

167 AIRLIFT SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

369 Fighter Squadron, 20 Dec 1942

Activated, 15 January 1943

Inactivated 10 Nov 1945

Reconstituted and redesignated 167 Fighter Squadron and allotted to WV NG, 24 May 1946

167 Fighter Squadron (SE) extended federal recognition, 1 Mar 1947

Redesignated 167 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 10 Oct 1950

Redesignated 167 Fighter Interceptor Squadron

Redesignated 167 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 10 Nov 1958

Redesignated 167 Aeromedical Transport Squadron (Light), 1 Apr 1961

Redesignated 167 Air Transport Squadron (Heavy), 18 Jan 1964

Redesignated 167 Military Airlift Squadron, 1 Jan 1966

Redesignated 167 Aeromedical Airlift Squadron, 1 Aug 1967

Redesignated 167 Tactical Airlift Squadron, 3 Jun 1972

Redesignated 167 Airlift Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

STATIONS

Westover Field, MA, 15 Jan 1943

Grenier Field, NH, 6 April 1943

Republic Field, NY, 26 May 1943

Westover Field, MA, 24 Aug 1943-2 Oct 1943

East Wretham, England, 18 Oct 1943-4 Nov 1945

Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, 9-10 Nov 1945

Charleston, WV

Martinsburg, WV, Dec 1955

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Manston, England

ASSIGNMENTS

359th Fighter Group, 15 Jan 1943-10 Nov 1945

167 Tactical Airlift Group

167 Airlift Wing

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

P-47, 1943

P-51, 1944

F-47, 1947

F-51, 1948

T-28, 1957

F-86, 1958

C-119, 1961

C-121, 1963

C-130, 1972

C-5, 2006

C-17

Support Aircraft

C-47, 1947-1948

T-6, 1947-1957

T-33, 1958-1961

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Europe

Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Germany, 11 Sep 1944

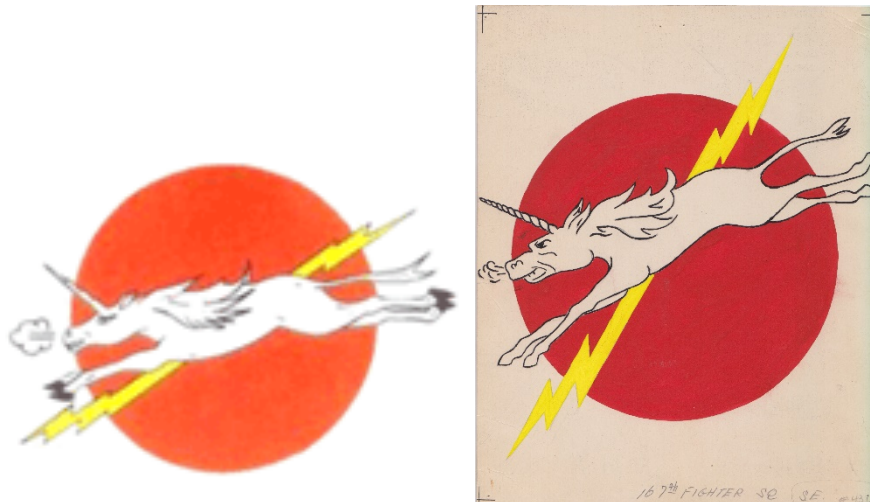
Fourth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award received in 1988

COMMANDERS

Major Solon J. James

Lieutenant Colonel David V. Cochran

EMBLEM



The unicorn of the 369 is seen in full stride, portraying an aggressive attitude on a red disc. The 167 FS of the WV ANG inherited this emblem as the direct descendant of the 369th FS.



167 Tactical Airlift Squadron patch

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Combat in ETO, 13 Dec 1943-25 Apr 1945.

On 24 May 1946, Charleston's Kanawha Airport became the home base for the 167 Fighter Squadron. The unit activated on 5 January 1947 and federally recognized effective 7 March 1947. The assigned strength: 19 officers and 35 airmen. Within six months, the unit attained full manning strength.

On 10 Oct 1950, the unit and all personnel were sworn in for 21 months of active duty. Most personnel and all aircraft became part of the 123rd Fighter Bomber Wing, located at Godman AFB, Kentucky. Some members transferred to Manston Air Field near London, England, flying F-84. Other seasoned pilots transferred to Korea.

C-47B carrying 21 Airmen of the West Virginia Air National Guard's 167 Fighter Squadron, left Godman Air Force Base, Ky., April 8, 1951, to return to Charleston, W.Va., for the funeral of a fellow unit member who died in a plane crash they never made it. Four minutes away from their destination at Yeager Airport, formerly Kanawha Airport, the aircraft sent a transmission to the airport control tower at 11:56 a.m. advising them they were on their way in to land. Before the plane made it, clipped the top of a hill and was vaulted over the top landing 50 feet on the other side. The right wing and part of the left wing were torn off at the second point of impact. According to witnesses, the entire hillside was streaked with fire after the plane skipped more than 400 feet, shearing off trees before bursting into flames and stopping. The crash, which left wreckage scattered over an area of 25,000 square feet, killed seven officers and 12 enlisted Airmen immediately and delivered fatal injuries to two more officers, according to an article in "The Charleston Gazette" published the day after the accident. The accident, which occurred a little more than 60 years ago, remains the worst in the history of the West Virginia Air National Guard. Nearby resident Jack Copen described the crash to Gazette reporter Robert D. Horan shortly after the accident. "I was eating dinner about noon when I heard a sound like a big artillery shell going off," said Copen, who lived only a few hundred yards from the site of the crash. "I looked out the window and saw a string of fire across the top of the hill and motors rolling." Copen then dispatched his wife, Eleanor, two and one-half miles to the foot of Polly Hill on Sandy where a call was placed to the airport notifying them of the crash. Copen and a neighbor, Goldie Seabolt, who was visiting for dinner, went to the crash site. "We heard two men near the wreckage calling for help," Copen said. "Flames were within 100 feet of them. They said they were blind and couldn't see, but they could walk. The first thing they said was asking which way the airport was." The two Airmen, the only to survive the initial crash, were then taken back to the Copens' house to have their injuries treated until ambulances arrived. Copen treated Capt. Harry K. Blackhurst and Maj. Isaac E. Bonfas for third-degree burns on their heads and much of their bodies. Both men were transported to Staats Hospital where they succumbed to their injuries, according to the Gazette article. Blackhurst died within 24 hours of the crash and Bonifas nine days later. The 19 others remained in the plane until after the flames were extinguished and the hot metal had cooled enough to safely enter. The bodies were charred from the flames leaving eight Airmen's bodies unidentifiable. The Airmen were returning here to pay their respects and attend the funeral of Maj. Woodford W. "Jock" Sutherland, of St. Albans, who died when his F-51 Mustang collided with another

fighter at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. More than 5,000 people attended a mass rite held at the Charleston Municipal Auditorium for the then 20 dead, whose average age was 25. The tragedy is still remembered and the Airmen who lost their lives are still honored here. A ceremony was held on April 8 marking the 60th anniversary of the crash. The 130th Airlift Wing's fire department sounded its sirens at the exact time of the radio call from the plane, and a wreath was laid on a memorial dedicated in the victims' honor at the time of the crash. A short video was also shown with photographs of the Airmen who lost their lives. "I am glad to know the men and women of the 130th Airlift Wing continue to remember the men who lost their lives that gray, April morning six decades ago," said Syd Edwards, a resident of Pt. Pleasant writing a book on the crash and the men's brief lives titled "Native Sons - 21 Lives Left Unfinished", who attended the memorial ceremony. "It is great to see they have not been forgotten by those who have inherited their legacy."

The following story was written by Dallas Higbee, news editor of The Gazette, who before his discharge last October was public information officer of the 167 Fighter Squadron, West Virginia Air National Guard. He was a close friend of many of the men killed in the C-47 crash here yesterday. Most of the men who died in the C-47 crash atop a Kanawha County hill Sunday had trained for more than three years at Kanawha Airport as members of the West Virginia Air National Guard. That the pilots who were among the dead knew the terrain is attested by the fact that in those three years they flew thousands upon thousands of hours in the air over the very territory where they died. And in that three years, not one fatal accident and only one serious accident took place. All of the pilots of the squadron were veterans of World War II. Last year the squadron attained the highest efficiency rating - which included morale, operating efficiency, maintenance, safety and many other factors - of any Air National Guard squadron in the entire nation. Credit for that distinction should go to every member of the squadron headed at that time by Lt. Col. James K. McLaughlin of Charleston. The fact that the pilots knew the Charleston terrain so well gave credence to the belief by military personnel that a faulty engine may have caused the fiery crash here. The pilot of the ill-fated transport, Capt. Edwin Keatley Whittington, was considered probably the best "big ship" pilot in the entire squadron. His co-pilot on this trip, Lt. H. B. Kesler, ranked next. Capt. Whittington had an outstanding war record with the Air Transport Command and joined the 167 when it was formed in the spring of 1947. Before World War II he was a civilian flier and logged hundreds of hours in the air over the Charleston area. He was a graduate of Dunbar High School and a former employee of The Charleston Gazette, where his wife, Mrs. Orpha Whittington, also worked at one time. Lt. Kesler was a veteran of the last war, also with the ATC. His love for flying was so great that he refused to give up his pilot's rating despite the fact that a steel brace held his back rigid. He was severely injured in an automobile accident after joining the squadron at its inception. The handicap of his back did not impair his skill as a flier, superior officers said. Probably the most spectacular war record was compiled by Lt. Charles R. Michaelson of Charleston. Lt. Michaelson was shot down over enemy territory on two occasions, one time making his way back through enemy territory to his home base in England. The other time he was shot down over Germany and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp. It was during this episode that he had what he described [sic] to this writer as his most harrowing experience. But, let's let him tell it in his own words, as he told to me when we were together

last summer at Air Guard encampment in Ohio. "If you want a POW story, I've got one," he said. "I had been shot down and after being interrogated, was being transferred to a regular prison camp. As the transportation was a little bad, I was beating it out on foot, with a guard. There had just been a B-26 raid on the Frankfurt marshalling yards and as we came up over a ridge I could see a bunch of German civilians around a crashed B-26. "They had the six crewmen out and were hanging them to a big tree. We ducked back down and went around another way. The way those guys were made, they would have strung me up, too." Like other members of his unit, First Lt. Herman F. Winter, Jr., 29, returned to active duty last October. The only son of Mr. and Mrs. Herman F. Winter, Sr., of 663 Forest Circle, South Charleston, he served three years in the U. S. Army Air Force during World War II. During six months of that period he was a medium bomber pilot flying combat missions over Italy. Lt. Winter was a graduate of Charleston High School and attended West Virginia University and Morris Harvey College. Lt. Drexel E. (Rex) Crites was the second of his family to die in air crashes. His brother, Lt. Arthur Crites, was killed in the crackup of a B-25 bomber in September, 1942, shortly after he had won his wings as a bombardier. Rex Crites, too, had an enviable war record. He was a fighter pilot in the Ninth Air Force, European theater, with a number of enemy planes shot down to his credit. Again, I'll let the lieutenant tell of one of his experiences in his own words. "We got in a lot of strafing missions," Lt. Crites said, "but the best was a troop train. I was flying a 51 when we ran across a dilly one day. I started in at one end and kicked rudder enough to make my ship 'walk' to the other end, spraying troops on each side. "The train stopped when they saw me and men spewed out like rats. I saw a clump of trees and planned a neat little trick for them. After a pass at the train, I came around for another shot and caught these guys in the trees from the rear. It was a picnic." Sgt. Richard Hazeltine, top-flight armorer for the squadron, went through the Battle of the Bulge in the last war as a member of the Third Armored Division. He was in service 39 months with seven months of overseas service, most of which was in combat. He was an employee of The Gazette before World War II and returned to his job at the end of the conflict. Sgt. William H. Shelton, termed by his associates one of the best crew chiefs in the business, went overseas with the Eighth Air Force in 1942 and flew 25 missions, returning to the United States in 1943. He volunteered for a second tour overseas and went back late in '43 for 30 more missions. Shelton was one of three brothers in the squadron. William, then 28, and his brothers John, 29, and Larry, 23, were inducted together in Charleston last October for their second tour of duty with the Air Force. Their parents are Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Shelton of Lockwood, Nicholas County. Larry was a radio man with the 9th Air Force in Germany after the war, and John, a flight chief, served during the war with the 10th Air Force in the China-Burma-India theater. Sgt. David E. Rollyson, Jr., was shot down over Europe and spent 18 months in a German prisoner of war camp, being liberated at the end of the war. Lt. Lyle L. Finley was in the South Pacific during the war, flying a P-38 for the 14th Air Force. Sgt. James E. Creasy was another of the dead who had a brother in service. Sgt. Robert Creasy is in the U. S. Marines in Japan. Sgt. James Creasy is survived by his wife, Ardith Stanley Creasy, and his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lewis Creasy of Chesapeake; a sister, Mrs. Irving Hastings, Jr., of Cabin Creek. He was an employee of Libby-Owens-Ford Glass Co. prior to last October. The body is at Degnan and Kittinger at South Charleston. The only serious accident before Maj. Sutherland's death Thursday involved Lt. Leonard Bostic of Charleston, who crash-landed an F-47 Thunderbolt near Kanawha Airport Dec. 6, 1947.

Released from active duty on 9 July 1952, the 167 FIS returned to Charleston, WV and the P-51.

On 7 March 1947, the 167 FS was formed with P-47Ds at Kanawha County Airport, Charleston. In August 1948, F-51Ds were acquired and the squadron was called to active duty on 10 October 1950 and was redesignated the 167 FBS after converting to F-84Bs. On 10 July 1952, the squadron returned to West Virginia and equipped with F-51 Ds and two F-51Hs

The 167 was the last operational squadron in the ANG with F-51Ds.

Because of limitations at Kanawha Airport at that time, that could not accommodate jet aircraft, a search for a new home in West Virginia began. Two sites considered were Beckley and Martinsburg. The cost of improvements at Beckley came to \$5,978,000 and for Martinsburg \$3,093,000. Though Beckley campaigned hard, Martinsburg received approval as the new site on 21 September 1955 and LTC Joseph T. Crane, Jr. became the Commander. Martinsburg had to raise funds to purchase the 200 acres needed to expand the runway. Two hundred citizens signed notes, totaling over \$160,000, to guarantee sufficient money for buying the land until a bond issue could be voted on by the citizens. The official move came on 3 Dec 1955, when the 167 deactivated at Charleston and reactivated on 4 Dec 1955 at Martinsburg. Shortly thereafter, equipment moved to the new site and active recruiting commenced to achieve full authorized personnel strength.

New construction and the increase of manpower continued in 1956. The immediate need became to recruit 70 airmen and 10 officers. By 1956, manning grew to a strength of 399 airmen and 44 officers.

Operating from Martinsburg Municipal Airport, the 167 FIS was flying a mix of F-51D Mustangs and T-28A when, in September 1957, the unit began conversion to the F-86H. Still designated a FIS after the conversion was completed, the unit didn't become a Tactical Fighter Squadron until 10 November 1958. The unit retained the F-86H until 1961 when it received the C-119 and became an Aeromedical Transport Squadron.

The 167 Fighter Interceptor Squadron dedicated its new facilities on 4 October 1958. On 10 November 1958, the unit became the 167 Tactical Fighter Squadron and a member of the Tactical Air Command.

In an announcement on 31 Jan 1961, the 167 learned it would gain change aircraft. On 1 Apr the unit received C-119. A new mission and name change also took effect: The 167 Aeromedical Transport Squadron, Light. The authorized strength had grown to 572 total airmen and officers.

Aircraft changes in 1963 saw the arrival of the C-121 with its worldwide operating capability. Staffing increased to 604 enlisted and 107 officers. Overseas missions flown to Puerto Rico, the Azores, France, England, Germany, Spain and Bermuda were not uncommon. The unit began flying missions to the Pacific areas in 1965 and 1966. During 1966, the Super Constellations

made 103 overseas flights, including 26 to Vietnam and 77 to other outpost such as Thailand, Australia, Japan and the Philippines, carrying 1198 tons of military cargo and 1390 passengers.

The unit has been active in numerous exercises such as Sentry Storm, Volant Oak, Rodeos, and various overseas deployments; for example, 1981, and again in 1988, all aircraft deployed to Europe a first for any unit.

Other activities involving the unit were hosting of the Apple Harvest Festival in October, a Volant Oak rotation in October and November and the involvement of aircraft and crews with Operation Provide Promise. Provide Promise support took place from Jul 1992 to Jan 1993.

13 July 1992. C-130 and volunteer crews from the 167 Airlift Squadron of the West Virginia ANG began flying food and relief supplies into the besieged Bosnian city of Sarajevo.

The unit continued to support Provide Promise from December 1993 to April 1994. The unit took part in the Bosnian relief effort as well.

In March 2002, West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd announced that the unit would transition to the C-5. The first C-5s scheduled to arrive in Martinsburg in 2007.

10 April 2007. A crew from the 167 Airlift Wing of the West Virginia ANG flew the unit's first operational mission in a C-5, delivering two CH-53E and over 60 Marines to the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa to Djibouti.

October 20, 2011 Flying seven of its 11 assigned C-5, the West Virginia Air National Guard's 167 Airlift Wing recently participated in an historic "surge." Based in Martinsburg, W.Va., the 167 demonstrated its readiness, power, flexibility and partnership capabilities during the exercise which tested the nation's largest military airlifters. The military exercise -- which took place Oct. 17-21 -- brought together 41 Active Duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve C-5 Galaxy aircraft and crews. The historic "surge" is designed to more than double the normal day-to-day workload of the C-5 units participating in the exercise. The C-5 aircraft routinely delivers equipment, supplies, cargo and passengers to military forces stationed worldwide. With its ability to fly more than 6,000 miles without refueling, the U.S. military's largest aircraft provides the flexibility needed to meet the demands of contingency and humanitarian missions. Lt. Col. Donald Magners, a pilot for the 167 Airlift Wing, says the missions flown during the exercise are similar to the missions flown during any given week. According to officials at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, the "surge" tests the ability of the U.S. Transportation Command and its air component, Air Mobility Command, to rapidly provide strategic airlift capability in response to large-scale crises and contingencies. Typically, the 167 Airlift Wing has no more than two to three C-5 aircraft supporting these types of missions at any given time. This week, the unit doubled its efforts by providing seven aircraft for the exercise, according to Col. Richard Robichaud, commander of the Wing's 167 Operations Group. "We're playing a really key role in the nation's airlift efforts, to support war efforts and our forces worldwide," Robichaud said. There are usually only 18 global C-5 missions in the system on any given day. The best C-5 daily

achievement since 2007 was 33 C-5s flown without mobilization. According to Air Force officials, the surge tests the U.S. Air Forces' readiness and capability at a time when the military branch faces intense, ongoing demands on its capacity. It provides a valuable opportunity to exercise and evaluate its enterprise - enhancing readiness and strategic agility. "With a surge like this, it takes a little time to prepare and some time to recover, but it's nothing out of the ordinary for us," said Lt. Col. Steven Truax, deputy commander of the Wing's 167 Maintenance Group. Truax said the Wing is demonstrating an "increased capability ... but we don't have to change anything to accommodate that." Adding: "Capability and flexibility is what we do every day out here.

"Decoy 01 heavy, check wheels down, wind 280 at 12, cleared to land." With those words, an air traffic controller working in the Martinsburg air base's new control tower helped 167 Airlift Wing members make history. Col. Roger Nye, the Wing's director of operations, piloted a C-5 from Altus Air Force Base, Okla., to Martinsburg on Dec. 4, 2006, marking arrival of the first of 11 C-5 the Wing will receive. Nye stopped the aircraft less than 3,500 feet down the runway. "It was done. Decoy 01 was home," he said. Unit members welcomed the public to the base on Dec. 10 for an Open House, which allowed those curious about the C-5 to get an up close and personal look at one of the largest airplanes in the world. Federal and state dignitaries were also on hand at the event to promote job growth and economic benefits the newer model aircraft will bring to the Eastern Panhandle. Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) has championed the project since 1999. He is responsible for directing nearly \$150 million of the projected \$230 million-plus in federal funding to upgrade base facilities to accommodate the C-5, which is more than twice the size of the unit's last aircraft, the C-130. Byrd beamed with joy as the hangar doors opened to reveal the gigantic aircraft bearing the name of his late wife, Erma. "It's a good day for West Virginia. It's a good day for West Virginia," Byrd said. Adjutant General Allen Tackett spoke of more than 200 full-time, high paying jobs that would be hired at the base as a result of the conversion from C-130s to C-5s. West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin praised unit members for past accomplishments. Manchin thanked airmen for responding to a host of state disasters while remaining prepared to deploy for duty overseas. Senior Air Force and National Guard Bureau officials were also on hand for the ceremony. 2007 The 167 has now received two of the projected 11 C-5 aircraft. Delivery of the remaining nine aircraft will be spread out over the next 18 months with final delivery by September 2008.

Officially, Fully C-5 Operational: Veteran Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) joined with airmen, friends, and state and local officials April 4 to formally dedicate the West Virginia Air National Guard's 167 Airlift Wing as a fully operational C-5 unit, according to a release from the Senator's office. Byrd said at the ceremony in Martinsburg, "It has been a challenging and exciting 10-year journey to reach this day." He harkened back to the unit's early days, flying P-51 in 1955 and in the 1970s switching to an airlift role with the C-130 and successful efforts along the way to forestall Pentagon plans to shutter the unit entirely. The wing began the switch to the mammoth C-5 in 1999 as part of "a plan to position the West Virginia Air National Guard for the future," he said. According to a Herald-Mail report, Col. Roger L. Nye, wing commander, said, "Nearly three years and \$220 million worth of military construction has transformed the 167 Airlift Wing into the nation's premier C-5 facility." The wing actually flew its first C-5 mission in

April 2007, when it delivered two Marine Corps helicopters and 60 marines to Africa.

First Local C-17 Training Hop for Martinsburg The West Virginia Air National Guard's 167 Airlift Wing recently flew its first C-17 training sortie from Martinsburg since converting from the C-5A, reported the local Montgomery Herald. "The fact that this sortie was able to happen ahead of schedule and without a hitch is a tribute to the hard work of all those who have been working this conversion over the last year," said pilot Capt. Justin McCabe in the newspaper's Jan. 13 report. The unit received its first C-17 last September, and is scheduled to have in place its eight C-17s by July. The inaugural C-17 sortie was originally planned for this month, but the unit managed to conduct its first two-hour local training flight from its base at Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport on Dec. 18. The wing's remaining C-5As are due to depart by May for retirement at Davis Monthan AFB, Ariz. 2015

USAF Unit Histories

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Sources

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