

## 242 COMBAT COMMUNICATIONS SQUADRON



### MISSION

The mission of the 242 Combat Communications Squadron to provide tactical and mobile communications. Equipment includes satellite, microwave, HF, UHF, and VHF radios, computer data processors (communications center), and telephone and system switching capabilities. Personnel and equipment have deployed to all areas of the United States and to the far corners of the world in support of real world missions and JCS exercises.

### LINEAGE

242 Airways and Air Communications Service Operations Flight activated, 15 Oct 1952  
Redesignated 242 Mobile Communications Squadron, 1 July 1961  
Redesignated 242 Combat Communications Squadron  
Redesignated 242 Combat Information Systems Squadron, 1 Jul 1985  
Redesignated 242 Combat Communications Squadron

### STATIONS

Geiger Field, Spokane International Airport, Spokane, WA  
F-37 NIKE site, Four Lakes, WA, 9 Mar 1962

### ASSIGNMENTS

252 Combat Communications Group

### COMMANDERS

Capt Richard G. Ahrens  
Maj Ros Hill, #1984  
Maj Rollin J. Deschane

Maj Mark S. Sweitzer

**HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**



**MOTTO**

**OPERATION**

242 Airways and Air Communications Service Operations Flight had an authorized strength of two officers, 37 airmen, at the time of activation there was one officer and eight airmen assigned. Captain Richard G. Ahrens was the first commander. There have been several reorganizations since 1952, each of which increased the size of the unit, changed equipment authorizations or the unit designation.

At one time the 242 had four subordinate units, each located in a different state; 233rd Flight Facilities Flight, Denver, Colorado; 234th Mobile Communications Flight; Hayward, California; 237th Flight Facilities Flight, Minneapolis, Minnesota and 239th Mobile Communications Flight, St. Louis, Missouri. The combined strength of these units at one time reached 29 officers, 450 airmen. Presently, the 242 has one subordinate unit, 242 Flight Facilities Flight, Spokane International Airport, Washington.

In Nov 1961, the 242 moved to Four Lakes Communications Station. April 1962 saw elements of the unit participating in a full-scale army exercise, "Exercise Mesa Drive 11. The task was to provide sequential teletype weather reports and facsimile weather maps to 2nd

Weather Group Detachment. In June 1962 the 242 was attached to the 252nd Communications Group (Mobile) for administrative and logistical support. Later the 242 became a subordinate unit of the 252nd and it became known as 252nd Mobile Communications Group.

October 1962 brought the Cuban Crisis and the 242 was placed in an accelerated training status. Mobilization appeared imminent and additional unit training assemblies were authorized to increase the unit readiness. Over 2500 priority requisitions were submitted for spare parts kits to bring them up to wartime levels.

Being mobile, the 242 generally conducts field training at other than the home station. Over the years they have convoyed thousands of miles to training sites without incident. The longest convoys to date have been 1600 miles one way to Volk Field, Wisconsin, made in 1963 and 1964.

The 242 has been involved in many special exercises and support activities, some of which included communications for the USAF in search and rescue operations, providing air traffic control services at the Coeur d'Alene Airport, Hayden Lake, Idaho, in support of the World and National Boy Scout Jamborees, providing air traffic control services to the Federal Aviation Administration and the United States Forest Service in support of forest fire operations from 1967 thru 1972, Supporting the Washington Army National Guard and the United States Army during maneuvers at Yakima Firing Center for several years, and supporting USAF and Air National Guard missions in Wisconsin, Germany, and Hawaii. As a result of providing this support, the 242 Mobile Communications Squadron and 242 Flight Facilities Flight were awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and the State of Washington Distinguished Unit Citation in 1971. An additional Air Force Outstanding Unit Award is pending for services rendered in 1972 and 1973.

The 242 has provided the initial cadres for the formation of three other units in the Washington Air National Guard. In 1966 the 242 Flight Facilities Flight was formed and in 1971 the 242 provided the majority of personnel required for the activation of the 105th Tactical Control Squadron and 105th Tactical Control Flight, each of whom has become outstanding units of the Washington Air National Guard.

The mission of the 242 Mobile Communications Squadron is to provide for the installation, operation, and maintenance of mobile communications, air traffic control, and navigational aid facilities in support of USAF operations in accordance with Gaining Command plans for use in a national emergency. The 242 is subject to world-wide deployment on a no-notice basis. All assigned equipment is of a mobile configuration and is of the latest type in the Air Force inventory.

Equipment and personnel have deployed to all areas of the U.S. and to the far corners of the world in support of real world missions and JCS exercises. Countries include Korea, England, Germans, Denmark, Norway, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Spain, Morocco, Egypt. Active community

efforts include ash cleanup after the Mt St Helens eruption, Phones for the Deaf Program, and an active control tower operation at the Couer d'Alene airport in Idaho.

The 242 Combat Communications Squadron received Presidential Mobilization Orders in February 2002 on short notice for 33 unit members to mobilize and deploy overseas on a demanding overseas tour joining the Nation's fight against terrorism. The citizen-soldiers from Spokane and the Pacific Northwest were called up on short notice to design, install, maintain, and upgrade high-demand communication services at overseas bases, known as "tent cities". Working conditions proved challenging when faced with operating and maintaining delicate communications equipment in the desert with sand and daytime temperatures exceeding 125 degrees. Unit personnel deployed to various locations in Southwest Asia on 6-month tours with several extended by 30-40 days.

The 242 Combat Communications Squadron, at Geiger Field Air National Guard Base, Spokane International Airport, Wash., celebrates its golden anniversary and continues to provide combat communications to the warfighter at locations around the globe. The 130-person Air National Guard communications squadron is responsible for providing satellite, microwave, telephone and network communications in a combat environment. They normally deploy with a flying wing such as the 92nd Air Refueling Wing to provide the everyday communications services we take for granted stateside. "When you deploy to a remote location overseas, access to secure radios, phones, e-mail and the Internet is an absolute necessity," said Maj. Mark Sweitzer, 242 flight commander. "The 242's job is to establish this 'communications flow' and continuously sustain the transfer of data measured in 'gigabytes per second' that directly supports wartime operations." The 242 was slated for an operational readiness inspection this summer after a successful dress rehearsal at Fairchild AFB, Wash., last year. Last February the unit was activated under presidential mobilization orders and deployed more than 33 airmen overseas on a demanding 180-day mission to join the war against terrorism. The list of Spokane area guardsmen deployed overseas is an interesting group of salesmen, students, college professors, phone company technicians, bankers and a CPA. "I'm extremely proud of the way the Air National Guard stood up to a demanding 180-day mission overseas when called upon to fight the war on terrorism ... The 242 is conducting a wartime operation which requires the highest level of commitment," said Lt. Col. Jim Hutchinson, 242 CBCS commander. During peacetime, guardsmen normally go on active duty orders to complete initial training and then drill one weekend a month and two weeks each summer. The 180-day deployment by the 242 underscores the ANG's significant contribution to support the nation's war effort. Due to its proximity to Fairchild, the 242 is part of the 141st ARW family and a member of Team Fairchild. Last summer, the ramp space at Geiger Field hosted 92nd and 141st Air Refueling Wing flight operations during Fairchild's runway closure. The 242 maintained aircraft ramp access, installed remote telephone lines, and provided a break area for security forces on 24-hour patrols. They also off-loaded more than 600 gallons of fuel to keep aerospace ground equipment and support vehicles on the move.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.  
Unit History. *Washington ANG, WA, Golden Anniversary, 1924-1974*. Nd.