

## 302 TACTICAL ELECTRONIC WARFARE TRAINING SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

302 Troop Carrier Squadron constituted, 25 May 1943

Activated, 1 Aug 1943

Inactivated, 27 May 1946

Redesignated 302 Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium), 10 May 1949

Activated in the reserve, 27 Jun 1949

Ordered to active service, 10 Mar 1951

Inactivated, 14 Mar 1951

302 Transport Squadron constituted, 4 Jun 1943

Activated, 21 Jun 1943

Disbanded, 1 Dec 1943

320 Troop Carrier Squadron constituted, 9 Dec 1944

Activated, 17 Dec 1944

Inactivated, 19 Aug 1946

302 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo-Jet constituted, 15 Nov 1952

Activated, 1 Jan 1953

Inactivated, 20 Jun 1959

302 Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium), 302 Transport Squadron, 320 Troop Carrier Squadron and 302 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo-Jet consolidated and redesignated 302 Tactical Electronic Warfare Training Squadron, 19 September 1985. (Not activated)

## **STATIONS**

Mohanbari Airfield, India, 21 June 1943 – 1 December 1943  
Sedalia AAFld, MO, 1 Aug 1943  
Camp Mackall, NC, 18 Jan 1944  
Baer Field, IN, 22 Feb-1 Mar 1944  
Langar, England, 17 Mar 1944  
Merryfield, England, 27 Apr 1944 (operated from Grosseto, Italy, 18 Jul-24 Aug 1944)  
Villeneuve/Vertus, France, 8 Sep 1944  
St Marceau, France, 2 Oct 1944  
Dreux, France, 2 Nov 1944  
Wendover Field, Utah, 9 Dec 1944 – 25 May 1945  
North Field, Tinian, Marianna Islands, 30 May 1945  
Poix, France, 28 May 1945  
Villacoublay, France, 14 Aug 1945-15 Feb 1946  
Roswell AAF, NM, 17 Oct 1945–19 Aug 1946  
Bolling Field, DC, 15 Feb-27 May 1946  
Chicago-Orchard Aprt, IL, 27 Jun 1949-14 Mar 1951  
Shaw AFB, SC, 1 Jan 1953–25 Jun 1953  
Sembach AB, West Germany, 7 Jul 1953  
Laon-Couvron Air Base, France, 25 Aug 1958–20 Jun 1959 (operated from Phalsbourg Air Base until 30 Sep 1958)

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

30 Transport Group  
441 Troop Carrier Group, 1 Aug 1943  
509 Composite Group, 17 Dec 1944 – 19 Aug 1946  
314 Troop Carrier Group, 15 May 1945  
27 Air Transport Group, 8 Aug 1945  
314 Troop Carrier Group, 15 Oct 1945-27 May 1946  
441 Troop Carrier Group, 27 Jun 1949-14 Mar 1951  
66 Tactical Reconnaissance Group, 1 Jan 1953  
66 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 8 Dec 1957–20 Jun 1959

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

C-46  
C-47, 1943-1946  
C-54  
RF-51  
RF-80  
RF-84

## **COMMANDERS**

Capt John J. Casey, Jr

## HONORS

### Service Streamers

### Campaign Streamers

### Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Rome-Arno

Normandy

Northern France

Southern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

***India-Burma***

***Asiatic Pacific Theater***

### Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation

France, [6-7] Jun 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" device

***1 Jul 1945 – 14 Aug 1945***

1 Jan 1958 – 31 Dec 1958

## EMBLEM



320 Troop Carrier Squadron emblem: On a disc divided per fess debased, grayed orange and light

turquoise blue, border equally divided blue green and white, a caricatured, tan and brown, winged donkey in front of a white cloud formation, leaping, from a small, tan and brown island, in dexter fess, with white water marks about shore line and three palm trees, proper, thereon, toward a like island in sinister base. (Approved, 27 Jun 1945)



302 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo-Jet emblem

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

Included airborne assaults on Normandy, Southern France, Holland, and Germany; relief of Bastogne; and aerial transportation in ETO and MTO, during World War II.

The 320 Troop Carrier Squadron was set up within the 509th to provide an immediate-response, secure, safe means for moving men and material (including atomic scientists and bomb components) to any destination, within the U. S. or overseas. They were ultimately equipped with five 4-engine C-54 transport planes and called themselves "Green Hornet Airlines".

All during the month of April 1945 the Main Ground Echelon of the 320 was processed for POE. It got off to a smooth start on the second section of the 509th troop train that left Wendover the morning of April 26th, with 40 enlisted men and 2 officers. They arrived at Seattle POE on the morning of the 28th, where they were joined by the 320 Advanced Ground Echelon. Embarkation took place the morning of May 6th aboard the SS *Cape Victory*. The boat trip was marred by the usual seasickness as well as the poor quality of food as far as Honolulu. By that time, most of the men had their sea legs, and with the purchase of a quantity of fruit juice, the remainder of the trip to Tinian was uneventful. After the Ground Echelon of the 509th was safely on its way, planning for the movement of the Air Echelon was taken up. On about 15 May 1945 movement of 509th personnel by C-54s of the 320 began. After completing the movement of the Air Echelon of the Group, plans for ferrying across the Rear Air Echelon of the 320 were continually delayed due to

the necessity of transporting freight and passengers vital to Project needs. The 320 was formally stationed at Tinian starting May 30. For the reason that space on the C-54s was preempted, not all the Squadron personnel intended to be flown overseas reached Tinian before the end of the war.

The 393rd Bomb Squadron (VH), chosen to be the combat unit of the 509th Composite Group, arrived at Wendover Field UT from Fairmont Field NE in mid-September 1944 with 20 B-29 flight crews. It was determined that only 15 crews were required to carry out the 393rd's mission, leaving five crews available for reassignment. The men of these five crews were given the choice of transferring to other Groups of the Second Air Force or remaining at Wendover and being reassigned to the 320 Troop Carrier Squadron, then being formed as part of the 509th. The members of the five crews who qualified for positions within the 320 opted to remain. Major Hubert Konopacki was the first CO of the 320. He was replaced by Major Charles Sweeney on 6 January 1945, Capt. John Casey Jr becoming Operations Officer. After Major Sweeney was transferred to the 393rd on 4 May, Capt. Casey became CO and 1st Lt Elbert Smith was Operations Officer for about one month before also transferring to the 393rd. 2nd Lt Frank Griffin became operations officer and served in that capacity at Wendover until mid-July, when he was transferred to Tinian.

The 320 started operations in September 1944 even though the unit was not officially activated, along with the 509th as a whole, until 17 December. Initially, several twin-engine C-46s and C-47s were utilized to carry cargo and passengers between key points throughout the U. S. These planes were gradually phased out after four-engine C-54s were acquired starting in November. Until the acquisition of the C-54s, it appears that 320 flight personnel were assigned to a pool and temporary crews were selected as needed to fly the 2-engine planes. Additional crew members for the long-range 4-engine flights were in place by mid-February.

Prior to the start of flights to/from Tinian using the squadron's C-54s, all or most of the 320 flight personnel received two weeks of training at Air Transport Command schools. The navigators went to Rosecrans Field at St Joseph MO, the pilots and flight engineers to Homestead Field FL. The courses were designed to acquaint crew members with ATC procedures to be followed on overseas trips since the 320 would be under their jurisdiction after leaving the continental U. S. Many of the pilots and navigators then went to the Marianas as passengers on ATC C-54s to gain first-hand knowledge of the routes and fields they would be using in future trans-Pacific operations.

The orders for 320 flights to Tinian were initially cut at Wendover. However, on reaching Hamilton Field CA the ATC cut new orders for the same flights, since air traffic control on the overseas segments was an ATC responsibility. The westward journey was made by way of Hickam Field on Hawaii and then Johnston island (bypassed, weather permitting) and Kwajalein atoll before reaching North Field on Tinian.

At full wartime strength, the 320 comprised 30 officers, two warrant officers, one flight officer, and 117 enlisted men with the functions of scheduling, maintaining, and crewing its five C-54s. In October 1945, 22 officers, one warrant officer, and 45 enlisted men transferred from Wendover to Roswell. Evidently the majority of the 320 personnel (55 percent) had been transferred to Tinian

with the rest of the 509th. Some of the extensive operations of the C-54s and crews during and for a year after the war, within the atomic initiative, are as follows. There was total flexibility as to the high-priority passengers and cargo carried. *November 1944-August 1945*. Flights were made throughout the U. S. The "milk run" to/from Kirtland AAF in Albuquerque linked Wendover and Los Alamos. Kirtland was the closest 4-engine field to Los Alamos. Frequent trips were made to Naval Test Stations in California. Flight plans were often deliberately misleading for security reasons. Cargo almost certainly included fissionable materials produced at Oak Ridge TN and Hanford WA. Many atomic scientists and technicians of the Manhattan Project, as well as members of the military, were among the passengers.

*January-February 1945*. Logistical support was provided for the 393<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 509th, on detached service at Batista Field in Cuba for training and testing tactics later employed in combat.

*March-June 1945*. Crews of the 393<sup>rd</sup> were ferried to Offutt Field, where they picked up Silverplate B-29s made at the Martin-Omaha plant, and to Topeka AAF for overseas staging.

*15 May-15 July 1945*. A major airlift moved personnel and equipment of the 509th and Los Alamos Project Alberta from the U. S. to Tinian.

*15 July-5 August 1945*. Highly secret shipments, accompanied by armed MPs who remained with the planes always, were flown to Tinian.

*6 August 1945*. Standby C-54s with MPs on board were stationed on Iwo Jima to transport men back to Tinian in case there was an emergency landing there of one or more B-29s due to mechanical failure or enemy action.

*August-September 1945*. Military and civilian experts were ferried to Japan after the surrender~ for assessment of atomic-bomb damage and interviews with Japanese scientists and officials. Several members of 509th HQ and the 320 went to Nagasaki via Okinawa in C-54 594 shortly after VJ-day.

*September-November 1945*. A second major airlift returned personnel to points in the U. S., including the new base of the 509th at Roswell AAF NM. *March-August 1945*. C-54s and crews participated in Task Group 1.5 of the Strategic Air Command (Operation Crossroads). The Pacific base was Kwajalein atoll. A Fat-Man-type bomb was dropped from a 509th B-29 on ships at Bikini atoll on 30 June.

Transport of *uranium-235 and plutonium* cores. The U-235 projectile for the *Little Boy* bomb was carried to Tinian on the cruiser Indianapolis after being flown from Kirtland Field in Albuquerque to Hamilton Field near San Francisco. The U-235 target rings for that bomb and the Pu hemispheres for the *Fat Man* bomb were apparently transported all the way from Kirtland to Tinian in C-54s. It is not clear which of these flights were made by Air Transport Command and which by the 320. It is known that shipments of cargo having very high priority, with 24-hour armed guards, were flown

to Tinian in C-54s of the 320 from mid-July to as late as 5 August 1945. These could have contained any of various bomb or test-unit components. In connection with the operations that have been described, particularly in the preceding paragraph, a communication, "509th Composite Group; Special Functions", dated 29 May 1945, from the Chief of Staff of the Twentieth Air Force in Washington, Brig. Gen. Lauris Norstad, to the Commanding General of the XXI Bomber Command on Guam, Major Gen. Curtis LeMay, is pertinent. One subject is the operations of the 320 TCS: 6. Special Air Transportation Normal expectation in the state of development which will have been reached by the time of first battle deliveries [of the atomic bombs], is that emergencies will arise requiring shuttling of personnel and material. To handle these emergencies as well as the air shipment of special components referred to in paragraph (3), a squadron of C-54 aircraft has been incorporated in the 509th Composite Group. This squadron has been cleared by the War Department to operate between the United States and the Theater over ATC routes, and under the supervision of ATC while on their routes. Wendover Field, Utah, has been established as the supply and support base in the United States and the C-54s are planned to operate between there and the Marianas.

The standard C-54 crew of five consisted of: Pilot, Co-pilot, Navigator, Radio Operator, and Flight Engineer. To eliminate rest stops on long overseas flights the crew was enlarged to eight by addition of a third pilot, a second navigator, and a second radio operator. The designations were then: Airplane Commander, Pilot, Co-pilot, 1st Navigator, 2<sup>nd</sup> Navigator, 1st Radio Operator, 2nd Radio Operator, and Flight Engineer. One pilot, one navigator, and one radio operator could always be resting enroute. Mandatory inspections were still made; however, it was arranged that the lengthiest occurred at Wendover or Tinian. The longest stop away from Wendover was generally at Tinian. From copies of orders for 15 overseas flights (out of a total of 31 made) it appears that there were five basic crews; whether these were assigned formally or informally is not clear. With the exception of Francis Norris, these men had originally been recruited from the five extra crews of the 393rd Bomb Squadron. The second navigators and radio operators flew with whichever of the basic crews were getting ready for an overseas trip, while the flight engineers generally were assigned to the airplanes. Each co-pilot generally flew with the same crew, but there were exceptions. There were eight navigators for the five planes. The three newest men, Burgener, Castater, and Felchli, were the second navigators. If an additional second navigator was needed for a flight, one of the navigators of the 216th Base Unit filled in. The second radio operators were also assigned to basic crews as needed. The ten flight engineers were assigned to the five aircraft, but apparently alternated going on overseas trips. All members of the 320 flight crews collected per diem while on overseas flights.

Colonel Tibbets made many administrative trips in one of the C-54s (002). Destinations included Washington DC, Chicago, Omaha, various Manhattan Project sites, and the Marianas. Eugene Krause was usually the Flight Engineer. The rest of the crew was generally from the 320 or 509th HQ, though some of the 393rd and 216th Base pilots went as co-pilots. Joseph Westover, 393rd Airplane Commander, also flew C-54s and once made it from Wendover to New York City in 8 hours and 10 minutes.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> July 1953, Colonel G.H. Fulcher landed at Sembach in Germany in a Lockheed T-33. He was accompanied by thirty-two Lockheed RF-80As, four T-33s and eighteen Douglas RB-26 Invaders. The 66<sup>th</sup> TRW had arrived! The wing had been activated at Shaw AFB, South Carolina, on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1953; replacing the 118<sup>th</sup> TRW the title of which reverted to the Tennessee Air Guard. The 66<sup>th</sup> had three operational squadrons: the 30<sup>th</sup> Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (TRS), Night Photo; and the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS', Photo Jet. The 30<sup>th</sup> flew the RB-26, and the Jet Photo squadrons flew the RF-80A. Just prior to the move to Europe, in February 1953, the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> had relinquished the RF-51 Mustang for the RF-80A-10. Prior to the move to Europe these aircraft were being rotated or changed for the RF-80A-15 models modified with the J-33A-35 engine and 230 gallon centerline wing tip fuel tanks. There was no ejection seat in these aircraft; but there was an improved canopy emergency removal system; something that had been problematic in the early RF-80s.

The movement from the States to Germany took place without incident for the wing. In fact, apart from the inevitable delays for bad weather at Keflavik, the exercise was the most successful ever accomplished over the Northern Route. The order of flight was the T-33s followed in their turn by the 302 TRS, the 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS and the 30<sup>th</sup> TRS. The 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS departed Shaw for Maine on the 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1953. On arrival at Sembach all aircraft were reported to be in commission and operational. In similar fashion the Atlantic voyage of wing personnel was without significant problems. The ocean remained calm and the men and women arrived at Bremerhaven on the USS Leroy Eltings feeling refreshed and eager to settle in to their new homes.

The RF-80A pilots of the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS' were amongst the most experienced tac recce drivers in the USAF. For example of the 20 pilots assigned to the 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS, twelve, possibly more, had seen action in Korea. The commander of the squadron, Maj. Jean Woodyard had been one of the three pilots who had flown the first ever combat air refueling mission into North Korea. Approximately eight of the pilots had flown the RF-80 in combat with the 8<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> TRS out of K14. Two others had flown RF-51 Mustangs with the 45<sup>th</sup> TRS and two had flown the LT-6 Mosquitoes. Bob Sweet of the 302 TRS had flown all three aircraft in Korea.

The 66<sup>th</sup> was ready to commence operations from Sembach virtually on arrival at the base. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> July, just three days after arrival, the RF-80s of the 302 TRS began involvement in an operation requiring continuous oblique coverage of the Rhine River; and a small mosaic of the Munich area. July, August and September were to be particularly successful in mission terms. Relatively fine weather allowed a significant number of missions to be flown. The 85% success rate in Operation Coronet, which commenced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, was remarkable. The three squadrons of the 66<sup>th</sup> in this exercise flew a total of 327 sorties: 261 day and 66 night. The pilots of the 66<sup>th</sup> found the even reasonable north European weather difficult to contend with at times. On the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1953, an RF-80 of the 302 TRS made a forced landing in a field near Augsburg. The pilot had been cleared into marginal weather; but had got lost and had run out of fuel. This accident prompted a grounding of all the wing's aircraft while an intensive training program was initiated updating all pilots on what to expect from the weather in northern Europe. This turned to be time well spent. For the remainder of the year only one major accident occurred in the 66<sup>th</sup> TRW; when an RF-80 skidded off the runway at Landstuhl. In this accident, pilot error was deemed not to have been the cause.



The RF-80As flown by the 66<sup>th</sup> were the final versions of this aircraft. Powered by the higher thrust J-33A-35 engine they also carried the 230 gal Fletcher wing tip tanks. Thus, were range and altitude performance enhanced. The 302 aircraft differed from the 303<sup>rd</sup> in the radios they carried. The 302 had 15 channel VHF sets and the 303<sup>rd</sup> the later UHF sets. The latter would normally have been the preferred option; but many areas in Europe did not have the UHF capability and the 303<sup>rd</sup> was limited in the operations it could undertake. Bob Sweet flew with the 302:

“With the appropriate crystals the 302 TRS could fly to almost any place in Europe and North Africa. The 302 took full advantage and was tasked for some choice missions....The sqdn kept a 3-4 aircraft detachment operating from Vaerlose for most of the Spring and Summer of 1954. Danish AF photo interpreters would plot every photograph so any miscue on a flight line was readily apparent.....During 1955 the 302 sent a detachment to Madrid to photograph the bases being constructed by SAC in Spain”

Late autumn and winter of 1953 brought appalling weather to Northern Europe and a multitude of problems to the tactical units of USAFE. The 66<sup>th</sup> TRW initiated further intensive flying safety programs for the pilots; and the mission backlog over this period became acute. The mosaic mapping in Austria was shelved until early spring; and the exercises undertaken in conjunction with the 7<sup>th</sup> Army were severely compromised in air support terms because the aircraft simply couldn't get off the ground. The problem was particularly for the 30<sup>th</sup> TRS and their RB-26s. In *Exercise Harvest Moon* commencing on 13<sup>th</sup> October, the squadron was to fly visual reconnaissance and simulated atomic bomb missions. In the event there was very little participation in this or in *Exercise Power Play* in November, when the 30<sup>th</sup> had a similar mission. The problems with the Invaders were mainly concerned with severe icing and a review of the cold weather operation of the aircraft was undertaken at this time. In both of the above exercises the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS' fared marginally better than the 30<sup>th</sup>; but all the missions had to be undertaken at low level.

For the six months from December 1953 to June 1954 the 66<sup>th</sup> was unique in that it was the only jet equipped unit in USAFE to remain accident free. 1954 was also the year when, not only the 30<sup>th</sup> TRS was to convert to a new aircraft, but the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS' were scheduled to receive the Republic RF-84F Thunderflash. Pilots from these squadrons attended courses at the Mobile Training detachment (MTD) at Spangdahlem in Germany; headquarters of the 10<sup>th</sup> TRW, two of whose squadrons were also to convert to the 'Flash.

Operations during 1954 were adversely affected by the weather in the early part; but by Spring the conditions had improved sufficiently to allow a relatively high number of successful missions to be flown. By June the 30<sup>th</sup> TRS had completed 65% of its Austrian mission. The 302 TRS took part in Exercise Blue Danube that involved 28 sorties being flown. The 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS took part in a 5 day exercise commencing on the 6<sup>th</sup> May. For the purpose of this mission the squadron deployed to Giebelstadt; and in addition to photographing some 21 army required targets and 15 weather reconnaissance missions; the unit was given the task of taking oblique pin-point photographs of castles and other places of interest in Germany for publicity purposes. The taking of these 'happy snaps', sometimes clandestinely, was something which was a welcome relief from the run of the mill targets.

One of the exploits of the 302 pilots met with disapproval from superiors. Bob Sweet and Bob Kilpatrick decided on an experiment. Bob Sweet recalls: "There was a long standing debate on how long you could keep an RF-80 airborne. On 19 November, 1954, Bob Kilpatrick and I in a two ship formation stayed airborne for an honest 4:00. We must have flown from the North Sea to Munich a half dozen times and I near froze to death. We also received a glorious ass chewing since we had filed out a local clearance showing 2:45 fuel on board!"

In 1954 the 302 formed an aerobatic team. The pilots of the team were Capt. Bob Sweet, Lt Russ Tansey, 1st Lt Tim Whitworth and Capt. Robert Kilpatrick. The team, nicknamed the 'Bald Iggles' performed at the Armed Forces day on the 21st May. Although the weather prevented them from going through their rehearsed routine the display was nonetheless deemed a success.

*Condition Alpha* was called on the 20th June. The simulated posturing and threats were enough to put all squadrons on immediate alert. The 303rd TRS deployed to Echterdingen near Stuttgart; while the 302 remained at Sembach. In these initial days the function of all these units was picket duty. The RB-26s and RF-80s patrolled an arbitrary bomb line and reported all aircraft crossing that line. In the early morning of 23rd June *Condition Coco* was declared. Hostilities had broken out at precisely 0450 hours! Within minutes the first reconnaissance missions were being flown. Throughout the exercise the squadrons of the 66th flew a total of 613 missions. The 303rd flew 242 of these; 94 photo and 148 visual. The benefits of this exercise in terms of experience were profound in tactical terms. One of the most significant of these underlined just how much needed was the eagerly awaited RF-84 by the RF-80 squadrons. Throughout *Carte Blanche* the RF-80s were frequently and fatally intercepted by the Venoms and Meteors of the 2nd ATAF; and, on the pilots own admission, some fourteen of their aircraft could have been shot down. The intercepting flights usually attacked in pairs or fours; and the single ship reconnaissance flights were clearly doomed in the face of such opposition. Also, because the RF-80s often had to work at a considerable distance from home, significant fuel for any significant evasive maneuvering was not available. Running for home was often the only tactic available to the hard pressed pilot, with its attendant and extremely risky consequences. The practice of sending unarmed reconnaissance aircraft to photograph or visually report on the status of enemy airfields was called into question as a result of the experiences of *Carte Blanche*. Ordering a pilot to fly over or alongside a heavily defended airfield was tantamount to ordering his death.

As a result of the exercise the 303rd TRS made certain recommendations regarding the RF-80. In light of the fact that the arrival of the RF-84F was imminent these may sound superfluous; but it must be remembered that at this time of high tension the squadrons may have had to go to war in their Shooting Stars. The RF-80, it was recommended, should have a total combat radius of 400 miles. This would guarantee sufficient fuel reserves to enable a reasonable degree of evasive action to be taken in the event of interception. The reconnaissance should always be taken in pairs, thus enabling a satisfactory of sky searching for enemy aircraft to be accomplished by both pilots, each looking out for the other. Finally it was considered vitally necessary for some aggressive training in evasion tactics to take place with pilots as a matter of urgency.

Other exercises later in the year intensified the frustrations felt by the RF-80 squadrons concerning the shortcomings of their aircraft. *Beware* in September was an exercise testing the air defenses of the United Kingdom. The RF-80s were hopelessly outclassed by the defending Royal Air force interceptors which wreaked havoc amongst the aging Photo jets. The long awaited RF-84F Thunderflash began to arrive at Sembach from August, 1955 onwards. One pilot from each of the squadrons was sent to Shaw AFB to the 363<sup>rd</sup> TRW for checkout on the aircraft and they would be the IPs (Instructor Pilots) for their respective squadrons on their return. Bob Sweet was the 302 TRS pilot and Ed Stoltz was the 303<sup>rd</sup>. They both spent most of March and the beginning of April flying the RF-84F. Back at Sembach in April both Bob and Ed were back flying the RF-80 when the RF-84 delivery dates began to slip. On June 16<sup>th</sup> they were both sent to the England to maintain currency by flying the F-84F. By the end of that year the 66<sup>th</sup> TRW had received four RF-84Fs; two for the 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS and two for the 302. The 10<sup>th</sup> TRW at Spangdahlem was also converting two of its squadrons to the RF-84 at this time. Conversion to the RB-57A was moving slightly faster. The 30<sup>th</sup> TRS had fully converted to the type by the end of 1955. In addition to receiving the RB-57A the 30<sup>th</sup> also received the B-57C dual trainer.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> September the transition program for the 302 TRS suffered a serious setback when one of two RF-84s, piloted by squadron CO. Major Aloysius P. McHugh suffered a loss of power at height. With exemplary skill major McHugh succeeded in recovering the aircraft and made a dead stick landing at Landstuhl. Bob Sweet was riding chase in an RF-80:

“.....it was tough just keeping visual contact. the traffic pattern and landing were the main events to monitor. At around 15k Mac called out that he had flamed out. I close up and we went through three air start attempts with no response. Mac indicated he was going to eject. We were at a point which would be a high downwind leg for Landstuhl AB. I told him to turn base leg and Landstuhl tower, aware of the emergency, cleared him to land either direction but downwind was the only option left. I made sure the airspeed stayed up so the '84 wouldn't sink from under him. The gear came down on short final and he touched down just short of the runway barrier, going through it the wrong way. The '84 sliced through the tape and roll out was just great until the nose came down and the nose gear folded. It had not extended quite all the way.”

Cazeaux was a regular venue for all tactical day squadrons of the USAFE. The range was the principle one used for gunnery practice. The 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS had been in December, 1956 and repeated the exercise in 1957. All units underwent a basic familiarization course in ground strafing against mesh nylon targets. The RF-84F was the last recce plane to be fitted with internal guns; ostensibly for the purposes of target designation for fighters or artillery. The reasons for abandoning them in later aircraft is conjectured by Paul Hodges: later arguments in the air force went something like, if you put guns in a recce aircraft the pilot is going to look for something to shoot rather than take pictures, guns being more fun than cameras. (Quite true) In addition, it costs more, complicates training, increases aircraft weight, and recce aircraft are supposed to be light, fast and dedicated. So, who needs guns?”

The 302 TRS deployed eight RF-84s and fifteen pilots to Nouasseur for six weeks on the 16<sup>th</sup> January. The reconnaissance training undertaken on this detachment was even higher than anticipated. Specific tasks included low level navigation, all phases of photography. Instrument flying,

formation, aerobatic and evasive tactics and night flying. Every air station and every port in Morocco was photographed by the 302 at this time. The squadron returned to Sembach on the 27<sup>th</sup> February. During March and April the 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS spent 30 days in Morocco overlapping with the 38<sup>th</sup> TRS which deployed there for 45 days on the 1<sup>st</sup> march. The 32<sup>nd</sup> detached in January and June.

In July 1958, following the deactivation of the 38<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Wing, the 66<sup>th</sup> HQ and the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS' moved from Sembach to Laon in France. This move was in accordance with USAFE's plan to realign the posture of various bases in anticipation of aircraft conversion. The 66<sup>th</sup> was to convert to the RF-101 Voodoo. Paul Hodges was involved in this move: "The runway at Sembach was designed by a Roller Coaster engineer, barely okay for the RF-84, absolutely unsuitable for the higher performance Voodoo."

Considerable construction was necessary at Laon before and during the transition phase; in particular the preparation of runway overruns. In August and September respectively the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS' moved from Sembach to their new base. Just prior to the move, in a public relations exercise, the 302 engaged in some large scale oblique photo coverage of all towns and cities within a 30 mile radius of Laon. The processed photos were presented to the various town and city officials as a means of introducing the newcomers to the community.

At the very time the 66<sup>th</sup> was moving house there occurred an incident which prompted a sustained alert status for all the tactical units of USAFE. What has become known as the Lebanon Crisis affected the US Armed Forces when the Lebanese government requested the assistance of the United States because of a political crisis in the country. On the 15<sup>th</sup> July President Eisenhower put all the US Armed Forces on the alert. Operation Post card was put into effect and the 66<sup>th</sup> was put on standby to deploy to the Lebanon and remain there until relieved by units from the USA. In the event, the deployment never took place. The 18<sup>th</sup> TRS from Shaw AFB did in fact deploy to Turkey at this time for 99 days in support of the US build up in the area.

1959 was heralded by the not unexpected news that the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> TRS were to be deactivated and their places in the 66<sup>th</sup> taken by the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> TRS from Shaw AFB. These two units arrived at Laon in May, 1959, with the 302 and 303<sup>rd</sup> officially deactivated on the 20<sup>th</sup> June. All the RF-84s were ferried to the IRAN facility at Naples for eventual distribution to NATO forces. Many of the pilots of both these squadrons were transferred to the new Voodoo squadrons; converting at Nouasseur.

RF-84 52-7287 - Crashed, bad landing, Sembach AB, W. Germany, 1957/58, no fatalities.

RF-84 52-7289 - Crashed, bad landing on Phalsbourg AB, FR, Sep 1958, fatalities unknown.

RF-84 52-7348 - Crashed, bad landing, on Laon AB, France 15 Oct 1958, 1 fatality.

RF-84 52-7349 - Crashed, take-off, fuel fire, 2nm N of Nouasseur AB, Morocco, 21 Aug 1958, 1 fatality.

RF-84 52-7368 - Crashed, landing/weather, on Phalsbourg AB, France, 10 Apr 1958, no fatalities.

RF-84 52-7369 - Crashed, landing at night/weather, on Phalsbourg AB, France, 9 Jul 1958, 1 fatality.

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Sources

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The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.