

AC-130 SYSTEMS SQUADRON

LINEAGE

STATIONS

Wright Patterson AFB, OH

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The AC-130U, managed by Aeronautical Systems Center's Special Operations Forces Systems Group is undergoing an Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration for a standoff precision-guided munition called Viper Strike. Viper Strike is a small, precision-attack munition with guide/glide fins and a 4-pound High Explosive Anti-Tank, or HEAT warhead. It has a man-in-loop control and is capable of destroying mobile targets such as armored vehicles from standoff range. Viper Strikes are currently in use in support of the global war on terrorism and are perfectly suited for special operations missions in urban and mountainous areas day or night. The AC-130 Systems Squadron at ASC currently has three people working with the Air Force Special Operations Command on the program upgrade, preparing for potential future demonstration transition to the center. AFSOC currently has 21 gunships in its inventory. Thirteen AC-130Us are flown by the 4th Special Operations Squadron and eight AC-130Hs are flown by the 16th SOS, both located at

Hurlburt Field, Fla. The AC-130H is managed at Warner Robins Air Force Base, Ga., and the AC-130 Systems Squadron is part of the Special Operations Forces Systems Group where the AC-130U is managed. The AC-130U has a 25 mm Gatling gun that is able to fire 1,800 rounds per minute, and, along with the AC-130H, carries a rapid fire 40 mm Bofors cannon and a 105 mm Howitzer. The cannons are located on the left side of the aircraft. The gunship has played a vital role in major conflicts since Vietnam, such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda and, more recently, has supported U.S. and allied ground forces in both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. AC-130s were some of the first air assets to deploy in preparation for operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, serving as a force multiplier by providing precision close-air support with the ability to loiter over the battlefield for extended periods of time. Work will be performed at Northrop Grumman's Huntsville, Ala., facility. The first phase of the contract is to demonstrate the use of Viper Strike from the Gunship and is expected to be completed in December 2006. The contract's second phase will test the military utility of the weapon system and address the possibility of incorporating a data link and additional communications. In an earlier news release, Dave Shrum, vice president of Northrop Grumman's Land Forces business unit said, "Viper Strike can add to AC-130 capability by providing a light-weight, low-collateral damage precision weapon at longer range. We're excited to be working with the special operations community to bring Viper Strike to its weapon arsenal." Lt. Col. Steve Knutson, deputy chief of test technology and experimentation division for AFSOC, said, "If the upcoming demonstration proves advantageous to the military and the decision is made to transition the Viper Strike capabilities to the gunship, that upgrade would complement the most lethal aircraft in the Air Force inventory." The AC-130 Systems Squadron of ASC's Special Operations Forces Systems Group oversees development, production, testing, modification, fielding and support of the AC-130. 2005

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.