

117 INTELLIGENCE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

117 Intelligence Squadron

STATIONS

Sumpter Smith ANGB, Birmingham, AL

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



117th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron emblem

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. -- Everyone on base knows that the 117th Intelligence Squadron is located here in Birmingham, but I have found that most people do not know much about the building on the hill without windows. I have had the distinct honor and privilege to be a part of this elite unit of dedicated intelligence professionals who perform the real-world active duty intelligence mission daily for the United States Air Force. The 117 IS is an Air Combat Command gained tenant unit located at the 117th Air Refueling Wing. In addition to being the home of Distributed Ground Station – Alabama, the 117 IS also hosts Joint Reserve Intelligence Center – Birmingham, one of the original nineteen Joint Reserve Intelligence Program sites.

The history of the squadron dates back to 1922 when the 135th Observation Squadron was federally recognized. After several iterations, the 135th eventually became the 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, out of which, in 1957, was formed the 117th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron or “Recce Tech.” The 117 RTS became responsible for providing photographic processing, imagery interpretation and product dissemination in support of national war time and peace time missions to include RF-4C, SR-71, U-2, and MQ-1 Predator reconnaissance flights as well as national satellite imagery.

On January 1, 1994, the 117 RTS was re-designated as the 117 IS and began to migrate away from wet film production and towards strategic missions utilizing national technical means imagery. Throughout the 1990’s, the unit routinely deployed to European Command for two week annual field training to assist in long roll production and exploitation of U-2 missions supporting contingencies within the EUCOM Area of Operation.

Discussions of the 117 IS becoming a component of Distributed Common Ground System began around 2000 and intensified after 9/11. Its activations sent virtually every unit member below Chief Master Sgt. to either Langley or Beale AFB to augment then Sentinel, now DGS -1 & -2. Initial operational capability status was realized on December, 18 2006 with the unit's first live Full Motion Video mission. Since that time, the 117 IS has built a reputation of innovation and unparalleled support to the warfighter.

One such innovation is the development of the 3D Battlespace Visualization Program, which provides the tools that allow the geospatial analyst to construct a 3-dimensional representation of a compound. This allows ground assault forces to plan and virtually rehearse their mission, greatly enhancing their efficiency, effectiveness and most importantly, safety. After the last round of BRAC, the 117 IS was asked to assist in the mission crew position training of personnel from both DGS-Indiana and DGS-Massachusetts. The 117 IS trained and subsequently performed over 180 Demonstrated Proficiency Evaluations. They also administered almost 400 Open- and Closed-Book Examinations with no additional resources other than those provided to support two 24/7 orbits. Perhaps most notably, from the middle of 2007 to the end of 2009, 15 members of the unit deployed to and augmented a key Special Operations Forces, Full Motion Video, Processing Exploitation and Dissemination node during its stand-up phase. Upon their return, the 117 IS made the critical decision to adopt and integrate their Tactics, Techniques and Procedures into its own operations. Through the intervening years, DGS-AL earned a reputation as the SOF, FMV, PED subject matter experts for Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency/25th Air Force and the 480th ISR Wing. Many of its procedures are being adopted throughout the DCGS enterprise.

The legacy of the 117 IS providing direct support to the operational missions of the USAF began when its airmen exploited film shot along the air corridor into Berlin during the Berlin Airlift. It continued when the airmen analyzed miles of Vietnam era Creek Misty film looking for signs of downed aircraft, thereby contributing to the search for the remains of missing Airmen. Additionally, the 117 IS has supported and continues to support multiple combatant commanders in Operations DESERT SHIELD, DESERT STORM, SOUTHERN WATCH, ALLIED FORCE/NOBLE ANVIL, ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, NEW DAWN, ODYSSEY DAWN, JUNIPER SHIELD, INHERENT RESOLVE, and FREEDOM'S SENTINEL. Closer to home, the unit supported Domestic Operations resulting from Hurricanes Katrina, Gustav, and Ike, the earthquake in Haiti and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The unit has also performed work for the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, Missile and Space Intelligence Center, and Army Materiel Command. To date, the unit has been awarded nine Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards and one Meritorious Unit Award.

The men and women of the 117 IS continue to directly contribute to the success of military operations in the AOR by being an indispensable provider of essential real-time intelligence to the Boots on the Ground warfighters with an emphasis on support to Special Operations Forces. The professional Airmen of the 117th Intelligence Squadron are literally engaged in real-time, real-world combat operations every day. I am proud to be a part of this outstanding intelligence organization. Everyone in the 117th Air Refueling Wing should be aware of their distinguished

history and current operational successes. 2016

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

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