

MEDIA PACKAGE



Creech Air Force Base Public Affairs

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FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet

HISTORY OF THE 432D WING AND 432D AIR EXPEDITIONARY WING

The illustrious history of the 432d "Hunters" began with the activation of the 432d Observation Group on Feb. 22, 1943, at Alachua Army Air Field, Fla., to train cadres for new groups and squadrons as the nation continued to prepare forces for war. After redesignation as the 432d Reconnaissance Group, and a transfer to Keystone Army Air Field, Fla., a revamped training program offered basic and flying training, and instruction on subjects that included chemical warfare, aircraft recognition, security and censorship. The Army Air Force inactivated the group on Nov. 1, 1943, shortly after its redesignation as the 432d Tactical Reconnaissance Group. Just over a decade later, on March 18, 1954, the group returned to activate status at Shaw Air Force Base, S.C., to provide tactical reconnaissance capabilities. In early 1959, after consolidating its lineage with the 432d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing's, the unit ran the U.S. Air Force Advanced Flying School, Tactical Reconnaissance briefly before inactivating on May 17, 1959.



Emblem of the 432d Wing, originally approved for the (then) 432d Tactical Reconnaissance Group on 2 Jun 1955.

Activated once again on Aug. 19, 1966, the 432 TRW formed up a month later on Sep. 18, 1966, at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. Thus began the most defining era of the unit's history, one that forged a legacy of valor, courage and steadfastness that buttresses the warfighting traditions carried on by today's Hunters. As before, the role that initially personified the "hunt" in Vietnam for the 432d was tactical aerial reconnaissance in support of other combat operations. This changed one year later, with the arrival and assignment of seven tactical fighter squadrons to the wing, as its mission set expanded to include combat air patrols against MiGs and ground strike operations. To be sure, the Hunters embraced the intensification of their combat role. Between Dec. 17, 1967, and Jan. 8, 1973, the wing's squadrons received credit for 36 confirmed MiG kills. Sixteen of those came from the Air Force's only Vietnam era "Aces," each one a Hunter. Three in all, they included Capt. Charles B. DeBellevue, of the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron, credited with downing two MiG-19s and four MiG-21s; Capt. Jeffrey S. Feinstein, of the 13 TFS, credited with downing five MiG-21s; and lastly Capt. Richard S. Ritchie, of the 555 TFS, credited with downing five MiG-21s.

Not all landmark events in that war occurred in the air, as with the case of Capt. Roger C. Locher of the 555 TFS. Shot down on May 10, 1972, Locher evaded captivity for 23 days before being rescued. The rescue itself, the deepest such mission into North Vietnam territory by American forces, is still deemed one of the most successful combat evasion chapters of the war. After participating in 14 of the 17 air campaigns of the Vietnam War, in Jan. 1973 the 432d officially ended operations in that country. Still, combat air operations continued that year in Laos until February and in Cambodia until August. After implementation of the cease-fire accords, the 432nd remained in Thailand to conduct routine reconnaissance and training missions. In belated recognition of its new mission set, it became the 432d Tactical Fighter Wing on Nov. 15, 1974. In April 1975, the wing supported the evacuation of American and Allied personnel from Cambodia and South Vietnam. That same year, the 432d played a key role in finding and recovering the American freighter, S.S. Mayaguez. Relieved of all operational duties on Nov. 30, 1975, the 432d inactivated on Dec. 23 of the same year.

This time the highly decorated flag of the 432d did not remain furled for long. After redesignation as the 432d Tactical Drone Group, the unit activated May 24, 1976, at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz., to conduct follow-on and evaluation testing of the AQM-34V unmanned drone. The 432d carried out parallel initial operational testing of the drone's DC-130H "mothership" as well. This brief venture into yet another mission area ended, for a time at least, with the group's inactivation in 1979. On July 1, 1984, the unit activated at Misawa Air Base, Japan, as the 432d Tactical Fighter Wing. Serving as the host base unit, the 432 TFW flew F-16 Viper aircraft in support of a tactical employment mission. Using Misawa as a test base for a new wing organizational structure, popularly referred to as the "one wing, one base, one boss" concept, the Air Force redesignated the unit as the 432d Fighter Wing on May 31, 1991. This concept led to the assignment of a third flying squadron to the 432 FW, with operational control of the 39th Rescue Squadron's four HH-60G "Black Hawk" helicopters ceded to the wing by the Air Rescue Service on Feb. 1, 1993. On Oct. 1, 1994, the 432 FW inactivated at Misawa as the 35th Fighter Wing stood up there.

The veteran combat unit returned to active service on May 1, 2007, at Creech Air Force Base, Nev., as the 432d Wing, and formed the U.S. Air Force's first unmanned (later remotely piloted) aircraft systems wing. In doing so, the 432d took charge of existing and rapidly expanding unmanned precision attack and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance combat missions there in support of overseas contingency operations. On May 15, 2008, the provisional 432d Air Expeditionary Wing activated at Creech to offer the fullest possible spectrum of leadership to these fights, while complementing the operate, train and equip efforts of the 432d Wing. Within a few short, frenzied and grueling years the Hunters quadrupled their output of MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper combat lines. Sprinting off the 250,000 flight hours mark hit in mid-2007, set over the course of 12 years—they hit the 500,000 flight hours mark in early 2009, the 1 million flight hours mark in early 2011, and then the 2 million mark in late 2013.

The unrelenting uptick in the RPA Enterprise's size and scope led to parallel, remarkable organizational changes to the 432d Wing and its Creech-based associates in 2012 and beyond. Among these, the establishment of a 799th Air Base Group under the host base 99th Air Base Wing in August, and shortly thereafter the activation of the 732d Operations Group under the 432d Wing in September. On the total force side, Air Force Reserve Command activated the 726th Operations Group at Creech in December 2014 to serve alongside the Hunters. Two more active duty squadrons joined the wing in 2015 and a third in 2016. Elements of the wing's operations and maintenance units underwent transformation that year following the Air Force's decision to retire the MQ-1 Predator fleet from active service. The 432d Aircraft Maintenance Squadron's Tiger Aircraft Maintenance Unit launched its first MQ-9 Reaper in the summer of 2016, shortly after the service redesignated the wing's flying mission units as attack squadrons.

(Current as of February 2018)



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet MQ-9 REAPER

Published Aug. 18, 2010

Mission

The MQ-9 Reaper is an armed, multi-mission, medium-altitude, long-endurance remotely piloted aircraft that is employed primarily as an intelligence-collection asset and secondarily against dynamic execution targets. Given its significant loiter time, wide-range sensors, multi-mode communications suite, and precision weapons -- it provides a unique capability to perform strike, coordination, and reconnaissance against high-value, fleeting, and time-sensitive targets.

Reapers can also perform the following missions and tasks: intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, close air support, combat search and rescue, precision strike, buddy-laser, convoy/raid overwatch, route clearance, target development, and terminal air guidance. The MQ-9's capabilities make it uniquely qualified to conduct irregular warfare operations in support of combatant commander objectives.

Features

The Reaper is part of a remotely piloted aircraft system. A fully operational system consists of several sensor/weapon-equipped aircraft, ground control station, Predator Primary Satellite Link, and spare equipment along with operations and maintenance crews for deployed 24-hour missions.

The basic crew consists of a rated pilot to control the aircraft and command the mission, and enlisted aircrew member to operate sensors and weapons as well as a mission coordinator, when required. To meet combatant commanders' requirements, the Reaper delivers tailored capabilities using mission kits containing various weapons and sensor payload combinations.

The MQ-9 baseline system carries the Multi-Spectral Targeting System, which has a robust suite of visual sensors for targeting. The MTS-B integrates an infrared sensor, color/monochrome daylight TV camera, image-intensified TV camera, laser designator, and laser illuminator. The full-motion video from each of the imaging sensors can be



An MQ-9 Reaper, armed with GBU-12 Paveway II laser guided munitions and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, piloted by Col. Lex Turner flies a combat mission over southern Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Lt. Col. Leslie Pratt)

viewed as separate video streams or fused.

The unit also incorporates a laser range finder/designator, which precisely designates targets for employment of laser-guided munitions, such as the Guided Bomb Unit-12 Paveway II. The Reaper is also equipped with a synthetic aperture radar to enable future GBU-38 Joint Direct Attack Munitions targeting. The MQ-9 can also employ four laser-guided missiles, Air-to-Ground Missile-114 Hellfire, which possess highly accurate, low-collateral damage, anti-armor and anti-personnel engagement capabilities.

The remotely piloted aircraft can be disassembled and loaded into a single container for deployment worldwide. The entire system can be transported in the C-130 Hercules, or larger aircraft. The MQ-9 aircraft operates from standard U.S. airfields with clear line-of-sight to the ground data terminal antenna, which provides line-of-sight communications for takeoff and landing. The PPSL provides over-the-horizon communications for the aircraft and sensors.

The primary concept of operations, remote split operations, employs a launch-and-recovery ground control station for take-off and landing operations at the forward operating location, while the crew based in continental United States executes command and control of the remainder of the mission via beyond-line-of-sight links. Remote split operations result in a smaller number of personnel deployed to a forward location, consolidate control of the different flights in one location, and as such, simplify command and control functions as well as the logistical supply challenges for the weapons system.

Background

The U.S. Air Force proposed the MQ-9 Reaper system in response to the Department of Defense directive to support initiatives of overseas contingency operations. It is larger and more powerful than the MQ-1 Predator, and is designed to execute time-sensitive targets with persistence and precision, and destroy or disable those targets. The "M" is the DOD designation for multi-role, and "Q" means remotely piloted aircraft system. The "9" indicates it is the ninth in the series of remotely piloted aircraft systems.

General Characteristics

Primary Function: Intelligence collection in support of strike, coordination, and reconnaissance missions

Contractor: General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc.

Power Plant: Honeywell TPE331-10GD turboprop engine

Thrust: 900 shaft horsepower maximum

Wingspan: 66 feet (20.1 meters)

Length: 36 feet (11 meters)

Height: 12.5 feet (3.8 meters)

Weight: 4,900 pounds (2,223 kilograms) empty

Maximum takeoff weight: 10,500 pounds (4,760 kilograms)

Fuel Capacity: 4,000 pounds (602 gallons)

Payload: 3,750 pounds (1,701 kilograms)

Speed: Cruise speed around 230 miles per hour (200 knots)

Range: 1,150 miles (1,000 nautical miles)

Ceiling: Up to 50,000 feet (15,240 meters)

Armament: Combination of AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, GBU-12 Paveway II and GBU-38 Joint Direct Attack Munitions

Crew (remote): Two (pilot and sensor operator)

Unit Cost: \$56.5 million (includes four aircraft with sensors, ground control station and Predator Primary satellite link) (fiscal 2011 dollars)

Initial operating capability: October 2007

Inventory: Total force, 104

History of Creech Air Force Base

Today, Creech Air Force Base, Nevada, is home to the famed “Hunters” of the 432d Wing and 432d Air Expeditionary Wing. The installation also houses the related operations of the British Royal Air Force’s No. 39 Squadron, the 556th Test and Evaluation Squadron, the Nevada Air National Guard’s 232d Operations Squadron, and the Air Force Reserve’s 726th Operations Group. The 799th Air Base Group, a geographically separated unit of the host 99th Air Base Wing at Nellis AFB, Nevada, supports the missions of these and other tenant units at Creech.



Creech Air Force Base arose from a small training site erected in the aftermath of the brutal December 7, 1941, aerial attack on Pearl Harbor, an event that thrust America and the newly organized U.S. Army Air Forces into World War II. Envisioned as a simple sub-post “tent city” military training camp, by March 1942 three graded-earth landing strips with taxiways were in place and additional plans underway to construct more permanent fixed facilities that included an auxiliary landing field for the parent Las Vegas Army Air Field. In the following seven decades the installation’s roles and missions focused on such a sudden call to duty—preparing Airmen for combat and other roles in service to the nation.

Built one mile northwest of the community of Indian Springs, and about 35 miles northwest of the city of Las Vegas, the sub-post was known as the Indian Springs Airport. Before the end of 1942, the Army had a contract for regular facilities there. By February 1943 the camp saw use as a divert field and as a base for air-to-air gunnery training. Later that summer, after the establishment of a four-engine ground training school for B-17 co-pilots, the airport’s full complement of aircraft included 29 B-17s, 18 TC-26s and 6 AT-61 trainers. In early 1945, as World War II began to wind down, so too did the missions at Indian Springs, and at year’s end the installation was in stand-by status with maintenance by a small housekeeping staff. As part of the post-war drawdown, both Indian Springs Airport and Las Vegas Army Air Field (today’s Nellis AFB) inactivated in January 1947.

Along with Las Vegas Army Air Field, Indian Springs Airport reopened in January 1949 after the birth of an Independent Air Force and the onset of the Cold War. Assigned to Air Training Command, the major command redesignated the field Indian Springs AFB as the site prepared for the arrival of its first permanently assigned Air Force unit in 1950. A renewal of airpower innovation and tactics in the new service during the Korean War left its mark on Indian Springs AFB. In July 1952, the base transferred to the Air Research and Development Command and realigned under the Air Force Special Weapons Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. After the 3600th Air Demonstration Team “Thunderbirds” moved to Nellis AFB in June 1956, the Indian Springs airfield became their primary air demonstration practice site.

History of Creech Air Force Base



In 1961, control of the installation at Indian Springs shifted to Tactical Air Command. The base's myriad roles throughout the 20th century belied its size and resources. A successive string of host and tenant organizations, ranging from groups to detachments, provided support to on- and off-site missions. Critical but little known responsibilities included support to the Continental Nuclear Test Program and service as a key staging base for the delivery of testing materials to the Soviet Union for joint verification tests. The base's proximity to such remote but essential locations led to the arrival of its most distinguished visitor on December 8, 1962, as President John F. Kennedy arrived at Indian Springs AFB before proceeding by helicopter to the Nevada Test Site for an inspection of those facilities.

On April 13, 1964, the Air Force redesignated Indian Springs AFB as Indian Springs Air Force Auxiliary Field and assigned it to Nellis AFB. During this era the base had two enduring and well known roles. It provided range maintenance for sections of the massive Nellis Test and Training Range. Concurrently, it served as a recurring host base for deployments of Airmen and aviators from all the services in search of realistic, less constrained field training. Despite these vital and persistent contributions to critical missions and the development of air superiority, the base acquired no singular operational mission of its own. A detachment of UH-1n helicopters in the 1970s and 1980s constituted the only aircraft unit assigned to the installation.

Following the inactivation of Tactical Air Command in 1992, Indian Springs AFAF fell under the new Air Combat Command. A new era began on December 13, 1996, with the first flight of the RQ-1 Predator remotely piloted aircraft at the airfield. In a defining moment of history, on the Nellis AFB Range, the Predator conducted the first successful firing of a Hellfire missile in February 2001. This transformation of a reconnaissance platform into an offensive weapon would, in a few short years, transform Indian Springs from a center of support to a center of operations reaching far beyond the horizons of the Nevada desert.

On June 20, 2005, with the transfer of the remotely piloted aviation mission to Indian Springs growing rapidly, the U.S. Air Force redesignated Indian Springs AFAF as Creech AFB in honor of Gen. Wilbur L. Creech. Naming the installation for General Creech, commander of Tactical Air Command from 1978 to 1984, and a veteran of more than 275 combat missions in Korea and Vietnam, was all the more fitting given his unofficial title as the "father of the Thunderbirds." A fearless pioneer, and commander of the Skyblazers Aerial Demonstration team that preceded the Thunderbirds, General Creech became a Thunderbird pilot and senior mentor.

History of Creech Air Force Base

On March 13, 2007 the arrival of the first MQ-9 Reaper at Creech marked another milestone in the base's growing fleet of remotely piloted aircraft. The U.S. Air Force elevated the leadership of remotely piloted missions on May 1, 2007 with the activation of the 432d Wing at Creech. Establishment of the 432d Air Expeditionary Wing at Creech on May 15, 2008 acknowledged the full spectrum of these operations. On August 30, 2012, the 799th Air Base Group stood up to improve base operating support at the base. Then, on December 5, 2014, the 726th Operations Group unfurled its flag at Creech in a direct reflection of the expansion and enduring importance of the total force alliance at the Hunters' main operating base.



A final ceremony on February 6, 2015 at Creech, in Hangar 1000, marked the end of the Silver Flag Alpha mission on the installation. The inactivation of the 99th Ground Combat Training Squadron came shortly thereafter on 1 April 2015. Yet, Creech AFB continued to grow and serve as the main operating base of the 432d Wing and 432d Air Expeditionary Wing. Throughout 2016, with a nearly 3,000-strong workforce, it continued to support and execute its vital role in the conduct of round-the-clock overseas contingency operations against global terrorism. Born at the onset of a world war that threatened America's safety nearly three-quarters of a century ago, this out-of-the-way, unassuming base still defends this nation against all who threaten it. (Current as of Feb 2018)