

## 187 AIRLIFT SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

Constituted 402 Fighter Squadron, 25 May 1943

Activated, 1 Jul 1943

Inactivated, 10 Nov 1945

Redesignated 187 Fighter Squadron, and allotted to WY ANG, 24 May 1946

187 Fighter Squadron (SE) extended federal recognition, 11 Aug 1946

Redesignated 187 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 1 Apr 1951

Redesignated 187 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1956

Redesignated 187 Aeromedical Transport Squadron, 1 May 1961

Redesignated 187 Air Transport Squadron (Heavy), 8 Feb 1964

Redesignated 187 Military Airlift Squadron, 1 Jan 1966

Redesignated 187 Tactical Airlift Squadron, 13 Jul 1972

Redesignated 187 Airlift Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

### STATIONS

Westover Field, MA, 1 Jul 1943

Groton AAFld, CT, 19 Oct 1943

Bradley Field, CT, 6-19 Jan 1944

Aldermaston, England, 12 Feb 1944

Andover, England, 1 Mar-27 Jul

Cardonville, France, 31 Jul 1944

La Vielle, France, 15 Aug 1944

Lonray, France, 6 Sep 1944

Roye/Amy, France, 11 Sep 1944

Florennes/Juxaine, Belgium, 26 Sep 1944

Zwartberg, Belgium, 27 Jan 1945

Gutersloh, Germany, 22 Apr 1945  
Sandhofen, Germany, 27 Jun 1945  
Fritzlar, Germany, 6 Aug-Sep 1945  
Camp Shanks, NY, 9-10 Nov 1945  
Cheyenne, WY

#### **DEPLOYED STATIONS**

Clovis AFB, NM, Dec 1951

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

370 Fighter Group, 1 Jul 1943-7 Nov 1945

#### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

##### **Mission Aircraft**

P-47D, 1943  
P-38J, 1944  
P-51D, 1945  
F-51D, 1946-1952  
F-80C, 1953-1957  
F-86L, 1958-1960  
C-119C, 1961-1963  
MC-119J  
C-121G, 1963-1972  
C-130B, 1972  
C-130H

##### **Support Aircraft**

T-6, 1946-1952  
B-26, 1947-1951  
C-47, 1947-1963  
T-33, 1953-1960  
C-45, 1953-1961

#### **COMMANDERS**

Maj Robert E. Sedman  
Maj Robert N. Maupin, 19 Jun 1948  
Maj Roy E. Cooper, 27 Feb 1951  
Maj Jack D. Ziemer (KIA)  
Cpt Melvin E. Conine  
Cpt John T. McCue, 22 Jan 1960  
LTC Gerald T. Rowley  
Maj John T. McCue  
LTC Benjamin R. Farmer, Dec 1977  
LTC Vernon E. Baldeschwiler, 1980

LTC Frank E. Jurenka, Jul 1981  
LTC Paul S. Lyman, January 2004  
LTC Bruce Rowe, #2007

## 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  
Hurtgen Forest, Germany, 2 Dec 1944

Cited in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army  
6 Jun-30 Sep 1944  
16 Dec 1944-25 Jan 1945

Belgian Fourragere

## EMBLEM





During World War I, Army officials directed units to design an identifying symbol that could be stenciled onto their equipment. The order reached the Wyoming National Guard's E Battery, 3rd Battalion, 148<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, 66th Field Artillery Brigade when it was on the frontlines in France. "At this time we were in intensive combat and my battery commander asked me how we could possibly comply with this request," Staff Sgt. George N. Ostrom, the battery supply sergeant and Sheridan, Wyo., cattle rancher wrote in 1973. "My reply was [for him] to detail me to brigade HQ and this could be done," he said. The rest is part of Wyoming lore: The battery commander dispatched Sergeant Ostrom to the rear where thoughts of home and the state's feisty frontier spirit inspired his design of a rider on a rough silhouette of a bucking horse. The commander of the 66th Artillery Brigade was so taken by the concept that he nixed all other drawings and had all brigade equipment marked with the "Bucking Bronco." State officials were equally enamored of the symbol when the Wyoming Guard returned home to the First Regiment Cavalry, which later became the 115th Cavalry. Now known as the Bucking Horse and Rider, the symbol, after refinement by Sergeant Ostrom, would become the state's most recognized and treasured trademark. State officials copyrighted the mark in 1936.

The Wyoming Guard saw a need for an Air Guard about a year before the Air National Guard celebrated its official federal birth. The 187 Fighter Squadron took flight Aug. 10, 1946, giving those cowboys a whole new frontier to tame. And just like the artillery, infantry and cavalry, the new unit needed an insignia, and Wyoming already had one ready to go. "The silhouetted bucking bronc, powerful and always dangerous, is representative of the mission of the unit," Air Force officials said in approving the emblem in 1953, just two years after the unit mobilized for the Korean War, where eight of pilots died in action. "Riding the mustang is a bronc-rider, a rough and ready product of the West who tames the mustang to do the job required," it said. "The bronc-buster is likened to the fighter pilots of the squadron, who are always ready to fly their mounts to do the job required." The logo used was not the same one Sergeant Ostrom originally drew, but one of the subsequent modifications that the state of Wyoming also adopted. The Wyoming Air Guard kept that insignia on its planes, equipment and even drew a big version of it on the floor of the hangar. That was all good until acting Wyoming Gov. Doc Rogers told the Wyoming Air Guard that it was the state's horse and the Wyoming Air Guard couldn't use it, or so the story goes. The Wyoming Air Guard redrew its horse, flipped it around and angled it a bit to see all four legs in 1957. By 1980, the unit had traded in the fighter mission for airlift ability and took hot iron and "branded" their horse. The brand is called "Wio" or "Flying Wio." It's a real brand designed by Lt. Col. John McCue, a former squadron

commander.

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

Combat in ETO, 1 May 1944-25 Apr 1945.

The Wyoming Air National Guard was organized as the 187 Fighter Squadron (SE) on 10 Aug 1946 in Cheyenne, WY. The first aircraft assigned to the unit were P-51s, which had recently seen action in World War II. Maj Robert E. Sedman, a veteran combat pilot was named the first squadron commander. The aircraft and headquarters were located in a small hangar on the southwest side of Cheyenne Municipal Airport.

By mid-1947, the number of aircraft and personnel had greatly increased. Because of a shortage of necessary equipment, the first year's summer field training camp had to be cancelled. Maj Ben Nelson, who later that year was elected Mayor of Cheyenne, served as an element commander.

Early in 1948, the squadron was operating with 25 aircraft and a full complement of pilots. Enlisted personnel strength was continuing to grow. Maj Robert N. Maupin was appointed as the first full-time commander of the Wyoming Air Guard on 19 Jun 1948. In August, the unit's first summer field training was held at the small Cheyenne headquarters.

Training and strength increased in 1949, and five units including Wyoming attended field training at Casper, WY. Eighty-eight plane flyover was completed without incident.

On 1 Feb 1950, the unit moved to its present location in a former United Airlines Modification Hangar on the north side of Cheyenne Municipal Airport. The first out-of-state summer camp for the unit was held that year in Grayling, MI.

Maj Roy E. Cooper, who was later to become the Wyoming Air National Guard's first General, was appointed commander on 27 Feb 1951. Although the unit continued to fly the same aircraft, the official name was changed to the 187 Fighter Bomber Squadron on 1 May 1951.

The Korean Conflict was intensifying and on 1 Apr 1951 the Wyoming Air National Guard was mobilized into federal service. Officers and airmen were ordered to active duty and sent to Clovis AFB, NM. Eighteen pilots flew more than 1,500 combat missions. Eight pilots were killed in action.

Called to active duty and redesignated 187 FBS but remained at Cheyenne MAP for more than seven months. 1 Apr 1951

Although most members of the Air Guard were now at Clovis AFB, a Wyoming Air National Guard State Headquarters was established on 11 Dec 1951 to maintain a working organization until the activated members returned to Cheyenne. An interim 8187 Air Base Squadron was created on 1 Jul 1952 to coordinate the return of the airmen who had been called to active duty and who were now returning to Wyoming.

On 18 Dec 1952, the 187 Fighter Bomber Squadron was released from active military service. Then, the 8187 Air Base Squadron was disbanded and all personnel transferred in their same grades to the 187 Fighter Bomber Squadron, which continued to be commanded by Maj Roy E. Cooper.

On 1 Jan 1953, the Wyoming Air National Guard expanded beyond Cheyenne creating a detachment at Casper to operate the Air National Guard Field Training Site. Beginning 1 Apr 1953, the unit officially began overall operation of the site. The Colorado and New Mexico and Wyoming Air Guard units, all flying F-51s, all trained together that summer at the Casper facility and the Split Rock Gunnery Range nearby.

Returned to state control at Cheyenne MAP. 1 Jan 1953

The Wyoming Air Guard continued training, and was a part of the 140<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing based at Buckley Naval Air Station outside Aurora, CO.

By early 1954, the complete conversion to jets and all pilot training had been accomplished. Summer camps were held at the Casper training site in 1954 and for the next four years.

The pilots and ground crews devoted much of their time to air-to-air and air-to-ground gunnery practice with 50 caliber machine guns. Air-to-air gunnery practice was accomplished with aerial targets towed by unit assigned T-33 and F-80.

The unit quickly filled its ranks with pilots and support personnel who had recently served on active duty in the Korean conflict.

In 1956, the Wyoming Air National Guard changed its official designation from the 187 Fighter Bomber Squadron to the 187 Fighter Interceptor Squadron to reflect its new mission and new aircraft.

With the structure change came command changes; Col Roy E. Cooper was named commander of the 153<sup>rd</sup> FIG and Maj Jack D. Ziemer was named commander of the 187.

On 1 Jan 1959, the unit began a 14-hour runway alert. Five aircrews were kept on active duty seven days a week.

Summer camp was held at the Casper Training Site for most of the unit, but a small detachment was sent to Wendover AFB in western Utah to support the F-86 rocket firings which had to be

done in the isolated Utah desert.

Now in an expanded role as an all-weather fighter interceptor unit, the entire Wyoming Air National Guard went to summer camp at Wendover AFB, UT in 1960.

A mid-air collision between a Wyoming Air National Guard F-86 and a private plane resulted in the death of Lewis, the pilot of the private plane. The appellant-plaintiff, as administrator of the estate of Lewis, sued the United States under the Federal Tort Claims Act. The trial court denied recovery on the ground that the accident was not caused by the negligence of an employee of the United States while acting within the scope of his employment. Captain Meckem and Lieutenant Anderson, both officers of the Wyoming Air National Guard, were on a training flight in which Meckem was evaluating the flying proficiency of Anderson. The flight was not under the command responsibility of the United States Air Force but was authorized by the Operations Section of the Wyoming Air National Guard. Prior to the collision, Meckem was flying the No. 2 position in a close formation, the lead plane of which was piloted by Anderson. Anderson saw the private plane in time to take evasive action but Meckem, whose vision was obstructed by Anderson's plane, hit the private plane on the side at a 70-degree angle. Meckem parachuted to safety and received superficial injuries.

A major change came for the Cowboy Guard in Feb 1961 when the unit and its role in national defense changed drastically.

The fighters were replaced by transport aircraft and the mission was changed to medical airlift.

Ten C-119 were assigned to the newly designated 187 Aeromedical Transport Squadron.

The unit was redesignated from a group level down to a squadron level. Group Commander Maj Rowley became the squadron commander and former Squadron Commander Cpt Tom McCue was named operations officer.

Fighter pilots began retraining to become transport pilots and many hours were spent training crews and maintenance people on the systems of the C-119. A mobile training detachment came to Cheyenne to provide this service. Transition flying training for key flight crews was accomplished at Jackson, MS by the 183rd. AMTS.

An active search began for registered nurses to become flight nurses in the aeromedical transport unit. The Wyoming Air National Guard was to have flight nurses and an aeromedical airlift mission for many years.

Elaborate plans were made to totally reconfigure the aircraft into flying hospitals but within two years the Cowboy Guard received newer aircraft and an expanded mission.

The C-121 gave the Wyoming Air National Guard a worldwide mission and took the Cowboy Guard off the ranches and away from the railroads to Southeast Asia and airlift missions

throughout the world.

The first C-121G, which had been flown previously by the U.S. Navy, arrived in Cheyenne on 21 Jun 1963 and expanded its military airlift role to worldwide mission capabilities. Entering the realm of South East Asia and Vietnam, the Wyoming Air Guard flew its first mission into the Southeast Asia Theater "combat zone" in late 1964, and continued to do so through the take over of South Vietnam by its enemies.

The unit again expanded to group strength and was designated the 153<sup>rd</sup> Air Transport Group (H) on 8 Feb 1964. The group was commanded by Maj Rowley with Maj John McCue serving as 187 Air Transport Squadron Commander.

From 1963 through 1968, the Cowboy Guard flew cargo for the Military Airlift Command throughout the world.

The aeromedical evacuation mission and the number of nurses and medical technicians was greatly expanded. Numerous "air evac" flights were flown throughout the nation and the world.

Continuing to fly the "Connies," the Cowboy Guard flew more and more worldwide missions. So many missions were flown that the traditional summer training camps were replaced with year-round on-the-job training as flight crews, nurses, medical technicians and support personnel were used to fulfill the global airlift challenge.

In 1972, the Wyoming Air guard received its first C-130. In 1975, the Wyoming Air Guard was selected for the unique role of aerial fire fighting. Two Wyoming C-130s were equipped with Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems (MAFFS) and began water/fire retardant bombing of fires throughout the United States. Those fire fighting mission still continue through the present.

With the new tactical airlift mission came the need to be combat ready and the Wyoming Air Guard passed the first level, C-3, test on 15 Oct 1973. The next level of proficiency and strength, C-2, was reached on 30 Nov 1973.

In 1975, the unit was selected to take on a unique and exciting mission—aerial firefighting. Using the Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS) huge storage tanks, pressurized air and 3,000 gallons of liquid fire retardant the Cowboy Guard learned how to fight fires from the air. Three crews were trained and checked out by Apr 1975.

Operation Brave Shield, a joint airlift and airdrop exercise at Pope AFB, NC, was held in 1975 and the unit provided three aircraft, four flight crews and numerous support personnel.

On 31 Mar 1976, the Wyoming Air Guard achieved C-1, the highest level of combat readiness. Three additional flight crews were trained and qualified for the MAFFS mission. Operation Jack Frost, a huge, simulated combat training exercise, was held in Canada and the Cowboy Guard



was invited to provide aircraft, crews and support personnel.

The unit returned to Operation Jack Frost in 1977, but the real action came when the MAFFS crews flew 67 firefighting missions in the disastrous San Bernadino and Big Sur forest fires in California.

A new mission, Volant Oak, the support of Southern Air Command in Central and South America, took aircrews, aircraft and support personnel to Howard AFB, Panama for the first time.

On Monday, 16 Jul 1979, disaster hit the Wyoming Air National Guard as a killer tornado, the worst ever to hit Cheyenne, ripped through the Air Guard facilities and aircraft. Buildings were destroyed, aircraft were lifted and tossed around, hangar doors were blown off never to be found. All aircraft received some damage. No Guard members were seriously injured or killed, but hundreds of cars and millions of dollars of property were destroyed. The unit was called to active duty, not only to repair its own damage, but also to help protect areas of the city that were in ruin.

Aircrews and support personnel returned to Panama in 1980 and again forest fires in California and Oregon took MAFFS crews to the scene.

Participated in Operation Just Cause in Panama. Dec 1989

Volunteers began flying missions in support of Operation Desert Shield. Aug 1990

At the end of FY92, 1,000 officers and enlisted personnel manned 14 WY ANG units, including the 187 AS at Cheyenne Municipal Airport with C-130Bs.

Beginning 09 Aug 1990, the first day of OPERATION DESERT SHIELD, and into OPERATION DESERT STORM the Wyoming Air Guard flew continental U.S. and Central and South America missions. During that time, the Wyoming 187 Aeromedical Evacuation Flight and the 153<sup>rd</sup> Clinic were both activated by order of the President of the United States, with a large number of those medical personnel being sent to Saudi Arabia. After the hostilities, Wyoming Guard members continued with OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT, which supplied humanitarian aid to Kurdish people displaced by the Iraqi military.

During 1993 and early 1994, the 153d Airlift Group traded its C-130B for new C-130-H3, which greatly enhanced the Wyoming unit's world wide flying capabilities. From JULY 1993 through FEB 1994, the 187 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, provided volunteer medical personnel for the Egypt/Somalia humanitarian effort in eastern Africa, OPERATION PROVIDE HOPE. Three of those medical personnel subsequently received commendations for saving US Army Rangers lives while under attack in Somalia in OCT 1993. During 1993-94, a number of Wyoming crews volunteered to fly missions into and over Bosnia/Serbia, while temporarily assigned OPERATION PROVIDE PROMISE.

The years between the Gulf War and 2001 proved to be a period of continued activity for the Wyoming Air Guard. Major unit deployments included OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY (Haiti) in 1995, OPERATION SOUTHERN WATCH (Iraq) in 1996 and 1998, OPERATION JOINT ENDEAVOR (Bosnia) in 1996, OPERATION SHINING HOPE (Bosnia) in 1999, OPERATION JOINT FORGE (Bosnia/Kosovo) in 1999, OPERATION CORONET OAK (Panama) in 2000, and the yearly MAFFS mission as directed.

During this same period numerous individuals volunteered for such missions as OPERATION SEA SIGNAL (Guantanamo, Haitian refugees) in 1995 and OPERATION NEW HOPE (El Salvador) in 1999, along with the missions listed above.

In April 1997 the Wyoming 153d Airlift Wing was reassigned to the Air Mobility Command and continued its federal and state airlift, fire fighting, and humanitarian missions. From 10 NOV to 05 DEC 1997 the Wyoming Air National Guard flew 250 airborne fire-fighting missions in the jungles of Indonesia as OPERATION TEMPEST RAPID, No. 1. This was the first time U.S. airborne fire fighting had ever been done outside of the continental U.S.

As with the rest of the U.S. military, the wing's focus changed abruptly on September 11, 2001. Responding immediately, the 153 AW became the first unit to resume flying, by answering the call to ferry blood donations around the western United States. By the end of September virtually all of the 153rd Security Forces Squadron had been called to active duty and assigned to active Air Force bases. As a result numerous individuals volunteered to be activated as security forces augmentees, an assignment that lasted half a year for many. Three others volunteered for temporary civilian airport security duties.

In December, 2001 the expected call up for more of the unit arrived. This resulted in five aircraft, their crews, and support personnel deploying to Oman as part of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. During the unit's eight-month deployment, it flew 5,500 hours (including 4,000 combat hours in Afghanistan), and earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor. In addition, the unit's air traffic controllers served in Pakistan during this period, while numerous other members answered the call in their individual AFSC capacity.

As the Global War on Terrorism expanded to include operations in Iraq and continued operations in Afghanistan, the 153d Airlift Wing repeatedly answered the nation's call. In addition to its ongoing commitment to MAFFS, Operation Joint Forge in Europe, and Coronet Oak in Latin America, the 153 AW maintained a two year long, two aircraft commitment to Operation Iraqi Freedom during 2004-2005. In 2000 and 2007 the unit returned to Afghanistan for two and three aircraft Aerospace Expeditionary Force rotations. On the home front, the end of 2007 found four aircraft responding to the great southern California wildfires.

In Cheyenne the period 2004-2007 witnessed the 153 AW receiving a remodeled dining facility, a new POL facility, a new air operations building for Air Traffic Control and Aerial Port, and approval of a new squadrons operations building. Numerous temporary modular buildings also

supported the unit.

The time period 2006-2007 also witnessed a unique combination of active duty and National Guard forces in Cheyenne. In 2006 the 30th Airlift Squadron, an active duty unit, stood up in Cheyenne, under the operational control of the 153 AW. Known as an active associate unit, the addition of the 30 AS resulted in the 153 AW receiving an additional four C-130 aircraft during 2007, and increased the wing's aircraft strength to twelve aircraft.

Six C-130 aircraft carrying special firefighting equipment continue to help battle wildfires in Texas and northern Mexico from the air, as of Monday, announced US Northern Command officials. Since the first of these aircraft arrived on the scene on April 17, these C-130s have carried out 64 missions to release many thousands of gallons of fire retardant and suppressant on the fires in southern Texas and the Mexican state of Coahuila via the self-contained Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System that they carry. Two of the C-130s are from Air Force Reserve Command's 302nd Airlift Wing at Peterson AFB, Colo. They are deployed to Laughlin AFB, Tex. The other four, staging from Dyess AFB, Tex., are Air National Guard assets from the 145th AW in North Carolina, 146th AW in California, and 153rd AW in Wyoming. 2011

Four C-130s saddled up with the Modular Airborne Firefighting System to help battle wildfires in Colorado. Responding to a National Interagency Fire Center request on June 24, the Defense Department activated two aircraft each from the Wyoming Air National Guard's 153rd Airlift Wing in Cheyenne and from Air Force Reserve Command's 302nd AW at Peterson AFB, Colo. The airplanes will stage from Peterson and are expected to be available no later than June 26, according to the US Forest Service. "We have been monitoring the fires and have had our aircrews, aircraft, and the MAFFS systems in a state of readiness anticipating a possible tasking," said 302nd AW firefighting chief Lt. Col. Luke Thompson. The Forest Service, which owns the palletized MAFFS kits, wanted the firefighting C-130s "to ensure that we continue to have adequate air tanker capability as we experience very challenging wildfire conditions" in the Rocky Mountains region and southwestern United States, explained Forest Service chief Tom Tidwell in a June 24 agency release. These C-130s can discharge 3,000 gallons of water or fire retardant over a large area in less than five seconds. 2012

Ogden Air Logistics Complex redelivered a Wyoming Air National Guard C-130H after 14 months of work to repair damage from a landing accident at Hill AFB, Utah, last year, officials announced. "A lot of creativity and ingenuity was needed since many of the C-130H structural parts that were needed are no longer made," Hill ANG Advisor Col. Steve. "It was akin to rebuilding a classic car." The 153rd Airlift Wing aircraft was conducting firefighting operations Aug. 17, 2014, when the aircraft's nose landing gear failed to extend properly, causing \$850,000 in damage to the underside of the aircraft. "They reskinned everything on the bottom. It looks brand new," added 153rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Todd Davis. Serial number 92-1533 was ferried back to its home base in Cheyenne, Oct. 13. 2015

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USAF Unit Histories  
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Sources

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