

30 RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

30 Photographic Reconnaissance Squadron constituted, 5 Feb 1943
Redesignated 30 Photographic Squadron (Light), 6 Feb 1943
Activated, 1 May 1943
Redesignated 30 Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, 11 Aug 1943
Inactivated, 7 Nov 1945
Redesignated 30 Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo, 11 Mar 1947
Activated in the Reserve, 25 Jul 1947
Redesignated 30 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Electronics, 27 Jun 1949
Ordered to Active Service, 1 May 1951
Inactivated, 16 May 1951
Redesignated 30 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night-Photo, 15 Nov 1952
Activated, 1 Jan 1953
Redesignated 30 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Night Photo-Jet, 8 Jan 1957
Redesignated 30 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 1 Oct 1966
Inactivated, 1 Apr 1976
Redesignated 30 Reconnaissance Squadron, 17 Jun 2005
Activated, 1 Sep 2005

STATIONS

Peterson AAFld, CO, 1 May 1943
Will Rogers Field, OK, 10 Oct 1943
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 3-17 Jan 1944

Chalgrove, England, 1 Feb 1944
Middle Wallop, England, 17 May 1944
Le Molay, France, 3 Jul 1944
Toussus Le Noble, France, 31 Aug 1944
Charleroi-Gosselies, Belgium, 22 Sep 1944 (operated from Florennes Juzaine, Belgium, 8-18 Dec 1944)
Vogelsang, Germany, 24 Mar 1945
Limburg, Germany, 2 Apr 1945
Eschwege, Germany, 11 Apr-Jul 1945
Drew Field, Fla, 20 Sep-7 Nov 1945
Newark AAB, NJ, 25 Jul 1947
McGuire AFB, NJ, 27 Jun 1949
Barksdale AFB, LA, 10 Oct 1949-16 May 1951
Shaw AFB, SC, 1 Jan 1953
Sembach AB, Germany, 8 Jul 1953
Spangdahlem AB, Germany, 8 Jan 1958
RAF Station (later, RAF) Alconbury, England, 25 Aug 1959 (operated from Moron AB, Spain, 9 May-10 Jun 1968)-1 Apr 1976
Tonopah Test Range, NV, 1 Sep 2005
Creech AFB, NV, 30 Aug 2011

ASSIGNMENTS

7th Photographic (later, Photographic Reconnaissance and Mapping) Group, 1 May 1943
Third Air Force, 21 Jun 1943
III Reconnaissance Command, 12 Oct 1943
Ninth Air Force, 4 Feb 1944
10th Photographic Group, 21 Feb 1944
67th Tactical Reconnaissance (later, Reconnaissance) Group, 13 Jun 1944-7 Nov 1945
66th Reconnaissance (later, Strategic Reconnaissance) Group, 25 Jul 1947-16 May 1951
66th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, 1 Jan 1953
66th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 8 Dec 1957
10th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, 8 Mar 1958-1 Apr 1976
57th Operations Group, 1 Sep 2005
432 Operations Group, 1 May 2007; 732 Operations Group, 10 Sep 2012; 432 Operations Group, 5 Apr 2019-.

ATTACHMENTS

67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group after 9 Jun 1944
10th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing from 8 Jan 1958

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-38/F-4, 1943
P-38/F-5, 1943-1945

F-5A
F-5B
F-5C
F-5E
RB-26, 1953-1955
B/RB-57, 1955-1957
RB-66, 1957-1965
RF-4, 1965-1976

COMMANDERS

1lt William D. Mitchell, 1 May 1943
Maj Richard S. Leghorn, 21 Aug 1943
Lt Col William D. Mitchell, 23 Jul 1944
Unkn, Jul-Nov 1945
Unkn, Jul 1947-May 1951
Lt Col Clason B. Saunders, By Mar 1953
Maj Oliver T. Hayes, Jr., 16 Nov 1953
Maj Harold E. Grant, 9 Jul 1956
Maj Warren A. Williams, 22 Jul 1957
Maj Robert L. Hopkins, Feb 1958
Lt Col Steven R. Wilkerson, 13 Dec 1958
Lt Col Chester B. Hackett, 12 Jul 1960
Maj Philip V. Howell Jr., 1 May 1961
Maj Richard J. Saile, 4 Jan 1963
Lt Col Delbert C. Hainley, 15 Jan 1964
Lt Col Austin C. Ayotte, 26 Jun 1966
Lt Col Frank M. Kelley, 10 Feb 1967
Lt Col Bill M. Davies, 11 May 1967
Lt Col Robert C. Caudry, 10 Aug 1970
Lt Col Norman P. Huggins, 27 Jul 1971
Lt Col Curtis L. Behrend, 15 Mar 1972
Lt Col Thomas J. Wicker, 31 Oct 1972
Lt Col Alexander M. Milligan Iv, 22 Jul 1974-1 Apr 1976
Lt Col James Fleitz, 30 Jul 2009

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France, Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
[7]-20 May 1944

Meritorious Unit Awards: 1 Jun 2007-31 May 2009; 1 Jun 2011-31 May 2012; 1 Jun 2012-31 May 2013; 1 Jun 2017-31 May 2018; 1 Jun 2018-31 May 2020. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 31 Dec 1959-1 Jan 1962; 15 Jul 1968-15 Jul 1969; 1 Jun 1972-1 Jun 1973; [1Se 2005]-31 May 2006; 1 Jun 2009-31 May 2010; 1 Jun 2013-31 May 2014; 1 Jun 2020-31 May 2021.

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

31 Dec 1959-1 Jan 1962

15 Jul 1968-15 Jul 1969

1 Jun 1972-1 Jun 1973

Citation in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army,
[10] Jun-[29] Sep 1944
[17] Dec 1944-25 Jan 1945

Belgian Fourragere

EMBLEM





30 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron





30 Reconnaissance Squadron emblem: On a disc Gules, stylized Blackbird wings displayed and inverted foreshortened garnished Azure, eyed, beak and talons Argent (Silver Gray) detailed Sable, grasping a terrestrial globe of the last, land masses Argent gridlined Gules, in chief a mullet Or, all within a narrow border of the last. Attached below the disc, a Blue scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "30 RECONNAISSANCE SQ" in Black letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The red background represents the red lights of a darkroom and symbolizes the way in which photo imagery was developed in the past. The Blackbird, perched on a globe, symbolizes the unit's ability to watch over the world. The dark globe symbolizes the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) employment capabilities to combat the Global War on Terrorism in the cloak of night. The yellow star is both from the heritage emblem and represents the components of the unit as one force and family. (Approved, 30 Nov 1954)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Trained in U.S., May-Dec 1943. Began flying photo reconnaissance in ETO on 25 Feb 1944. Mapped 6,000 square miles of the Netherlands and flew bomb-damage assessment missions over marshalling yards and gun emplacements in Belgium, Holland, and France, in Apr 1944. Earned DUC for participation with 10th Photographic Group, 7-20 May 1944, in photo reconnaissance of Normandy invasion beaches. The citation read, in part: "Employing specially modified equipment installed in unarmed P-38s, the intrepid pilots of the 10th Photographic Reconnaissance Group undertook the most hazardous missions. Flying unarmed and unescorted and at altitudes as low as twenty-five feet, they fearlessly piloted their aircraft over the difficult photographic runs in the face of intense fire from some of the strongest anti-aircraft installations in western Europe." Flew sorties over France on D-Day making visual and photographic reconnaissance of bridges, artillery, road and rail junctions, traffic centers, airfields, and other targets. Flew weather missions, made visual reconnaissance for ground forces, and photographed enemy positions to assist the First and Third Armies, Twelfth Army Group, and other Allied forces in the drive to Germany. Flew its first mission over Germany on 24 Aug 1944. Took part in the offensive against the Siegfried Line, Sep-Dec 1944, and in the

Battle of the Bulge (Ardennes-Alsace), Dec 1944-Jan 1945. From then until the close of the war in Europe, the squadron photographed dams and bridges on the Roer River in preparation for the ground offensive to cross the river, and aided the Allied assault across the Rhine River and into Germany. Flew its 2,000th operational mission on 22 Mar 1945. Flew missions to Berlin on 8 April and to Dresden on 10 Apr 1945.

From 1947 to 1951, the squadron served as an Air Reserve corollary unit under the guidance of active duty units in order to train and maintain currency in reconnaissance operations for its reserve personnel.

Provided tactical reconnaissance for USAFE and NATO, 1953-1976.

September 2nd, the 30 TRS with its RB-26s was tasked with the long-term mission of mapping all the British, American and French zones of Austria. The 303rd was requested to undertake a mosaic mapping of the Austrian Alps. This latter mission had to be completed with some urgency before the agreement with the Soviets necessitated the removal of all occupation forces from Austrian soil and resulted in the banning of overflights of that country.

Late autumn and winter of 1953 brought appalling weather to Northern Europe and a multitude of problems to the tactical units of USAFE. The 66th TRW initiated further intensive flying safety programs for the pilots; and the mission backlog over this period became acute. The mosaic mapping in Austria was shelved until early spring; and the exercises undertaken in conjunction with the 7th Army were severely compromised in air support terms because the aircraft simply couldn't get off the ground. The problem was particularly for the 30 TRS and their RB-26s. In Exercise Harvest Moon commencing on 13th October, the squadron was to fly visual reconnaissance and simulated atomic bomb missions. In the event there was very little participation in this or in Exercise Power Play in November, when the 30 had a similar mission. The problems with the Invaders were mainly concerned with severe icing and a review of the cold weather operation of the aircraft was undertaken at this time.

It was at this time that USAFE looked to warmer climes to provide its pilots with the time to practice their missions intensively without being constantly inconvenienced by the weather. Regular deployments to bases in North Africa began for all tactical units. It was also a time when the presence of state of the art Soviet fighters across the iron curtain prompted the US Air Force to commit itself to the re-equipment of its own forces in Europe to counter the threat. In late 1953 it was announced that the 30 TRS was to exchange its RB-26 Invaders for the twin jet Martin RB-57A Canberra. As the year drew to a close pilots from these squadrons were being checked out on their T-33s prior to temporary duty at Shaw AFB to convert to the RB-57A.

Operations during 1954 were adversely affected by the weather in the early part; but by Spring the conditions had improved sufficiently to allow a relatively high number of successful missions to be flown. By June the 30 TRS had completed 65% of its Austrian mission.

On the 30 November, 1954 the first of the RB-57A aircraft arrived at Sembach for the 30 TRS. Early 1955 saw the RB-57 and RF-84 MTDs set up at the base; usefully, because, yet again the weather had severely restricted flying; and the opportunity for ground training of all kinds was a welcome one.

The RB-57s continued throughout 1955. The first accident in the wing concerning these aircraft occurred on the 9th February, 1955 when a 30 TRS aircraft suffered considerable damage on taking off from Sembach. It slid along the runway to a long stop. The pilot had raised the landing gear before the aircraft had become completely airborne! Ron Lang was a radio and radar technician working on the RB-26s at the time and recalls the incident. Prior to the crash the pilot had had some difficulties taxiing! "He taxied so much that the brakes had to be replaced. When they were most of the personnel on the flight line lined up to watch him take off. Of course to start the plane, black powder canisters were inserted into the nacelles of the engines, ignited and started the jet engines with much black smoke streaming from the rear. He taxied to the runway, lined up for takeoff, pushed open the throttles and roared down the runway. It was said that he had raised the landing gear handle to the up position so that when the plane reached flying speed and lifted off the runway, it would allow the landing gear to immediately fold up into the plane for a show off hot take off. Unfortunately, the trim tabs were in the 'down' position; the plane immediately belly landed because the landing gear was retracted. The plane suffered damage to the undercarriage and ruined the special paint that was supposed to be somewhat radar proof."

The 30 TRS had fully converted to the RB-57A. By the end of 1955. In addition to receiving the RB-57A the 30 also received the B-57C dual trainer.

Of the new aircraft only the RB-57 was to see operational flying during 1955. The aircraft took part in Operation Fox Paw from the 1st to the 4th October acquitting themselves well in the night reconnaissance missions. The RF-84 pilots contented themselves with transition sorties of familiarization, navigation and instrument training flights.

As 1956 dawned the 30 TRS was experiencing the first of many problems with the RB-57. On the 29th January all these aircraft were grounded due to a faulty jack screw in the elevator trim control. This grounding lasted until 20th February. The squadron was on detachment to Wheelus in Libya at the time engaged on Operation Sunflash. They had to be relieved by the 303rd TRS who sent out four RF-80s to complete the mission which involved supporting guided missile squadrons and reporting on weather, range clearance and photographing missile impact. 99 missions were flown between the 31st January and the 24th March. Later in the year the RB-57s were grounded again.

This grounding lasted for two months and was caused by faulty actuators, which had to be replaced. In September, 1956, Exercise Whipsaw took place. This was a major NATO exercise similar in purpose to Carte Blanche: to test practice and evaluate current plans for the employment of nuclear weapons and the allied forces of Northern Europe. Whipsaw took place between the 25th and the 28th of the month. All squadrons took part. The principle mission profile was to fly pre-strike, post-strike and weather reconnaissance missions. Poor weather

took its toll of many of the missions; but in spite of this the 66th notched up a total of 118 sorties. The 30 TRS with its RB-57s deployed to Echterdingen for this exercise, which was, for them as much a test of their mobility capabilities as their mission capability. During the four days of the exercise the squadron flew 33 bombing sorties against 54 targets all of which were successfully hit.

Approximately a third of the missions were flown at night. The only problem that arose for the 30 TRS was the means of transport for their deployment. At the last minute air transport was made available for the move in the form of four C-123s and one C-124 of the 322nd Air Division; and two C-47s of the 66th Wing Flight. Contrary to expectations this provision actually slowed up the deployment; and one of the main recommendations of the 30 following the exercise was for such moves would be more efficiently managed if they took place wholly by road. Following the problems that had been encountered with the RB-57s the success of Whipsaw was a boost for the 30 TRS; but, in any event, the days of the aircraft were numbered as the Douglas RB-66 began to go into production; arriving in the European theatre during late 1956.

October, 1956 saw the first of what was to become a regular annual event for the 66th TRW. The Royal Flush reconnaissance competitions were inaugurated. Royal Flush was a NATO exercise which brought together recce units from both the 2nd Allied tactical Air Force (ATAF) and the 4th ATAF. The 1956 event was staged at Lahr in Germany from the 17th to the 19th October. USAFE was represented by the 30 and the 303rd Tactical Reconnaissance Squadrons flying for the 4th ATAF. The 303rd TRS' RF-84F flown by 1st Lt. John Robertson won the low level competition; and 1st Lt. Ronald A. Krzan from the 30 TRS came second in the high level competition flying a RB-57A.

At the time the 30 was converting to the B-66 at Sembach, prospective pilots had to complete 15 hours on the Sembach simulator in preparation for the aircraft, which were due to arrive in the summer. The first RB-66 to arrive at Sembach was, in fact, a 19th TRS machine on the 26th February, 1957. The purpose of this flight was to test out the Sembach runway for RB-66 operations. There was some doubt about whether or not the runway was long enough. In the event the 30 was sent to Landstuhl to transition because of that airfields longer runways and overruns. An additional factor, if one was needed, was that the heat wave experienced in the summer of 1957 buckled Sembach's runway. Squadron underwent a basic familiarization course in ground strafing against mesh nylon targets.

In January, 1957 the 30 TRS while still equipped with the RB-57A were heavily involved in Operation Sunrise. This operation, in support of the 11th Tactical Missile Squadron, took place in Libya; the RB-57s being based at Wheelus. The 11th TMS was involved in target practice. The job of the 30 Pilots was to find the missiles after they had been fired and photograph them. The target was a large T in the desert. Later in the year, in November the 30 was to repeat this exercise using its newly acquired RB-66s and in support of the 701st TMS in Operation Blast Off. At this time the squadron also took advantage of Wheelus' long runways and the good weather in the region, to transition more pilots onto the new aircraft.

30 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (Night Photographic): Converted from RB-57As to RB-66Bs during the fall of 1957 while assigned to the 66th TRW at Sembach AB Transferred during March 1958, to the 10th TRW. USAFE, and based at Spangdahlem AB until August 1959, and at RAF Alconbury until converted to RF-4Cs during 1965.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

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Sources

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

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.