pu, Taiwan. The facility sat atop an 834-foot high mountain 20 miles northwest of the Taiwanese capital of Taipei.

In mid-1954, then Lt. Col. Tisdale and Capt. Ardisana (29th RSM assistant operations officer)²⁴⁸ headed a Detachment 3, 29th RSM team that deployed to the barren field. Arriving with an air surveillance radar set, intercept receivers, recorders and antennas, they pitched their tents and set up two vans—one for intercept and one for direction finding. Not used operationally, the radar set served as camouflage for the unit's COMINT mission. Visiting the site later, Tisdale noted a handmade sign designating the facility "Camp Tisdale." He thanked the airmen for the honor, but had them remove the sign. Detachment 3 became Detachment 1 of the 6925th Radio Squadron Mobile in May 1955.

The main road from Taipei was paved, but after turning off towards the mountain, there was an unpaved road to the site that turned into deep mud in rainy weather. In 2001, former USAFSS officer Jack Tress, who arrived in Det 1, 6925th RSM in mid-1955, recalled local conditions in the early days.

The site -was located on an old WWII Japanese airstrip. There was a small village, Nan Szu Pu, a few hundred yards away with a few basic bars and B-girls. Quite a bit of the time, this milage was off-limits because of sanitation and black market activity. The DF site -was outside of the compound, probably 100-200yards away.²⁴⁹

When I arrived in June of 1955, all personnel were housed in 8-man squad tents. The only "permanent-type" buildings were the mess hall, the two ops buildings, and the comm center (although this may have been a trailer). There was also a little round building that served as the A. P. shack and entrance to the ops compound. The orderly room and supply room were tents. I know because in addition to being an intelligence officer, I was also adjutant and supply officer. Jack Tress also remembers long trips to use their "potty."

The latrine was a slit trench over which were wooden seats, and the whole thing was inside a tent. It was located a fair distance from the quarters, and that became a long distance if you were in a hurry. Periodically a new trench had to be dug and the latrine moved.

An outhouse replaced the slit trenches. The entire facility later became Shu Lin Kou Air Station,

named after the nearby village of Linkou. In succeeding years, Shu Lin Kou had a helipad but no runway. The Army's 176th ASA Company joined Det 3 of 29th Radio at Nan Szu Pu on 16 February 1955. 250 Naval Security Group Activity joined the USAFSS and ASA teams at Shu Lin Kou in June 1957. 25' Conditions improved during Tress' tour.

In the late summer or early fall of '55, they finally provided some better living facilities. They built several buildings, sized 20' x 60' with metal walls and roof and a concrete slab for the floor. The only heating was by one potbelly stove in the middle of the building. These buildings were used as barracks, and they even allowed the officers to have one for a BOQ.

A very small BX (base exchange) on Shu Lin Kou offered a limited choice of toiletries and cigarettes—cigarette brand was often limited to Old Gold. The Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) BX in Taipei had a better selection and together with Air Task Force 13 (ATF-13), provided logistic and administrative support for those stationed at Shu Lin Kou. The best place in Taipei to eat was the Grand Hotel, owned by Madame Chiang (Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's wife). Meals were cheap, with drinks generally more expensive than meals.

Shu Lin Kou Air Station was famous throughout the years—not only within USAFSS, but Air Force-wide for its outstanding dining hall. The SLK dining hall won the Air Force's coveted Hennessy Trophy as best-of-the-best dining facility in the Air Force in 1968, 1969, 1973 and 1974. 253 The Air Force considered Shu Lin Kou's 15 month tour of duty a remote assignment. Yet, many considered it the best-kept secret in the Air Force—the most coveted duty station in Asia.

Det 1, 6925th Radio Squadron Mobile became Detachment 1, 6925th Radio Group Mobile on 1 July 1956. Following his assignment on Taiwan in 1955-56, Al High remained in SIGINT, initially in USAFSS and later with the National Security Agency. Now retired, he lives on a golf course in North Carolina. Ironically, having been one of the pioneers at the site on Taiwan in 1956, Al was on temporary duty at Shu Lin Kou in 1977 when USAFSS SIGINT operations ceased at the intercept site.

6987th RSM Activated

Detachment 1, 6925th Radio Group Mobile was going strong in the spring of 1957 when Major Robert F. Stark took command of the unit. Arriving at Clark Air Base in April, Maj. Stark continued to Taiwan after a few days of orientation in 6925th Radio. His appraisal of Shu Lin Kou upon arrival is well stated.

Although some so-called Chinese Quonsets had been built for the airmen who were double-decked ... the place looked like a bad dream. We had to haul in water and were solely dependent on ATF 13P (Air Task Force 13, Provisional), which did not have much logistical capability as it too had recently come to Taiwan during an emergency situation (the Taiwan Straits conflict).

Faced with the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1954-55, the United States and the Republic of China expedited activation of Shu Lin Kou as an intelligence-gathering facility without a negotiated written agreement. Thus, with no documented base rights with the ROC and no support agreements when Maj. Stark arrived, he found the detachment "left out in the cold as far as who should provide the unit logistical support."

And having units of USAFSS, ASA and Naval Security Group colocated at SLK caused inherent interservice rivalry problems— who owned the station, who was host unit and who were the tenants? According to Stark, ATF 13P provided a military liaison officer, "but he was more of a hindrance than help." As recalled by Maj. Stark in 1999, most logistics problems finally worked themselves out with the assignment of Lt. Col. Glen Stitt as ATF 13P liaison officer.

Things really began to take a turn for the better -when Maj. Gen. [Gordon] Blake took over USAFSS, and Col. [James R] McNitt (later B/Gen) took over the 6920th SW (Security Wing) at Shiroi (Japan). After Gen. Blake's visit to Linkou and upon his return to the HQ, we were overrun with visitors from HQ USAFSS, NSA, and even the Pentagon and State Department.

Negotiations for a base rights agreement with the Chinese resulted in the establishment of Shu Lin Kou Air Station with the Air Force as host unit and USAFSS, ASA and NSG as tenants. On 1 July 1958, USAFSS activated the 6987th Radio Squadron Mobile at SLK with Stark as commander.254 Det 1, 6925th RGM was deactivated, and Major Stark reported to Col. McNitt (6920th wing CC). On 1 July 1959 as USAFSS assumed control of several bases worldwide, the 6987th RSM took control of Shu Lin Kou Air Station. ASA and NSG remained tenant organizations on station. Ironically, on Maj. Stark's recommendation, Lt. Col. Stitt (ATF 13 liaison officer) became the 6987th commander when Stark's tour of duty ended at SLK.

I.H.T.F.P.

*Any "G.I." who's served a hardship tour—and Shu Lin Kou certainly qualified—is familiar with the epithet "I hate this f—ing place" (I.H.T.F.P.). Major Robert Stark did not coin the phrase, but he used a related event in 1957 to turn around squadron morale and boost his standing with assigned airmen. Considered by many the 6987th's best and most popular commander ever, in 2001 80-year-old retired Colonel Robert Stark shared in his own words, "Shades of Catch 22 and M*A*S*H or I.H.T.F.P.*

makes light of the trials and tribulations of a unit working and living under less than desirable conditions.

So in the final analysis, Major Burns, without ever realizing it and certainly being unintentional, contributed greatly to the morale of Linkou.

After the 6987th RSM, Major Stark served as ops officer at Wakkanai and commanded USAFSS units at Berlin, Iraklion, Goodfellow AFB and HQ USAFSS, retiring as a colonel after 33 years service. When the author chatted with Colonel Stark in February 2009, he chuckled at my request to include his IHTFP anecdote in this USAFSS history.

Oh, you mean the one about that "crazy" major at Shu Lin Kou? Of course, you can; we don't reveal his real name. He 's just Major Burns.

Col. Stark is proud that the 6987th became one of Air Force Security Service's premier organizations and laughed out loud when I mentioned the unit's best dining hall awards.

Yeah, the Hennessy Awards! But, it wasn't that way in 1957; you remember those metal serving trays from World War II that we used. I'll never forget walking into the mess hall late at night upon arrival. The roof leaked, the cook was drunk, and a server was passed out behind the serving line. I thought, "What have I gotten myself into? "

At 89 years young, Col. Stark's mind remained sharp and his voice strong. Having served under him in the 6986th Radio Group Mobile, Wakkanai, Japan, in 1962-63, the author rates Colonel Stark "A-# 1." In belated news, the author learned that Col. Stark passed away in San Antonio, Texas, on 2 November 2009 RIP Sir!

6987th RGM/6987th SS

In 1962, the 6987th RSM became the 6987th Radio Group Mobile. The following year (1 July 1963), the unit was redesignated the 6987th Security Group.

6987th— Final Years at Shu Lin Kou

On 1 July 1974, the 6987th Security Group reverted back to the 6987th Security Squadron. The 6987th SS continued operations at Shu Lin Kou until 1977 when USAFSS quietly left Taiwan. As a precondition for diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, the United States agreed to end formal diplomatic ties with the Taiwanese government and remove U.S. forces from the island.

The former American Embassy in Taipei became the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), while cooperation between the United States and the Republic of China (Taiwan) continued under a multitude of guises. Civilians—former U.S. military technicians working under contract with the ROC government—continued SIGINT collection operations at Shu Lin Kou until about 1985 when the mission transferred to Yangmingshan, northeast of Taipei.²⁵⁶

Two decades earlier (1965), other major changes affected USAFSS operations in Okinawa and the Philippines. With detached units in Vietnam and Thailand, hostilities were heating up in Southeast Asia—discussed later.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources