

# 4<sup>th</sup> COMBAT CAMERA SQUADRON



## LINEAGE

4<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force Combat Camera Unit constituted, 4 Feb 1943  
Activated, 12 Feb 1943  
Inactivated, 2 Dec 1945  
Redesignated 4<sup>th</sup> Combat Camera Squadron, 7 Mar 1996  
Activated in the Reserve, 31 Mar 1996

## STATIONS

Culver City, CA, 12 Feb-25 Oct 1943  
Gosfield, England, 18 Nov 1943  
Marks Hall, England, 4 Dec 1943  
Ascot (Sunninghill Park), England, 17 Dec 1943  
St. Savuer Lendelin, France, 5 Aug 1944  
Force, France, 23 Aug 1944  
Chantilly, France, 11 Sep 1944  
Bad Kissingen, Germany, 5 Jun 1945  
Camp Myles Standish, MA, 1-2 Dec 1945  
March AFB (later, March ARB), CA, 31 Mar 1996

## ASSIGNMENTS

1<sup>st</sup> Motion Picture Unit, 12 Feb 1943  
Ninth Air Force, 17 Nov 1943-21 Nov 1945  
Unkn, 21 Nov-2 Dec 1945  
452<sup>nd</sup> Support Group, 31 Mar 1996  
604<sup>th</sup> Regional Support Group, 1 Jan 2002  
452<sup>nd</sup> Mission Support Group, 1 Oct 2010

## COMMANDERS

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

None

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

None

## **Decorations**

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Sep 1997-31 Aug 1999

2 Sep 2003-1 Sep 2005

2 Sep 2006-1 Sep 2008

## **EMBLEM**

Approved, 17 Jun 1998

## **MOTTO**

Eyes of the Eagle

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

Sailed from New York, 11 Nov 1943. Arrived in England, 16 Nov, 1943

For members of the Air Force Reserve's 4th Combat Camera Squadron deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan, it's their mission. Images and video by 4th CCS Airmen have been viewable worldwide in publications and media outlets since their arrival in October. As the end of the deployment drew near in early April, the Reservists, who all volunteered to deploy from their home at March Air Reserve Base, Calif., and capture a critical time in history, paused to reflect on their experiences. The team was attached to the 5/2 Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., and they lived together with Soldiers at forward operating bases and combat outposts throughout southern Afghanistan for the deployment. For Tech. Sgt. Rudy Castro, a videographer, the lens acts as a buffer when the world seems out of focus. "It's easy to separate yourself from the trauma behind the lens of the camera, but if you pull your camera away for a second, you realize the severity of what's going on," Sergeant Castro said. "At that point, you just have to get back behind your camera." For another team member, Tech. Sgt. Francisco Govea, a

photographer attached to 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment and the 8th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, the work he did made things real for him and the American public. “If there is not a photo of a humanitarian mission, then it didn’t happen. The photos are proof for the Americans that the humanitarian missions take place,” Sergeant Govea said. Combat camera teams went out on missions with Army infantry Soldiers, on both mounted and dismounted patrols, throughout their six-month deployment. It didn’t take long for these visual imagery specialists to understand that every time out could be a life-or-death situation. “The first mission was a real wake-up call,” said Master Sgt. Juan Valdes, a videographer attached to 1st Battalion, 17th Infantry Regiment and the 8th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment. “As I looked at my teammate, I emphasized words I learned at combat skills training: ‘Watch where you step and keep your situational awareness up.’ As moments grew closer to gunfire, I realized this wasn’t a movie; this was real life. People were dying, and it was my job to document.” But it wasn’t all about combat for the Airmen living with Soldiers. “I was out there on the ground with the infantrymen seeing what they do on a daily basis,” said Staff Sgt. Dayton Mitchell, a photographer. The teams covered all aspects of daily life for service members in Afghanistan. Joint patrols with the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, humanitarian missions, meetings with village elders, small-arms combat with insurgents, improvised explosive device detonations, and documentation of the aftermath of suicide bombers were just some of the moments captured by the lenses of combat cameramen. During Operation Moshtarak in Marjah, both Sergeant Castro and Tech. Sgt. Efrén Lopez were attached to 4th Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. They stayed with the unit for almost a month, without showers, sleeping outside on the ground and living as Soldiers live in combat. They both ended up capturing imagery during firefights with the enemy. “We went over a wall and into a ditch; bullets were flying overhead. I took cover and took pictures of the Army as they were engaging the enemy,” Sergeant Lopez said. “To document combat was both exciting and a little bit scary. It goes through your mind when you’re in a combat environment that I might get shot or an IED could go off next to me.” Knowing when to put down the camera and pick up a weapon is an important moment when a combat cameraman must react. On Feb. 13, Sergeant Castro engaged the enemy during a firefight he was in, helping Soldiers suppress enemy fire. “The feeling of getting to be part of the first 4th Combat Camera team to go into Afghanistan is a great feeling,” Sergeant Castro said. “I wanted to earn the name combat cameraman, and I think we all did. In an example of Total Force Integration, Reservists are playing key roles in the Air Force’s evolving cyber mission. 2010

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### 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.