

5th MOBILE AERIAL PORT SQUADRON



LINEAGE

5th Aerial Port Operations Squadron
5th Aerial Port Squadron
5th Mobile Aerial Port Squadron

STATIONS

Wheelus AB, Libya
Neubiberg AB, Germany
Evreux AB, France
Dreux AB, France, Oct 1958
Evreux, France, Oct 1960
RAF Mildenhall, England, 25 Jul 1966-15 Sep 1978

ASSIGNMENTS

317th Troop Carrier Wing

COMMANDERS

LTC Charles E. Powell, Jr.

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 5th Aerial Port Operations Squadron was activated at Donaldson AFB, SC and active manning began in Jan 1954. The personnel came from every type of unit to comprise the 5th. After averaging a new commander every six months, it became static under the command of LTC Charles E. Powell, Jr.

By this time the unit was "hot to trot" with rumors of France, Spain, Libya, and various points east being rife. On 7 Oct 1954, orders were concrete and the unit was Tripoli bound.

Two days out of New York, the available seats at mess were open without regard for schedules. Green faces and lost meals and appetites ran rampant.

Southern sun shone finally at Casablanca, and the opportunity to get shaky feet on terra firma was afforded some fifty percent of the personnel. The excursion was a complete success, with wine, cognac, lost watches and wallets, and a vivid memory of Morocco.

On 17 Dec 1954, the squadron landed in what was to be their home for the next year. Propaganda had it that Tripoli was an arid spot, but the 5th was welcomed by a deluge. At Wheelus Field, the squadron operated the passenger terminal and space control in conjunction with the 1615th Support Sq. The personnel assigned to the 5th were qualified in dropping heavy equipment from aircraft, usually the C-119, Flying Boxcar

Activity began in earnest; detachments were set up and manned in Nouasseur, Rome, Athens and Neubiberg, and familiar faces now became names on the roster and far away. Problems arose and most of these were resolved. A school was set up for our loadmaster-dropmaster personnel, and the 5th was in business.

In the fall of 1957, as Evreux began receiving its first C-130s, 5th Aerial Port Squadron moved from Neubiberg along with the 317th squadrons. Detachment #3 of the 6th Aerial Port Squadron, a Combat Control Team consisting of one officer and thirteen airmen, all C-130 jump qualified, was already based at Evreux. Nine months later, the 5th absorbed the 6th Aerial Port Squadron's personnel and moved to Dreux from overcrowded Evreux. The 5th returned to Evreux in October 1960 when more space became available after departure of the C-119 aircraft and 465th personnel.

While in France, the 5th Aerial Port Squadron had three missions:

Operate twelve airfreight terminals within USAFE area of operations in Europe and around the Mediterranean Sea from Morocco into eastern Turkey. Small detachments at each airfield will provide loading and unloading service, both passengers and freight, to the cargo aircraft.

Provide qualified loadmaster/dropmasters for cargo and troop parachute drops, air mobility, and joint tactical airlift training with the U.S.Army. Assist with classified clandestine special operations at remote landing sites.

Provide three parachute-qualified Combat Control Teams made up of air traffic controllers and radio operators responsible for setting up, marking, and providing air traffic control over airborne forces drop zones and bare bases.

Approximately 30 officers and 240 airmen comprised the 5th Aerial Port Operations Squadron assigned to Evreux. They operated aerial ports at Evreux and throughout the USAFE theater. The squadron was a self-sufficient unit organized into the following sections: Headquarters, Administration, Personnel, Operations, Combat Control Teams, Air Terminal Operations, and Support.

The Operations Section had approximately sixty loadmasters and five officers. Operations furnished loadmaster teams for movement of unusual or oversized loads and aerial delivery of personnel and equipment. These APO loadmasters were air-drop qualified and, when needed, flew in addition to the usual load-masters found in the troop carrier aircrews. Later, after a few years of operations, all the C-130 loadmasters became air drop qualified. All loadmasters and officers assigned to an aerial port squadron had to undergo training for aerial delivery of personnel and equipment from the C-119, C-123, C-124, and C-130s at the aerial delivery school operated by the 5th APO Squadron at Evreux. Selected officers trained at a special school operated by NATO at RAF Old Sarum, very close to Salisbury, England. Training in accurate load weight-and-balance computations was a vital, ongoing program. The section provided augmentee loadmasters for the C-124s that were assigned temporarily to 322d Air Division air assault missions. Three Combat Control Teams consisting of one officer and thirteen airmen were assigned to the CCT Section. These "Pathfinders" were equipped with portable radios, portable radar beacons, identification panels, weather sensors, and drop zone lighting kits. The CCT air controllers had to maintain parachute-jumping proficiency in order to be the first to arrive at the drop zone and report surface wind velocity and direction. Several practice drop zones were established around Dreux and Evreux for realistic training.

The Support Section had sixty-five airmen assigned to the motor pool, with automotive maintenance and special equipment operators, a parachute packing and repair shop, a carpenter shop, cooks, medical technicians, and security police. The 5th APO Squadron motor pool had about seventy Army M-series tactical off-road vehicles such as forklift trucks, 1/4-ton trucks (Jeeps), 3/4-ton weapons carriers, 2-1/2 ton 6X6 trucks, 5-ton 6X6 tractors with their 40-foot long flatbed trailers, and 2-1/2-ton 6X6 wreckers. All this equipment was necessary for rapid loading and off-loading aircraft, and for recovery of drop zone equipment. The airhead had to be quickly cleared of supply loads and vehicles to prevent destruction of follow-up air drops. The small carpentry shop had facilities to fabricate equipment platforms, bridging, and shoring for air dropping special loads to ensure they survived ground impact. Of course, they could also repair their drop platforms after an exercise. The parachute shop had large industrial grade sewing machines and strong fans for repairing and drying large-sized cargo parachutes. The 5th security police had a special collection of heavy infantry weapons including grenade launchers, 50cal. heavy barrel machine guns, and 60 mm mortars for local defense of the tactical airheads or drop zones. These weapons were also available to the combat control teams.

The squadron moved to Dreux from overcrowded Evreux AB with six officers and seventy airmen in October 1958. It was located at marguerite number three and was supported by the 60th Troop Carrier Wing. The squadron received additional personnel and equipment while at Dreux.

The squadron was involved in many of the humanitarian airlift operations and demonstrated its capabilities in two major airlifts. On 29 February 1959, Agadir, Morocco, was hit by a severe earthquake followed by a tidal wave that killed several thousand people. The 5th set-up a complete air terminal at Rabat. Here it unloaded tons of relief supplies and U.S. Army Engineering units to aid rescue and recovery. Ten vehicles were airlifted into the terminal. The following year in 1960, the Congo airlift occurred. This required squadron resources for more than a year to set-up two air terminals for evacuation of civilians, then receive fourteen million pounds of cargo and 38,000 incoming U.N. troops. Airhead security was a serious issue because of the civil revolution; USAFE was very concerned about the targets the C-130s and C-124s presented while on the Congo airport ramps.

In October 1960, as space became available, the 5th Aerial Port Squadron returned to Evreux.



Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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