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HISTORY
OF THE
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

(Unclassified Title)

July 1968 through June 1969

1. Aircraft accidents FY 1968
2. Glory Trip
3. Missile - Testing
4. Missile - Launching

Assigned to the

STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Home Station

March Air Force Base, Riverside, California

VOLUME I - NARRATIVE

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APPROVED:

Paul K Carlton

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Commander

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FOREWORD

This history covers the major activities of Fifteenth Air Force for fiscal year 1969. This current narrative, statistical section and documentary collection is the forty-third installment since Fifteenth was reactivated after World War II. The command passed the 25th year of existence on 1 November 1968.

This installment is both similar and dissimilar to previous ones. The major change in coverage is from semiannual to annual, although the length of the manuscript remains relatively unchanged. Secondly, material which had traditionally been in Chapter I under command status is relegated to Chapter III. Material on aircraft operations and the missile program has been elevated to Chapters I and II respectively. The scope of coverage remains much the same as in recent installments; material on communications, personnel and facilities is melded where appropriate. The number of charts has been increased as has been the size of the documentary section to augment the narrative.

As in the recent past the preparation of this history has again been accomplished under an austere manning situation. The third writer's space was deleted at the end of 1968, so this installment has been prepared by Mr. Maurice A. Miller - newly assigned early in 1969 - and the chief of the office. Mr. Miller has written the two chapters dealing with weapon systems and the chief on command status. Mrs. Pat Thrower as editorial assistant compiled the bulk of the charts and typed the

manuscript.

Suggestions for improving the history are always welcomed by members of the history staff.

R. Bruce Harley

R. BRUCE HARLEY
Command Historian
Office of the Historian

CHRONOLOGY

1 July 1968 - 30 June 1969

- 2 Jul 68 - The 18th SAD was inactivated at Fairchild. Brig Gen Arthur W. Holderness, commander, was reassigned as commander of the 314th AD (Korea).
- 2 Jul 68 - Division reassignment for the following units previously assigned to the 18th SAD:
 - 6th SW, Eielson, to 12th SAD
 - 92nd SAW, Fairchild, to 14th SAD
 - 341st SMW, Malmstrom, to 810th SAD
- 5 Jul 68 - Col Eugene J. Crahen, acting commander of the 341st SMW (Malmstrom), was appointed wing commander.
- 5 Jul 68 - Col William B. Colson became base commander at Malmstrom. Previously he had been executive officer of the 18th SAD (Fairchild).
- 10 Jul 68 - Col William W. Culbertson became commander of the 450th BW (Minot), vice Col John R. Hinton, Jr., reassigned. Col Culbertson had been vice commander of the 93rd BW (Castle); Col Hinton became commander of the 410th BW (K. I. Sawyer).
- 10 Jul 68 - Col Lawrence E. Stephens, formerly the base commander at Glasgow, became vice commander of the 3960th SW (Andersen AFB).
- 16 Jul to 31 Jul 68 - The 450th BW (Minot) participated in airborne alert indoctrination training.
- 17 Jul 68 - Turnover of the Hawes AFS communications equipment from ESD to SAC.
- 19 to 26 Jul 68 - CAP summer training encampment at Fairchild AFB.
- 21 Jul to 17 Aug 68 - A second AFROTC encampment was conducted at March AFB.
- 24 Jul 68 - Col James Wagner became commander of the 28th BW (Ellsworth), vice Col Edgar S. Harris, Jr., reassigned. Col Wagner had been asst DCS/Ops at Hq 15AF; Col Harris was reassigned as commander of the 96th SAW (Dyess) in 2nd AF.
- 24 to 30 Jul 68 - SAC ORI of the 341st SMW (Malmstrom).

- 25 Jul 68 - The 450th BW inactivated at Minot AFB and was replaced by the 5th BW designation from Travis AFB.
- 25 Jul 68 - The 5th MMS was reactivated at Minot AFB after being out of existence since 15 Jul 63.
- 27 Jul 68 - Col Wendell W. Sanders was appointed commander of the 456th SAW (Beale), vice Col Richard G. Wilkinson, reassigned as chief of staff.
- 29 Jul 68 - Col Ralph T. Holland was appointed commander of the 810th SAD (Minot), vice Brig Gen Henry L. Hogan, reassigned as the USAF Deputy Director of Information. Col (brig gen selectee) Holland had been commander of the 42nd AD at Blytheville AFB (2nd AF).
- 29 Jul 68 - Brig Gen Paul N. Bacalis was assigned as Commander, 14 SAD (Beale AFB), vice Brig Gen Douglas T. Nelson, reassigned as asst Deputy Chief of Staff/Plans, Hq SAC.
- 29 Jul 68 - An SR-71 from the 9th SRW (Beale) crashed 90 miles northwest of Fort Worth, Texas.
- 30 Jul 68 - A KC-135 from the 93rd BW (Castle) crashed 50 miles east of home station.
- 31 Jul 68 - Col Ralph C. Jenkins, Chief of Staff, retired this date and was succeeded by Col Richard G. Wilkinson.
- 1 Aug 68 - Lt Gen Jack J. Catton became commander of 15AF, vice Lt Gen William K. Martin, retired. Gen Catton had been DCS/P & R, Hq USAF.
- 1 Aug 68 - Brig Gen Douglas T. Nelson, formerly commander of the 14th SAD (Beale), became DCS/Plans at Hq SAC.
- 1 Aug 68 - Brig Gen Alex W. Talmant became commander of the 47th AD (Castle), vice Brig Gen John A. DesPortes, reassigned. Gen Talmant had been commander of the 4258th SW (U-Tapao AB, Thailand); Gen DesPortes became Chief of Staff, U. S. Taiwan Defense Command, Taipei, Taiwan.
- 1 Aug 68 - Col Charles R. Hammack became commander of the 390th SMW (Davis-Monthan), vice Col Robert R. Scott, reassigned. Col Hammack had been wing vice commander; Col Scott became commander of the 90th SMW (Warren).
- 1 Aug 68 - Col Lester E. Gunter was appointed commander of the 22nd BW (March), vice Col Mitchell A. Cobeaga, retired.

8 Aug 68 - Brig Gen Jack C. Ledford became commander of the 12th SAD (Davis-Monthan), vice Brig Gen George P. Cole, reassigned. Gen Ledford had been commander of the 1002nd IG Group (Norton); Gen Cole became asst DCS/Materiel at Hq SAC.

16 to 22 Aug 68 - 2AF ORI of 22nd BW (March).

20 to 24 Aug 68 - SAC ORIT of the 5th BW (Minot).

20 to 24 Aug 68 - SAC ORIT of 91st SMW (Minot).

5 Sep 68 - In a change of command ceremony, Col Roderick R. Patton succeeded Col Edward G. Butler, retired, as base commander at March AFB. Col Patton had been base commander at Fairchild AFB.

5 Sep 68 - Col George E. Burch became commander of the 456th SAW (Beale).

8-13 Sep 68 - SAC General Inspection of Hq 15AF.

12 Sep 68 - Col Ralph E. Kirchoff was appointed base commander at Minot AFB.

16 Sep 68 - Major George R. Kimsey became commander of the 4306th Spt Sq, vice Capt Joseph A. Malpeli, who resigned from the service.

16-20 Sep 68 - 15AF ORI of the 916 AREFS at Travis AFB.

23 to 28 Sep 68 - 15AF ORIT of the 456th SAW (Beale).

1 Oct 68 - A Robbins AFB KC-135 with a 320th BW (Mather) crew aboard crashed while attempting to take off from U-Tapao AB, Thailand at 2235 PST. Three crew members were fatalities; the fourth was seriously injured. SAC tasked 15AF to investigate even though it was classed as a 3rd AD accident.

4 Oct 68 - A B-52H assigned to the 5th BW crashed 12 miles northeast of Minot, North Dakota, while returning from a training mission to Minot AFB. Two crewmen ejected safely (the copilot and radar navigator) and the other four were killed - two in the wreckage and two when their parachutes failed to open in time.

5 to 10 Oct 68 - 15AF ORI of the 93rd BW (Castle).

10 Oct 68 - A major accident involving a tire failure occurred to an SR-71 when on its takeoff roll. In addition, the barrier failed during engagement.

14 to 20 Oct 68 - 8AF ORI of the 5th BW (Minot).

18 Oct 68 - Gen Jack J. Catton announced the reassignment of Col Charles R. Hammack from Commander, 390th SMW (Davis-Monthan), to Hq USAF. He will report in Dec 68 as Chief, Strategic Offensive/Defensive Division, Director of Aerospace Programs, DCS/Programs and Resources.

27 Oct 68 - The 28th BW (Ellsworth) participated in a BUY NONE exercise.

27 Oct to 1 Nov 68 - 15AF Special Inspection of the 28th BW (Ellsworth).

28 Oct to 1 Nov 68 - SAC ORIT of the 44th SMW (Ellsworth).

31 Oct 68 - Col Robert E. Kimmel, DCS/P, retired this date and was presented with the Legion of Honor award.

1 Nov 68 - Col Robert J. Hill became DCS/Personnel. He had been commander of the 90th SMW (Warren).

1 Nov 68 - 25th anniversary of 15AF. Due to post-operative convalescence by the current commander, Lt Gen Jack J. Catton, the actual observance was postponed until 7 December 1968.

1 Nov 68 - The Directorate of Administrative Services became the Directorate of Administration.

1 Nov 68 - Col Ralph T. Holland, commander of the 810th SAD (Minot), was promoted to a brigadier general.

4 to 9 Nov 68 - SAC ORI of the 91st SMW (Minot).

8 Nov 68 - Col Robert R. Scott was appointed commander of the 90th SMW (Warren), vice Col Robert J. Hill, reassigned.

13 to 19 Nov 68 - 15AF ORIT of the 22nd BW (March).

19 Nov 68 - A crew from the 390th SMW (Davis-Monthan) fired a TITAN-II downrange from Vandenberg.

22 to 27 Nov 68 - 15AF ORI of the 320th BW (Mather).

27 Nov 68 - The 15AF protocol function and its two personnel were transferred from DXI to the chief of staff.

1 to 7 Dec 68 - SAC ORI of the 90th SMW (Warren).

9 to 13 Dec 68 - SAC ORI of the 390th SMW (Davis-Monthan).

12 Dec 68 - SNOWTIME 69-2-C was flown as a joint SAC/NORAD penetration exercise.

15 to 20 Dec 68 - 15AF ORI of the 92nd SAW (Fairchild).

6 Jan 69 - Col Edward P. Denton became commander of the 390th SMW (Davis-Monthan), vice Col Charles R. Hammack.

8 Jan 69 - The 10th SMS completed Force Modernization to MINUTEMAN-II at Malmstrom.

13 Jan 69 - An RC-135E assigned to the 6th SW ran off the runway at Shemya AFS upon landing and was a total loss. No casualties.

20 to 24 Jan 69 - SAC IG ORI of the 6th SW (Eielson).

21 Jan 69 - A B-52H of the 5th BW crashed on takeoff from Minot AFB. All six personnel aboard were killed.

22 to 23 Jan 69 - A periodic field commanders conference was held at Hq 15AF.

27 Jan 69 - President Nixon nominated the following 15AF personnel for promotion to the grade of temporary brigadier general:
Col Woodrow A. Abbott, C, 93 BW
Col Harold R. Vague, JA, Hq 15AF

30 Jan 69 - A crew from the 44th SMW (Ellsworth) fired a MINUTEMAN-B from Vandenberg under Operation GLORY TRIP 32B, a FOT launch, to renew a launch program which had been in a hiatus for a year.

6 Feb 69 - TOP RUNG 69-2-C was flown as a joint SAC/NORAD penetration exercise.

16 to 21 Feb 69 - 15AF ORI of the 55th SRW (Offutt).

17 Feb 69 - The 22nd BW (March) flew a BUY NONE Exercise.

20 Feb 69 - A crew from the 91st SMW (Minot) fired an AFLC MINUTEMAN-B from Vandenberg in Operation OLYMPIC TRIALS B8, a PACER KITE test launch.

23 to 28 Feb 69 - SAC ORI of the 5th BW and 91st SMW at Minot AFB.

1 Mar 69 - Col Howard R. Lackay, SU, retired this date.

- 10 to 15 Mar 69 - SAC ORI of 100th SRW and 390th SMW at Davis-Monthan.
- 22 Mar 69 - The 92nd SAW (Fairchild) completed deployment to the Western Pacific as a 3rd AD cadre unit for a 6-month stint in support of ARC LIGHT operations.
- 24 Mar 69 - A crew from the 44th SMW (Ellsworth) participated in a launch effort of a MINUTEMAN-B from Vandenberg in Operation GLORY TRIP 33B, a FOT launch.
- 25 Mar 69 - A crew from the 91st SMW (Minot) fired a MINUTEMAN-B from Vandenberg in Operation GLORY TRIP 34B, a FOT launch.
- 2 Apr 69 - The Armament and Electronics Maintenance Squadrons at the command's bomb wings were redesignated Avionics Maintenance Squadrons.
- 2 Apr 69 - Detachment 1 of the 320th BW was organized at Mt Home AFB.
- 6 Apr 69 - About 800 Minot AFB personnel assisted citizens of Minot, North Dakota, in combating the city's worst flood in 65 years. 12,000 city residents and their belongings were evacuated from 2,000 homes.
- 7 to 11 Apr 69 - SAC ORI of the 90th SMW (Warren).
- 10 Apr 69 - TOP RUNG 69-3-W was flown as a joint SAC/NORAD penetration exercise. In conjunction with it, a Tanker Task Force Exercise was conducted at Eielson AFB.
- 18 Apr 69 - First graduation from the 15AF First Sergeant's School.
- 23 Apr 69 - A crew from the 91st SMW (Minot) fired a MINUTEMAN-B in Operation GLORY TRIP 34B from Vandenberg, a FOT launch.
- 28 Apr 69 - Col Lawrence W. Steinkraus became commander of the 22nd BW (March), vice Col Lester E. Gunter, reassigned.
- 1 May 69 - Col Harold R. Vague, staff judge advocate, was reassigned in the same capacity at Hq PACAF.
- 4 to 9 May 69 - 15AF ORI of the 320th BW (Mather).
- 8 May 69 - A B-52 crashed on landing at Castle AFB while taking off from a student training mission. All crew members escaped injury.
- 12 to 16 May 69 - SAC ORIT of the 341st SMW (Malmstrom).

- 21 to 26 May 69 - 8AF ORI of the 456th SAW (Beale).
- 24 to 29 May 69 - SAC ORIT of the 28th BW (Ellsworth).
- 24 to 29 May 69 - SAC ORI of the 44th SMW (Ellsworth).
- 27 May 69 - The 320th BW (Mather) participated in a BUY NONE Exercise.
- 29 May 69 - AMALGAM MUTE 69-4-A was flown as a joint SAC/NORAD penetration exercise.
- 4 Jun 69 - In a change of command ceremony, Col Leslie W. Brockwell replaced Col Ray M. Watkins as commander of the 6th SW (Eielson). Colonel Brockwell had been vice commander.
- 5 Jun 69 - An RC-135 assigned to the 6th SW (Eielson) crashed east of Shemya AFS at the tip of the Aleutian Island chain.
- 12 Jun 69 - SNOW TIME 69-3-W was flown as a joint SAC/NORAD penetration exercise.
- 17 Jun 69 - A UH-1F assigned to the 341st SMW (Malmstrom) crashed approximately 40 NM southeast of the base.
- 18 Jun 69 - An ALCS crew from Ellsworth (44 SMW) launched a MINUTEMAN-I assigned to Warren (90 SMW) from Vandenberg in Operation GLORY TRIP 37B, a FOT launch.
- 23 Jun 69 - Col Bryan M. Shotts became commander of the 93rd BW (Castle), vice Col Woodrow A. Abbott (brig gen selectee), reassigned to the 4258th SW at U-Tapao.
- 27 Jun 69 - Col Charles F. Minter, Jr., became commander of the 9th SRW (Beale), vice Col William R. Hayes, selected to attend the National War College. Col Minter had been wing vice commander.
- 30 Jun 69 - A crew from the 90th SMW (Warren) fired a MINUTEMAN-B from Vandenberg in Operation GLORY TRIP 38B, a FOT launch.

INTRODUCTION

(U) Shortly after the beginning of fiscal year 1969, Fifteenth Air Force had a new commander. Lieutenant General Jack J. Catton proved to be interested in every facet of the command, and this history reflects that drive and enthusiasm. Policies and directives flowed from the command section on a vast panorama of subjects. Each chapter has its fair share of the commander's thinking. This was not to say that every problem was solved, but at least steps were taken toward solution.

(U) Coinciding with this historic process was a changed emphasis in the history program itself. The Historical Division became a separate staff agency on 1 July 1969, and the first fiscal year history of the command was prepared under this reorganization. Consequently, the new history program philosophy has been implemented for coverage of the previous year's activities.

(U) This history is operations-oriented. The command status chapter, which has traditionally introduced the period under consideration, has been placed last in sequence. It has statistics totaled from the other chapters to provide the reader with a last look at command capability, management and organization. On the other hand, the first chapter has all aspects of the B-52/KC-135 weapon system pulled together. There is no separate maintenance chapter. Extensive coverage of accidents is given in an annex. The second chapter does the same for missiles, ranging from capability to support activities. The subject of communi-

cations appears in all three chapters, depending on whether it is related to training, missile launch capability or command control. Also, whenever appropriate, material bearing on personnel and facilities is melded in with a larger subject.

(U) To aid the reader, short tables have been placed in the text where needed. The chart section in the first appendix has been considerably lengthened to accommodate other illustrative material.

(U) It was an exciting period during which to work, and the historians have attempted to convey this spirit of the times.

CHAPTER I

AIRCRAFT

Introduction

(U) When Dwight David Eisenhower died in Washington on 28 March 1969, the newly inaugurated Republican President, Richard M. Nixon, declared a day of mourning as a widow buried her husband and a nation paid respect to a World War II hero and ex-President. This event, occurring during the throes of political and military debate over deployment of an anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system, caused many to look upon Eisenhower's presidential years as a time of relative peace. It had been a time of rapidly advancing technological development after he ended the Korean War. The jet aircraft and the missile became the weapon systems of the Air Force.

(U) Many changes have occurred in the nation's history since Eisenhower's last day in the White House only eight years previously. The misty war in Vietnam, the militant unrest of races and college students, the uncertain direction of a country in an arms race when astronauts were headed for a lunar landing in July 1969, all contributed to a change in political parties and leadership of the nation during the autumn of 1968.

(U) Yet the tone of the Vietnam War did not change. It surpassed the number of dead in the Korean War. The secrecy of the Paris peace talks became more apparent, if less hopeful. The hearing on the Pueblo's

released crew's captivity and its subsequent acquittal by the Secretary of the Navy did little to change the unrest of the nation.

(U) President Nixon was faced with a Pueblo-type situation in April 1969 when the North Koreans shot down a Navy EC-121 "spy" plane over international waters. Instead of a large defensive task force deployed as in the Pueblo's capture only 14 months earlier, Nixon's reaction was clear, cool: "spy" planes would continue surveillance off North Korea - with fighter protection. After all, it was number 13 of the reconnaissance missions ending in tragedy in the same area since 1953: a total of 105 Americans have been killed.

(U) Even as policy changes concerning the future defense of the United States were debated in Washington by the newly-installed Republican chiefs, many of the nation's statesmen recalled Eisenhower's attack on the military-industrial complex that had grown rapidly in the last decade. However, Eisenhower also said, "A vital element in keeping the peace is our military establishment. Our arms must be mighty, ready for instant action, so that no potential aggressor may be tempted to risk its own destruction." When the motives and competence of the military were questioned, when instant history attempted to condemn this necessary arm of defense, when increased vigilance was more demanding with the rise of Red China's nuclear capability, then those responsible for stewardship at each military command level had to give a true account of their actions, not to bury mistakes or misjudgments in secrecy, but to ensure that future leaders of the country and the military

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learn from all the lessons of the past.

(S) Fifteenth Air Force was no different from any other responsible command level, especially with its own contributions to the Vietnam War. This inconclusive "conventional" war had bewildering effects on its own units, as well as on the entire nation. This chapter, then, presents the contributions to the war, and the direct, indirect and side effects on the units. This headquarters was an intermediate command echelon, and within its authority, assisted the units where possible to help them maintain their capability to support a conventional war as required, and prepare for nuclear emergencies under the Emergency War Order (EWO). Fiscal year (FY) 1969 was only 31 days old when Lieutenant General Jack J. Catton assumed command of Fifteenth Air Force, vice Lieutenant General W. K. Martin, who retired.

THE VIETNAM WAR

Background

(S) The B-52 heavy bombing support continued into the fourth summer since the 320th Bombardment Wing (BW), Mather Air Force Base (AFB), California, dropped its bombs on Viet Cong strongholds on 17 June 1965 (Guam time). With a couple of rotational exceptions since then, Fifteenth's B-52s have supported the ground forces with almost daily sorties.* By 16 February 1968, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had authorized escalation to 1800 bombing sorties per month.

* B-52Fs were used until 1 April 1966, when 28th BW deployed with "Big Belly" modified B-52Ds which have been used since that time.

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(D) During most of FY 1968, Fifteenth as a command possessed four B-52D-equipped bomb wings. These units participated as cadre units in ARC LIGHT, the nickname given this bombing activity, on a rotational basis. During March 1968, the 22nd BW had converted to B-52E models, and the 91st BW inactivated in June. (These two units had deployed under PORT BOW during the Pueblo Crisis of February 1968). This left Fifteenth with two B-52D units: the 92nd Strategic Aerospace Wing (SAW), Fairchild AFB, Washington, and the 28th BW, Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota. They were faced with "back to back" periods of temporary duty (TDY) as full cadre units, i.e., six months on ARC LIGHT and approximately five months at home station. ARC LIGHT consisted of four cadre units, plus augmentee TDY personnel, assigned to Third Air Division (AD), Andersen AFB, Guam.

(S) The problems inherent in such a rotational schedule were numerous. Also, important policy questions concerning training came to the foreground. Basically, which was more important - contingency or alert training? Crew shortages throughout the command compounded pre-deployment and post-deployment training. Scheduled aircraft modifications and maintenance contributed to the complex ARC LIGHT scheduling. Some relief to B-52D units came from the Replacement Training Unit (RTU) which Headquarters Strategic Air Command (SAC) had established within Castle's 93rd BW on 15 April 1968. All B-52 units (except D unit) contributed B-52 crews for this transition course.

(U) Problems and effects of ARC LIGHT commitments caused much

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command attention and concern. Generally, there was personnel assignment instability in the aircraft units because of short-notice reassignments and short-term tours of duty in the wings. Quality training and retention decreased, generally, although there were exceptions. Morale and esprit de corps received appropriate attention. Fifteenth asked that Headquarters SAC reduce this command's commitments. This was reduced somewhat in cadre and augmentation support. Efforts by this headquarters to have Headquarters SAC increase the RTU training load proved fruitful, while parallel efforts to place 22nd and 93rd BW's Non-Operational Active (NOA) aircraft into ARC LIGHT were not successful.

(U) In summation, the Vietnam War proved a challenge for most of this command's endeavors. What the past year's events demonstrated was how this command utilized its resources and capabilities to meet both EWO and contingency commitments. It was a time of ever-changing, complex circumstances that created a great need for constant readiness and flexibility. How well the people assigned to Fifteenth Air Force met the SAC mission is the subject of the following treatise.

Overview*

() Because of the surge from 1200 to 1800 bombing sorties per month, the JCS required another B-52D cadre to deploy by 1 April 1968.

* Before engaging in a detailed discussion of the problems of ARC LIGHT, a brief resume of the year's events is appropriate. The reader is referred to the unit histories, 3rd AD history, and the SAC history for details on all ARC LIGHT matters after the aircraft and aircrews deployed to Western Pacific bases. This headquarters had no control or responsibility for these activities.

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The 92nd SAW was selected. The 28th BW, which had deployed in January 1968 to support the 1200 sortie rate, flew the 25,000th B-52 bombing sortie in June just prior to its redeployment. When the 28th BW's last KC-135 landed at Ellsworth on 15 July, plans were already established for the unit's return to ARC LIGHT in December. Yet, these plans were changed. Although the 28th BW was scheduled to replace the 454th BW (Columbus AFB, Mississippi) in early January 1969, Headquarters SAC reduced the ARC LIGHT posture from four to three cadre units. The 28th BW was relieved of this commitment. This meant, then, that a simultaneous cadre rotation would occur in April 1969 with the 92nd SAW again deploying.

(P) These changes came about for several reasons. One, as will be discussed more fully later in this history, concerned the scheduled phaseout of SAC activity at Columbus with the squadron and crews being transferred to Ellsworth. A second reason was the progress of the Paris peace talks. All four involved parties seemed to be getting down to the serious business of negotiation when the shape of the conference table was settled. It was believed by many that the whole philosophy and emphasis would change after January 1969. As matters turned out, nothing changed; by the end of the fiscal year, the ARC LIGHT units were still holding the 1800 sortie rate. A third factor was the buildup of the SAC unit at U-Tapao Royal Thai Air Base (RTAB), Thailand. Fewer total aircraft were required, thus one cadre could be eliminated. The TDY augmentation "package" was also reduced with the addition of permanent

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change of station (PCS) slots authorized for 3rd AD. By the end of January, more and more sorties were flown from U-Tapao as the new posture went into effect. Overall, ARC LIGHT commitments in this area were reduced, but there were more side effects.

(S) On the other hand, tanker task force (TTF) operations increased for deployments of fighters belonging to Tactical Air Command (TAC). The 916th Air Refueling Squadron (ARFS) at Travis AFB, California, was directed to form a TTF to support ARC LIGHT deployments and redeployments. March was the primary staging base for TAC deployments, while Castle continued the support of YOUNG TIGER activity. And, as the 92nd SAW deployed in March 1969, all refueling support to the unit and TAC deployments launched from these California bases.¹

(S) Events of ARC LIGHT did not escape tragedy. Less than two months after deployment, tragedy struck the 92nd SAW crew force. On 10 May, a Pease AFB owned B-52 flown by a 92nd SAW crew crashed after takeoff from Andersen and exploded when it impacted in the ocean with a loss of all six crew members on board. The B-52 was loaded with its lethal bombs en route to Vietnam. A 320th BW KC-135 crew was lost at U-Tapao RTAB, Thailand, on 2 Oct 1968, under similar circumstances.²

(S) At the end of the fiscal year, the 92nd SAW was the only Fifteenth Air Force unit on ARC LIGHT. The 28th BW was scheduled to deploy from October 1969 to March 1970.*³

* From an overview of the contributions of 15AF to the war, the narrative now turns to a more detailed coverage of problems and effects generated by the deployment and redeployment of these units, and RTU augmentation training and problems.

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ARC LIGHT

(U) This headquarters was concerned with the 28th BW and 92nd SAW in their ARC LIGHT commitments during the fiscal year, and with command plans for the next fiscal year. Both pre- and post-deployment guidelines were furnished to both units. In September 1968 - before the scheduled January 1969 deployment - the 28th BW Commander, Colonel James Wagner, informed General Catton that in spending approximately 3,380 man-hours preparing for the Operational Readiness Inspection Test (ORIT), the unit had lost 38 aircraft training sorties. And, although he was confident that his unit could successfully fly the ORIT, he recommended that those units that were in the Zone of Interior (ZI) only six months between ARC LIGHT stints be excused from the ORIT commitment. Colonel Wagner's 821st Strategic Aerospace Division (SAD) Commander, Brigadier General Richard C. Neely, agreed with Colonel Wagner's comments and stated that it would be a complete waste if the ORIT was not flown, since so many hours had already been spent in preparation.⁴

Consequently, this headquarters examined all aspects of this problem area, and made many recommendations to General Catton. These included reducing operational and training commitments, reducing crew instability in the units, excusing the units from certain evaluations; e.g., ORIT/BUY NONE, Combat Evaluation Group (CEG), Inspector General (IG) Compliance Inspection, Maintenance Standardization Evaluation Team (MSET), placing NOA aircraft into ARC LIGHT, and establishing a

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as to ensure safety of the flight training. The quality of the graduates of the CCTS may have been improved, but the quantity, over which this command had no jurisdiction, was sadly lacking in meeting the demands of the alert posture in Fifteenth.

ALERT POSTURE

Ground Alert

(S) As mentioned previously in this narrative, the shortage of combat crew members affected the ground alert commitments within Fifteenth. The requirements had increased over those of FY 1968. The actual aircraft on alert climbed to 100 percent on 31 October, but began to regress to a low of 69 percent for B-52s and 75 percent for KC-135s. The PACCS alert commitment of six EC-135s remained at 100 percent for the entire year. ⁴⁶

(U) The principle that a weapon system must be tested in order to ensure its effectiveness was applied to aircraft on alert. By exercising the alert aircraft for BRAVO and COCO exercises, commanders could determine how the unit would react under real launch conditions. Many times materiel caused delays, thus pointing to maintenance malpractices or sloppy work. This headquarters offered recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the alert force exercises. These included quality control of maintenance performed by adequately trained personnel, and giving special attention to the battery charging procedures so the aircraft would start. One recommendation was made because of the many alert sortie degradations caused by crew shortages. An aircraft could be taken off alert (obviously, there was no crew to fly it) and placed in maintenance

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to prepare for other flying commitments.

Dispersal and Sustained Reaction Posture

~~(S)~~ Two other concepts in ground alert were force dispersal exercises, nicknamed GLASS BLADE, and sustained reaction posture (SRP). Variations of the dispersal concept had been used for many years, with the greatest test of their value during the Cuban Crisis of 1962. This reduced the number of combat aircraft at any one base and served to complicate enemy targeting. Fifteenth had 13 dispersal bases for 31 B-52 and 82 KC-135 aircraft. During the year there were problems at Grant County Airport (Larson AFB), Roswell Airport (Walker AFB), and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Major weaknesses were found in the communications area. Usually a unit dispersed to its forward base and had to use the communications already in place. Since there was no money to send people to the forward base to service and test this equipment periodically, it did not always work. All dispersal bases were exercised by each unit with one of each kind of aircraft. The SRP was the new name for DEFCON 1S (defense condition), an alert posture that called for ready to launch aircraft parked at the end of the runway. Less than five minutes was allowed to launch due to the submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs). Every unit had three quarterly exercises lasting three hours and one lasting from 36 to 48 hours.

Airborne Alert

~~(S)~~ The concept of airborne alert changed on 1 July 1969. Up to that time units had been required to maintain capability of flying

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these daily missions at various levels, capable of destroying selected targets. In early 1968, the nuclear armed flights were suspended and communications monitor of the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) sites was discontinued for the lower DEFCON. Indoctrination and training continued at a slower pace with fewer units involved. Consequently, the Eielson TTF was reduced accordingly. Over the years the airborne alert had been nicknamed CHROME DOME and GIANT WHEEL, with monitor missions called HARD HEAD and BUTTER KNIFE.

~~(S/INT)~~ On 1 July 1968, Headquarters SAC began a new concept nicknamed GIANT LANCE. This was a joint ground and airborne alert that used a portion of the total alert force in a number of response options, including show of force and enduring survival. This was called "Selective Employment - Air/Ground Alert," or SEAGA, for its acronym. The indoctrination phases were required of the following units:

450 BW - Minot	16-31 Jul 68
5 BW - Travis	1-15 Jun 69
456 SAW - Beale	16-30 Jun 69

When the 5th BW at Travis moved its aircraft to Mather and the 5th numerical designator replaced the 450th, the schedule was changed to:

5 BW - Minot	16-31 Jul 68
320 BW - Mather	1-15 Jun 69
456 SAW - Beale	16-30 Jun 69

Deletion of Clear, Alaska BMEWS monitor, came in November.

~~(S)~~ This headquarters' activity was confined primarily to monitoring and coordinating changes to the SEAGA concept. This included routine administration, air traffic control, timing, tanker support for

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indoctrination refueling at Kadena, and support for the Eielson TTF. In staff visits to the wings, this headquarters learned that units were not fully prepared to perform SEAGA. To ensure that the crews understood SEAGA, Fifteenth directed the units to brief the flight crews periodically on the various SEAGA options. Another problem appeared in June 1969 when the 320th BW was flying its sorties. Other priority missions flown by 320th crews caused an interruption in the daily flights. This headquarters requested that SAC headquarters give full credit for the recalled sorties. During this time the tankers from the 22nd BW and 916th ARFS with the Eielson TTF were engaged in air search for the missing RC-135. This headquarters decided to use those 22nd and 320th BW KC-135s at Kadena in support of refueling before the Beale unit began its indoctrination. The 456th SAW flew all of its missions.

(S) Fifteenth Air Force was also responsible for the operations of the Eielson TTF at all levels. Airborne communications monitor of the Clear BMEWS, known as BUSY POKER, was a part of the mission of the Eielson TTF. Maintenance of support to SEAGA operations was necessary. This included coordinating bomber and tanker landings at Eielson and Shemya, as well as the capability to maintain logistics, including fuels, for extended SEAGA operations. Thought was given to a one-time exercise of the TTF on 10 April in conjunction with a TOP RUNG exercise, but this headquarters requested cancellation. There were not enough tankers available from Fifteenth's resources to conduct the exercise in a realistic manner.

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(U) Operation BUSY POKER required attention by this headquarters. A special study was conducted on the performance of the high frequency (HF) radio system as used in the monitor missions. The results for the first half of 1968 showed that the 6th SW had a higher HF malfunction rate than all of the SAC fleet of KC-135s, but these were categorized as minor. For the same period of time the airborne systems had a better rate, but the deviations were excessive. The causes were malfunctions in the engines and HF radios, the latter being unique for this special operation.

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(S) Because of the HF radio problem, this headquarters considered a suggestion to relocate the BUSY POKER orbit. A test area was flown on 39 sorties in August, but the results of no improvement in HF performance and loss of ultra high frequency (UHF) communications prompted abandoning the test. By November, the monitor requirement had been deleted for lower DEFCONS and schedules had to be changed, allowing for units to plan for augmentation should monitoring be implemented.

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(S) Throughout the year this headquarters assigned aircraft and crews from Fifteenth's units. The TTF was reduced to 10 aircraft and 12 crews on 15 July 1968. By 1 October, the TTF was at 10 crews. This headquarters assigned three aircraft and three crews from its resources. On 1 January, the reduction of TTF requirements to eight aircraft and crews lowered this command's requirements to two aircraft and crews. Fifteenth's commitment was increased by one KC-135 and crew on 1 April 1969. Because the 92nd SAW's B-52s and half of its KC-135s were deployed

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on Operation ARC LIGHT, that wing had to furnish half the TTF commitment from 15 July through 30 September. This also applied to the 509th BW. This TTF provided refueling for all of Eielson's mission requirements, including the reconnaissance refueling support of Operation BUSY RELAY. 55

(S) Not only was the airborne alert commitment reduced, other special operations flown by Fifteenth's B-52 and KC-135 showed a decrease in the number of operations flown.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Spanish Tanker Task Force

(U) Fifteenth Air Force had a commitment on 1 July 1968 for one aircraft and two crews at Torrejon AB, Spain, to support the mission of the 98th SW. The aircraft and crews rotated every four weeks. On 1 January 1969, the commitment increased to two aircraft and three crews. All KC-135 units furnished support to this mission at one time or another. 56
Only the 28th BW had no commitment in this fiscal year.

TAC Deployments to the Atlantic

(U) As single manager for the KC-135 tanker fleet, SAC supported many other commands in refueling. There were several movements of TAC fighters to Alaska and Europe that required KC-135 support. Examples were Operations COLLEGE SHOES, CORONET FINCH, BIG BOY, DEEP FURROW, 57
CRESTED CAP, and ACID TEST.

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(U) Finally, in May 1969, definite procedures were established by Headquarters SAC on aircraft status reporting. Because of a reversal of high level philosophy that had implications for the USAF's budget, NORS and cannibalization rates were standardized at a more realistic rate. Criteria for reporting the shortages were given. There was little room for misinterpretation of the new directives. The objective was to ensure that bases used every effort to improve supply support, and if the rates continued high, the rate would reflect lack of Air Force Logistics Command (AFLC) support. Concurrently, management procedures had to improve. 96

FACILITIES

(U) Construction of operations, maintenance, and aircraft support projects continued at a limited pace because of budget restrictions. Those projects considered mission essential to aircraft operations were placed on higher priority than those that might complete a base's master plan. Paving projects, maintenance docks, and mission support facilities completed during the year are listed in Chart XIV.

Conclusion

(U) The Vietnam War continued with a change in cadre unit posture during FY 1969. Although the 92nd SAW was the only Fifteenth Air Force unit that deployed on Operation ARC LIGHT during that time, other B-52 wings furnished augmentee crews directly to 3rd AD or through the 93rd BW's RTU. Combat crew shortages compounded wing pre- and post-deployment training. While two B-52D units were preparing for ARC LIGHT, the RTU crews returning from ARC LIGHT demonstrated a regression in proficiency

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and required more refresher training before assuming ground alert.

✓) The alert posture fluctuated, and C-ratings plummeted because of crew shortages. The inputs from the CCTS were not always the best, and units had to provide additional training before putting them on alert. During the year the 93rd BW was surveyed, evaluated, and inspected many times in its role as the only B-52 and KC-135 crew training wing for all of SAC. Concurrent with the beginning of the fiscal year was a new airborne alert called SEAGA. Three wings flew indoctrination under the new concept.

✓) Although aircrew training was completed, many units were taxed to their limit in meeting the sortie rate necessary. Three ORIT failures blemished the command's record; two were expected as a result of recent ARC LIGHT cadre duty and conversion, but one was a complete surprise.

(U) Maintenance continued to be effective, although the wings were severely undermanned. Like supply, the maintenance area called for the best management of all available resources. Supply's lateral support procedures came under review as a means of improving supply management.

(U) In general terms, the aircraft mission was accomplished, but how well depends on the value judgments the reader draws from this narrative. There were still problems to solve, and this headquarters, under the leadership of General Catton, spent a great deal of time and effort to search for better ways - all to improve effectiveness.

(U) The aircraft study is not complete at this point. One other

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important and vital area must be treated: flying safety.* This command lost one KC-135, two RC-135s, three B-52s, one UH-1F helicopter, and two SR-71s in major aircraft accidents. The accident rate was completely unsatisfactory. From 30 June 1968, the date of the KC-135 crash at Red Bluff, California, to the last day of the fiscal year, accident investigation was part of this headquarters' concern - and the attempts to prevent more accidents led to a scrutiny of operations, training, and maintenance. In this sense, it was not a vintage year, for 38 personnel were killed in aircraft accidents.

* See Annex I.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

1
Weekly Standup Briefing Notes, FY 1969, Historian in attendance;
OPORD, 15AF 203-70, "ARC LIGHT," 15 Apr 69, Ex 1; IC, DOT to DO, "Travis
Tanker Task Force Operations," 1 Aug 69, Ex 2.

2
Hist, 15AF, FY 69, Annex I.

3
Plan, 15AF Air Operations Schedule (Peacetime), 1 Jul 68.

4
Memos, CS to VC, 12 Sep 68; IC, DO to CS, VC, "Comments on 821 SAD &
28 BW Letters," 10 Sep 68; IC, DM to CS, VC, "Commitments of Arc Light
Units Upon Return to ZI," 10 Sep 68; IC, DP to CS, VC, "28th Bomb Wg
Arc Light Levies," 11 Sep 68; Ltr, Brig Gen Richard C. Neeley, 821 SAD
(C) to Lt Gen J. J. Catton, 4 Sep 68; Ltr, Col James Wagner, 28 BW (C),
to Gen Catton, 3 Sep 68, Ex 3.

5
Ibid.

6
Msg, SAC (DPL/DO/DM/DP) to 15AF (DPL) et al., "ARC LIGHT Cadres,"
05/2144Z Oct 68; Msg, 15AF (DPL) to 821 SAD (C), "ARC LIGHT Cadres,"
08/1500Z Oct 68; Msg, 15AF (DM) to SAC (DM2) et al., "ARC LIGHT Cadres,"
16/1904Z Oct 68, Ex 8; Msg, SAC (DO) to AIG 667, "ARC LIGHT Posture,"
21/1440Z Oct 68; Msg, 15AF (DO/DP) to SAC (DO/DP) et al., "ARC LIGHT
Posture," 25/2230Z Oct 68, Ex 9; Msg, 15AF (DOTOC) to SAC (DOOC/DM2B),
"ARC LIGHT Changeover Conference," 30/0002Z Oct 68, Ex 10.

7
Ltr, 15AF (DO) to SAC (DO), "ARC LIGHT Staff Study," 15 Oct 68, Ex 16;
Ltr, SAC (DOT) to 15AF (DO), "ARC LIGHT Staff Study," 2 Dec 68, Ex 17;
IC, DO to DPL, "ARC LIGHT," 22 Nov 68; IC, DOTOC to DOT, "ARC LIGHT
Trip Report," 2 Dec 68; Talking Paper, DOTOC for C, "Training Relief
for B-52 'D' Units," 12 Nov 68, Ex 18.

8
IC, DOT to DO, "ARC LIGHT/YOUNG TIGER Predeployment Ground Training,"
n.d. (ca. 12 Aug 68); Ltr, 15AF (DO) to SAC (DOT), "Pre/Post Deployment