



FACT SHEET

16TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

Mission

The 16th Special Operations Squadron (16 SOS), currently stationed at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M, flies the AC-130W Stinger II gunship, a heavily armed variant of the C-130H Hercules designed for close air support, armed reconnaissance, interdiction, night search and rescue, and airborne command and control. The AC-130W uses a complex weapons suite to employ 30mm and 105mm guns, as well as AGM-176 Griffin missiles and GBU-39 Small Diameter Bombs. The unique gun fire control system, along with two MX-20 sensors, allow the crew to simultaneously engage two targets geographically separated by up to one kilometer with separate guns. A comprehensive precision strike package gives the crew a standoff capability to employ missiles or bombs before moving into the gun orbit, enabling the ultimate flexibility in dynamic operations.



The 16 SOS trains and maintains its combat-ready force to provide highly accurate firepower in support of both conventional and unconventional forces anywhere in the world.

Background

16th Ferrying Squadron (constituted as 16th Air Corps Ferrying Squadron on 18 Feb 1942; activated on 16 Apr 1942; redesignated as 16th Ferrying Squadron on 12 May 1943; disbanded on 1 Apr 1944; reconstituted on 19 Sep 1985) consolidated (19 Sep 1985) with the 16th Combat Cargo Squadron (constituted on 9 Jun 1944; activated on 13 Jun 1944; inactivated on 29 Dec 1945; disbanded on 8 Oct 1948; reconstituted on 19 Sep 1985) and the 16th Special Operations Squadron (constituted on 11 Oct 1968; activated on 30 Oct 1968). Consolidated unit retained designation as 16th Special Operations Squadron.

Aircraft

Various tactical and support aircraft, 1942–1944. C–47, 1944, 1945; C–46, 1944–1945. AC–130H, 1968-2015. AC-130W, 2015–

Assignments

Middle West Sector, Air Corps Ferrying Command (later, 5th Ferrying Group), 16 Apr 1942–1 Apr 1944. 4th Combat Cargo Group, 13 Jun 1944. Army Air Forces, India-Burma Theater, 5 Sep 1945. 4th Combat Cargo Group, c. Oct–29 Dec 1945. 8th Tactical Fighter Wing, 30 Oct 1968 (attached to 388th Tactical Fighter Wing, 19 Jul 1974–8 Dec 1975). Tactical Air Command, 8 Dec 1975. 1st Special Operations Wing, 12 Dec 1975. 1st Special Operations Group, 22 Sep 1992 (redesignated 16th Operations Group, 1 Oct 1993; then 1st Special Operations Group, 16 Nov 2006). 27th Special Operations Group, 1 Jun 2009–

Stations

Hensley Field, Grand Prairie, TX, 16 Apr 1942. Love Field, Dallas, TX, 8 Sep 1942–1 Apr 1944 . Syracuse Army Air Base, NY, 13 Jun 1944. Bowman Field, KY, 16 Aug–9 Nov 1944. Sylhet, India, 7 Dec 1944. Argartala, India, 26 Dec 1944. Chittagong, India, 31 Jan 1945. Namponmao, Burma, 11 Jun 1945. Ledo, India, 3 Sep 1945. Namponmao, Burma, Oct 1945. Ondal, India, Nov–29 Dec 1945. Ubon RTAFB, Thailand, 30 Oct 1968. Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 19 Jul 1974. Eglin AF Aux Airfield #9 (Hurlburt Field), FL, 12 Dec 1975. Cannon AFB, NM, 1 Jun 2009–

Decorations

Presidential Unit Citations: (Southeast Asia), 1 Dec 1969–1 Mar 1970; 1 Jan–1 Apr 1971.
Gallant Unit Citation: 6 Oct 2001–30 May 2003.
Meritorious Unit Awards: 1 Jul 2007–31 May 2009; 1 Jun–30 Sep 2009; 1 Oct 2009–30 Sep 2011; 1 Oct 2011–30 Sep 2013; 1 Jun 2013–30 Nov 2013; 1 Oct 2013–30 Sep 2015.
Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat “V” Device: 1 Jan–31 Dec 1970; 1 Oct 1971–31 Mar 1972; 1 Apr–22 Oct 1972; 18 Dec 1972–15 Aug 1973; 15 Oct 1974–12 May 1975; 13–15 May 1975; 1 May 1982–30 Apr 1984; 1 Jun 1997–31 May 1999; 1 Jul 2003–30 Jun 2005; 1 Sep 2006–30 Jun 2007.
Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 1 Jan 1976–31 Mar 1977; 15 Jul 1979–15 May 1980; 16 May 1980–30 Apr 1982; 1 May 1985–30 Apr 1987; 1 May 1988–30 Apr 1990; 16 Apr 1992–15 Apr 1994; 1 Jun 1995–31 May 1997; 1 Jul 1999–30 Jun 2001; 1 Jul 2001–30 Jun 2003; 1 Sep 2004–31 Aug 2006.
Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm: 30 Oct 1968–28 Jan 1973.

Emblem

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 Spectre has been a symbol of the 16th Special Operations Squadron and the AC-130 gunship since inception in the late 1960's. The Spectre appearing at night in a “covert” manner represents the unit's special operations mission. It also represents the unit's gunship nighttime mission, to attack quickly and precisely and then vanish; much like the phantoms of folklore do. The unit's motto “Spectre” represents the nickname of the aircraft the squadron has flown since the Vietnam War and the “Spectre” symbol.