

924 FIGHTER GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

924 Troop Carrier Group, Medium established, activated, and allotted to the Reserve, 28 Dec 1962

Organized, 17 Jan 1963

Redesignated 924 Tactical Airlift Group, 1 Jul 1967

Redesignated 924 Tactical Fighter Group, 1 Jul 1981

Redesignated 924 Fighter Group, 1 Feb 1992

Redesignated 924 Fighter Wing, 1 Oct 1994

Inactivated, 30 Sep 1996

Redesignated 924 Fighter Group, 8 Dec 2010

Activated in the Reserve, 1 Jan 2011

STATIONS

Ellington AFB, TX, 17 Jan 1963

Bergstrom AFB, TX, 17 Mar 1976-30 Sep 1996

Barksdale AFB, LA, 1 Jan 2011

ASSIGNMENTS

Continental Air Command, 28 Dec 1962

446 Troop Carrier Wing, Medium (later, 446th Tactical Airlift Wing), 17 Jan 1963
433 Tactical Airlift Wing, 1 Jul 1972
Tenth Air Force, 1 Apr 1981
482 Tactical Fighter Wing, 1 Jul 1981
301 Tactical Fighter (later, 301 Fighter) Wing, 1 Oct 1982
Tenth Air Force, 1 Oct 1994-30 Sep 1996
442 Fighter Wing, 1 Jan 2011

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-119, 1958-1968
C-130, 1969-1981
F-4, 1981-1991
F-16, 1991-1996

COMMANDERS

Col John R. Combs, 17 Jan 1963
Col Edwin F. Wenglar, by 25 Mar 1968
Col Arthur A. Gentry, by 30 Jun 1969
Col Edwin F. Wenglar, by 30 Jun 1971
Col Richard E. George, 1 Jul 1972
Col Victor H. Coale, by 31 Dec 1973
Lt Col Jack Ricot, 13 Sep 1975
Lt Col Jonathan Gardner, by 17 Jan 1976
Col Elmer C. Apel, by 30 Sep 1978
Col Forrest S. Winebarger, 1 Jul 1981
Lt Col Randolph S. Reynolds, 14 Oct 1984
Lt Col John A. Bradley, by 28 Jul 1985
Lt Col Richard J. Eustace, 6 Dec 1988-31 Dec 1993
Unkn, 1994-Apr 1996
Col Lee Graves, May-30 Sep 1996
Col John Russell, Sep, 2021

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
1 Dec 1967-10 Jan 1972
1 Apr 1983-30 Mar 1985
1 Jun 1986-31 May 1988

EMBLEM



924 Tactical Airlift Group emblem

924 Tactical Fighter Group emblem: A blue shield representing the sky, the Air Force element of operation. A star represents Texas, and alludes to the geographic location of the group. White rays from the star represent contrails left by an aerospace vehicle. Red rays from the same source represent the plume of an afterburner. A yellow light between the two rays represent array of light penetrating the plume. A saguaro cactus indicates the strong ability of Air Force personnel to survive under adverse and challenging conditions. (Approved, 27 Jul 1983)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Became the first Reserve unit to convert to C-130. 1968.

Group supported NASAs Manned Spacecraft Center, specifically air drop missions of Gemini spacecraft and Paraglider mockups, 1963-1970.

Between 1963-1965, participated in humanitarian missions such as transporting an iron lung to a South American patient, transporting food and medicine to a famine-stricken village in Mexico, dropped hay to snowbound cattle in Texas and New Mexico during Operation Haylift, and airlifted supplies to New Orleans, LA following Hurricane Betsy.

Ferried aircraft to and from Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

1969 During the period January through June, the 924 made 36 aircraft movements to and from Southeast Asia with a total of 1,120 flying hours, 23,950 tons miles and 130,060 passenger miles

Throughout the 1970s, the group continued humanitarian missions including hurricane relief, search for survivors of an oil rig explosion in the Gulf of Mexico, Honduras relief, fighting forest fires in California, and airlifting snow removal equipment to the northeast United States.

1970 Hurricane Celia rips through Corpus Christi and once again the 924 is called upon for emergency assistance. Over 71 tons of supplies were airlifted to stricken areas.

1974 The United States Department of Agriculture calls on the 924 to help with the eradication effort of the screw worm devastating Puerto Rico. In a continued effort to control flies in that region, it is imperative that sterilized flies be delivered within a certain time span with a cargo compartment temp of 70°.

1974 The 924 responds to a cry from the Honduras after a hurricane ravages them. Within hours, the 924 were on their way carrying over 10 tons of food, clothing and other supplies so desperately needed.

1976 In January, Headquarters, Department of the Air Force, directed the 924 TAG and the Central Air Force Reserve Region to move to Bergstrom AFB, Texas. Bergstrom AFB was located outside of Austin, Texas. The Department of Defense announced late in 1974 that Ellington AFB would close by June. The 924 TAG moved into its new home on 10 March. Aircrews, with commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Gardner in the lead, flew eleven of the C-130s to Austin to begin operations at their new home. It was a dramatic arrival watched by many Bergstromites and documented on three television news programs. Newspaper reporter Nat Henderson described it as a "Herculean" effort. The airmen brought their planes in at one-minute intervals, in-trail, held at the end of the runway until all were down, then taxied in formation to "D" ramp-their permanent parking area. Relocating the units from Ellington to Bergstrom was part of a Department of Defense plan to phase out Air Force operations at Ellington and turn the base over to the State of Texas.

1977 The 704th Tactical Airlift Squadron of the 924 Tactical Airlift Group received the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) Cross of Gallantry with Palm medal. The RVN was for their participation in Operation Enhance, the last major resupply operation of the Vietnam conflict. The aircrews ferried missions to Southeast Asia beginning in 1968, but the medal was awarded for the period of 26 October to 6 November 1972, when three unit aircraft were flown to Tan Son Nhut and released to the Saigon government. This early arrival of the 704 TAS made them available to ferry additional aircraft from Clark AB, Philippines to Saigon.

1977 There are 85 officers assigned, 465 airmen, 123 arts, and 17 civilians assigned. The move from Ellington caused a heavy manpower loss; however, within a year's time, 218 vacancies had already been filled. There are still 75 vacant positions to fill.

1978 The 924 provided emergency flying support to an injured cave explorer deep in Mexico to Ciudad Victoria.

1979 A rash of natural disasters hits the southern hemisphere and the 924 is right there to assist. Two vessels lost at sea, and massive earthquake ripped through Columbia causing tidal waves and torrential rains and flooding. One 924 aircraft spotted a drifting boat with five men on board and was able to divert a Polish ship to its rescue.

1979 The 924 Tactical Airlift Group during July participated in Exercise Paid Yellow Rose at Savanna, Georgia Approximately 100 members including eight aircrews, 56 maintenance, communications, food service, weapons security, the airdrop. During the afternoon of 14 July, the wartime scenario began. Approximately 300 camouflaged Rangers were airdropped medics and safety participated. Eleven aircraft from the 68 TAS and seven assigned to the 307th Tactical Airlift Squadron, Bergstrom AFB started the deployment. The exercise tested the Group's airdrop capability of more than 400 paratroops from Hunter Army Air Field being airlifted and dropped. The container delivery systems were also tested, the short field takeoffs and landings and the first actual test of biological warfare equipment. The First Ranger Battalion stationed at Hunter provided some 300 paratroops for simultaneously over three different drop zones by the C-130s flying wartime maneuvers. The aircraft had to make short field landings on a dirt air strip. The Rangers scrambled aboard through huge clouds of dust churned up by the aircraft engines. Taking off required all the aircraft's power to get into the air before the short runway ended. Exercise Paid Yellow Rose proved the capability and wartime readiness of the Alamo Wing. The next morning, the C-130s made short field landings on a dirt airstrip and extracted the Rangers. At the conclusion of the exercise the aircraft and personnel returned to Texas, after accomplishing 71 sorties, 115 flying hours, 300 paratroops airdropped and extracted during 17 short field landings and take offs.

From November through January 1980, the Alamo Wing and the 924 TAG headed south for their duty associated with the Panama Rotation. From Howard AFB, Panama, seven aircrews and six aircraft provided a mission commander and other operational people to perform the flying portion of the mission. On the maintenance side, two officers and approximately 50-maintenance specialists maintained the aircraft on a 24-hour basis. The mission of the units was to use their own C-130 aircraft to make rounds at U.S. Embassies from Guatemala to Paraguay. The units were charged with defense of the canal, by flying cargo and personnel to South America along with search and rescue missions.

1980 The 924 Tactical Airlift Group was awarded the Outstanding Unit Award for exceptionally meritorious service from 1 September 1978 to 29 February 1980. During this period, the unit earned more "outstanding" ratings than any other in three major inspections, setting the Group and its subordinate units above and apart from similar units. It maintained the highest manning level of any Air Force Reserve unit in the nation. Deployed group-assigned squadrons and flights completed worldwide assignments during active duty training periods, which were noteworthy by letter of commendations from supported units. The Group participated in missions and operations such as Volant Oak, Redoubt III and Paid Yellow Rose providing unquestioned evidence of mobility effectiveness and combat readiness of the unit.

1980 In 1980, there are 1,308 reservists assigned, 45 civilians and a payroll of \$8.3 million, an operations & maintenance budget of \$806,000 and an inventory of \$55,083,000 (aircraft are \$54,954,000 of that).

1981 The 924 Combat Support group and Mobility Support Flight were incorporated into the 924 Tactical Fighter Group. Unit staffing changed considerably, reduction in supply, transfer of cooks to civil engineering (PRIME RIBS) increase in transportation career fields. Unit retention declined during this period as personnel were forced to cross train into other career fields.

1981 Once again, the 924 is faced with monumental challenges, this time in the conversion of its aircraft from C-130 to F-4s. There is opposition from the local community as well as concerns from the EPA. The conversion will definitely take place; however, tension remains high, both on and off the base. Not one C-130 pilot will remain at Bergstrom and a recruiting effort is underway for flying and maintenance crews.

1981 Converted from transport to fighter aircraft in 1981 and afterwards participated in fighter competitions throughout the United States and overseas.

1981 The 704th participates in their last Panama Rotation missions during February and March. Aircraft and crew have flown to Paraguay, El Salvador, Cicaraua, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Equator, Columbia, Puerto Rico, Equadro, Barbados, and Chile.

1984 Two hundred sixty-five members of the 924 conduct annual tour at Tyndall AFB Florida. The most difficult problem is with billeting. Rooms were either insufficient, inadequate or room assignment problems. However, despite a few administrative problems the unit exceeded its goal of flying ninety-one sorties from 9-11 July.

1985 The 924 supported the City of Austin during Memorial Weekend with a flyover in the missing man formation in honor of Austin's new Vietnam Veterans Center.

1985 In September, the 924 deployed to Alaska in support of PATRIOT SALMON. The 924's F-4's honed their fighter skills against active duty F-15 Eagles from Elmendorf AFB. Alaska, during the exercise.

1985 In March, 924 personnel participated in the TEAM SPIRIT '85 exercise held in the Republic of Korea. Tent City became home to many. Among the fun activities participated in where chem war gear exercises, and visits to a tent that was converted from a laundry pick-up to the USAF Hospital First Aid Center. Despite the "austere" living and working conditions, the deployment was declared an overwhelming success.

1986 "Ready for War" is the theme as the 924 deployed to Taegu AB Korea in June. Approximately 513 personnel will participate. Channel 7 news covers the "live action" for loved ones back home to see.

1986 MIDNIGHT SUN 86-2 was the name of the exercise that found 70 members of the 924 in Alaska to participate in a variety of offensive and defensive counter air and dissimilar air combat tactic missions. Another exercise, MAPLE FLAG, brought 70 reservists to Canada in a joint American/Canadian exercise. Texans, who were use to 90 degree weather, found themselves chilling out in the low forties, with a cold drizzling mist to accompany the cooler weather and no sunshine for days. The cold was responsible for more hydraulic and air leaks on the unit's six deployed aircraft than normally found in the warm Texas climate. reservists to Canada in a joint American/Canadian exercise. Texans, who were use to 90 degree weather, found themselves chilling out in the low forties, with a cold drizzling mist to accompany the cooler weather and no sunshine for days. The cold was responsible for more hydraulic and air leaks on the unit's six deployed aircraft than normally found in the warm Texas climate.

1989 Korea was the site for CORONET BOA. An exercise that tested the unit's readiness for a war time mission. Once again the 924 proves it was the best unit in the United States Air Force Reserve.

1989 GUNSMOKE '89 resulted in a second place award in the first event for the 924. Fifty members of the 924 competed at Nellis Air Force Base NV, and over 1,000 personnel participated from bases worldwide.

1989 The last of the 924 organizations moved out of the "Mole Hole" located at SAC Hill. With the move of Comm and Civil Engineering Squadron's into Bldg 1604, another era came to an end. The 924 had occupied the old "mole hole", Bldg 4204, since 1976, many of its services were housed there, including personnel, recruiting, legal, social actions, training and safety. A new Group Headquarters building will now house many of these services.

1990: In August of 1990 hostilities in the Middle East were escalating. President Bush was considering military intervention. Members of the 924 watched intensely and wondered silently if they would be called upon to respond to what seemed like a world crisis situation unfolding and, if so, were they prepared physically, emotionally, and professionally. In September of 1990, although the 924 had not been activated, training took on new meaning.

A new sense of urgency existed to take care of paperwork, and get things professionally and personally in order. Active duty personnel at Bergstrom were beginning to deploy in support of OPERATION DESERT SHIELD. An overwhelming response of 924 Reservists volunteered to help in any way to support the mission and approximately fifty group members backfilled for active duty. The general consensus of 924 personnel was that "we will go anywhere, anytime to fight for our country." By the end of the year, tension was high. The United States continued its buildup of military personnel in the mideast. It was a quiet moment in late December when members of the 924 Security Police Squadron were notified and reported to process for deployment. It was a time of great emotion as loved ones said good-bye.

As one reservist put it: "On Dec 29, 1990, we were called to duty to support Desert Storm. The thoughts came fast: Am I ready to accept this? My family, my job and my career with the unit. The worrying began, bills, job etc." "When it came time to tell my wife and other family members, it was heartbreaking. I choked, my voice began to tremble, the tears ran down my

cheeks. How it felt to see the expressions on their faces. Them asking why?"

"As my duty began preparing for Desert Storm the long hours and hard work, the time came to leave. At the Mobility Processing Center, our families embraced us for the last time. The good-byes and I love you. It hurts to know now that it is for real." "When we loaded the C-141 and left Bergstrom, I felt the loneliness and I was scared when we arrived in the Gulf region. Fear hit me because this was for real. Now it was time to do our duty."

In subsequent months, the call came again. This time civil engineering and the hospital squadrons were called to active duty. The mission was now called DESERT STORM. The transportation squadron backfilled for the 67th and those who volunteered served anywhere they were needed. Back home, the 924 took care of the families left behind.

A cease fire was declared on Feb 27, 1991, and by April of 1991, it was all over. It was homecoming time. The flags flew, tears were shed, and everywhere you looked, there were smiles on every face. The pride could not be contained as the 924 welcomed all those who served during DESERT SHIELD /STORM came home. It was a moment of deep gratitude that no one was hurt or injured, that all had come home safely. It was also a moment of respect for our country and pride in our capability to defend our national interests at a moment's notice without a moment's hesitation.

1991 At first glance, it resembled a "bird of prey." A high flying falcon circling overhead, searching. As it began its descent, its delta shaped gray plumage soon became familiar to those on the ground." So was the feeling of the first F-16 to arrive at the 924. The 924 was preparing for its F-16 conversion. The unit's official conversion ceremony would take place on 13 Jul 91. By the time of conversion, there would be twenty F-16's assigned.

1991 Deployed to United Arab Emirates in support of DESERT STORM/SHIELD. Landed at a bare base facility at Al Sharjah and then re-deployed to Al Minhad AB and staged out to Dubai International Airport to establish base operations for the 1713th Air Refueling Wing Provisional.

1992: As Bergstrom AFB prepared to close down as an operating active duty base and the 924 prepared to become an Air Reserve Station, Lt Col Charles Koyrn was selected to be its first base commander. It was going to be a monumental task as the base closed and the reserve cantonment area was left to fend for itself with no active duty support. 1992 Effective March 2, 1992, the 924 Tactical Fighter Group became the 924 Fighter Group. The 704th Tactical Fighter Squadron became the 704th Fighter Squadron. The 924 Combat Support Squadron became the 924 Mission Support Squadron. The changes reflected the ongoing realignment of the former Tactical Air Command into the new Air Combat Command. Got that!!!

At first they were four specks, poised slightly above the horizon. In less than a minute, the approaching aircraft grew in size, making them easily identifiable. And if there were any doubt as to what type airplanes they were, the roar that accompanied them made it clear. These were F-4E's. On this day, the transition from old to new was quick. Just seconds behind the Phantoms were their replacements - a flight of F-16 Fighting Falcons, displaying the markings of the 924 Tactical Fighter Group which was hosting this June 13 conversion ceremony. Spectators witnessing the historic flyby at Bergstrom AFB, Texas, could only protect themselves from the

discomfort of the noise, not from the feelings of loss seeing an old friend move on. For as they watched the Phantoms climb into the Texas sky, most realized a chapter of Air Force Reserve history was closing forever. The 924 was the last of five Air Force Reserve units to trade their venerable Phantoms for F-16s. Members of the unit were excited about getting the high-tech F-16 aircraft made famous during Operation Desert Storm. But they all agreed the F-4's they had been flying and maintaining for the past 10 years would always hold a special place in their hearts.

Trained Reservists for worldwide deployment as they provided air-to-air and air-to-ground support, 1990-1996.

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1992 What comes to mind when you think of Alaska? Icy cold temperatures, lots of snow, mountains, beautiful scenery? For the 924 when you thought of Alaska you thought PATRIOT SALMON '92. No, not a fishing expedition, but a two-week deployment to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. It was a challenge to flying skills and ground support. The lessons learned; however, were invaluable to all who participated.

1993 The 67th Comptroller's office and Supply would cease to function and be transferred to other agencies and by September 1993, the 67th Reconnaissance Wing would officially leave Bergstrom. The 924 became the host with no active duty support left. In November, Gen Closner announces that the 924 would remain at Bergstrom. It has been a long hard fight, but the 924 won. Tension over the last few years had been high as the Base Realignment and Closure Commission ((BRAC)) tossed the 924 around like a runaway basketball. At the beginning of the year, the BRAC had suggested that the 704th be reassigned to Carswell and the 924 be deactivated. Feelings of confusion, anxiousness, depression and a sad feeling of insecurity loomed overhead. People were trying to make decisions about their lives with no concrete facts to back up those decisions.

The 924 was in the midst of becoming a host base and looming in the background was the uncertainty of what the BRAC had in store for her. The city of Austin had fought hard to keep the 924 in place and with a sigh of relief, the decision to keep Bergstrom open was made. "WE'RE STAYING" read the Bull's Eye headline June of 1993 as the BRAC voted 7-0 to keep Bergstrom open as a Reserve Base.

She was safe until 1996 when the BRAC would look at the progress of the airport. There were still many unanswered questions. As a result of the BRAC activities, in 1996 the 924 Fighter Wing was disestablished due to the closing of Bergstrom AFB. By September the aircraft, personnel and equipment were gone and on 27 Sept 1996, the keys to the base were turned over to the City of Austin.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

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