



FACT SHEET

U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet 353 SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP (AFSOC)

Lineage. Established as 3 Air Commando Group on 25 Apr 1944. Activated on 1 May 1944. Inactivated on 25 Mar 1946. Disestablished on 8 Oct 1948. Reestablished, and consolidated (31 Jul 1985) with the 553 Reconnaissance Wing, which was established, and activated, on 9 Feb 1967. Organized on 25 Feb 1967. Inactivated on 15 Dec 1970. Redesignated: 353 Reconnaissance Wing on 31 Jul 1985; 353 Special Operations Wing on 21 Mar 1989. Activated on 6 Apr 1989. Redesignated 353 Special Operations Group on 1 Dec 1992.

Assignments. III Fighter Command, 1 May 1944; Fifth Air Force, c. 1 Dec 1944; V Fighter Command, c. 13 Dec 1944; 86 Fighter Wing, c. 18 Dec 1944 (under operational control of 308 Bombardment Wing, 26 Jan 1945-); V Fighter Command, c. 11 May 1945-25 Mar 1946 (remained under operational control of 308 Bombardment Wing through 28 May 1945; under operational control of 309 Bombardment Wing, 29 May-c. 8 Aug 1945 and c. 27 Oct 1945-25 Mar 1946). Air Defense Command, 9 Feb 1967; First Air Force, 25 Feb 1967 (attached to Thirteenth Air Force, 19-30 Oct 1967); Thirteenth Air Force, 31 Oct 1967-15 Dec 1970 (under operational control of Seventh Air Force entire period). Twenty-Third Air Force (later, Air Force Special Operations Command), 6 Apr 1989-.

Components. Squadrons. **1** Special Operations: 6 Apr 1989-. **3** Fighter Reconnaissance (later, 3 Fighter, Commando): 1 May 1944-25 Mar 1946 (air echelon detached 7 Nov 1944-7 Jan 1945). **4** Fighter Reconnaissance (later, 4 Fighter, Commando): 1 May 1944-25 Mar 1946 (ground echelon detached 7 Nov 1944-5 Jan 1945; air echelon detached 7 Nov 1944-16 Jan 1945). **17**

Special Operations: 1 Aug 1989-. **31** Special Operations: 6 Apr 1989-31 Aug 2001. **157** Liaison: 1 May 1944-10 Nov 1945 (detached 1 May-c. 18 Aug 1944 and 3 May-10 Nov 1945). **159** Liaison: 1 May 1944-15 Dec 1945 (detached 1 May-c. 18 Aug 1944 and 3 May-15 Dec 1945). **160** Liaison: 1 May 1944-15 Dec 1945 (detached 1 May-c. 18 Aug 1944 and 3 May-15 Dec 1945). **318** Troop Carrier: 1 May 1944-25 Mar 1946 (detached 1 May-14 Aug 1944; ground echelon detached 12 Sep-1 Nov 1944; air echelon detached 12 Sep 1944-c. 18 Feb 1945). **553** Reconnaissance: 25 Feb 1967-15 Dec 1970. **554** Reconnaissance: 25 Feb 1967-15 Dec 1970.

Stations. Drew Field, FL, 1 May 1944; Lakeland AAFld, FL, 5 May-Oct 1944 (deployed at Alachua AAFld, FL, 21 Aug-5 Oct 1944); Leyte, 1 Dec 1944; Mangaldan, Luzon, c. 26 Jan 1945; Laoag, Luzon, 19 Apr 1945; Ie Shima, c. 8 Aug 1945; Chitose, Japan, c. 27 Oct 1945-25 Mar 1946. Otis AFB, MA, 25 Feb-Oct 1967; Korat RTAFB, Thailand, 31 Oct 1967-15 Dec 1970 (operated from U-Tapao, Thailand, 30 Jan-28 Feb 1969). Clark AB, Philippines, 6 Apr 1989 (operated from Okinawa, Jul 1991-4 Feb 1992); Kadena AB, Japan, 5 Feb 1992-.

Commanders. Maj Klem F. Kalberer, 1 May 1944; Col Arvid E. Olson Jr., 1 Jun 1944; Lt Col Walker M. Mahurin, 2 Sep 1945; Lt Col Charles H. Terhune Jr., 20 Nov 1945; unkn, 18 Feb-25 Mar 1946. None (not manned), 9-28 Feb 1967; Col Gus Weiser, 1 Mar 1967; Col Henry L. Timmermans, 8 Jul 1968; Col Ted H. Ostendorf, 1 Jul 1969; Col John W. Mitchell, 7 Dec 1969; Col Robert M. Slane, 11-15 Dec 1970. Col James P. Nance, 7 Apr 1989; Col Leon E. Hess, 6 Sep 1990; Col Robert M. Stankovich, 6 Sep 1991; Col Jerry L. Thigpen, 25 Jun 1993; Col Thomas M. Beres, 8 Aug 1995; Col Jerald L. Folkerts, 2 Sep 1997; Col Michael B. Byers, 19 Apr 1999; Col Douglas P. Salmon, 17 Nov 2000; Col Mark P. Transue, 30 Jul 2002; Col Norman J. Brozenick Jr., 25 Jun 2004; Col Raymond J. Chapman, 15 Jun 2005; Col David A. Mullins, 8 Jun 2007-.

Aircraft. P-40, 1944; F-6, 1944; C-47, 1944-1945; CG-4, 1944; P-51, 1944, 1945-1946; L-5, 1944, 1945; UC-64, 1944, 1945. EC-121, 1967-1970; YQU-22, 1968-1969; QU-22, 1970. MC-130E/H, 1989-; HC/MC-130P/N, 1989-; C-130E, 1989-; CH/HH-53, 1989-1990; MH-53, 1990-2001.

Operations. When activated, the 3rd Air Commando Group trained to establish and maintain an airstrip behind enemy lines, to provide for its own supply and air defense, to attack targets in the enemy's rear areas, and to furnish air support for ground operations. The group's headquarters, liaison, and airdrome squadrons, as well as its medical dispensary and the ground echelons of the 3rd Fighter Squadron and 318th Troop Carrier Squadron sailed from the west coast in early Nov 1944, arriving on Leyte on 1 Dec 1944. The ground echelon of the 4th Fighter Squadron sailed a week later and arrived on Leyte in early Jan 1945. The flying personnel of the 3rd and 4th Fighter Squadrons, as well as some enlisted members of their engineering sections, were air-transported to Nadzab, New Guinea, where they received the group's new P-51 aircraft. The separated squadrons flew patrol missions in New Guinea until joining the group on Leyte in Jan 1945. Began combat in the Philippines by flying bombing and strafing missions against airdromes on Mindanao. Later, on Luzon, the fighters continued bombing and strafing missions. In addition, the group provided air support to ground forces, flew fighter sweeps to Formosa, and escorted heavy bombers on bombing missions to Formosa and the China coast. The air echelon of the 318th Troop Carrier Squadron flew their C-47s across the Pacific, arriving at Nadzab,

New Guinea, in late Oct 1944. The squadron carried cargo and passengers and air-evacuated wounded soldiers to Australia until it moved to Leyte in mid-Jan 1945. While on Luzon, this squadron also para-dropped supplies to ground forces. The liaison squadrons received their L-5s in late Jan 1945, and thereafter evacuated wounded from advanced points, flew courier, search and rescue, and reconnaissance missions, spotted for signal aircraft warning battalions, and dropped supplies to allied and guerrilla forces. In Apr 1945, the Group, less the liaison squadrons, moved from Mandaldan, on the Lingayen Gulf, to Laoag, in northwest Luzon, in recently captured territory 150 miles behind enemy lines. The group operated the base and the 318th Troop Carrier Squadron provided most of the resupply. The group set up air-ground support stations that directed aircraft to targets and tactical radio ground stations situated with U.S. and guerrilla ground forces. In June 1945 Laoag became the staging field for flights to Okinawa. In Aug 1945, the group moved to Ie Shima, in the Ryukyus, from where the fighter squadrons flew surveillance missions over Japan. The 318th TCS participated in the evacuation of allied prisoners of war from Japan. By the end of Oct 1945, the group moved to Chitose AB, Japan. By February 1946 the squadrons were reduced to paper strength and the group inactivated the next month. Beginning in Feb 1967, the 553rd Reconnaissance Wing trained to support a special electronic reconnaissance program utilizing EC-121G and EC-121R aircraft. Moved to Thailand in increments beginning mid-Sep 1967 and began day and night unarmed reconnaissance missions over Southeast Asia on 25 Nov 1967. A wing detachment at Nakhon Phanom Airport, Thailand, performed combat evaluation of YQU-22A aircraft and associated equipment, Dec 1968-Aug 1969. From Jul to early Sep 1970 the wing provided combat evaluation of the QU-22B aircraft and on 1 Oct 1970 the QU-22Bs were placed in full operation, reducing the need for EC-121s. Strength of the wing was reduced in both personnel and equipment, and in mid-Dec 1970 the wing inactivated, leaving its two reconnaissance squadrons active under other USAF wings. The 353rd Special Operations Wing activated in Apr 1989 in the Philippines to train for unconventional warfare and special operations activities in the Pacific area of operations. Maintained capabilities by participating in joint/combined and other theater exercises and training opportunities. Also maintained helicopter air refueling operations and supported humanitarian and disaster relief operations, as well as performed some search and rescue and aeromedical evacuation missions. Following the destruction of Clark AB during the volcanic eruptions of Mount Pinatubo in Jun 1991 the group temporarily operated from bases on Okinawa, then officially relocated there in Feb 1992, with one squadron moving forward to South Korea. Redesignated to group level in Dec 1992, but continued operations as before. In Feb 1996 developed Taegu AB in South Korea as a special operations training base. Gained a weather flight in Apr 1996 and began providing weather support for U.S. Army Special Forces at Torii Station, Japan. From Dec 1996 periodically deployed aircraft and personnel to Italy to support NATO operations in the Balkans and to Southwest Asia to support allied operations against Iraq. After a killer tsunami devastated Thailand on 26 Dec 2004, the group quickly deployed three MC-130s and one C-130 with personnel to relieve the disaster victims, furnishing early response as part of Operation UNIFIED ASSISTANCE. Augmented special operations forces participating in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Service Streamers. None.

Campaign Streamers. *World War II:* Leyte; Luzon; Western Pacific; Air Offensive, Japan;

China Defensive; China Offensive. *Vietnam*: Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase II; Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase III; Vietnam Air/Ground; Vietnam Air Offensive, Phase IV; TET 69/Counteroffensive; Vietnam Summer-Fall, 1969; Vietnam Winter-Spring, 1970; Sanctuary Counteroffensive; Southwest Monsoon; Commando Hunt V.

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers. None.

Decorations. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards with Combat "V" Device: 1 Apr 1967-31 May 1968; 1 Jul 1968-15 Apr 1969; 2 Sep 2004-1 Sep 2006; 1 Oct 2006-30 Sep 2008. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards: 6 Apr 1989-5 Apr 1991; 1 Jun 1993-31 May 1995; 1 Sep 1995-31 Aug 1997; 16 Oct 1998-31 May 2000; 13 Oct 2000-1 Sep 2002; 2 Sep 2002-1 Sep 2004. Philippine Presidential Unit Citation (WWII). Philippine Republic Presidential Unit Citation: 31 Jan-31 Jul 2002. Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm: 1 Apr 1967-15 Dec 1970.

Lineage, Assignments, Components, Stations, and Honors through 13 Jan 2009.

Commanders, Aircraft, and Operations through 13 Jan 2009.

Supersedes statement prepared on 6 Feb 2006.

Emblem. Approved on 19 Jun 1967; modified on 13 Mar 1995.

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