

120 WEATHER FLIGHT

MISSION

120 Weather Flight's primary mission is to provide forecasting and observing services in a tactical environment to the 163 Armored Cavalry Regiment, Montana ARNG. Upon mobilization the flight would be gained by Air Weather Service under the Military Airlift Command, and deploy with the regiment. The flight obtains administrative support from the 140 Tactical Fighter Wing, and conducts routine training at Buckley ANG Base.

LINEAGE

120 Weather Flight

STATIONS

Buckley AFB, CO

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj. Melvin C. Van Lewen
LTC William Thomas, #2001
LTC Doug Brown

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 120th Weather Flight was allotted to the state of Colorado and activated on 15 Apr 1967, commanded by LTC Crow. In 1968 the flight was activated and deployed to the Republic of Vietnam. Upon return to the States, the flight was tasked to backfill the base weather station if and when its active duty personnel were mobilized.

In Dec 1980 all ANG weather flight missions were converted to Army support and the 120th was tasked to support the 163rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, Montana Army Guard, headquartered in Bozeman, Mont.

The flight rapidly learned how to support the new mission, although there were difficulties overcoming the problems of geography (the unit is located over 700 miles from Denver) and supply (both the Air National Guard and Army Guard are responsible for providing different types of mission equipment). Personnel are both "airmen" and "soldiers," living in two worlds simultaneously.

The flight's training requirements are unique in that much time must be spent learning how to "soldier in the field," as well as performing technical weather duties. Personnel must know how to interpret topographic as well as weather maps and operate combat weapons and vehicles as well as tactical weather instruments. Tanks, helicopters and howitzer batteries are every bit as dependent on accurate weather information as fighters and bombers. While "living in the field" is not what people usually expect when joining an Air Guard weather unit, a member's first annual training exercise with the regiment at Gowen Field, Idaho, is a "baptism of fire." Sleeping under the stars, eating MREs and living in the dirt without the luxury of; daily showers is something the weather flight now takes for granted, Weather personnel must be qualified to work independently and be able to brief commanders of tank, artillery and helicopter units with accurate weather data as well as know how to defend themselves under hostile fire and care for themselves in field environments. Forecasting in the field without access to the high-tech instruments available at a regular base weather station calls for special skills.

Air Force Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.