



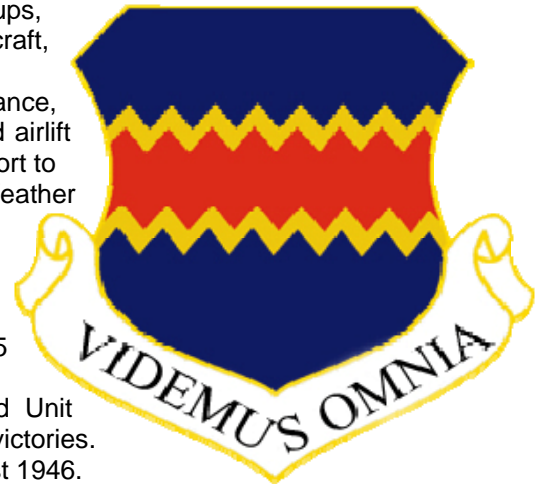
FACT SHEET

United States Air Force

History of the 'Fightin' Fifty-Fifth'

Offutt Air Force Base's 55th Wing is ACC's largest wing composed of 6 groups, 27 squadrons and 3 detachments located worldwide, employing 39 aircraft, including 13 models of 2 different types. Mission responsibility includes the Air Force's most diverse flying operation supporting worldwide reconnaissance, command and control, Presidential support, nuclear treaty verification, and airlift missions. As host unit for Offutt AFB, the wing provides infrastructure support to over 40 associate units, including US Strategic Command, AF Global Weather Center, Space Command, and the Defense Finance Accounting Service.

The 55th Wing traces its lineage to the 55th Pursuit (Interceptor) Group constituted on 20 November 1940 and activated 15 January 1941, at Hamilton Field, California. During World War II, the 55th Pursuit Group (55 PG) garnered two campaign medals, seven theater streamers, and two Distinguished Unit Citations. The group fostered 16 aces who were credited with 90 air-to-air victories. Its last mission flew on 21 April 1945 and inactivation occurred on 20 August 1946.



On 24 February 1947, Strategic Air Command activated and redesignated the 55th Fighter Group as the 55th Reconnaissance Group at MacDill Field, Florida, operating the RB-17. The newly activated group's mission consisted of aerial photography, mapping, charting, and photo reconnaissance missions--some flew around the globe. The group then converted to RB-29 aircraft and transferred to Topeka (later Forbes) AFB, Kansas, in 1948. On 19 July 1948, the 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SRW) activated and was bestowed with the awards and honors of the 55th Reconnaissance Group at Topeka AFB, Kansas. Early in 1950 wing moved to Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico. In 1952 the wing returned to Forbes AFB, Kansas, and converted to RB-50s. The wing formally assumed a global strategic reconnaissance mission in 1954 and transitioned to the RB-47H/E/TT "Stratojet."

For the 55 SRW the decade of the '60s was history making. On 1 July 1960, the wing gained worldwide attention when an RB-47 was shot down over the Barents Sea. Then, in 1962, the 55 SRW provided significant reconnaissance information during the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1966 the wing moved to Offutt AFB, Nebraska, and assumed the LOOKING GLASS airborne command post mission. The '70s were also exceptionally busy for the wing. In the early years, the wing received several versions of the RC-135 aircraft. Meanwhile, an EC-135 and its crew performed the first airborne launch of a Minuteman F intercontinental ballistic missile from Vandenberg AFB, California. The wing also added the E-4A, National Emergency Airborne Command Post to its mission.

Through the 1980s the 55 SRW continued its worldwide operational missions and gained host responsibility for Offutt AFB in 1986. Operationally, the wing continued to perform its missions in support of the US defense against the WARSAW Pact, but also supported US operations in regional contingencies. These operations included Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada, Operation ELDORADO CANYON in Libya, and Operation JUST CAUSE in Panama.

While the '80s introduced the wing to conventional contingency operations, the '90s found such contingencies to be the status quo. In 1990 the wing was one of the first to deploy aircraft and personnel in support of Operation DESERT SHIELD. The wing deployed to the Persian Gulf on August 8, 1990, and began 24-hour-a-day reconnaissance of the region for Central Command Commander Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, under Operation DESERT SHIELD. At the start of Operation DESERT STORM, January 18, 1991, the wing continued to provide real-time information to theater commanders and remains there yet today. The 55th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing became the 55th Wing on September 1, 1991, to reflect the wing's performance of a diversity of missions.

When SAC disestablished and Air Combat Command (ACC) established, the wing transferred to ACC and gained its fifth operational location. The 24th Reconnaissance Squadron at Eareckson AFB, Shemya, Alaska, joined the wing with its Cobra Eye and Cobra Ball missions. On April 1, 1993, the 55th Wing took operational control of the 11th Airlift Flight. The 11th ALF flew operational airlift missions in support of the commander of the United States Strategic Command and transported high-ranking military, Department of Defense officials, and members of Congress. This unit has since inactivated and the mission has reverted back to Air Mobility Command. The 2nd ACCS also inactivated in 1994 with its mission transferring to the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron. Likewise, the 24 RS inactivated in 1994 and its mission transferred to the newly activated 45th Reconnaissance Squadron. Also in 1994, the 1st ACCS National Emergency Airborne Command Post was renamed the National Airborne Operations Center to reflect the addition of a support role to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. In October 1998, the 55th Wing transferred control of the EC-135 LOOKING GLASS mission to the United States Navy's TACAMO aircraft and the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron, which flew the EC-135 LOOKING GLASS aircraft, inactivated. In September 1999, the 338th Combat Training Squadron was activated and assigned to the 55th Operations Group. Additionally, in March 2000, the wing received its 16th RIVET JOINT aircraft. The wing conducts operations from Offutt AFB, Nebraska; Davis Monthan AFB, Arizona; Kadena AB, Japan; RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom; Souda Bay Naval Support Activity, Crete; and other locations around the world. The 55th Wing is the largest wing in Air Combat Command and the second largest in the Air Force.

(Current as of June 2009)