

53 COMBAT AIRFIELD OPERATIONS SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

53 Combat Communications Squadron constituted 15 Jul 1988

Activated, 22 Jul 1988

Redesignated 53 Air Traffic Control Squadron, 1 May 2015

Redesignated 53 Combat Airfield Operations Squadron, 23 Jun 2023

STATIONS

Robins AFB, GA, 22 Jul 1988

ASSIGNMENTS

5 Combat Communications Group, 22 Jul 1998

461 Operations Group, 1 Oct 2014

COMMANDERS

Capt William M. Miner, 22 Jul 1988

HONORS

Service Streamers

Global War on Terrorism-Service (GWOT-S)

Campaign Streamers

Southwest Asia

Defense of Saudi Arabia

Liberation and Defense of Kuwait

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Meritorious Unit Award

1 Jun 2007-31 May 2009

5 Oct 2009-4 Oct 2010

5 Oct 2011-4 Oct 2013

5 Oct 2013-[30 Sep 2014]

[1 Oct 2014]-31 May 2015

1 Jun 2015-31 May 2016

1 Jun 2016-31 May 2017

1 Jun 2018-31 May 2019

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

[22 Jul] 1988-31 May 1990

1 Oct 1990-30 Apr 1991

28 May 1992-22 Feb 1993

1 Mar 1993-31 Jul 1994

1 Jun 1998-31 May 2000

1 Jun 2002-31 May 2003

1 Jun 2003-31 May 2004

1 Jun 2004-31 May 2005

1 Jun 2005-31 May 2007

5 Oct 2010-4 Nov 2011

1 Jun 2013-31 May 2014

1 Jun 2017-31 May 2018

1 Jun 2020-31 May 2021

EMBLEM



53 Combat Communications Squadron emblem: On a disc Azure parted and erased Sable, an alligator rampant Vert, eyed Gules, armed Argent, detailed Sable, grasping in sinister paw a terrestrial globe Proper, and grasping in dexter paw a sword Or point to dexter base, emitting a lightning bolt arcing from chief of the last fimbriated of the fourth, all within a narrow border of the same. Attached above the disc, a Green scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "FIGHTING GATORS" in Yellow letters. Attached below the disc, a Green scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "53D COMBAT COMM SQUADRON" in Yellow 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 Fighting Gator cutting the black field denotes fury and power to fight evil and receives its origin from the unit's parent organization, the 5th Combat Communications Group. The lightning bolt represents communications. The globe signifies worldwide readiness to deploy on a moment's notice. (Approved, 1 Feb 2007; latest rendition approved, 29 Jul 2015)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

3/7/2014 Members of the 5th Combat Communications Group at Robins - the only remaining active duty combat communications group in the Air Force - are able to provide rapid-response capabilities to any military tasking or humanitarian relief effort in the world at any time. In particular, when it comes to staying proficient in air traffic control duties, its members regularly train throughout the year in all areas of mobile control tower set-up and take-down procedures.

The group's latest exercise was conducted Feb. 24 through 28 with a blend of air traffic controllers and maintainers. Located just west of the Guardian Centers in Perry, the Perry-Houston County Airport provided a training site for the 15 members throughout the week to communicate with private aircraft flying into the airport. "Every aspect of what we do out here is training," said Tech Sgt. Joseph Menendez with the 53rd Combat Communications Squadron. "From driving the trucks to the location to running the wires, this provides an opportunity for us to maintain our proficiencies as well as talk to the aircraft."

An established central position adjacent to the airfield provided an ideal location for a mobile control tower to perform its operations during the week. The tower was transported from Robins to Perry on the back of a Humvee, which can be raised several feet in the air to provide an elevated view for two air traffic controllers to communicate with civilian and transient aircraft. Although small, the tower provides everything one needs to perform air control operations in any austere landing strip. There are radios, light guns, a crash phone, recorder - all the tools to get the job done during each day's 10-hour shift.

For the three days the air traffic controllers are on the job, close to 100 calls will have been made assisting pilots with take-off and landing clearances, communication and more. "As controllers we are able to brush up on our phraseology. If you don't use it, you lose it," said Tech Sgt. Joshua Clifton with the 53rd CBCS. None of these capabilities would exist without the support of nearby power generators and two antennas, maintained by airfield systems technicians and electrical power production professionals who continuously oversee their use.

Setting up that power takes no more than two hours, but the team accomplishes their goal within 90 minutes. "This training allows us to be more proficient when the time comes for us to set this up. At the same time, we're also able to support the people around Perry with their flight missions," said Senior Airman Adam Spittle, 53rd CBCS airfield systems technician.

7/25/2014 - The 53rd Combat Communications Squadron is getting ready to leave the 5th Combat Communications Group for a new home under the 461st Air Control Wing, representing a realignment effort aimed to enhance all unit capabilities. On Oct. 1, the 53rd will officially become its own airfield squadron, though the staff of 145 personnel - 16 of them air traffic controllers - and their equipment will remain at its current location on the opposite side of the base. The transition is part of a Program Action Directive handed down by the Secretary of the Air Force. With the migration of the squadron's Deployable Air Traffic Control and Landing Systems, or DATCALs, to Air Combat Command, necessary funding will be provided that will help refurbish tactical radars and other equipment for the first time in several years. The squadron already houses \$12.5 million in equipment.

"In the end I feel this is going to be a positive move for the personnel assigned to our unit," said Senior Master Sergeant Dwight Carns, 53rd CBCS superintendent. "ACC, along with the Air Force Flight Standards Agency, has revitalized the importance of our mission set and will be looking to fund our maintenance and training programs for the future." As of June of last year with the inactivation of the 689th Combat Communications Wing, the 5th CCG has operated as its own entity, reporting directly to the 24th Air Force and Air Force Space Command. The realignment, which began earlier this year, included the deactivation of the 54th CBCS and the disbursement of all of its air traffic control personnel, Radar and Airfield workcenters to the 53rd.

The move also meant that all satellite, secure data and voice capabilities from the 54th and 53rd respectively, would be realigned along with the personnel to perform those functions to the 51st and 52nd CBCS. Sound confusing? Basically, the Air Force saw a need to revamp the Combat Communications capability, and it was decided to restructure the 5th MOB. The 53rd was identified as the unit to stand up a new capability. The 53rd will serve as a Combat Airfield Operations Squadron - CAOS - taking on all tactical airfield capabilities, navigation and air traffic control, representing the first of its kind in the Air Force.

"It was decided at the highest levels to move this squadron from AFSPC to the ACC because it was better suited for the mission it does," said Lt. Col. Claude Archabault, 461st Operations Group deputy commander. "We're trying to do this as seamlessly as possible, bringing them into our family and making sure their needs are met."

5/8/2015 - ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- During a redesignation ceremony May 1, members of the 53rd Air Traffic Control Squadron embraced a new name, continuing a new chapter at Robins. "The redesignation was the final action needed to realign our squadron in both mission and purpose," said Lt. Col. Matthew "Pudge" Davis, 53rd ATCS commander. "As one of my old commanders used to say, 'Words have meaning.' We are now called what we actually do.

"The Airmen can now take pride in their name, and carry forward a legacy of success and promise to a new generation of Airmen who are the 53rd Air Traffic Control Squadron." The squadron was formerly the 53rd Combat Communications Squadron, aligned under the 5th Combat Communications Group in Air Force Space Command. The new squadron is now aligned

with the 461st Air Control Wing and Air Combat Command. Realignment efforts began in 2014, and included the deactivation of the 54th CBCS, with all of its air traffic control personnel sent to the 53rd CBCS. The 53rd ATCS also moved to its new headquarters in Bldg. 1364, with 138 Airmen supporting mobile air traffic control support from a variety of career fields, including air traffic control, radar maintenance and airfield maintenance.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORIES

Created: 19 Feb 2025

Updated:

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.