

2nd SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



LINEAGE

Company B, 2nd Balloon Squadron organized, 25 Sep 1917
Redesignated 2nd Balloon Company, 19 Jun 1918
Redesignated Balloon School Detachment, 30 Aug 1921
Demobilized, 15 Aug 1922

2nd Balloon Company constituted, 18 Oct 1927
Activated, 20 May 1930

Balloon School Detachment Reconstituted and consolidated with 2nd Balloon Company, 6 Aug 1930

Redesignated 2nd Balloon Squadron, 1 Oct 1933
Disbanded, 3 Feb 1942

2nd Strategic Support Squadron constituted, 31 Dec 1948
Activated, 14 Jan 1949
Discontinued and inactivated, 15 Jun 1961

2nd Balloon Squadron reconstituted and consolidated with 2nd Strategic Support Squadron.
Consolidated squadron redesignated 2nd Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron, 19 Sep 1985

Redesignated 2nd Special Operations Squadron, 11 Feb 2009
Activated, 1 Mar 2009

STATIONS

Ft Omaha, NE, 25 Sep 1917
Garden City, NY, 30 Nov-7 Dec 1917
Camp de Coetquidan, Morbihan, France, 3 Jan 1918
Camp de l'Ermitage (near Menil-la-Tour), France, 26 Feb 1918
Villiers-sur-Marne, Aisne, France, 30 Jun 1918
La Goneterie Ferme (near Bouresches), France, 22 Jul 1918

Trugny (near Epieds), France, 25 Jul 1918
Beuvarde, France, 28 Jul 1918
Seringes-et-Nesles, France, 3 Aug 1918
Chery-Chartreuve, France, 4 Aug 1918
Courcelles-sur-Vesle, France, 12 Aug 1918
La Queue de Theinard (near Domevre-en-Haye), France, 23 Aug 1918
Bois de Remenauvaux (near Griscourt), France, 29 Aug 1918
Bois de la Lampe (near Mamey), France, 12 Sep 1918
St Pierre Ferme (near Fey-en-Haye), France, 15 Sep 1918
Locheres, France, 22 Sep 1918
Varennes-en-Argonne, France, 28 Sep 1918
Cheppy, France, 2 Oct 1918
Charpentry, France, 10 Oct 1918
Apremont, France, 15 Oct 1918
Chatel-Chehery, France, 25 Oct 1918
Sommerance, France, 2 Nov 1918
St Juvin, France, 3 Nov 1918
Buzancy, France, 4 Nov 1918
Sommauthe, France, 6 Nov 1918
Authe, France, 7 Nov 1918
Les Petites, Armoises, France, 8 Nov 1918
Auzeville-en-Argonne, France, 11 Nov 1918
Mercy-le-Haut, France, 21 Nov 1918
Euren, Germany, 8 Dec 1918
Colombey-les-Belles, France, c. 20 May 1919-unkn
Mitchel Field, NY, c. 23 Jun 1919
Ross Field, CA, Aug 1919
Scott Field, IL, 3 Jul-15 Aug 1922
Scott Field, IL, 20 May 1930
Ft Bragg, NC, 19 Jun 1930
Pope Field, NC, 1933-3 Feb 1942
Biggs AFB, TX, 14 Jan 1949
Walker AFB, NM, 18 Apr 1950
Castle AFB, CA, 16 May 1951
Pinycastle (later, McCoy) AFB, FL, 1 Sep 1956-15 Jun 1961
Nellis AFB, NV, 1 Mar 2009

ASSIGNMENTS

Unkn, 25 Sep 1917-Jul 1918
Balloon Wing (later, Balloon Group), I Army Corps, Jul 1918
Balloon Group, IV Army Corps, 20 Nov 1918
Balloon Group, VII Army Corps, 27 Apr-11 May 1919
Unkn, May-Aug 1919
Balloon School (later, Air Service Balloon Observers School), Ross Field, CA, Aug 1919-15 Aug 1922
Sixth Corps Area, 20 May 1930

First Army, 30 Dec 1940
I Air Support Command, 1 Sep 1941-3 Feb 1942
Eighth Air Force, 14 Jan 1949
Fifteenth Air Force, 16 May 1951
Second Air Force 1 Sep 1956
Eighth Air Force, 1 Jan 1959
321st Bombardment Wing, 1 Sep 1959-15 Jun 1961
919th Operations Group, 1 Mar 2009

ATTACHMENTS

97th Bombardment Wing, 14 Jan 1949-18 Apr 1950
509th Bombardment Wing, 18 Apr 1950-16 May 1951

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Type R Observation Balloon, 1918-1919
C-3 Observation Balloon, 1930-1939
A-6 and A-7 Spherical Balloons, 1930-1942
C-6 Observation Balloon, 1938-c. 1941
C-54D, 1949-1951
C-124A, 1950-1961
MQ-1

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

C-54D
42-72469

C-124A
49-235
49-241
49-0237
49-0244

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

C-124A green fuselage and nose stripe. The triangle beneath and in front of the squadron insignia was burnished metal. The tail and outer wings were arctic red.

C-124A 2nd SSS insignia was green bordered in yellow. The running Indian was yellow with a brown tomahawk and loin cloth.

COMMANDERS

None (unmanned), 25 Sep-20 Oct 1917
Maj M. C. Fleischmann, 21 Oct 1917
1Lt Allan P. McFarland, 9 Jan 1918
Lt I. W. Koenig, 12 Aug-Nov 1918

Unkn, Nov 1918-Aug 1922
Unkn, 20 May 1930-3 Feb 1942
Maj Ellsworth A. Powell, 14 Jan 1949
Col Avery J. Ladd, 24 Mar 1950
LTC James T. Brothers, 1 Aug 1952
LTC Russell Cassity, Jan 1955
LTC Vernon Q. Mullin, 1 Nov 1955
Maj Leo H. Flowers, 9 Feb-15 Jun 1961
Col Ray Pijma
LTC Randal Russell

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

World War I
Champagne-Marne
Aisne-Marne
St Mihiel
Meuse-Argonne

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

None

EMBLEM

On a disc Azure, above in base a demi-sun Or, two bayonets in saltire, points up, blades Argent, grip, hand guard and pommel of the second, between the bayonet points two mullets of the like, over all a stylized scorpion Sable, detailed of the third, eyed Gules; all within a narrow Yellow border. Above the disc, a Yellow scroll edged with a narrow Blue border and inscribed "SEMPER VIGILANS" in Blue letters below the disc, a Yellow scroll edged with a narrow Blue border and inscribed "2D SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQ" in Blue letters. 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 2D SOS traces its lineage to the 2D Balloon Company of WWI. Semper Vigilans, "Always Vigilant", was the unit's original motto and reflects both the heritage and readiness of the 2D SOS. The 2D Balloon Company was activated in time of conflict. Each star on the original WWI insignia represented unit involvement in a major campaign or combat operation; likewise the 2D SOS has been activated to conduct operations in support of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The two stars on the 2D SOS emblem signify involvement in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The scorpion characterizes the airborne mission capabilities of the 2D SOS. It is a predatory animal known for its ability to conceal itself and strike rapidly with deadly results. The tail and stinger represent reach and lethal power. The pedipalps (claws) are covered with

sensory setae that detect airborne vibration and signify intelligence gathering and collection. The eyes atop the head symbolize the ability to see in the night and conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. The commando dagger, with its double-edged blade, symbolizes the versatility, assuredness and balanced war-fighting capability of the Air Force Special Operations. The two commando daggers, crossed, represent the 2D SOS's ability to coordinate strikes, conduct joint special operations and build partnerships with other service components.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Organized in Sep 1917; went overseas to France in Dec 1917. Served as the first American balloon unit on the battle front, Feb 1918. Served in occupation forces in Germany, Dec 1918-May 1919. Returned to the US in Jun 1919; involved in balloon training until demobilized in Aug 1922.

Trained with troops in North Carolina, May 1930-Feb 1942.

After activation again in 1949; provided airlift support and transported fissionable materials and nuclear weapons components.

In the 1950s, provided airlift support for several nuclear tests.

26 January 1950 A C-54D 42-72469, departs Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, for Great Falls Air Force Base, Montana, with a crew of 8 and 36 passengers (34 service personnel and 2 civilians). Two hours into a planned eight-and-a-half hour flight, at 1709 hrs. it makes its last contact by radio and has been missing since. Despite a massive air and ground search at the time and repeated searches since 1950, no trace of the aircraft or its occupants has been found, nor has the cause of the aircraft's disappearance been determined.

In July 1950, as the unit is preparing for the arrival of its first C-124A. At the time, the unit was equipped with C-54 and was stationed at Biggs AFB. The squadron was redeployed to Walker AFB, Roswell, New Mexico, and nicknamed the "Globe Girdlers".

C-124A, Serial No. 49-235 arrived at Walker AFB on 17 Jul. It was the first C-124A delivered to the Air Force for operational purposes. That first airplane was named "Apache Chieftain", and the other C-124s in the squadron received similar Indian names.

The squadron received four additional C-124As during August. By this time, a training syllabus had been set up. Pilots were given 19 hours of "dual" and 5 additional hours of "solo" time in the airplane before being cleared for cross-country flights. The squadron flew three missions in the Zone of Interior during the month. In September, seven additional C-124As arrived at the unit. This brought the squadron to its full complement of 12 C-124As. The unit's C-54s, or at least some of them, were still flying and performing regular missions with the squadron at this time, as evidenced by the 31 missions flown by Skymasters during the month.

In October the squadron received a tasking to train C-124 crews in response to the activation of the 3rd Strategic Support Squadron. The specific tasking is to train four crews, but the squadron's intent was to train as many crews as possible, if time allowed.

The squadron's C-124s were grounded in November due to severe nose wheel shimmy problems. Corrective action was taken by Douglas Aircraft Corporation and 2nd SSS maintenance personnel, and the first airplane was back in the air on the 19th. Between the 19th and 23rd all aircraft were modified and released for operational commitments.

In December, some of the squadron's personnel, including aircrews, were transferred to the newly organized 3rd Strategic Support Squadron. In January, replacement personnel, all pilots, arrived in the squadron.

In May 1951, the squadron moved to Castle AFB, CA, where it remained until reassigned to the Air Material Command as a Logistics Support Squadron.

“This is a great mission for the Air Force Reserve,” said Col. Ray Pijma, 2nd SOS commander. “Unmanned aerial systems is a growing field — probably the fastest-growing in the Air Force — and we are proud to be a part of it.” As Colonel Pijma accepted the 2nd SOS banner from Maj. Gen. Frank Padilla, 10th Air Force commander, and officially assumed command of the squadron, three members of the new unit were missing. As the rest of the squadron stood in formation in a small theater on Nellis, a pilot, sensor operator and mission coordinator were holed up in a ground control station a few hundred yards away, maneuvering a Predator and pointing its on-board cameras at critical targets on the ground thousands of miles away. “We operate this CAP 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year,” Colonel Pijma said. “It’s a very demanding schedule, but we have some great volunteers here in the 2nd SOS, and they are committed to getting the job done.” “The 2nd SOS went from zero to hero in less than a year, General Padilla said. The squadron started June 1, 2008, as Det. 1 of the 919th Operations Group. “They reached IOC (initial operational capability) by June 1 of this year and are already flying a combat air patrol. They wrapped their arms around this CAP and took it over as their own,” the general said. Part of the Air Force’s Total Force Integration program, which is designed to blend together regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard operations, the 2nd SOS is a classic associate Reserve squadron with a bit of a twist. It’s geographically separated from both its parent unit, the 919th Special Operations Wing at Duke Field, Fla., and its host associate unit, the regular Air Force 3rd SOS at Cannon AFB, N.M. It’s also geographically separated from the aircraft it operates. “All of the aircraft we operate are owned by the active-duty, and they’re all downrange,” Colonel Pijma said. “We have Air Force personnel launching and recovering the vehicles in theater, and we pick them up via satellite control and run the mission once the Predator is up in the air,” said Lt. Col. George Wilson, a Predator pilot assigned to the 2nd SOS. Using satellite data links, pilots like Colonel Wilson use a computer keyboard and joystick to maneuver the Predator while sensor operators, like Senior Master Sgt. David Owens, control the variable-aperture TV camera, the variable-aperture infrared camera (for low-light and nighttime use) and other sensors as the mission requires. “We also can use a laser to guide the Hellfire missiles,” Sergeant Owens said. Predators can be equipped with laserguided AGM-114 Hellfire anti-tank missiles for situations where immediate action against a target is required. Colonel Wilson and Sergeant Owens are typical of most members of the 2nd SOS in that they have a wealth of experience in

manned aircraft systems. And while operating an unmanned aerial system is very different from flying a C-130, for example, there are some similarities. “There are a lot of things unique to operating a UAV, but basic aviation knowledge carries over,” Colonel Wilson said. “Personally, I don’t like the whole computer thing. It takes some getting used to. The aviation concepts are the same, but the dimensions of the mission and the machine are different.” While Colonel Wilson personally prefers the cockpit to a UAV’s ground control station, he knows he is providing an invaluable service to America’s war fighters. It doesn’t matter what day of the week it is or the time of day: Air Force Reservists from the 2nd Special Operations Squadron at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., are operating an MQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicle as it soars over a war zone half a world away, providing critical real-time information and intelligence to special operations forces and other troops on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. The 2nd SOS was officially activated June 6, but five days earlier, the 2nd became the first Reserve squadron to assume command of a UAV combat air patrol – a 24/7 orbit over a critical area of a combat zone. “I’m here for one reason and that’s to support the guys on the ground,” he said. “What they are going through in theater is a lot tougher than anything we have to deal with here. I’ll do whatever I can to help those guys.” A former loadmaster, Sergeant Owens, who serves as the 2nd SOS superintendent, also sees some similarities in flying manned and unmanned systems. “One thing that is critical in both situations is communication,” he said. “I’m constantly talking with the pilot, and we’re communicating with the mission coordinator inside. The mission coordinator is talking with the customer on the ground. The pilot might have to turn the aircraft a certain way to get me a better picture for the troops on the ground, and I might have to change my picture view depending on how we have to fly. Also, you have different airplanes stacked up above you and below you that you have to keep in contact with. There is constant communication among everybody involved.” The past year has certainly been a busy one for the men and women of the 2nd SOS. And it doesn’t look like there will be a slowdown anytime soon. “Our next goal is FOC, full operating capability,” Colonel Pijma said. “That will be achieved as we continue to grow and obtain the capability to conduct surge operations to support a second CAP.” The colonel estimates the squadron will reach FOC by the fall of 2010. As they work toward FOC, the experienced and dedicated volunteers assigned to the 2nd SOS will continue to provide war fighters on the ground with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support. “Like many other UAV squadrons, the 2nd SOS is comprised of people with a wide range of experience: AC-130 gunships, MC-130 Combat Talons, A-10s, Harriers, F-14s, F-15s, F-16s, F-18s and Stealth fighters, bombers, tankers, airlifters, and even helicopters,” Colonel Pijma said. “But the real strength of the squadron lies in the civilian backgrounds of our members: commercial pilots, general contractors, attorneys, med techs, software engineers, property managers and small business owners — volunteers all.” 2009



Air Force Order of Battle
Created: 8 Apr 2011
Updated: 28 Oct 2013
Published:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.