

TACTICAL TANKERS
KB-29/KB-50
1953-1965
A CHRONOLOGY

Note: This is an extension and correction to the original chronology, provided to me by Lt Col Clarence G “Rocky” Weishar, USAF (Ret) in 1993. Certified as true and correct as I can get it.

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429th AREFS 1960-63
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20 April 2007

“TAC TANKERS”

| | <u>Activated</u> | <u>Inactivated</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 421 st AREFS: | 8 July 1953 | 18 February 1965 |
| 420 th AREFS: | 18 March 1954 | 25 March 1964 |
| 429 th AREFS: | 19 July 1954 | 8 October 1963 |
| 622 nd AREFS: | 18 July 1955 | 1 April 1964 |
| 427 th AREFS: | 7 September 1956 | 1 April 1963 |
| 431 st AREFS: | 8 January 1957 | 8 March 1965 |
| 4505 th AREFW: | 1 July 1958 | 8 October 1963 |
| 4505 th CAMS: | 1 July 1958 | 8 October 1963 |

“115/145 Avgas...”

“JP-4 Jet Fuel...”

FOREWORD

This is an update to the original chronology, compiled at the Air Force Archives at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, in February 1972. It is based on extensive research in the now more accessible archives, presently under the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell. Since 1972 much more of our history has been declassified and a more complete chronology can be presented. Although the 420th and 421st AREFS were never part of the 4505th AREFW, they are included to complete the list of tactical KB-29/KB-50 aerial refueling units. The veterans and families of all of these included units are a part of the Tactical Tanker Association, and all are invited to become formal members and share in the intense camaraderie which we all deserve and enjoy.

The Air Force of today, with its “Global Reach, Global Power,” began with us. We were the pioneers.

421st AREFS

8 Jul 53 Activated as 421st Air Refueling Squadron Medium, from Detachment 4, 98th Bomb Wing (SAC) at Yokota AB, Japan. Assigned to Japan Air Defense Force. “Unknown commander” 8 Jul 53 – Jul 54. KB-29Ms and the one YKB-29T assigned.

15 Feb 54 Assigned to 49th Fighter Bomber Group, Japan.

18 Jun 54 AF approves unit emblem, a hummingbird attached to a hose and a winged valve.

By 1 Jul 54 Lt Col John A. Steele commander.

22 Apr 56 Redesignated 421st Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber.

~ Jul 56 First KB-50s arrive.

By 1 Jul 57 Lt Col Malcolm L. O’Neale commander.

1 Oct 57 Assigned to 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Yokota AB, Japan.

1 Mar 58 Conversion to KB-50Js begins.

1 Jul 58 Redesignated 421st Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical.

By 1 Jul 59 Lt Col Ross Davidson commander.

1 Jul 60-31 Mar 62 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award (AFOUA)

8 Dec 60 Becomes part of 41st Air Division, Yokota AB, Japan.

Jan 61 Lt Col John F. Yelton commander.

17 Aug 61 Lt Col Keith L. Warren commander.

1 Mar 62 Air Force approves new unit emblem, a stylized tanker and 3 receivers over a multicolored rainbow and a globe.

1 Nov 62-15 Mar 64 AFOUA (second award).

28 May 64 Lt Col Russell W. Paulsen temporary commander.

Jul 64 Lt Col Fain H. Pool commander.

9 Jun – 14 Oct 64 AFOUA (third award).
27 Nov 64 KB-50s relieved of refueling duties in PACAF.
18 Feb 65 421st AREFS inactivated at Yokota AB, Japan.

420th AREFS

18 Mar 54 Activated as 420th Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber, at Alexandria AFB (later England AFB), Louisiana, under command of Lt Col Frederick R. Bates. Assigned to Ninth Air Force. First unit of its type in Tactical Air Command (TAC).

20 Jun 54 First KB-29P flight from Alexandria AFB.

23 Jun 54 A 420th KB-29P refuels a TAC fighter in flight, the first time a TAC tanker had done so.

1 Sep 54 Maj John R. Groom commander.

18 May 55 Maj James B. Young commander.

22 Jul 55 Lt Col James R. Sheffield commander.

4 Oct 55 420th moves PCS to Sculthorpe RAF Station, Norfolk, England. Attached to 47th Bomb Wing, 49th Air Division (USAFE).

9 Oct 55 Assigned to Third Air Force (USAFE).

19 Dec 56 First KB-50s arrive.

28 Feb 58 First KB-50Js arrive.

8 Aug 58 Redesignated 420th Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical.

9 Sep 58 Lt Col Henry A. Dafler commander.

31 Jan 59 Last KB-29P mission flown.

14 Dec 59 Maj Clyde G. Miller commander.

4 Mar 60 Lt Col Theodore J. Tanner commander.

15 Jun 61 Lt Col Lawrence E. Spears commander.

1 Jul 61 Assigned to Seventeenth Air Force (USAFE).

8 Nov 61 Assigned to 47th Bomb Wing, Seventeenth Air Force (USAFE).

1 Oct 62 Assigned to 7375th Combat Support Group (USAFE).

14 Aug 63

Lt Col Joseph F. McAllister commander.

25 Mar 64

Inactivation at Sculthorpe RAF Station, England.

429th AREFS

- 19 Jul 54 Activated as 429th Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber, at Langley AFB, Virginia. Assigned directly to Hq TAC. Attached to the 405th Fighter Bomber Wing (TAC). Capt Marvin F. Stowe commander.
- Sep 54 First KB-29P arrives.
- 10 Jan 55 Maj George H. Mullins commander.
- 1 Dec 55 Air Force approves unit emblem, a red elfin refueling a receiver with a silver syringe, superimposed on a golden globe.
- Jun-Dec 56 Capt James C. Richards temporary commander.
- 1 Jul 56 KB-50s begin replacing KB-29Ps.
- Dec 56 Maj George H. Mullins resumes command.
- Jan 57 Begins conducting classes for the 427th AREFS, Robins AFB, Georgia, on the KB-50 and its refueling systems.
- 17 Jan 58 Receives first KB-50J from Hayes Aircraft Corporation.
- 6 Jun 58 Maj Charles J English commander.
- 1 Jul 58 Redesignated 429th Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical. Assigned to new 4505th Air Refueling Wing, Langley AFB. Growth and operations of wing and other squadrons reflect techniques developed by 429th personnel.
- 1 Jan 60 Maj Kenneth R. Wheeler temporary commander.
- 26 Jan 60 Lt Col Harold P. Schmoldt commander.
- 13 Aug 60 Lt Col Thomas C. Hofmann commander.
- 8 Oct 63 Inactivation at Langley AFB, Virginia.

622nd AREFS

18 Jul 55 Activation as 622nd Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber, at England AFB, Louisiana, with KB-29Ps. Assigned to Ninth Air Force (TAC). Lt Col Dale A. Shaver commander.

12 Jun 56 Maj Lloyd F. White commander.

15 Jul 56 Air Force approves unit emblem, a caricatured pelican feeding a baby pelican a fish, superimposed on a globe.

10 Dec 56 Maj Earl R. Saunders commander.

5 Apr 57 Receives first KB-50.

1 Oct 57 Assigned to Eighteenth Air Force (TAC).

1 Jan 58 Assigned to Twelfth Air Force (TAC).

1 Jul 58 Unit redesignated 622nd Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical. Assigned to the new 4505th AREFW.

30 Oct 58 Lt Col Thomas J Tiernan commander.

1 Jul 62 Maj Warren A. Williams commander.

12 Oct 62 Lt Col Robert W. Harris commander.

8 Oct 63 4505th AREFW inactivated; 622nd assigned to 4440th Aircraft Delivery Group, Langley AFB, Virginia.

9 Mar 64 Lt Col Robert I. Metzworth commander.

1 Apr 64 Inactivation at England AFB, Louisiana.

427th AREFS

- 7 Sep 56 Activated at Robins AFB, Georgia; designated 427th Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber. Assigned to Ninth Air Force (TAC). Maj John F. Yelton commander.
- 5 Apr 57 First KB-50 arrives.
- 4 Jun 57 Air Force approves the unit emblem, a St Bernard dog carrying a keg with three faucets, superimposed on an inverted black-edged triangle.
- 1 Oct 57 Assigned to Eighteenth Air Force (TAC).
- 1 Jan 58 Assigned to Twelfth Air Force (TAC).
- Early 58 Unit reequips with KB-50Ks.
- 1 Jul 58 Unit redesignated 427th Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical, and reassigned to the newly-activated 4505th AREFW, headquartered at Langley AFB, Virginia.
- 1 Jul 58 Lt Col Sherod A. Santos commander.
- 20 Aug 58 427th moves PCS to Langley AFB, Virginia.
- 1 Apr 60 Lt Col Samuel C. Burgess commander.
- 25 Jul 60 Lt Col Thomas J Price commander.
- 10 Apr 62 Lt Col Robert W. Harris commander.
- 12 Oct 62 Lt Col George C. Welsh commander.
- 9 Jan 63 Unit reduced to one officer and one airman pending inactivation.
- 1 Apr 63 427th inactivated at Langley AFB, Virginia.

431st AREFS

- 8 Jan 57 Activated at Turner AFB, Georgia as 431st Air Refueling Squadron, Fighter-Bomber. Assigned to Ninth Air Force (TAC). Lt Col Dale A. Shaver commander.
- 24 May 57 Air Force approves the unit emblem, a red Pegasus in flight in front of a globe, with a motto, "Any where, Anytime."
- 12 Jun 57 First KB-50 (49-385) arrives.
- 27 Jun 57 First flights in unit's KB-50s.
- 23 Oct 57 Lt Col Benjamin F. Chapman commander.
- 1 Jul 58 Redesignated 431st Air Refueling Squadron, Tactical. Assigned to the newly-activated 4504th AREFW, Langley AFB, Virginia.
- 18 Jul 59 Unit moves PCS to Biggs AFB, Texas.
- 26 Jul 60 Lt Col Samuel C. Burgess commander.
- 25 Mar 61 Lt Col Kenneth M. Buzzard commander.
- 29 Apr 61 Lt Col Charles T. Garvin commander.
- 8 Oct 63 4505th AREFW inactivated. 431st assigned to the 4440th Aircraft Delivery Group (TAC), Langley AFB, Virginia.
- 26 Jan 65 431st flies the last KB-50 refueling mission, F-105s to Europe, from Lajes Air Transport Station, Azores. Aircraft commanders were Capt Rolland E. Hoover and Capt Thomas F. Kennan, Jr.
- 17 Feb 65 Maj Anthony C. Pronier and a select crew fly the last KB-50 mission, the delivery of KB-50J 49-389 to the US Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.
- 8 Mar 65 431st inactivated at Biggs AFB, Texas, bringing to a close the tactical tanker era in the US Air Force.

4505th AREFW

- 1 Jul 58 The only air refueling wing in the TAC structure activated at Langley AFB, Virginia. Assigned to Ninth Air Force (TAC). Col Charles W. Howe commander. Units included:
- Headquarters Squadron, Langley AFB, Virginia
427th AREFS, Robins AFB, Georgia
429th AREFS, Langley AFB, Virginia
431st AREFS, Turner AFB, Georgia
622nd AREFS, England AFB< Louisiana
4505th CAMS, Langley AFB, Virginia
- 1 Nov 68 Assigned to 836th Air Division (TAC).
- 31 Dec 58 Crews per flying squadron increased from 20 to 25. KB-50J/K possessed by all squadrons.
- 1 Jul 60 Col Lawrence F. Tanberg commander.
- 1 Jul 61 836th Air Division inactivated. 4505th Wing assigned to Ninth Air Force (TAC). 4440th Aircraft Delivery Group assigned to the Wing.
- 13 Aug 62 Col George H. Kneen commander.
- 8 Oct 63 4505th AREFW inactivated at Langley AFB, Virginia.

4505th CAMS

- 1 Jul 58 Activated at Langley AFB, Virginia, and assigned to the 4505th AREFW. Maj George W. Askew, Jr., commander.
- 18 Aug 58 Lt Col Dale L. Jones commander.
- 15 Jan 59 Air Force approved the unit emblem, a beaver standing on a tool kit, holding a black wrench, against a blue globe.
- 1 Jul 60-30 Jun 61 Unit awarded the AFOUA.
- 26 Oct 62 Maj Jesse L. Trent commander.
- 2 Nov 62 Lt Col Sherod A. Santos commander.
- 1 Jan 63 Lt Col William A. Cossaboom commander.
- 1 Apr 63 4505th CAMS inactivated at Langley AFB, Virginia.