



FACT SHEET

12TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

Mission

The mission of the 12th is to launch and recover the MQ-9 Reaper aircraft enabling operational employment by conventional and special operations Mission Control Element (MCE) squadrons. To avoid the inherent delay in transmitting commands through satellite communications to RPAs from distant stations, the squadron deploys to locations where it can control the aircraft during takeoff and landing using line of sight communications. This minimizes risk during critical flight operations, while permitting mission operations to be performed from remote locations. The 12th maintains unique equipment and training enabling a rapid deployment capability affording Combatant Commanders with an in extremis MQ-9 capability to respond to crises around the globe.



Background

World War II

The 12th Special Operations Squadron was first activated at Selfridge Field, Michigan as the 12th Pursuit Squadron, one of the original squadrons of the 50th Pursuit Group in January 1941 when the United States expanded its military forces on the eve of World War II. After training with Seversky P-35s and Curtiss P-36 Hawks, the squadron moved with its parent 50th Pursuit Group to Key Field, Mississippi in October, where it began to equip with Curtiss P-40 Warhawks. It was located there when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 8.

Responding to the critical need for fighters in the Pacific, in February 1942 the squadron deployed to Christmas Island. The 12th flew patrols over the Pacific from Christmas Island between February and October 1942. During this time the squadron was equipped with P-39 and P-400 aircraft. It began combat operations from Fighter Strip No.2 on Guadalcanal on 19 November 1942, moving to Guadalcanal in February. The squadron was subsequently equipped with P-38 Lightning aircraft. The squadron participated in Operation Vengeance, the successful operation to kill Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto of the Imperial Japanese Navy on April 18, 1943. Combat operations continued until 14 August 1945 from Moret (and from Puerto Princesa Airfield between 26 April and 11 May 1945).

Following the surrender of Japan, the squadron remained in the Philippines.

Korean War

When the North Korean People's Army crossed the 38th parallel to invade South Korea in June 1950, Far East Air Forces looked to its resources in the Philippines to reinforce its forces in Korea

and the squadron was moved from the Philippines to Taegu Air Base in late July. However, as United Nations forces withdrew into the Pusan Perimeter, the squadron was forced to move to Ashiya Air Base, Japan eleven days after arriving in the theater of war, after flying only a handful of missions from Taegu with North American P-51 Mustangs. The following month it returned to Korea and Pusan East (K-9) Air Base.

After the Inchon Landings, United Nations forces rapidly moved north and the squadron was able to establish a detachment at Pyongyang East Air Base on 5 November 1950, with the entire squadron arriving just over two weeks later. However, Chinese intervention in Korea forced the squadron to withdraw in December, first to Suwon Air Base, then to Chinhae Air Base (although a detachment of the squadron continued to operate from Suwon until 4 January 1951). Part of the squadron resumed Suwon operations again on 24 March 1951, while another part flew out of Pusan West Air Base Suwon operations lasted until 4 May 1951, while those in Pusan lasted only until 23 April.

Although still stationed at Chinhae, The squadron operated from Seoul Air Base, closer to the front lines, from 8 May to 9 August 1951 and again from 18 August until 30 September, after which it began operations at Hoengseong Air Base. It moved entirely to Hoengseong on 2 June 1952.

It continued to fly combat missions in Korea from until 8 January 1953 and again, after re-equipping with the North American F-86 Sabre, from 25 February to 27 July 1953.

Vietnam War

The 12th deployed to Vietnam twice in 1965, first from 1 February to March 1965 and 15 June to 25 August 1965. It supported air defense alert capability in Southeast Asia between 1968 and 1972.

The squadron stood alert in South Korea from 23 January to 13 June 1968, after the seizure of the USS Pueblo by North Korea.

Operations in the Pacific

The squadron was unmanned and unequipped from May 1972 until November 1975. It remanned and reequipped with McDonnell F-4 Phantom II aircraft in late November 1975. Through 1980, it flew offensive and defensive exercises in support of its wing, the 313th Air Division, and Pacific Air Forces. It converted to McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle aircraft in 1980. In 1981, the 12th earned the Hughes Trophy in recognition as the outstanding fighter squadron in the USAF.

On 5 November 1999, the squadron moved without personnel or equipment to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska where it joined the 3d Wing on 28 April 2000. Between 2000 and 2008, it performed offensive and defensive counter-air missions with current air-to-air weaponry, including night vision goggles (NVG), to achieve air superiority in support of taskings from 3 Wing.

At Elmendorf Air Force Base, the squadron employed the F-15C air superiority fighter in global expeditionary support of war-fighting commands. The squadron was inactivated in September 2006, due the Base Realignment and Closure of 2005.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft

The 12th was redesignated the 12th Special Operations Squadron and activated at Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico to operate the MQ-1 and MQ-9 from forward deployed locations during critical flight maneuvers. It absorbed the personnel and equipment of a small detachment that had been performing the same mission at Cannon since October 2013. The squadron is the first of its kind in the United States Air Force, and is being considered as a model for similar units by Air Combat Command.

Lineage

Constituted as 12 Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) on 20 Nov 1940. Activated on 15 Jan 1941. Redesignated as: 12 Fighter Squadron on 15 May 1942; 12 Fighter Squadron, Two Engine, on 26 Jan 1944; 12 Fighter Squadron, Single Engine, on 6 May 1946; 12 Fighter Squadron, Jet, on 23 Dec 1949; 12 Fighter-Bomber Squadron on 20 Jan 1950; 12 Tactical Fighter Squadron on 1 Jul 1958; 12 Fighter Squadron on 1 Oct 1991. Inactivated on 30 Sep 2007. Redesignated as 12 Special Operations Squadron on 10 Feb 2015. Activated on 12 Feb 2015.

Assignments

50 Pursuit (later, 50 Fighter) Group, 15 Jan 1941 (attached to 7 Interceptor [later, VII Fighter] Command, 10 Feb–17 Aug 1942); 15 Fighter Group, 18 Aug 1942; US Army Forces in South Pacific, 1 Dec 1942; XIII Fighter Command, 13 Jan 1943; 18 Fighter (later, 18 Fighter-Bomber) Group, 30 Mar 1943 (attached to Air Task Group 5, Provisional, 27 Jan–19 Feb 1955; Air Task Force 13, Provisional, c. 3 Sep–30 Nov 1955; 49 Fighter-Bomber Group, 7 Aug 1956–14 Mar 1957; 18 Fighter-Bomber Wing, 15 Mar–15 Aug 1957; Thirteenth Air Force, 16 Aug–1 Sep 1957); Thirteenth Air Force, 2 Sep 1957; 18 Fighter-Bomber (later, 18 Tactical Fighter) Wing, 25 Mar 1958 (attached to 2 Air Division, 1 Feb–15 Mar 1965 and 15 Jun–25 Aug 1965; 314 Air Division, 23–29 Jan 1968); 18 Tactical Fighter Group, 1 May 1978; 18 Tactical Fighter Wing, 11 Feb 1981; 18 Operations Group, 1 Oct 1991; 3 Operations Group, 28 Apr 2000–30 Sep 2007. 27 Special Operations Group, 12 Feb 2015-.

Stations

Selfridge Field, MI, 15 Jan 1941; Key Field, MS, 3 Oct 1941–c. 19 Jan 1942; Cassidy Field, Christmas Island, 10 Feb 1942, Palmyra Island, 22 Oct 1942; Efate Island, New Hebrides, 19 Nov 1942 (operated from Fighter Strip No. 2, Guadalcanal, 19 Dec 1942–6 Feb 1943); Fighter Strip No. 2 (later, Kukum Field), Guadalcanal, 7 Feb 1943 (operated from Treasury Island, Solomon Islands, 19 Feb–Aug 1944); Mar Drome, Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea, 23 Aug 1944 (air echelon operated from Guadalcanal, Aug 1944; a portion of the squadron operated from Morotai, 8 Nov 1944–10 Jan 1945); Lingayen, Luzon, 13 Jan 1945; Hill Strip, San Jose, Mindoro, 27 Feb 1945 (rear echelon operated from Lingayen, 28 Feb–4 Apr 1945 and became the advance echelon at Moret Field, Zamboanga, Mindanao, on 24 Apr 1945; an air echelon operated from Puerto Princesa, Palawan, 26 Apr–11 May 1945); Moret Field, Zamboanga, Mindanao, 4 May 1945 (a detachment operated from Sanga Sanga, Sulu Archipelago, 11 Jun–Aug 1945, and another detachment operated from Tacloban, Leyte, 25–c. 30 Jul 1945); Tacloban, Leyte, 5 Nov 1945; Puerto Princesa, Palawan, 15 Feb 1946 (a detachment operated from Florida Blanca AAB, Luzon, 24 Jun–16 Jul 1946); Florida Blanca AAB, Luzon, 17 Jul 1946; Clark Field (later, AFB), Luzon, 16 Sep 1947 (operated from Johnson Field, Japan, 28 Jun–c. 11 Jul 1949); Taegu AB, South Korea, 28 Jul 1950; Ashiya AB, Japan, 8 Aug 1950; Pusan–East AB, South Korea, 8 Sep 1950 (a detachment operated from Pyongyang–East, North Korea, c. 5–19 Nov 1950); Pyongyang–East, North Korea, 20 Nov 1950; Suwon AB, South Korea, 3 Dec 1950; Chinhae, South Korea, 22 Dec 1950 (a detachment operated from Suwon AB, 22 Dec 1950–4 Jan 1951; part of the squadron operated from Suwon AB, 24 Mar–8 May 1951, and another part from Pusan–West AB, South Korea, 24 Mar–23 Apr 1951; operated from Seoul AB, South Korea, 8 May–9 Aug 1951 and 19 Aug–30 Sep 1951; operated from Hoengsong, South Korea, 1 Oct 1951–1 Jun 1952); Hoengsong, South Korea, 2 Jun 1952; Osan–ni AB, South Korea, 11 Jan 1953; Kadena AB, Okinawa, 30 Oct 1954 (operated from Yonton Auxiliary AB, Okinawa, 10 Nov–11 Dec 1954; deployed at Tainan AB, Formosa, 27 Jan–19 Feb 1955 and c. 3 Sep–30 Nov 1955; detachment operated at Clark AB, Philippines, 1–14 Aug 1957); Clark AB, Philippines, 15 Aug 1957; Kadena AB, Okinawa (later, Japan), 25 Mar 1958 (deployed at Da Nang AB, South Vietnam, 1–19 Feb 1965; Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 8 Feb–15 Mar 1965 and 15 Jun–25 Aug 1965; Osan AB, South Korea, 23 Jan–13 Jun 1968); Elmendorf AFB, AK, 28 Apr 2000–30 Sep 2007. Cannon AFB, NM, 12 Feb 2015-.

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations: Philippine Islands, 10–11 Nov 1944; Korea, 3 Nov 1950–24 Jan 1951; Korea, 22 Apr–8 Jul 1951. Presidential Unit Citation: Southeast Asia, 25 Jun–25 Aug 1965. Meritorious Unit Awards: [12 Feb 2015]-30 Sep 2015; 1 Oct 2015-30 Sep 2017. Air Force

Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device: 1 Aug 1964–5 Jun 1965. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 1 Dec 1959–30 Nov 1960; 1 Sep 1962–31 Aug 1963; 6 Jun 1965–31 Dec 1966; 1 Sep 1978–30 Sep 1979; 1 Oct 1979–31 May 1980; 1 Jun 1981–31 May 1983; 1 Jun 1983–31 May 1984; 1 Jun 1984–31 May 1986; 1 Jun 1987–31 May 1989; 1 Jun 1989–31 May 1991; 1 Jun 1991–31 May 1993; 1 Jun 1993–31 Aug 1994; 1 Sep 1994–31 Aug 1995; 1 Sep 1995–31 Aug 1997; 1 Jan 2000–31 Dec 2001; 1 Jan 2002–30 Sep 2003; 1 Oct 2003–30 Sep 2005; 1 Oct 2005–1 Nov 2006; 2 Nov 2006–[30 Sep 2007]. Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII). Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citations: [28] Jul 1950–31 Jan 1951; 1 Feb 1951–31 Mar 1953. Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm: 1 Apr 1966–30 Jun 1970.

Aircraft

Seversky P-35 (1941)
Curtiss P-36 Hawk (1941)
BT-13 Valiant (1941)
Curtiss P-40 Warhawk (1941–1942)
Bell P-39 Airacobra (1942–1943, 1944)
Bell P-400 (1942–1944)
Lockheed P-38 Lightning (1943–1946)
Republic P-47 Thunderbolt (1944, 1946, 1947–1948)
North American P-51 Mustang (1946–1947, 1948–1950, 1950–1953)
Lockheed P-80 Shooting Star (1946, 1949–1950)
North American F-86 Sabre (1953–1956)
Republic F-84 Thunderjet (1956–1957)
North American F-100 Super Sabre (1957–1958, 1958–1963)
Republic F-105 Thunderchief (1962–1972)
McDonnell F-4 Phantom II (1975–1980)
McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle (1980–2008)
General Atomics MQ-1 Predator (2013–2015)
General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper (2015–