

128th AIR CONTROL SQUADRON



LINEAGE

128th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron received federal recognition, 10 Feb 1948

Redesignated 128th Tactical Control

Redesignated 128th Air Control Squadron

STATIONS

Milwaukee, WI
Cudahy, WI
Milwaukee, WI, 1972
Camp Douglas, WI

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Maj George S. Watson
Cpt Joseph P. Lofy,
Maj William Conn
LTC Donald B. Scott, 1950
Maj Raymond E. Hren
Maj Thomas A. Ramey
Maj Raymond E. Hren
LTC Thomas A. Ramey, 1961
LTC John P. Smokowicz
LTC Wayne W. Hills
LTC Edward J. Steinbacher
LTC Richard Sotherland
LTC Robert Woodward
LTC Joel Grasse
LTC James A. Michelson

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 128 Air Control Squadron (128 ACS), Wisconsin Air National Guard, has been based at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center since October 1991. The unit is federally

recognized and maintains a worldwide readiness deployment capability providing tactical air control, data links, and data transfer in the Theater Battle Management arena.

Worldwide Deployable Air Control System: The federal mission of the 128 ACS is to maintain and operate a transportable extension of the Theater Air Control System. In this role the unit provides: (1) An air picture via data links from multiple sensors to the theater commander, (2) Radar control for offensive and defensive air operations, (3) Early warning, detection and tracking of surveillance data, (4) Personnel training and equipment maintenance to sustain a state of readiness for worldwide deployment. State Mission: Provide the Governor of Wisconsin, the capability for a highly mobile Command, Control, Computer, Communications, and Intelligence element, capable of supporting any contingency. This mission encompasses natural disaster relief, counter narcotics activities to local law enforcement agencies and support to State agencies during times of crisis.

The unit is composed of the Commander and his staff, which include the Director of Operations, Chief of Maintenance and support elements. There are 30 full-time employees with 131 Traditional Guardsmen, who organize, train, and are equipped to perform their missions as directed by the Governor of the State of Wisconsin through the Adjutant General.

The 128 ACS occupies six facilities on the Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center. The Headquarters, Maintenance and Operations, are located in a new state of the art facility. Radar Maintenance is located in a building near the radar while Vehicle Maintenance, Aerospace Ground Equipment and Material Control are collocated with Volk Field facilities sharing common resources.

The 128 ACS is a stand-alone, self supporting unit in the field. It is assigned the latest Modular Control Equipment (MCE) with Tropo Scatter Radio, satellite communications and the new Theater Deployable Communications package to accomplish its mission. Additionally, the unit is assigned numerous heavy-duty vehicles, generators and equipment for remote area operations.

The primary mission of the 128th Tactical Control Squadron is to maintain and operate a mobile forward extension of the Tactical Air Control System (TAGS). In the forward areas the Forward Air Control Post (FACP) provides early warning, detection, tracking and telling of surveillance data, providing radar control for offensive and defensive air operations in an area of responsibility. The unit is designed to meet worldwide contingency requirements.

The 128th Tactical Control Squadron is supported by the host unit, the 128th Air Refueling Group, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Its Air National Guard operational support unit is the 152nd Tactical Control Group, Hancock Field, Syracuse, New York. Air Force support comes from the 507th Tactical Control Wing, Shaw AFB, South Carolina and the 73rd Tactical Control Squadron, Myrtle Beach, S.C. The gaining command is 9th Air Force at Shaw AFB, S.C. in the Tactical Air Command.

Early in November, 1947, an officer from Tenth Air Force Headquarters was assigned to Milwaukee to assist in the formation and organization of an Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron within the newly conceived Air National Guard structure.

The job of recruiting men for this venture was difficult. Contacts were made while plans for organization continued. Meetings were held, without pay, in a single office in the old National Guard Hangar Building at Mitchell Field. By the end of November there were fifteen men working toward the goal of Federal Recognition for their young idea.

On February 10, 1948, with the assist of a few paperwork transfers to attain a total strength of 35 members, the unit was officially designated with Federal Recognition, as the 128th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron. Major George S. Watson was designed as the 128th's first Commander.

The official recognition and designation of the 128th as an Air National Guard Unit did not automatically solve all the problems which then existed or were soon to face the fledgling unit. Initial equipment authorizations were received. They consisted of two dozen enameled funnels, a horse shoeing kit and three mule packs.

The first summer training was held at Camp Williams, Wisconsin, and only fifteen men were in attendance. Yes, the road of growth for the 128th in its first few months was rough and winding but the spirit, pride and dedication of this small nucleus of the squadron was able to overcome virtually any obstacle. Deeply imbedded was the thought that they were on the ground floor of something that was destined to be big. This, and the desire to grow with it, were all the incentive this initial group needed to recruit additional members, become as deeply involved and knowledgeable in the structure of their assigned mission as possible, and instill in each other and those that followed that the 128th would be recognized for a long time.

Early in 1949, the unit would receive some tired, worn out World War II radio equipment. Radar equipment, generally the heart of an AC&W Squadron, was slow in coming, but finally an AN/TPS-2 radar set was received. Maximum range was supposed to be fifteen miles, but was more like two miles if the weather was good and you could "fudge" a little by looking out the door. The antenna was rotated with a hand crank, there was only one scope with a full four-inch viewing tube, and controlling was accomplished by dead reckoning

Annual summer training in 1949, with the unit now under command of Captain Joseph P. Lofy, saw new faces, new equipment and new techniques. It was a bigger and better unit. Strength was approaching one hundred men and proficiency had improved considerably. Hard work and dedication had paid off. The 128th was well on its way toward the accomplishment of its objectives.

Progress and change were ever present with the 128th during its growing years. In 1950, the unit came under the command of Lt Col Donald B. Scott and a Racine, Wisconsin detachment was added. Oscoda, Michigan was the summer training site and the unit had finally reached full strength.

Growth continued and proficiency improved. In the summer of 1951, the 128th, under the command of Major Raymond E. Hren, was called to active duty with the Air Force during the Korean Conflict. Assignment was an Air Defense mission at Dow AFB, Bangor, Maine.

Major Hren was transferred to Japan and Major Thomas A. Ramey replaced him as Commander of the 128th. A bit later, the radar site at Dow AFB was deactivated and in August of 1952, members of the unit were transferred to bases throughout the country and around the world. Assignments included Japan, Alaska, Greenland, Germany and Korea.

It is interesting to note that during the late summer of 1952, huge forest fires were burning about fifty miles north of Bangor. The Maine Forest Service asked the military for help. Dow AFB personnel, including airmen from the 128 AC&W Squadron, were "recruited" for several days of front line fire fighting. The 128 personnel were an easy mark for this task as the squadron was starting its deactivation phase and most of the troops were on "standby duty".

The radar site was deactivated in August 1952. All personnel were transferred to other AC&W units and USAF bases. By mid 1953, the members of the old 128 were being released from active duty.

March of 1953 saw members of the 128th beginning to be released from active duty. The requirement to serve had been fulfilled, but the squadron's growing pains had to start all over again. Without equipment — the majority of which either stayed at active duty locations or was returned to supply depots — and working in temporary facilities, approximately forty men remained to become the nucleus for the unit's present uninterrupted growth. On September 1, 1953, the 128th AC&W Squadron was again Federally Recognized as an Air National Guard Unit. A new building at General Mitchell Field, completed during the unit's active duty, became the 128th's new home. Major Hren returned from overseas to resume command of the squadron.

As the years progressed, the 128th mission assignment changed from Air Defense to the Tactical Air Command. New technologies were introduced and training emphasis turned toward a quick-reaction, highly mobile radar capability. The late '50s also brought on a specialized radar control unit (TOP) capable of precision bomb drop control. Again the 128th met the challenge. Personnel were trained and during summer training of 1959 the TOP detachment directed the dropping of their first "flour sack" bombs on a target raft anchored in Lake Michigan offshore from Camp Haven, Wisconsin.

The 1960's continued to bring change to the 128th. A change in facilities, when the unit outgrew its site at Mitchell Field and moved into a Nike Site Complex in Cudahy, Wisconsin. A change in summer field training, with the advent of special joint military exercises and operations such as "Bright Star — Pine Cone III", "Swift.

Strike" and "Guard Strike". In the 1960's the 128th also experienced several recall alerts and an accelerated training status as a "selected reserve force" unit.

In September of 1972, the unit again moved — this time, into a completely new facility constructed especially for the 128th at the site of its previous building at General Mitchell Field.

The next few years brought travel to the 128th, as exercises took the unit to El Paso, Texas and in 1975 the unit deployed to Fort Sumner, New Mexico.

In 1976 under the command of Lt Col Robert Woodward, the unit was re-organized from a Control and Reporting Post (CRP) to a Forward Air Control Post-Heavy (FACP-H) reducing authorized manpower from 259 to 143. In that year the unit changed responsibility from the 157th Tactical Control Group, St. Louis, Missouri to the 152nd Tactical Control Group in New York.

After a few years, the manning was reduced and in October of 1979, the unit was again reorganized this time from a FACP-H to an FACP with manpower authorization reduced to 73 and its name changed to the 128th Tactical Control Flight.

In 1980 the 128th TCP received the latest state-of-the-art radar equipment — the AN/TPS 43. Its capabilities and mobility far exceeded those of the previous equipment and enhanced the ability of the unit to provide expert airspace management for all of the sophisticated aircraft in the inventory.

1981, And in September of that year, the 128th added another first by becoming the first ANG radar unit to deploy to Europe in support of exercise "Coldfire 81", a key part of the U.S. annual REFORGER exercise.

In 1983, the unit played a key role in the first Composite Force Training (CFT) exercise ever hosted by an Air National Guard Permanent Field Training Site at Volk Field. As the sole ground radar unit involved in exercise Sentry Independence 83, the 128th proved invaluable to the ultimate success of the exercise, providing close control for Red and Blue air DACT missions and all air refueling missions.

The 128th again found itself on the leading edge of accomplishments for a FACP and the National Guard in 1985. In May, the unit deployed to Sicily to participate in NATO exercise Distant Hammer 85. It was the first time that such an Air National Guard Tactical Control Unit had participated in a Distant Hammer exercise and the first time such a unit had been deployed to the island of Sicily. When the unit returned, the 128th also participated in Sentry Independence 85 exercise at Volk Field, controlling all of the air refueling missions from home station.

That year the unit participated in Sentry Independence 87 and also saw the unit participate in its first drug interdiction mission as the unit supported Autumn Harvest 87 in the Arizona desert with a "mini" package of 24 people and equipment. saw the 128th TCP change its name back to the 128th Tactical Control Squadron.

The unit again went to Volk Field in support of Sentry Independence 88. In addition, the unit originated the first ever Sentry Boomer Exercise joint services exercise to protect High Value Assets. This became an annual exercise, still going on each year. brought back another overseas deployment. In May of that year, under the command of Lt Col James A. Michelson, the unit successfully deployed to Sagres, Portugal to support a joint services NATO exercise Open Gate 89. It was the first Tactical Control unit every to participate in an Open Gate exercise and the first of its kind to deploy to Portugal. In 1989, the unit received its second Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 September 1987 to 30 August 1989.

2009

The Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron shipped out for a deployment to Qatar May 13 following an afternoon send-off ceremony at Volk Field, Camp Douglas. For this mission the squadron, an extension of the Theater Air Control System, will be involved with command and control of the Central Command airspace. Squadron members are proficient in satellite and ground communications, radar operations and support, command and control, computer maintenance, encryption systems, power production and telecommunications. Besides its wartime mission, the unit supports daily military flying in local airspace, is prepared to respond to the governor's call for state emergencies, and deploys throughout the United States for various exercises and contingencies. The 128th ACS was initially activated in 1947 at General Billy Mitchell Field, Milwaukee. The squadron moved to Volk Field in 1991. The unit's last deployment was to Afghanistan in 2007. Three Wisconsin Air National Guard members are spearheading an initiative which would bring control of Afghani airspace to facilities in Qatar. Capt. Seth Kaste, Capt. Chris Divyak and Tech. Sgt. Travis Skowronski of the Volk Field based 128th Air Control Squadron recently completed three weeks of air battle management training for the Operation Enduring Freedom area of responsibility at Khandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, with the intent of returning to Qatar to train an additional 50 airmen of the 71st Expeditionary Air Control Squadron, including additional members of the 128th. This training and certification will allow the 71st EAC to be the first unit in history to conduct Afghanistan's air battle management from a remote location — Qatar — when it inherits the mission from the Royal Australian Air Force Control and Reporting Center July 1. Air battle management involves coordinating aircraft for air-to-air combat and air-to-ground support as well as standard flight control and air refueling tasks.

2009

Approximately 60 members of the Wisconsin Air National Guard's 128th Air Control Squadron returned to Volk Field early in the afternoon of Oct. 5, concluding a deployment to Southwest Asia that began May 13. "One-Two-Eight, welcome home," Brig. Gen. Donald Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, told unit members surrounded by cheering family and friends during a brief ceremony. The 128th ACS, an extension of the Theater Air Control System, augmented the active component 71st Expeditionary Air Control Squadron at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center in Southwest Asia. According to Lt. Col. Jerry Iverson, commander of the deployed element, the 128th ACS performed two missions during its deployment. Working in conjunction with Patriot batteries and other resources, the 128th helped ensure air defense for roughly 188,000 square miles of air space covering Iraq, Afghanistan and other Persian Gulf interests. The squadron also provided air battle management over the skies of Afghanistan from a remote location. Air battle management involves coordinating aircraft for air-to-air combat and air-to-ground support as well as standard flight control and air refueling tasks. "It was a very rewarding, but very difficult mission," Iverson said. "We will never know — you will never know — how many lives you saved," Dunbar told squadron members. "But you should know your contribution was significant. I'll match you against any other unit." Iverson agreed. "We are the finest air control squadron in the Air Force, without a doubt," he told his Airmen. "I'd be proud to take them wherever I go." Iverson's praise included squadron members who did not deploy. The unit maintained its stateside mission of supporting daily military flights in local

airspace. Tech. Sgt. Jason Kostreva, an aerospace ground equipment operator with the 128th ACS, said the deployment went well, and quickly. "I still missed the family," he said. Iverson acknowledged that he turned 53 just the day before. "This is a great birthday present," he said.

2010 For the first time in nearly 15 years, a new commander leads Wisconsin's 128th Air Control Squadron. Lt. Col. Gerry Iverson formally assumed command of the ACS during a change-of-command ceremony at Volk Field May 1. Iverson assumed command from the 128th's longest standing commander since the unit's inception in 1947. Lt. Col. Herb Dannenburg will retire following 28 years of service — the last 15 leading the air control unit. The 128th is a mobile radar/communications unit that supports air operations from the ground. The 128th has more than 125 traditional Guard members and about 30 full-time employees. The unit most recently returned in October from a deployment to Southwest Asia but has conducted multiple deployments in support of the war on terror since 2001. Volk Field Commander Col. Gary Ebben pledged his support for Iverson and said he expects the great work from the 128th will continue.

2011 A group of Wisconsin Airmen stand united in a unique mission — controlling air space from the ground. Now they stand united as one of the nation's top Air Force units. Air Force officials recently awarded the prestigious Air Force Outstanding Unit Award to the Camp Douglas-based 128th Air Control Squadron, which employs more than 160 members of Wisconsin's Air National Guard. "I've got outstanding officers, and outstanding NCOs and Airmen that are dedicated to meeting their own individual qualifications ... but they're also dedicated to upholding the traditions of this organization," said Lt. Col. Gerard Iverson, 128th ACS commander. "That's what so great about this award — it's not just one person, it's the entire organization." The ACS was recognized for their service from Nov. 1, 2008 through Oct. 31, 2010. During this time of highlighted service, the ACS provided theater battle management command and control while deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Recognized for their proficiency during a Unit Compliance Inspection in June 2010, the ACS earned a 97 percent compliance rating from an Air Combat Command Inspector General team. The unit was also looked to for their expertise when they were called upon to provide pre-deployment training to another Air Control Squadron — certifying 40 Airmen prior to their deployments overseas. "This is a tremendous honor," said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, adjutant general of Wisconsin, "that recognizes the significant contributions of the 128th ACS to the joint war fighter. This is a special group of Airmen and I am very proud of their performance." The 128th does not rest on its laurels, however — the squadron remains busy supporting Presidential events across the country and participating in large-scale exercises such as the Patriot Exercise, Northern Lightning and NATO's international exercise, Ramstein Rover. "We don't let grass grow under our feet. We've continued to reach out and seek out events that challenge us," Iverson said. "You have to be proactive in getting out there. By doing so, it gives everyone experience to further hone those skills that we train for." In the award's announcement letter, Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt, director of the Air National Guard, highlighted the caliber of the award and its significance to the nation. "The competition was extremely keen and each winner is commended for having been selected from an outstanding group of nominees," Wyatt said. "The dedication and commitment of the members of these organizations enable the Air National Guard to fulfill its commitment to the mission of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, domestic improvement and most important of all — defense of America."

This is the fourth AFOUA award the 128th has earned, but the first since the 1980s. The 128th ACS is a mobile radar/ communications unit that supports air operations from the ground. The unit deployed immediately following Sept. 11, 2001 and has since deployed twice to Afghanistan and once to another base in Southwest Asia. Meanwhile they continue to support Homeland Defense as part of Operation Noble Eagle. “We bring a seasoned, well-rounded, experienced and highly motivated control and reporting center to the combatant commander,” Iverson said, “and that is a testament to each and every individual in this organization.”

The Wisconsin Air National Guard’s 128th Air Control Squadron, based at Volk Field Combat Readiness Training Center, has been awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for exceptionally meritorious service between Nov. 1, 2008 and Oct. 30, 2010. Gov. Scott Walker praised the unit during a Dec. 2 ceremony at Volk Field. “This is only the fourth time since 1948 that this award has gone to this unit, and this is quite an accomplishment,” Walker said. “On behalf of all of us here in Wisconsin, we are exceptionally proud of that accomplishment. In a larger context, we are proud of all of you.” Brig. Gen. John McCoy, commander of the Wisconsin Air National Guard, expressed his pride in the 128th ACS. “It’s one thing to talk about how great we are,” McCoy said. “But when an inspection comes through ... we come through here at Volk. It’s an honor to be here in front of you as the head of the Air National Guard in Wisconsin — the 2,300 men and women of the Wisconsin Air National Guard — and be able to talk about how great Volk is.” The award, presented by the secretary of the Air Force, cites several accomplishments by the 128th ACS, including a deployment to the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing from May through October 2009, where the unit operated the Battlespace Command and Control Center; a 97 percent compliant rating for a June 2010 unit inspection; and an “Outstanding” rating for an August 2010 information security inspection

128 Aircraft Control & Warning Squadron

Wisconsin ANG

Allotted: 24 May 1946 to ANG

Federalized: 16 September 1951 at

Dow AFB, Maine

Released from active duty: 1 September, 1953 and returned to control of Wisconsin

Billy Mitchell Field, Wisconsin

Camp Douglas, Volk Field, Wisconsin

Tactical Control Flight

Syracuse, New York

FACP: 20 August, 1971

Manning: 5 officer, 43 Airmen

128 Tactical Control Squadron

Cudahy, Wisconsin

CRP: 20 August 1971 to 16 June 1992

Manning: 27 Officer, 213 Airmen

128 Air Control Squadron

Redesignated: ACS 16 June, 1992

Deployed to: Afghanistan 2006

Information for Dow AFB, ME

Latitude: 44-49-11 N, Longitude: 068-49-16 W

Call Sign(s): Separate

L-1 128 Dow AFB, ME CPS-5, TPS-10A





Air Force Order of Battle
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Sources