

## 56 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



### MISSION

On 27 June 2007, the 56 Airlift Squadron inactivated as the C-5 training mission transitioned to the USAF Reserves at Kelly Field, Texas. The unit would only stay inactive for 9 years as it reactivated on 1 Aug 2016 as the 56 Air Refueling Squadron and prepared to become the first formal training unit for the USAF's newest air refueling and cargo aircraft the KC-46 Pegasus. The reactivation of the unit at Altus AFB returned the unit to the home it had since 1969 and reunited it with the 58th Airlift Squadron, a unit it had served with during the island hopping campaigns in the South Pacific during World War II.

The 56 Air Refueling Squadron maintains a proud history and tradition of training highly qualified aircrew members while operating the Air Force's largest aircraft in the inventory throughout its history. It is aligned under the United States Air Force's Air Education and Training Command's 19th Air Force, headquartered at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

### LINEAGE

56 Troop Carrier Squadron constituted, 12 Nov 1942  
Activated, 18 Nov 1942  
Inactivated, 25 Mar 1946  
Activated in the Reserve, 3 Aug 1947  
Redesignated 56 Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 27 Jun 1949  
Ordered to active service, 15 Oct 1950  
Inactivated, 14 Jul 1952  
Activated in the Reserve, 14 Jul 1952  
Inactivated, 16 Nov 1957

Redesignated 56 Military Airlift Squadron, Training, and activated, 27 Dec 1965  
Organized, 8 Jan 1966  
Redesignated 56 Airlift Squadron, 27 Aug 1991  
Redesignated 56 Air Refueling Squadron, 23 Jun 2016  
Activated, 1 Aug 2016

## **STATIONS**

Bowman Field, KY, 18 Nov 1942  
Sedalia AAFld, MO, 23 Jan 1943  
Laurinburg-Maxton AAB, NC, 5 May 1943  
Baer Field, IN, 2–17 Jun 1943  
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 15 Jul 1943  
Dobodura, New Guinea, 2 Aug 1943  
Port Moresby, New Guinea, 23 Dec 1943  
Nadzab, New Guinea, 22 Apr 1944  
Biak, 19 Sep 1944; San Jose, Mindoro, 27 Feb 1945  
Porac, Luzon, 20 May 1945  
Okinawa, 20 Aug 1945  
Tachikawa, Japan, 20 Sep 1945–25 Mar 1946  
Greater Pittsburgh Aprt, PA, 3 Aug 1947  
Greenville AFB, SC, 16 Oct 1950–14 Jul 1952  
Pittsburgh, PA, 14 Jul 1952–16 Nov 1957  
Tinker AFB, OK, 8 Jan 1966  
Altus AFB, OK, 20 Jan 1969–30 Sep 2008  
Altus AFB, OK, 1 Aug 2016

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

375 Troop Carrier Group, 18 Nov 1942–25 Mar 1946  
375 Troop Carrier Group, 3 Aug 1947–14 Jul 1952  
375 Troop Carrier Group, 14 Jul 1952–16 Nov 1957  
Military Air Transport Service (later, Military Airlift Command), 27 Dec 1965  
443 Military Airlift (later, 443<sup>rd</sup> Airlift) Wing, 8 Jan 1966  
443 Operations Group, 1 Oct 1991  
97 Operations Group, 1 Oct 1992–1 Oct 2008  
97 Operations Group, 1 Aug 2016

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

C-47, 1942–1945  
B-17, 1944  
C-46, 1944–1946  
C-82, 1950–1952  
C-46, 1952–1954  
C-119, 1954–1957  
C-124, 1966–1968

C-5, 1969

KC-46A

## **COMMANDERS**

Cpt Maurice W. Wiley, 20 Nov 1942

1Lt George W. Beswick, 13 Mar 1943

1Lt Bob J. Willis, 23 Jul 1943

1Lt Paul N. Wentz, 29 Feb 1944

Cpt James M. Sweet, 27 Nov 1944

Cpt Edward W. Ringo, 24 Jun 1945-Unkn

Maj Michael E. Adams, 3 Aug 1947

Maj Donald M. Reed, 15 Oct 1950

Maj Fred J. Altieri, 7 Nov 1950

Maj William G. Porter, 19 Dec 1950-Unkn

Maj William T. Fitzroy, 1956-16 Nov 1957

Lt Col Joseph J. Pietrucha, 8 Jan 1966

Lt Col Thomas L. Overton, 30 Jun 1967

Col John G. Caulfield, 1 Aug 1967

None, Not Manned, 5 Nov 1968-Jul 1969

Lt Col Calvin C. Owens, Jul 1969

Lt Col Ralph D. Haaf, 17 Dec 1969

Lt Col Robert G. Caesar, 5 Jun 1970

Lt Col Sarkis H. Kavookjian, Jan 1972

Lt Col Melvin E. Riggert, 18 Jun 1973

Lt Col Norman W. Janes, 1 Dec 1974

Lt Col Gary S. Baker, 2 Jul 1976

Lt Col Donald R. Delaney, 5 Jul 1977

Lt Col Robert H. Robben Jr., 11 Sep 1978

Lt Col David A. Terry, 20 Jul 1979

Lt Col Edward S. Brannum, 31 Mar 1981

Lt Col Michael Davenport, 20 Jun 1983

Lt Col Roger W. Hanson, 29 Mar 1985

Lt Col Wayne R. Heske, 23 Jun 1987

Lt Col Charles L. Hudson, 22 Jul 1989

Lt Col Alan L. Joseph, 21 May 1991

Lt Col Hugh L. Gordon, 26 Oct 1992

Lt Col Richard T. Devereaux, 3 Oct 1994

Lt Col Joseph Motz, 2 Jul 1996

Lt Col Stephen O. McCallister, 18 Feb 1998

Lt Col Merrill J. Alligood Jr., 11 Feb 2000

Lt Col James M. Baron, 22 Jun 2001

Lt Col David E. Hafer Jr., 19 May 2003

Lt Col Kyle J. Kremer, 22 Jul 2005

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

Air Offensive, Japan

New Guinea

Northern Solomons

Bismarck Archipelago

Western Pacific

Leyte

Luzon

Southern Philippines

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Apr 1967–31 Mar 1969

1 Apr 1970–31 Mar 1972

1 Jul 1979–30 Jun 1981

1 Jul 1985–30 Jun 1987

1 Jul 1991–30 Sep 1992

1 Oct 1992–30 Jun 1993

1 Jul 1993–30 Jun 1994

1 Jul 1994–30 Jun 1995

1 Jul 1995–30 Jun 1996

1 Jul 1996–30 Jun 1998

1 Jul 1998–30 Jun 1999

1 Jul 2000–30 Jun 2002

1 Jul 2002–30 Jun 2004

1 Jul 2004–30 Jun 2006

1 Jul 2006–30 Jun 2007

1 Jul 2007–30 Jun 2008

1 Jul 2017–30 Jun 2019

1 Jul 2019–30 Jun 2021

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII)

## **EMBLEM**



Celeste, within a diminished annulet Or a stylized falcon displayed Azure beaked and eyed of the second, the top of the wings overlapping the annulet, capped with a mortarboard Sable garnished Argent superimposed to dexter base by a second stylized falcon displayed of the last beaked and eyed Yellow; all within a diminished bordure of the third. (Approved, 16 Nov 1966 and slightly modified, 12 Jul 1971. Approved, 12 Jul 1971)

#### **MOTTO**

SAFETY THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

#### **OPERATIONS**

Aerial transportation in Southwest and Western Pacific during World War II; airborne assault on Nadzab, New Guinea, on 5 Sep 1943.

The 56 Airlift Squadron had its beginning on November 8, 1942. On that day, the 56 Troop Carrier Squadron was activated at Bowman Field, Kentucky, training in the C-47. The 56 TCS

mission was to ferry troops and equipment to the Pacific Theater during World War II. The squadron moved to New Guinea and then the Philippines as the war progressed and ended up in Japan, where it was deactivated March 25, 1946.

Reactivated in 1947 at Greater Pittsburgh Airport, the now reserve unit 56 began flying the C-46. At the onset of the Korean Conflict, the 56 was called to active duty and moved to South Carolina and the C-82. In 1952, the squadron once again returned to reserve status at Pittsburgh where it trained in C-119s and C-124s before deactivation in 1957.

On December 27, 1965, the squadron was reactivated as the 56 Military Airlift Squadron and assigned to Tinker AFB, Oklahoma. It's mission was training crews in the C-124.

In January 1969, it moved to Altus AFB, and in October of the same year became the first operational C-5 Galaxy flying unit with the first actual aircraft arriving on December 17, 1969. Since then, the 56 has trained thousands of aircrew members and participated in many worldwide contingencies including Southeast Asia, the "7 Day War" in 1973, JUST CAUSE in 1989, Operations DESERT SHIELD & STORM in 1990/1991, Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in 1991/1992, and Operation PROVIDE HOPE in 1992, as well as operations in the former Yugoslavia.

The 56 Air Refueling Squadron has been training the past few months to ensure they are ready for the arrival of the KC-46 Pegasus. While simulators are useful, scheduling and usage can create delays that slow the process of training. That is where part-task trainers, or PTTs come into play.

A PTT is a simple computer simulator that allows operators to run through checklists and hone their skills without a large simulation or even flying an actual aircraft. The simulator consists of multiple digital screens, which recreate the cockpit of a KC-46. In preparation for the KC-46 arrival, members of the 56 ARS have been training on the PTT to be as prepared as possible. "The training was used to teach 56 ARS members how to operate the PTT for the boom and pilot systems," said Tech. Sgt. Jonathan Mellon, a boom operator assigned to the 56 ARS. "We will use this training as a way to help our cadre become proficient in both normal and non-normal procedures as a way to prepare ourselves for aircraft delivery and student production."

The first batch of 56 ARS instructors were certified last month. This training gives instructors the ability to operate the PTT for use in teaching future students who will eventually become boom operators in the operational world. "This training will also allow us to take the cadre over to the device to not only let them practice procedures but get them trained on how the device operates," said Mellon. "They will then be able to take others over to utilize the device." A large benefit of the PTT is saving money. Since no traditional maintenance or repair is required for the trainer, this creates an additional and more cost effective way to teach students. "This device is a great way for us to help develop not only our proficiency but give another avenue for us to teach students," said Mellon. "The device is more advanced than legacy platform trainers and helps provide more realistic training without having to utilize a simulator or aircraft."

With the KC-46 scheduled to arrive to the 97th Air Mobility Wing on Feb. 8, 2019, the 56 ARS is prepared for the influx of new students that will come with it. The 97th AMW will remain the home of the KC-46 training program and continue to revitalize the way today's warfighters develop to meet the operational demands of the Air Force in the future. 2019

---

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.