

106th RESCUE WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

394th Bombardment Group (Medium) constituted, 15 Feb 1943
Activated, 5 Mar 1943
Redesignated 394th Bombardment Group (Light), Dec 1945
Inactivated, 31 Mar 1946
Redesignated 106th Bombardment Group (Light) and Allotted to ANG (NY), 24 May 1946
Extended federal recognition, 21 Mar 1947
Redesignated 106th Composite Group, Nov 1950
Redesignated 106th Bombardment Group (Light), Feb 1951
Redesignated 106th Bombardment Group (Medium), May 1951
Inactivated, 16 Jun 1952
Returned to ANG (NY), 1 Dec 1952
Redesignated 106th Bombardment Group (Light)
Redesignated 106th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group
Redesignated 106th Rescue Group
Redesignated 106th Rescue Wing

STATIONS

MacDill Field, FL, 5 Mar 1943
Ardmore AAFld, OK, 12 Jul 1943
Kellogg Field, MI, 19 Aug 1943-15 Feb 1944
Boreham, England, c. n Mar 1944
Holmsley, England, 24 Jul 1944
Tour-en-Bassin, France, 25 Aug 1944

Bricy, France, 18 Sep 1944
Cambrai/Niergnies, France, 8 Oct 1944
Venlo, Holland, 2 May 1945
Kitzingen, Germany, Sep 1945-15 Feb 1946
Boiling Field, DC, 15 Feb-31 Mar 1946
Floyd Bennett Field, NY, 1 Mar 1951
March AFB, CA, 28 Mar 1951-16 Jun 1952
Westhampton Beach, NY

ASSIGNMENTS

Ninth Air Force
Strategic Air Command

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-26
A-26
B-29

COMMANDERS

LTC Joe W Kelly, c. 20 Mar 1943
Col Thomas B Hall, 6 Apr 1943
Col Gove C. Celio Jr., 24 Jan 1945-Feb 1946
Unkn, Mar-Aug 1951
Col Howell M Estes Jr., 4 Aug 1951
Col Loran D Briggs, 1 Mar-16 Jun 1952

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

American Theater
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
France, 7-9 Aug 1944

French Croix de Guerre with Palm
France, 6 Jun-14 Sep 1944

EMBLEM



Azure, a clenched fist terminating in displayed dexter demi-wing of an eagle, the first grasping a torch, all sable fimbriated argent, flames gules fimbriated of the last. (Approved, 15 Apr 1954)

MOTTO

READINESS STRENGTHENS LIBERTY

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The primary federal mission of the 106th is combat search and rescue (CSAR). In peacetime, the 106th performs search and rescue missions on behalf of the State of New York and the Federal government. It performs long range over-water missions using the aerial refueling capabilities of the HC-130s and the Wing's rescue helicopters, the HH-60G.

Moved to England, Feb-Mar 1944, and assigned to Ninth AF. Entered combat in Mar 1944 and helped to prepare for the invasion of Normandy by hitting V-weapon sites, marshalling yards, bridges, airdromes, and gun emplacements. On D-Day, 6 Jun, bombed gun positions at Cherbourg; afterward, struck communications, fuel supplies, and strong points in support of the Normandy campaign. Aided the breakthrough at St Lo by bombing targets in the area on 25 Jul 1944.

Received a DUC for operations from 7 to 9 Aug 1944 when the group made five attacks against strongly fortified targets in northern France, knocking out an ammunition dump and four railroad bridges. Capt Darrell R Lindsey was awarded the Medal of Honor for leading a

formation of B-26's over one of these bridges on 9 Aug. During the flight, Lindsey's plane was hit and the right engine burst into flames. Knowing that the gasoline tanks could explode at any moment, he continued to lead the formation until the bomb run had been made, then ordered his crew to bail out. The bombardier, the last man to leave the plane, offered to lower the wheels so that Lindsey might escape through the nose of the aircraft, but realizing that this could throw the plane into a spin and hinder the bombardier's chances to escape, Lindsey refused the offer and remained with his B-26 until it crashed.

After moving to the Continent late in Aug 1944, the group hit strong points at Brest and then began to operate against targets in Germany. Took part in the Battle of the Bulge, Dec 1944—Jan 1945, by hitting communications to deprive the enemy of supplies and reinforcements. Bombed transportation, storage facilities, and other objectives until the war ended; also dropped propaganda leaflets.

Remained in the theater to serve with United States Air Forces in Europe as part of the army of occupation. Began training with A-26's. Transferred, without personnel and equipment, to the US on 15 Feb 1946.

The Ardmore facility was designated, July 12, 1943, as a Martin "Marauder" B-26 Crew Training Base. The 394th Bombardment Group's four squadrons, the 584th, (Captain Kenneth T. Wilhite, Squadron Commander); 585th, (Captain Edward B. Saxon); 586th, (Captain Joseph M. Silk) and 587th, (Captain Robert E. Keating), under command of Lt. Colonel Thomas B. Hall, were here during a brief period of five weeks before they were transferred, August 19, 1943, to Kellogg Field, Battle Creek, Michigan. They had previously been stationed at MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida since activation, March 3, 1943, and were involved with Phase Two crew training while at Ardmore. This involved local and distant training flights with simulated missions allowing all crew members to practice and improve their skills. Classroom instruction was also part of the program. At this time, no gunnery or bombing ranges were associated with the Ardmore field. It is reported that the 394th used a bombing range located in the Great Salt Plains area of northern Oklahoma as did other training units. The outlines of a German battleship, the Scharnhorst, and an oil refinery were used as simulated targets.

The 394th was assigned to the 9th Air Force at Boreham, England, March 11, 1944, and reassigned to Homsley South, July 24, 1944. From these bases and others in France and Holland in mid-to-late 1944 and 1945, the 394th built a reputation of being experts at destroying marshalling yards, railways, bridges and factories. By the end of WWII, 30 men of the unit had been lost to accidents, 180 killed in action, 59 prisoners of war, two missing in action, 40 wounded in action, 13 evadees, and 11 injured in action. Fast Forward Note: Colonel Hall, commanding officer, April 6, 1943 to January 24, 1945, survived WWII but died in action over North Korea, February 11, 1951.

The postwar years saw numerous mission and aircraft changes. When the Korean War broke out in June 1950, the entire 106th Bomb Wing returned to Federal service and was assigned to

March AFB, CA. The Wing traded its B-26 for the B-29 in 1951. The Wing returned to New York State control in 1952.

Ordered to active service, 1 Mar 1951

Inactivated, 16 Jun 1952

Returned to ANG (NY) on 1 Dec 1952

After returning to New York, the 106th Bomb Wing regained its light bombers and flew them until its conversion to an air defense fighter unit in 1956. In the space of three years, the newly redesignated 106th Fighter Wing completed three aircraft conversions. It operated the T-33, the F-94 and the F-86. In 1959, the unit was again given a new mission and new aircraft when it became an airlift group equipped with the C-119. It operated as a general transport and aeromedical evacuation unit until being re-equipped with the C-97 in 1962. In 1969, the C-97s were modified into the tanker version, the KC-97. The 106th flew this aircraft until 1972.

In 1969, the Air Force closed Suffolk County Air Force Base; it remained vacant for less than a year when the Air National Guard relocated the 106th from its home of 24 years, Floyd Bennett Field to eastern Long Island. The 106th Air Refueling Group moved to Suffolk County Airport in 1970 and returned to the air defense community in 1972 when it received the F-102. Once again, the Wing's mission was short lived. The year 1975 would see a dramatic mission change for the 106th Fighter Interceptor Group, one that would have far reaching impact and long lasting significance for the unit, Long Island and the nation.

The 106th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group was the new name for the former fighter unit. The F-102s were replaced by HC-130 and the HH-3. The group's new home at Suffolk County Airport was ideally suited for the rescue mission along the eastern seaboard of the country. The 106th was now the only Air Force rescue organization in the northeastern portion of the United States.

1987 106th Aerospace Rescue And Recovery Group Suffolk County Airport, Westhampton Beach The Group has had its current Air Rescue and Recovery mission since June 1975. Early in 1987, as a result of a change in mission emphasis, the Air Force announced plans to eliminate helicopter aircraft from the Group. Such action would have made it impossible for the Group's aircrews to maintain training and mission capability. When the news became public knowledge, local congressional representatives took action to insure the helicopters would not be removed and further, that new replacement helicopters would be procured in the next couple of years. This action was direct recognition of the Group's contributions to the safety and well being of surrounding civilian communities of the Long Island and New England area. During 1987, the 106th ARRG was credited with 10 lives saved. This brought the Group's total credited lives saved to 223 since 1975. Aircrews and a HC-130 deployed to Alaska in August to perform navigation search and rescue training. The Group concluded its second major construction project in as many years with the occupancy and dedication of its new base firehouse. The Group also provides crash, fire and rescue support for Suffolk County Airport.

1988 The 106th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group had a landmark year in 1988. The year began with notification from the Department of the Air Force that the unit was to lose one HC130P used for long-range search and rescue operations. The next five months were dedicated to emphasizing the need for this capability. The concern is still being addressed. Since 1975 the 106th ARRG has been the only Air National Guard unit on the Eastern Seaboard with a search and rescue mission. During the first half of calendar year 1988 the unit was credited with two lives saved. In June 1988, the unit competed with other Department of Defense organizations, including the U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force, for the privilege of participating in the United States Space Shuttle Program. Following weeks of rigorous training and competition, the 106th ARRG was selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) as the primary organization responsible for ocean rescue of astronauts during space shuttle launches. The unit participated in the two successful U.S. Space Shuttle launches, "Discovery" and "Atlantis," during the latter half of 1988. During the summer of 1988, its Civil Engineering Squadron personnel deployed to West Germany for overseas training. The Group ended the year on December 30 when it was credited with four lives saved during search and rescue operations off the Long Island Coast. Since the Group entered the rescue mission in 1973 it has been credited with saving 230 lives.

In 1993 the 106th Rescue Group was redesignated the 106th Rescue Wing.

In 1993, Suffolk County Air National Guard Base was renamed Gabreski Air National Guard Base in honor of Col Francis S. Gabreski, a leading ace from World War II and Korea and a former Base Commander at Suffolk.

The Wing has provided HC-130 support for every shuttle mission since the loss of the Space Shuttle Challenger when the Wing was designated to serve as the primary rescue organization for space shuttle launches from Florida. In February 2001 the Wing was designated as a Space Shuttle launch alternate landing site. If a problem develops during the launch phase, astronauts and mission controllers may use Gabreski's long main runway to safely return the orbiter to earth.

The 106th Rescue Wing received national attention again in July 1996 when its aircraft and rescue personnel were the first unit on-scene after the TWA Flight 800 disaster. It assisted local, state and federal authorities for more than a week after that tragic event.

The 106th is a key part of the Total Force and supports Air Force contingency operations around the world. Since the end of the Gulf War, it has provided personnel and aircraft to support the Air Force mission in Operation Northern Watch in Turkey and Operation Southern Watch in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In 2001, after the September 11th terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the 106th Rescue Wing went to the front lines in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the War on Terrorism. While supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, the Wing made its first two Combat Rescues by recovering Army soldiers trapped in the wreckage of a Chinook helicopter shot down near Fallujah in 2003.

In peacetime, the 106th Rescue Wing reports through the Adjutant General to the Governor of New York State. The Wing is gained by Air Combat Command when activated to support Federal missions.

The 106th Rescue Wing at Gabreski Field, N.Y., is the only Air Force combat search and rescue unit in the northeastern United States. It performs civilian humanitarian rescues in addition to its combat search and rescue duties.

The 106th RQW covers NASA Space Shuttle launches providing contingency operations should a problem arise. The 106th supported Operation Northern Watch in Turkey and Operation Southern Watch in Southwest Asia. The Wing stands ready to fulfill a variety of combat and support roles, including pararescue, security forces, medical support, services, civil engineering, logistics and transportation. The Wing has deployed and participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The combat experience of five Wing members was highlighted in Airman's magazine. The Wing also deployed for operations in the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan and continues deploying in support of the Air Expeditionary Forces and Expeditionary Combat Support.

The 106th RQW is ready to assist the State of New York in disaster relief and other state emergencies, as directed by the Governor. The Wing can execute rescue missions and many other skill sets such as Civil engineering, Logistics, Medical and Command and Control Operations. The 106th also has the ability to execute aerial firefighting with the HH-60, as well as medical evacuation using both the HC-130 and the HH-60. The 106th Medical Group is trained and equipped to perform in-place patient decontamination (IPPD) and all members are trained to respond to possible Chemical/Biological attacks.

The Wing is one of the closest military units to the City of New York and was one of the first to respond to the World Trade Center following the devastating terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. The Wing's State Mission to provide Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) has never been more important as the Wing fully engages in the Global War on Terrorism.

Working in close cooperation with New York State Civil Authorities, the 106th can provide specialized rescue capability and the full range of combat skills present in the Wing; medical assistance, force and asset protection, civil engineering, firefighting and logistics support. These skills represent much added value to State and local emergency managers who will manage a broad range of potential events from terrorist attacks to natural disasters to national security events like the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. Joint Task Force 2 (JTF 2), an Army and Air National Guard leadership team is headquartered at Gabreski Air National Guard Base and is one of 6 JTF's situated geographically around the State of New York. Whether it be fighting fires with helicopters or responding to the aftermath of TWA 800 or digging for survivors at the World Trade Center, the 106th has validated the importance of its New York State mission.

The 106th Rescue Wing was tasked to provide rescue service to the City of New Orleans following the levee failure in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. Two rescue helicopters, a HC-130 airborne tanker and a Pararescue team deployed to Louisiana to assist in the massive recovery efforts underway. The helicopters worked both day and night using night vision goggles and forward looking infrared (FLIR) and fuel was provided in flight by the HC-130 tanker crews. The ability to be refueled in flight over New Orleans was a big advantage for the 106th since much of the ground refueling could not be done because of power outages and fuel trucks were overwhelmed by the demands of the recovery efforts. The Pararescue teams (PJs) worked from the helicopters and were hoisted onto flooded rooftops to assist survivors in escaping from their devastated homes. The PJs were able to provide immediate medical assistance to those in need and clearly saved the lives of many who were in extreme medical danger. The teams also worked from inflatable Zodiac boats and moved from house to house in the flooded streets recovering survivors. Two weeks of effort resulted in 161 lives saved and became the largest single life saving event in the 31 year history of the 106th Rescue Wing.

2005

31 Aug

Eight pararescuemen from the 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, deployed in Title 10 status to Jackson, Mississippi. Approximately twenty-two HH-60s assigned to the ANG, active duty Air Force, and Air Force Reserve rescue units operated at NAS Jackson.

1 Sep

The 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, deployed two HH-60 and twelve personnel in Title 10 status to Jackson, Mississippi.

2 Sep

One HC-130 assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing deployed to Hurlburt Field, Florida to provide helicopter aerial refueling support over New Orleans.

3 Sep

One MC-130P aircraft from the 129th Rescue Wing transported unit pararescuemen personnel and swift water rescue equipment to NAS New Orleans. An additional C-130J from the 146th Airlift Wing based at NAS Point Mugu, California transported additional 129th Rescue Wing pararescuemen personnel and equipment. By this time, Air Guard rescue assets deployed to New Orleans included twelve zodiac boats and Air Guard Combat Controllers who operated three helicopter Landing Zones. Air Guard rescue personnel were expected to remain deployed for approximately fourteen days. Air Guard pararescuemen and combat controllers deployed to the hurricane stricken area came from the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG; 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon ANG; 129th Rescue Wing, California ANG, and the 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska ANG. The 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, deployed to Jackson, Mississippi and Hurlburt Field, Florida.

11 Sep

Thirteen maintenance personnel assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, returned

to home station at Francis Gabreski Airport.

25 Sep The ANG deployed fifty-two pararescue personnel to support Hurricane Rita relief operations in Louisiana, Texas, Florida, and Mississippi. Pararescue personnel came from the 123^d Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG; 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon ANG; 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, and the 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska ANG.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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