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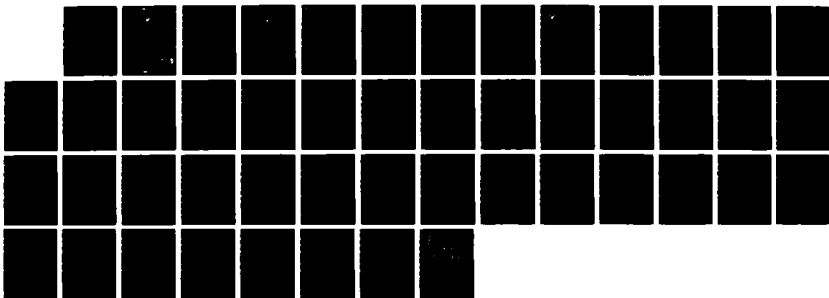
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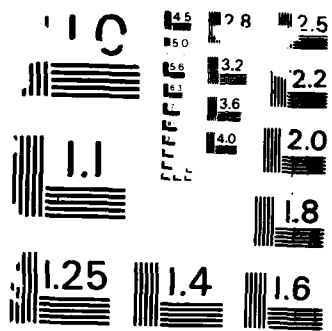
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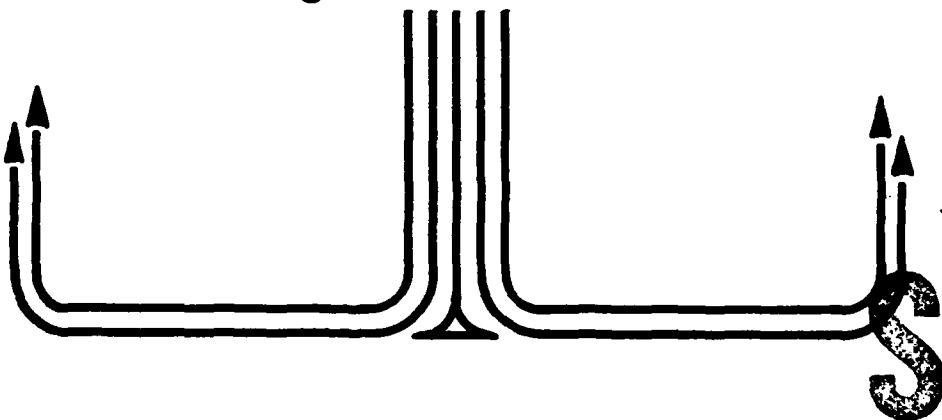


AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

STUDENT REPORT
THE HISTORY OF THE
TACTICAL AIR COMMAND
1946 TO 1956

MAJOR MICHAEL J. DENNIS 88-0730

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
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| <p>A need existed for a single-source history of the Tacitcal Air Command. This document uses the published TAC chronologies, from 1946 through 1956, the TAC statistical summaries, and the TAC annual histories to create a usable single-source TAC history for the period 1946 through 1956.</p> <p>The period was assessed for significance with respect to resources, leadership, organization, operations, and mission. Combines analysis with historical data, for user convenience.</p> | | | | |
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PREFACE

"Men make history and not the other way round. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better." These words, by President Harry S. Truman, bring out a simple fact...we are, what we are today as a result of the courageous initiatives taken by our past leaders. This precisely applies to the United States Air Force and the Tactical Air Command.

This study is an attempt to document, enliven, and analyze the first ten years of the Tactical Air Command, 1946 through 1956. This is necessary, if for no other reason, to ensure the sacrifices and labors of our TAC predecessors are not lost or diminished by time.

This paper examines the first ten years of TAC by separating them into four distinct periods. These periods represent major changes in TAC, as determined by the author. Each period is given a synopsis to assess the key events of that period. The synopsis is followed by individual summaries of each year, focusing on resources, leadership, organization, operations, and mission.

It is important to establish the sources for this work and ensure proper credit is given, where due. The format for this paper is adapted from "The Development of Strategic Air Command, 1946-1986." SAC's outstanding history program makes a fine example for other commands to follow. All the historical facts, in this report, are the result of other's efforts. All historical data is either quoted directly or paraphrased. In order to maintain the readability of this document, only direct quotations, resource data, and historical assessments (other than the author's) are openly cited. The chronological summarization of events, places, and names are not cited. Regardless, the recording of these facts are the work of others and should be recognized as such.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Michael J. Dennis, was born on 1 May 1953, in Momence, Illinois. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the USAF Academy in 1975. He completed Undergraduate Pilot Training at Laughlin AFB, TX, in 1976 with an assignment to Griffiss AFB, NY. After flying the T-33 for two years, he upgraded to the F-106 and remained at Griffiss AFB until 1981. That year he was assigned to Tyndall AFB, FL, as an F-106 Instructor Pilot. In 1984, Major Dennis reported to Elmendorf AFB, AK, as an F-15 pilot, until his assignment to Air Command and Staff College. During his twelve years of service, Major Dennis has held positions as Safety Officer, Training Officer, Weapons and Tactics Officer, Academic Instructor, Instructor Pilot, and Flight Commander. He has completed Squadron Officer School and Air Command and Staff College. He has accumulated over 2800 fighter hours, and awards such as Tactical Air Command Instructor Pilot of the Year and Alaskan Air Command Well Done Award.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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REPORT NUMBER 88-0730

AUTHOR(S) MAJOR MICHAEL J. DENNIS, USAF

TITLE THE HISTORY OF THE TACTICAL AIR COMMAND--1946 TO 1956

I. Purpose: To create a single-source document, covering the Tactical Air Command in the years 1946 through 1956, which provides a historical chronology of events, relevant facts, and an analysis of their significance.

II. Problem: The history of the Tactical Air Command is dispersed throughout thousands of documents, with no single-source document available. The significance of much TAC history is lost without a concise, analytical, historically accurate source. Creation of such a document will provide increased interest in and appreciation of TAC's unique role in the United States Air Force.

III. Data: Tactical Air Command history is recorded in many different ways. The USAF Historical Research Center maintains many files of unrelated historical documents, statistics, studies, and reports from the TAC's conception, in 1946, until present day. Of these many sources, the most usable for this type of document was the TAC chronologies and statistical summaries. Both of these sources represent raw, uncorrelated,

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unanalyzed data, inconvenient to the typical historical user. The chronological record of events and statistics, from these two sources, were combined, analyzed, and recorded into a single document. The yearly TAC histories were then used to gain insight into the events and assess their significance. The ten years covered by this paper, were further divided into four groups, of distinctive significance. The format of this paper first assesses the significance of the period then records each individual year's data. The data was assessed with reference to resources, leadership, organization, operations, and mission.

IV. Conclusions: The first ten years of TAC, 1946 through 1956, represent great strides in technology, tactics, weapons, and aircraft. What began as an all propeller, subsonic tactical force, in 1946, became an all jet, supersonic, nuclear capable fighter force, by 1956. The leaders and personnel who envisioned, organized, trained, and equipped this force have created a legacy worthy of documenting. By assessing the data for historical significance, then analyzing and recording it in a usable format; history, those who made it, and the future are better served.

Chapter One

1946 THROUGH 1948

SYNOPSIS

On 21 March 1946 the War Department of the United States forever established the importance of tactical airpower by the creation of the Tactical Air Command (TAC). TAC became one of the three combat commands of the Army Air Forces, along with the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and the Air Defense Command (ADC). A misunderstanding exists from this act; the implied, complete compartmentalization of tactical and strategic assets. The creation of TAC and SAC perpetuated "the wartime distinction between tactical and strategic air power represented in the European Theatre of Operations by the Ninth and the Eighth Air Forces." (4:1) However, TAC and SAC both contained fighter, cargo, and bomber aircraft. (1:--) This overlap of missions and aircraft between TAC and SAC would not be resolved in the immediate future.

While TAC of 1946 bears little resemblance to modern TAC, its creation was the initial step in the dedicated development of tactical airpower: its doctrine, strategy, and tactics. Additionally, TAC became "at once an air arm and an operational training agency." (4:2) Without these important steps, tactical airpower stood the possibility of decay or stagnation in the post World War II demobilization of the military. The period of 1946 through 1948 separates itself from other periods in TAC's history for three reasons: (1) TAC's basic organization is established, (2) The United States Air Force becomes a separate service on 18 September 1947, and (3) On 1 December 1948, TAC is reduced to an operational headquarters assigned to the newly organized Continental Air Command (CONAC).

TAC's formation on 21 March 1946, brought it five major headquarters: the Third Air Force, the Ninth Air Force, the Twelfth Air Force, the Nineteenth Tactical Air Command, and the Ninth Troop Carrier Command. The most significant contributions came from the Ninth and Third Air Forces and the Ninth Troop Carrier Command (TCC). The Ninth Air Force contributed an outstanding combat record, tactical experience, and tradition. (4:2) The Third added an "organizational structure, operational training concepts and policies, and installations." (4:2) Finally, the Ninth Troop Carrier Command brought more installations and proven standard operating procedures and

policies. (4:2) These five, vastly different, organizations contributed much to the newly formed TAC and at the same time, their diversity was the cause of many problems. (4:3) Major General Elwood R. Quesada, TAC Commanding General, realizing "homogeneity and a sense of command individuality were not easily to be achieved," (4:3) made standardization of all levels of the command one of his primary objectives.

TAC established its first headquarters at Drew Field, Tampa, Florida--it moved to Langley Field, Virginia, on 27 May 1946-- where, with the 3 AF organizational structure and training concepts, "3 AF directives were redesignated TAC directives in toto." (4:9) The mindsets of the fighter pilots--including Gen Quesada, former commander of 9 AF--were more "wishfully" aligned with the combat rich tradition of 9 AF than the training orientation of 3 AF but, reality dictated otherwise. (4:4-6) The desired combat orientation was obscured by TAC's "preoccupation with recruitment and demobilization and the custody of stations in inactive or standby status." (4:6) TAC simply could not maintain a combat ready force with so many immediate problems facing it and no war to fight; thus training became the primary mission. General Quesada stated this in June 1946: "We must train and we must train a great deal. We are in a horrible state; to put it bluntly, we are in a hell of a shape..." (4:7)

On 31 March TAC deactivated the 9 TCC and 19 TAC headquarters leaving it with just the 3 AF, 9 AF, and 12 AF. This was the ideal organization envisioned by Gen Quesada. The Ninth and Twelfth would be the "tactical" forces for the East and West Coasts, respectively, and the Third would be the troop carrier force. The East-West division would allow 9 AF and 12 AF more stability in establishing an effective, cooperative program with ground forces in their area. (4:14) Headquarters AAF was opposed to the three air force plan and sought deactivation of 3 AF for economic reasons. (4:19) Despite Gen Quesada's concern over the loss of a dedicated troop carrier force, the Third Air Force was deactivated on 1 November 1946. TAC would keep this structure until its subjugation to CONAC in December 1948.

TAC saw a great need for reorganization on the base/unit level in order to improve combat readiness, command and control, and effective use of resources. Therefore, in July 1946, TAC started consideration of the "Hobson Plan" for wing organization. This plan organized wings along functional lines and was first tested in May 1947, at MacDill Field, Florida. When it was approved, on 27 June 1947, it standardized all TAC units with the same wing structure used today. (6:8-11) The improvement under the plan is "attributed to the fact that units were smaller and commanding officers were more familiar with the duties of the men under their command." (6:15) During this same time TAC maintenance was failing under the diversity of procedures and

policies. (4:12) The adoption, in August 1946, of the Aircraft Maintenance Organization Plan provided the necessary standardization and helped TAC units to meet their many commitments. Finally, on 1 Nov 1947, TAC would adopt the same "Directorate System" as the newly formed USAF Headquarters and achieve the greatly needed standardization at the highest levels of the USAF.

USAF independence greatly motivated TAC as the new leader of tactical airpower. General Quesada displayed this motivation in his annual report to General Spaatz, soon to be USAF Chief of Staff. TAC objectives on 1 July 1947:

- (1) Promote interservice cooperation
- (2) Development and testing of tactical doctrine and techniques
- (3) Maintaining a state of readiness for immediate and maintained combat operations. (2:4)

These objectives blended well with the stated purpose of the preamble to the National Security Act of 1947, which gave the USAF its independence: "to provide for their authoritative coordination and unified direction. . . and for their integration into an efficient team." (6:24) Air Force leaders saw as key benefits from this act the "doctrinal independence from the Army, the building of an air force that would always be in fighting trim, and the full manning of the 55-group program by the end of 1947." (6:25) Thus, despite the demobilization after World War II, TAC began to increase its size towards its share of the USAF's goal of 55 operational combat groups. Though operational tactical training was its highest priority, TAC now faced manpower problems due to requirements of the new "wing plan" and the 55 group plan. (6:41) TAC was forced to recall 400 officers to active duty in 1947 to meet the manpower shortfall and greatly enhance on-the-job training. (6:39) Tactical development of its forces was increasingly achieved through operational tactical exercises, which became a common occurrence. While these exercises varied from a hypothetical invasion of the Carolinas to arctic conditions in Alaska, the predominant theme of all was "jointness." TAC airlift forces were not idle during this period either. Cargo units ran up impressive records while assisting disaster relief and other emergencies. Unfortunately, all these great advances by TAC were abruptly halted on 1 December 1948.

On 1 December 1948 TAC and Air Defense Command (ADC) became operational headquarters under the newly created CONAC. All units and stations under TAC were transferred to CONAC on that date. The reason for the change was to geographically align USAF command areas with those of the Army and to strengthen the Air National Guard and Reserve programs. (3:30) However, the significance to TAC was that it now existed, more or less, as a paper headquarters. Its day-to-day control, training, and

development of tactical airpower ended. TAC's interim mission, assigned by CONAC, became "providing USAF cooperation with surface forces and operational training thereof." (3:30)

TAC's birth, rapid growth, and abrupt halt combined with USAF independence to make 1946 through 1948 a significant period in TAC's history. The USAF's appraisal of TAC's achievements during this period was stated: "the command responded with industry and initiative in bringing its organization to a point of 'combat readiness.'" (6:53) Numerous precedents established during this period can be seen in today's TAC. None of these precedents could be more important than the independence of airpower and the unleashing of tactical air doctrine from the constrictions of army doctrine. The visions of airpower's limitless possibilities, previously discounted by the Army hierarchy, could now be explored. While TAC still pursued improvement in its support of surface forces and the two doctrines remained closely linked, TAC minds were now free to explore the capabilities of airpower.

1946

Assigned Resources (As of April)

Personnel. 37,090 total (8,076 officer, 18,692 airmen). (5:23)

Aircraft. C-45, C-46, C-47, C-54, C-82, AT-6, P-47, P-51, P-61, P-80, A-26, B-17, B-25, L-5, gliders, helicopters. (3:4)

Units. 1 Light Bomb Group, 1 Composite Group, 2 Fighter Groups, 1 Reconnaissance Group plus 2 Squadrons, 2 Troop Carrier Wing Headquarters plus 4 Groups, 4 Liaison Squadrons, 1 Tow Target Squadron, 9 Air Service Groups, and 1 Air Aviation Squadron. (3:2)

Bases. 41 Stations in 21 States. (3:2)

Leadership

Major General Elwood R. Quesada was named Commanding General effective 21 March 1946.

Organization

TAC was initially assigned five major numbered air force equivalents on 21 March. These were 3 AF, 9 AF, 12 AF, Ninth Troop Carrier Command (TCC), and Nineteenth Tactical Air Command (TAC). To improve the unity of the command, the 9 TCC and 19 TAC headquarters were deactivated on 31 March 1946, and all their assets were reassigned to the remaining three numbered air

forces. This plan was submitted, by Major General Quesada, to Headquarters Army Air Forces (AAF) and approved by General Carl Spaatz, Commanding General AAF, on 12 April 1946.

TAC Headquarters was originally located at Drew Field, Tampa, Florida but was moved to Langley Field, Virginia on 27 May 1946. Langley Field had just been reassigned to TAC, on 30 April, from Air Transportation Command. The headquarters of 12 AF was activated at March Field, California on 17 May while 9 AF Headquarters had been activated at Biggs Field, Texas, on 28 March. Ninth Air Force moved its headquarters to Greenville Army Air Base (AAB), South Carolina, on 1 November and at the same time 3 AF Headquarters were deactivated.

Operations

Third Air Force began its tenure under TAC by training 104 Chinese Air Force crews in C-46's in the period March through July. Beginning on 23 May, "3 AF would fly 126,684 miles and maintain one third of the US national commercial airline force by acting as a cargo and mail carrier." (3:6)

TAC flew 21 air demonstrations, using 242 aircraft and 17 gliders, to support Army recruiting. TAC also participated with 16 aircraft in the National Air Show at Omaha, Nebraska, on 17-21 July; with 27 aircraft in the American Legion Show in San Francisco, California, on 22-24 July; and with 24 aircraft in the Mexico City Airshow on 1 December. TAC's public display of tactical airpower was capped off with 100 TAC aircraft participating in the Cleveland Air Races on 30 August to 3 September. By the end of the year, TAC had participated in 159 air demonstrations or recruiting shows.

TAC's joint exercises for the year were Operations Mountain Goat and Aliso Canyon during which TAC flew 3337 sorties from 15 -28 November. These exercises saw the P-80's first use in the close support role.

Mission

"The Tactical Air Command will provide and operate that portion of the AAF which is maintained in the United States, and in such other areas as may be designated from time to time, for cooperating with land and sea forces in the conduct of land and amphibious operations." (3:8)

1947

Assigned Resources (Only personnel data available)

Personnel. As of October 30, 32,328 total (3,758 officer, 22,561 airmen) (6:60)

Leadership

Major General Elwood R. Quesada, Commanding General.

Organization

TAC now contains two numbered air forces, the Ninth and Twelfth, but the greatest change came on 26 July when President Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947 which would make the Army Air Force a separate service, the United States Air Force. As USAF independence took effect on 18 September 1947, TAC was already expanding towards its share of the Headquarters AAF assigned goal of 55 operational combat groups.

On 15 August TAC adopted AAFR 20-15 which established the Wing-Base Plan at all TAC bases. Under this plan the parent TAC unit commander would also become the base commander. The TAC wing would now consist of a headquarters, headquarters squadron, and four major operational groups. TAC Headquarters also changed its organization when it adopted the same directorate system as the new USAF Headquarters.

Operations

TAC continued to expand its operations and develop its tactical experience. The Ninth Air Force conducted the first of nine Air Indoctrination courses at Lawson Field, Fort Benning, Georgia, on 24 February. These courses were large scale demonstrations for the army.

Ninth Air Force supported the Eureka Sound Weather Station when four of its cargo aircraft airlifted 105 tons of equipment, in 34 sorties, from Thule AB, Greenland to the station.

TAC's first joint exercise, as an independent service, was Exercise Yukon which started 1 November and would continue into 1948. Another exercise, Snowdrop, involved TAC troop carrier support of ground forces at Pine Camp, New York. This exercise, from 1 November to 8 February 1948, would provide "testing and development of equipment, and air transportability tactics during cold weather operations." (3:19)

Ninth Air Force continued its emphasis on jointness with Operation 100, started on 1 July, and later Operation 200, started on 19 December. While the first program dealt mostly

with training in the use of Joint Operations Centers and Tactical Control Facilities, the second was a greatly expanded version which incorporated a hypothetical invasion of the Carolina coast.

The 94th Fighter Squadron, flying new P-80's, deployed to Ladd Field, Alaska, for a six month cold weather test. The test began on 13 October but would be terminated early, in January, after a fatal accident due to an iced fuel system. The P-80 still achieved some milestones in this year. By August "the P-80 had flown 20,000 hours, dropped over 2000 bombs, and fired over 158,390 rounds of .50 caliber." (3:15)

TAC directed, early in the year, a 60 percent in-commission rate for all flying units. To reach this goal TAC started the first Maintenance Training Program on 14 August. On 28 October TAC established a Maintenance Indoctrination Course for all pilots.

On 23 December General Carl Spaatz, USAF Chief of Staff, declared TAC had achieved its portion of the USAF 55 operational combat group goal except for 1 group which was 70 percent short on personnel, and 8 groups which were 55 percent short on equipment. TAC had predicted 10 wings would fail to meet required effectiveness. (4:46) The program represented a very rapid expansion in TAC's strength.

Mission

"TAC added two new responsibilities to its mission:

1. Participation in disaster relief and other domestic emergencies.
2. Participation in Reserve Training Program to maximum extent possible." (3:19)

1948

Assigned Resources (As of 31 October)

Personnel. 31,731 total (3,913 officer, 23,606 airmen). (28:8)

Aircraft. 1061 total composed of: 298 Fighter(including 73 F-80, 69 F-84), 63 B-26, 104 Reconnaissance(including 56 RF-80), 237 Cargo(including 122 C-82), and 80 Liaison(L-4 and L-5). Other types: F-47, F-51, RF-51, RB-26, B-45, L-13, H-5, CB-25, C-45, C-47, T-6, and other trainers. (28:37)

Units. Eleven wings (4 fighter, 3 troop carrier, 1 bombardment, 3 tactical reconnaissance). (28:37)

Bases. Sixteen. (28:4)

Leadership

Lieutenant General Elwood R. Quesada commanded through 23 November when Major General Robert M. Lee assumed command.

Organization

The USAF and TAC continued to establish identities, separate from the Army. As of 13 January, all previously designated "Fields" or "Army Air Fields" became Air Force Bases.

The most significant change of the year came on 1 December when all TAC units were transferred to the newly formed Continental Army Command (CONAC). TAC was reduced to an operational headquarters assigned to CONAC

Operations

TAC shifted its emphasis to Professional Military Education when it adopted the Accelerated Training Program in January. "This program was given priority, until March, over flying, maintenance, and other normal functions." (3:22) It consisted of professional, military, and standardization training.

On 15-19 March TAC participated in Exercise Timberline. This was a mountain exercise which showed the advantages of P-80's over army divisional artillery against certain targets.

TAC conducted several more exercises which emphasized jointness. Exercise Assembly was to improve the efficiency of staffs in joint operations. Exercise Mesquite provided TAC experience in protecting armored columns. Also, Operation Combine III, a joint air-surface demonstration for various combat training schools, and Exercise Camid III a joint amphibious exercise were held during 1948.

The most significant of all TAC operations during the year was its participation in Operation Vittles, the Berlin airlift. This operation began on 21 June and would continue till 12 May 1949. The Berlin airlift proved to be "the first test of USAF airpower as an instrument of foreign policy." (3:26)

In July TAC received its first jet bombers when B-45's arrived at the 47th Bombardment Group. On 23 August Turner AFB, Georgia, became the first TAC unit to receive the F-84.

Mission

Both the 9 AF and 12 AF mission directives were changed "to include the conduct of independent air operations in addition to the previous responsibility of supporting surface forces." (3:23) Twelfth Air Force completely changed its mission, on 28 April,

when it added "independent, immediate, and sustained operations" (3:25) to its mission directive and omitted the reference to cooperation with surface forces.

TAC was reduced to an operational headquarters under CONAC and given the interim mission, on 16 December, of "providing USAF cooperation with surface forces and operational training thereof." (3:30)

Chapter Two

1949 Through 1950

SYNOPSIS

The period of 1949 and 1950 distinguishes itself by TAC's existence as a operational headquarters under CONAC. For two years TAC would be subordinated to CONAC and constantly striving to keep tactical air power at the forefront. (9:24) TAC slowly climbed back to its former status during 1950. First as a major subordinate command under CONAC; then as a major command, independent of CONAC, on 1 December 1950.

The difficulty in assessing this activity comes from the confused organizational structure imposed by the CONAC creation and the slow emergence of TAC from this restraint. For the first months after TAC came under CONAC, TAC operated under its own mission interpretation and transferred its administrative duties to CONAC. (7:1) CONAC finally directed TAC to be a command headquarters with two operational tactical air force headquarters. Under this arrangement CONAC described HQ TAC as "an operational command headquarters. . . to further serve as the staff of the Commanding General, Continental Air Command for tactical air operations." (7:5) The tactical air force headquarters "were to serve as agents for the execution of exercises and maneuvers formulated by TAC." (7:5) Unfortunately, due to shortages created by post WW II demobilization and slow procurement, TAC could not locate the manpower or equipment needed to form the necessary ancillary units--such as tactical control groups-- under the TAF's and was forced to propose the formation of one Tactical Air Force (Provisional) instead of two full TAF's. (7:5-6) This was a novel approach to the problem which CONAC accepted. Within its own headquarters TAC found its "organizational structure far less complex than that of the preceding year." (7:6) Since CONAC assumed the administrative duties for the command, TAC dropped its directorates for personnel, material, and comptroller. Emphasis within TAC was placed fully on operations, planning, requirements, and communications. (7:5-6) CONAC found itself overtaxed and allowed TAC to organize its headquarters "in the manner which can most expeditiously discharge its mission." (7:10)

The delineation of duties and responsibilities between TAC and CONAC closely resembled an often violated "border." This problem was even evident in the lines of communications; for example: CONACR 26-1 authorized TAC to communicate with any commanding general of any sister service, or other operational command. However, TAC was prohibited, by this same regulation, from communicating directly with the Air Material Command on supply or logistics matters. (7:3) Any such communication must pass through CONAC and thus was typically bogged down. The problem this created for TAC was obvious; without direct contact with the logistical and supply chains, successful operational exercises would be questionable. (7:3-4) Problems and confusion of responsibilities continued to increase with even USAF HQ circumventing CONAC authority by asking TAC for tactical inputs on development of future system. (7:33-36) Finally, during an evaluation of the status of the command, CONAC stated: "certain TAC functions should be rewritten 'in the interest of clarity and to eliminate certain overlap and duplication.'" (7:15) In reality TAC continued more or less as it had; as the unofficial Operations Staff of Continental Air Command instead of a subordinate operational command. (7:105)

Obviously, CONAC's expansive organization had difficulty devoting the necessary direction and staff resources to support tactical air power. Yet, TAC's responsibility was limited to "the continuous planning and preparation for the conduct of Tactical Air Operations." (3:31) TAC was constantly forced to fill the tactical void left by the CONAC staff; for example: to "keep tactical doctrine abreast with current technological developments." (7:14) CONAC hadn't taken on the task so TAC did by establishing a liaison with the Air Material Command (AMC) laboratory. TAC followed this up by tasking itself to provide AMC with descriptions of TAC requirements and outlining projects with tactical significance. (7:14,15) It was also TAC which expressed concern that the USAF still relied upon doctrine and manuals from WW II. In TAC's eyes these manuals "did not treat air power as a separate and distinct force." (7:29) Thus TAC proposed the publishing of new Air Force Manuals covering the "principles, procedures, and techniques used in the employment of air power." (7:29) In the area of nuclear weapons it was again TAC leading the way. One example came during a Force Requirements Conference conducted at TAC when the conferees expressed great dismay at the lag in weapons development. The result; a blunt introduction of the concept of "atomic, radiological, and biological armament." (8:67) This was followed by TAC's submission of a "requirement for an atomic bomb, capable of being carried by fighter-bomber type aircraft." (8:71) TAC also had a great impact on systems already in or coming into the inventory.

TAC had much to consider in the planning of tactical exercises, considering the great increase of new systems into the tactical forces. The F-86 entered the inventory in 1949 and the

number of B-45 units rapidly increased. Also the first successful intercept of an aircraft by a guided missile was performed. For TAC "guided missiles and their utilization assumed important proportions in the Command's quest for armament developments." (8:67) TAC actively sought new and improved aircraft to conduct tactical missions such as close air support and fighter escort. Thus TAC found itself conducting much of the testing and evaluation of these systems. (8:93-95) TAC's successes in these areas were mostly due to its close contacts with other services and commands. To perform its mission TAC maintained "continuous liaison with appropriate Army and Navy headquarters" (8:72) and these contacts helped push the development of joint doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures. TAC even had a naval officer permanently assigned to its headquarters. (8:73) All things considered, TAC was still an "agency designed to further cooperation with surface forces." (8:105)

TAC slowly resumed its former status as a major command shortly after the Korean War began. This was no coincidence for the Korean Conflict was, at the minimum, bound to have the same effect on TAC as the Berlin Airlift did. (8:7-8) This external impact would drain TAC resources away with limited replacements. More likely there were two reasons for TAC's rebirth: (1) numerous complaints that tactical air power had been too long assigned a lesser priority than strategic or defensive air power, (8:8) (2) the War in Korea immediately displayed USAF's shortcomings in the close air support role with the solution being the elevation of the organization most in-tune with this mission. (9:25) Regardless of the reasons for TAC's rebirth, the effect was tremendous. There were numerous plans for TAC reorganization. TAC's favorite was one which called for TAC to assume operational and administrative duties. TAC's least favorite called for it to also assume the Air Personnel Command duties for CONAC. (8:9) More confusion surrounded TAC's new mission as a major subordinate command under CONAC. TAC's proposal--similar to its previous mission--was ignored by CONAC which in turn stated TAC's mission as: "to support the operations of the Strategic Air Command and the Military Air Transport Service as directed by Headquarters Continental Air Command." (9:8) The requirement to support SAC puzzled everyone. The problem was solved when four months later, on 1 December 1950, TAC was restored to major command status. (9:24-25)

TAC's restoration as a major command and the Korean War kept its manpower and unit status in a constant state of flux. (9:18) The assignment of Ninth Air Force (Tactical) and many units from the Fourteenth Air Force was a rapid expansion of TAC's strength. (9:4) As units and personnel were transferred to the Far East Air Force (FEAF), Air National Guard and Reserve units were activated and assigned to TAC to fill in the voids. (9:78-79) This created its own problem since these ANG and Reserve units

had to be immediately reorganized upon activation due to previous lack of standardization. (9:82-83) Still, to TAC's and their own credit, they quickly adjusted and these units proved their worth. TAC had, in a very short time, "experienced a spurt in growth to the extent that TAC units and bases literally extended from coast to coast." (10:11)

1949

Assigned Resources

Personnel. TAC existed only as an operational headquarters. Assigned to TAC Headquarters were 78 officers, 43 airmen, and 37 civilians. (3:30)

Leadership

Commanding General was Major General Robert M. Lee.

Organization

TAC Headquarters remained at Langley AFB, Virginia, while CONAC directed 9 AF HQ to move from Greenville AFB, South Carolina, to Langley AFB. Ninth and Twelfth Air Forces were assigned to CONAC as were all their units.

Operations

TAC still provided much of the expertise in tactical and even cargo matters due to CONAC Headquarters inabilities in these areas. Thus on 3 February it was TAC personnel who field tested British Royal Air Force Hastings and Valetta cargo aircraft for suitability as USAF transports. (7:49-51) Then, in June, the 4th Fighter Wing, at Langley AFB, converted to the new F-86. The 84th and 85th Bombardment Squadrons, also at Langley AFB, received the B-45. TAC's planning and exercises incorporated these new weapon systems.

TAC continued its participation in the planning of joint exercises such as North Star, Tarheel, and Portex. Exercise Tarheel was designed to indoctrinate Army and Air Force personnel in air-to-ground operations. Operation Little Combine, 15-16 April, was a demonstration of combat operations by a tactical control group and joint operations center.

Mission

TAC's mission statement was now to provide "continuous planning and preparation for the conduct of Tactical Air Operations." (3:31)

1950

Assigned Resources (As of August)

Personnel. Prior to August TAC existed only as an operational headquarters. In December TAC was restored as a major command. Totals as of December: 23,897(3,606 officers, 18,201 airmen). (29:12)

Aircraft. 523 total consisting of: B-26, B-45, C-47, C-82, C-119, TC-46, F-84. (9:157-158)

Units. Eleven wings (5 fighter-bomber, 4 troop carrier, 2 tactical reconnaissance). These totals include one troop carrier group and one tactical reconnaissance group which had not yet completed the conversion to a wing. (9:24)

Bases. Eleven Air Force Bases as of December. (29:6)

Leadership

Major General Robert M. Lee commanded through 7 July when Major General O. P. Weyland assumed command until 17 July. On that day Major General Glenn O. Barcus assumed command. The reason for Gen Weyland's short tenure was his reassignment to the Far East Air Force (FEAF) in Korea.

Organization

TAC continued as an operational headquarters under CONAC until 1 August 1950, when it was reorganized as a major subordinate command under CONAC. At this time TAC gained various units and bases from the Fourteenth Air Force. Ninth Air Force was redesignated 9th Air Force (Tactical), moved from Langley AFB to Pope AFB, North Carolina, and was reassigned to TAC. Ninth Air Force (Tactical) then became TAC's operational agency.

TAC immediately lost some of its newly gained resources when it transferred several support squadrons and one tactical reconnaissance squadron to FEAF. The buildup in Korea required a mobilization of ANG and Reserve units. Many of these units, called up in August and October, were assigned to TAC, for training, before going to Korea.

In October TAC transferred all but a few B-45's to SAC and Air Training Command (ATC). TAC was slowly getting out of the bomber business. Finally, on 1 December 1950, TAC was restored to major command status.

Operations

TAC continued with its planning and participation in joint operations with numerous TAC planned exercises. One of the most significant of these was Project Strawbass which involved the emergency airlift of personnel and equipment to West Coast ports and from there to Korea. TAC was also instrumental in the rapid, first deployment of F-86's to FEAF. Exercise Sweet Briar determined the adaptability of doctrine and equipment to sub-arctic conditions. Finally, in July TAC assisted in Exercise Greenhouse, a nuclear test at Eniwetok in the Pacific, by providing an air task liaison unit.

The greatest impact on TAC and the entire USAF was the outbreak of hostilities in Korea on 25 June. TAC immediately increased the emphasis of combat operations in all training programs. Units such as the 2215th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), formed 1 August for B-26 training, were activated quickly to handle replacement training for units assigned to FEAF. At the same time TAC initiated the Overseas Rotational Program. In this program TAC wings rotated one squadron overseas for two month tours.

A TAC innovation, which would become increasingly important over the coming years, was the formation of the Air Ground Operations School at Pope AFB. This was the training school for Air Liaison Officers (ALO's) and Forward Air Controllers (FAC's). While this school opened on 15 September, TAC had already initiated jump training for its FAC's in January. Also, during September, TAC officially established an Electronic Countermeasure (ECM) office and training program.

As 1950 ended TAC was rapidly regaining its former status in the world of tactical airpower and playing a key supporting role in the Air War over Korea.

Chapter Three

1951 Through 1953

SYNOPSIS

The period of 1951 through 1953 encompasses TAC's participation in the Korean War, and was the first great test of USAF tactical air power as a separate service. While TAC as a command was not a direct participant, it greatly supported the USAF effort through training of aircrews, rotation of units, resupply, and the operational development of new weapon systems for use by the FEAF. TAC support of the FEAF effort is even more notable when considering TAC's recent, Dec 50, revival as a major command. During this period TAC experienced great fluctuations in size, strength, and commitments as a result of the USAF push for expansion, and the drain of TAC resources to the FEAF. (10:49-69) TAC continued to experience massive changes--which peaked at near bizarre levels in 1953--until the truce in Korea, on 27 July 1953, which would allow the USAF some stability.

TAC organizational growth took a different path than before its subordination to CONAC; it separated cargo aircraft and tactical fighter aircraft by numbered air forces. (10:45-46) Ninth Air Force would gain the parenthetical designation of (Tactical) and become the tactical sword of TAC while Eighteenth Air Force would command the cargo, or troop carrier arm. (10:44) The Ninth had been drastically reduced prior to its restoration under TAC due to economics, the Korean War, and the reorganization of other numbered air forces. Initially, the Ninth "lived up to its name only insofar as its jurisdiction over nine units--none of them established upon a wing basis--would allow." (10:45) The Air Force accepted TAC's proposal on the formation of the Eighteenth Air Force in early 1951 as "an air force which would encompass all troop carrier units within the Zone of the Interior (except Military Air Transport type functions)." (10:47) A critical problem still remained for the Eighteenth; no personnel to man its headquarters. When HQ USAF was unable to provide the necessary manpower from the USAF pool, TAC had to comb its own headquarters for personnel with sufficient experience in troop carrier operations. Only through these intra-command transfers was the Eighteenth able to assume active operations in a timely manner. (10:47) The keystone to the organizational changes in TAC during this period undoubtedly was the Air Force Organizational Act of 1951. "By its terms the

Air Force was required to establish a separate Tactical Air Command to accomplish the Air-Ground cooperation mission." (11:1)

Much of the organizational evolution in TAC can be placed in three categories: (1) new unit assignments to TAC, (2) units reassigned from TAC to other commands, and (3) modifications of the units themselves. (10:11) At times these organizational changes had significant effect on the units. With the manpower demands made by the FEAF, TAC was often forced to transfer units to that theater, or else so many personnel from a given unit that the unit ceased to function. (10:28-32) Overall personnel shortfalls reached a point where three TAC wings scheduled for deployment overseas, in December 1951, were manned at only seventy percent. (11:19-22) There was a great amount of instability within the command during this period. Take for example the 116th Fighter-Bomber Wing at George AFB, CA; it was notified of its impending movement to Europe in June 1951, and was prepared for the move. At the time of the deployment, with no warning, their destination was suddenly changed to the Far East. TAC criticized itself by stating: "The unfavorable effect upon the morale of the wing personnel concerned which is caused by changes in plans such as this one is indisputable." (10:59-60) Other units were shifted to new bases, re-designated, or given mission changes. It is "not to be understood that this 'base hopping' was all lost motion and wasted energy." (10:57) These moves were most often an attempt to allow the consolidation of unit missions and capabilities that did not previously exist. (10:57) Other examples of the disastrous effects of these drastic organizational changes can be found in individual unit histories such as this anonymous one: "Due to the indecisive mission of the unit the efficiency was curtailed and demoralized by the confusion of activation, deactivation, and reactivation." (10:67) Another unit reported of its difficulty in converting from a jet bombardment unit (B-45's) to a night attack unit (B-26's)--the B-26 being an older propeller aircraft. (10:71) Finally it must be reiterated that although these changes were often necessary to refocus the units on their primary mission areas and responsibilities, the overall effect on the morale of the command was nearly disastrous. (10:67-68)

Lieutenant General John K. Cannon, TAC Commanding General, stated in August 1951: "the present job of TAC is to prepare for war." (11:2) TAC attempted this task by enhancing training, promoting and testing new systems, or modifying old systems, especially in the air-ground arena. (15:94-100) Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) is one example of TAC's initiatives; TAC assigned 9 AF training responsibility for ECM to fill the USAF void. (10:106-107) TAC also became a primary player in "securing of a quantity of 'light, simple, easy to produce day fighters with performance that would guarantee superiority over the coming successor to the Mig-15.'" (15:2) Another lesson learned from Korean experience--and one in which TAC played a critical role in

doctrinal development--was the utility of the helicopter. (16:80) TAC stated: "Recent events and experiences, including the helicopter's performance in rescue work and in Korea, have at once enhanced the aircraft's prestige and stimulated interest in its potentialities and developments." (15:28) In January 1952, the Eighteenth Air Force proposed the formation of a troop carrier squadron, helicopter, to accommodate the newly arriving YH-19. (13:56) The command also saw itself as the spokesman for jointness and constantly sought ways to promote better cooperation with the ground forces. This was exemplified by Brigadier General William M. Gross, Commandant of the Air-Ground Operations School, when he stated: "While the official mission of the school is to indoctrinate Air Force and Army officers in the doctrine, tactics, and techniques of air-ground operations, its unwritten, and possibly most important mission, is that of advancing the art of inter-service cooperation." (14:2) TAC applied this cooperative attitude toward ADC also. When ADC was unable to meet its defensive requirements, "TAC agreed to make available to the aerial defense system ground alert fighter aircraft at command stations within the control capability of ADC." (15:139-140) TAC also authorized ADC to directly task TAC units in case of an actual air emergency. (18:1) TAC's contribution to training and tactical doctrine development is stated very well in its history: "TAC has been among the pioneers and some of its agencies have taken on an importance that has transcended the limits of the command." (12:43)

This period can be summarized as a period of hectic and often seemingly uncontrolled growth. However, much was accomplished and many missions were enhanced or created while new systems--such as the F-84, F-86, F-94, and C-124--were brought into the inventory. A sad departure was that of the F-51, a war machine with a great history, which left TAC with an all jet fighter force. (3:55) The growth could be seen from HQ TAC--where the build-up "points an obvious finger at the growing importance being accorded tactical air power" (10:94-95)--to the unit level. During the last half of 1953 alone, TAC "gained a total of 27 units of various types." (18:5) By examining the yearly statistics, you realize, by the end of 1953, TAC more than doubled its personnel and increased by fifty percent its number of aircraft. Much of this increase is accounted for by the "activations of new units, de-activations of others, including Air National Guard units assigned to TAC, and re-designation of some units." (18:5)

1951

Assigned Resources (As of January)

Personnel. 26,414 total (3,791 officer, 20,411 airmen). (29:12)

Aircraft. 854 total aircraft composed of: C-45, C-46, C-47, C-82, C-119, B-26, B-29, B-45, F-51, F-80, F-82, F-84, F-86, RF-80, RB-26, RF-51, and assorted trainers and liaison aircraft. (29:46)

Units. Eight wings (4 Fighter Bomber, 1 Tactical Reconnaissance, 3 Troop Carrier). (29:9)

Bases. Eleven. (29:6)

Leadership

Major General Glenn O. Barcus commanded through 24 January and was followed by Lieutenant General John K. Cannon who assumed command on 25 January. Lt. Gen. Cannon would be promoted to General on 29 October. Major General O. P. Weyland was assigned from TAC to FEAF on 17 March and then returned to TAC as Deputy Commanding General. On 10 June Gen Weyland was again transferred to FEAF, only this time as Commanding General of FEAF.

Organization

TAC started 1951 with only the Ninth Air Force (Tactical) assigned to it but, on 28 March, the Eighteenth Air Force was activated at Donaldson AFB, South Carolina. The Eighteenth became operational on 1 June with nine troop carrier wings and one troop carrier group assigned to it. The Ninth would again change its name when, on 27 May, it became Headquarters Ninth Air Force (Tactical) and then on 26 June the "tactical" was dropped.

During 1951 TAC activated many additional units while transferring and receiving other units. Newly activated units included the 47th Bombardment Wing at Langley AFB, the 4407th Womens Air Force (WAF) Squadron at Miami International Airport, 62d Troop Carrier Wing (Heavy), 49th Air Division at Langley AFB, 1st Aeromedical Group, and 4426th Reconnaissance Crew Training Squadron. Among these the 62 TCW was TAC's first C-124 wing and the 1st Aeromedical Group was the first such organization in TAC. "The 2d Forward Medical Evacuation Flight represented another first, with its mission of moving casualties from the front lines to the rear area." (3:43) Finally, on 16 November, TAC received four fighter-bomber wings from SAC. This was one of the initial steps in separation of missions between TAC and SAC.

Operations

The number of exercises was reduced from previous years in proportion to the rising commitment in Korea, but there still were several large joint exercises to develop and test tactical doctrine. Among these, Exercise Southern Pine became highly controversial. This joint Army-TAC exercise was to test "tactical concepts for fighters in Air-Head operations, fixed-

wing and helicopter assault techniques, communications, logistics, and medical evacuation." (3:43) The Army hotly contested USAF medical evacuation doctrine and sought to keep the mission entirely Army. On a lighter side, but still very crucial, was Operation Fruitcake which airlifted mail and parcels to Japan for the Christmas holidays. "This was TAC's first major exercise of the C-124." (3:45)

The expansion of missions and training became a high priority as the 20th Fighter-Bomber Group began Special Weapons (nuclear) Training. The concept of nuclear warfare was becoming increasingly tactical and TAC sought to fix the training gap when it established the Radiological Defense School at Langley AFB, Virginia. On 12 March TAC expanded its training squadron into the 4400th Combat Training Group and later renamed it the USAF Air Crew School. A new mission for TAC was created when it established the 1st Bomb Squadron, Missile, Light at the Missile Test Center, Cocoa, Florida. TAC would now be using "pilotless bombs". Finally, in the period of July to December, TAC supported NATO's needs with the deployment of five TAC wings overseas. Of these "the 433 Troop Carrier Wing would become the first air unit assigned to NATO with its deployment on 8 August." (3:43)

Mission

"The Tactical Air Command is organized to provide for Air Force Cooperation with land, naval, and/or amphibious forces and operational training of air force units therefor." (27:1)

1952

Assigned Resources (As of May)

Personnel. 61,494 total (6,952 officer, 49,617 airmen). (30:70)

Aircraft. 1347 total with the new aircraft in the inventory being F-94's and C-122's. (30:31)

Units. Fifteen wings (8 troop carrier, 5 fighter-bomber, 2 tactical reconnaissance). (30:14)

Bases. Eleven. (30:7)

Leadership

General John K. Cannon, Commanding General.

Organization

TAC's basic organization remained unchanged but its subordinate units were still undergoing great fluctuations. The most significant of these were the permanent assignment of the 49th Air Division, 20th Fighter-Bomber Wing, 47th Bombardment Wing, and 137th Fighter-Bomber Wing to USAFE in June and 117th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing on 1 February. Another first was scored for TAC when, on 16 December, "the 644th Troop Carrier Squadron (Assault-Rotary Wing) was established and became the USAF's first helicopter squadron." (3:51)

The mobilization of Air National Guard units, due to the Korean War, continued with the activation of the 64 TCW. At the same time the 375 TCW was returned back to reserve status under CONAC. Additionally, the 405th and 479th Fighter-Bomber Wings (FBW) were formed at Godman AFB, Kentucky, and George AFB, California, respectively. These units were formed from the personnel and equipment of two deactivated ANG squadrons.

Operations

The number of exercises increased with most of them oriented towards the airlift capabilities of Eighteenth Air Force. Operation Backbreaker, in January, involved the emergency airlift of 1200 F-86 drop tanks and shackles to Korea. This alleviated a critical shortage caused by the increased tempo of the Korean Air War. The Eighteenth also provided emergency airlift for relief of the Mississippi River flood victims in April. Starting in June TAC would begin testing troop carrier techniques and would continue for a year. "The result would eventually be the development of the Computed Air Release Point (CARP) system for airdropping personnel and equipment." (3:48) TAC airlift supported the Northern tier stations again when it airdropped 140,000 pounds of supplies to the Danish Weather Station in Greenland during Project Parkway Site. Even more significant was the new record airdrop set in November by the 8th Troop Carrier Squadron when it "dropped 360,000 pounds of equipment in less than ten seconds at Fort Bragg, North Carolina." (3:50)

The tactical exercises were topped by Exercise Long Horn in March and April. "This was the largest joint Army-USAF exercise conducted since WW II." (3:47) Another key exercise was Exercise Snowfall, conducted during January and February as a "test of winter tactics, techniques, and doctrine." (3:46) However, this exercise was also the "first use of H-19 helicopters in tactical maneuvers." (3:46) TAC continued participation in nuclear weapons testing with Exercise Desert Rock IV from 21 April to 29 May. Finally, the TAC agreement to augment ADC was tested when the 192d Fighter-Bomber Squadron deployed to Keflavik, Iceland on 23 August.

TAC and Ninth Air Force emphasized the importance of tactical fighter aviation with 9 AF's first annual Fighter-Bomber Gunnery Meet held from 8-17 September. This was the start of a TAC tradition that continues even today.

Mission

The TAC mission was amended to include: "conduct weather reconnaissance over areas of Joint Air-Ground Operations." (3:49)

1953

Assigned Resources (As of June)

Personnel. 55,142 total (5,911 officer, 44,397 airmen). (31:53)

Aircraft. 1318 total with inventory consisting of B-25, B-26, B-29, B-45, C-45, C-46, C-47, C-82, C-119, C-124, F-51, F-80, F-84, F-86, RF-80, RB-26. (31:30)

Units. Fourteen wings (5 fighter-bomber, 8 troop carrier, 1 tactical reconnaissance). (31:14)

Bases. Fifteen. (31:8)

Leadership

General John K. Cannon, Commanding General.

Organization

The year 1953 was probably one of the most erratic years in the history of the TAC organization, due primarily to the massive shifting of units from one command to another and the numerous activations and deactivations. On 1 January alone, three fighter-bomber wings, one tactical reconnaissance wing, and three bombardment squadrons reverted back to the Air National Guard and were then deactivated. Their personnel and equipment were then used to form the 366 FBW, 50 FBW, 21 FBW, 66 TRW, 422 BS, 423 BS, and 424 BS. Later, on 25 August, TAC would use the same technique when it released the 313 TCW (just activated on 1 February) to the reserves, and activated the 465 TCW with the 313th's resources. Other units activated were 463 TCW, on 16 January, and on 1 February the 463 TCW and 464 TCW. Finally on 23 December the 461st Bombardment Wing (Light) was activated at Hill AFB, Utah.

There were several other strange expansion techniques developed by TAC this year such as activating and then deactivating units a short time later. This happened with the

37th Fighter-Bomber Wing, activated on 8 April, at Clovis AFB, New Mexico. It was deactivated in June, due to program limitations on USAF wing strength, only to have the 388 FBW activated at Clovis AFB on 23 November. On 15 January TAC made the "first use of USAF personnel for Pathfinder duties in tactical operations" (3:53) when it formed the Pathfinder Squadron (Provisional) at Donaldson AFB, South Carolina, but deactivated it on 27 March.

TAC transferred several flying units to USAFE during the year, in response to the increasing importance of that theater of operations, and several bases to other commands. The units transferred to USAFE were: the 66 TRW, 50 FBW, and the 465 TCW. On 1 September TAC deactivated Godman AFB, Kentucky; in October it transferred Blytheville AFB, Arkansas, to Air Material Command, and Altus AFB, Oklahoma, to SAC.

TAC, on 16 April, made one of the stranger transfers of the year when it transferred the 405 FBW from 9 AF and placed it directly under TAC. At the same time it moved the unit from Godman AFB to Langley AFB.

Operations

TAC continued the upgrade of its flying units as it brought the first F-86's on board, in March, with the 21st and 50th Fighter-Bomber Wings. On 7 May the 63 TCW received the first of its new C-124's. TAC also cleaned out the older aircraft from its inventory, when in November, it phased out the last of its C-46's and earlier in the year, on 23 June, it transferred the last of its F-51's. This spelled the end of propeller-driven fighters in TAC, for a time.

Ninth Air Force kept itself in the midst of tactical aviation with its participation in tests at the Atomic Energy Test Site in Nevada on 6 April. These tests were called Exercise Upshot and Knothole. Then on 7-10 April they held the first of many Fighter Symposiums at Southern Pines, North Carolina. These symposiums would prove crucial to the development of new tactics and doctrine to accompany the new weapon systems coming into the inventory. They would benefit not only TAC but all tactical aviation. Additionally, 9 AF hosted the USAF Tactical Reconnaissance Symposium at Shaw AFB, South Carolina on 2-7 November.

The exercises were fewer this year but still innovative in nature. A rather unique one was Project North Sled which resulted in the first C-124 landing on an ice island in the Arctic Ocean. Another airlift feat was Operation Brush Bay in which 18 AF C-124's transferred the 82d Airborne Division from the Canal Zone to Pope AFB, North Carolina. Lastly, but most significant, was Project Wagon Wheels which emphasized the

importance of communications and sought to establish a telecommunications capability within tactical units.

Mission

On 29 June TAC redefined "Tactical Airpower" and thus made its mission less restrictive. The definition became "the application of all airpower, under command or control of a theater or area commander, against an enemy's potential and capabilities in being, normally only within the theater area of responsibility." (3:55)

Chapter Four

1954 Through 1956

SYNOPSIS

With the Korean War over, the USAF and TAC looked far ahead with their goal a strong, modern, and sizable tactical force. For this reason the USAF had abandoned its previous "55 group plan" and had now undertaken a far more ambitious "137 wing plan." (20:2-20) Nuclear warfare was considered the greatest threat by many prominent leaders while others--such as Gen Weyland, TAC Commander--considered limited war in a remote part of the globe as the highest threat. (25:3-5) Weapon systems were needed with the capabilities varying from carrying out tactical nuclear strikes to deploying to the most remote spots on earth within short periods of time and being able to conduct sustained operations. In previous years TAC had acknowledged and practiced a limited nuclear role, but now nearly every weapon system had a nuclear mission as well as conventional. In addition, the requirements for greater tactical mobility spawned the need for greater range for fighters. (20:19) The result was an air refueling capability for fighters from the F-84F on. On 30 April 1956, General Thomas D. White, USAF Vice Chief of Staff, made the observation: "technological advances had brought a 'new look' to Tactical Air Forces. . . . One of these advances was the development of nuclear weapons; the other was TAC's capability for aerial refueling." (25:3) These and other technological advances make this period distinctive but, there is another reason as well. During this period TAC is attempting to assert itself both as a command and headquarters with an operational mission. This desire resulted in the activation of TAC's third numbered air force--supposedly--the Nineteenth Air Force.

The Nineteenth Air Force was conceived, in the late summer of 1954, by General O. P. Weyland who assumed command of TAC on 1 May 1954. There were many reasons leading to this idea; among them: (1) the realization of an inadequate force structure in NATO which had to be heavily fortified with TAC units (20:22) and (2) the overtasking of the Ninth Air Force with reenforcing NATO and FEAF, in addition to its essential responsibility of operational training for replacement aircrews. (22:14-15) Gen Weyland--while presenting his proposal to the USAF Chief of Staff--stated: "the one tactical air force then in the United States (the Ninth) was inadequate to meet current and future

visualized commitments." (22:14) Gen Weyland went on to state: he "considered it vital to maintain a tactical air force headquarters in the United States, designed, organized and trained to be capable of rapid deployment. . . to any area where military action was threatened." (22:15) Headquarters USAF was deeply opposed to the creation of another numbered air force and especially the costly overhead created by another headquarters and informed TAC to seek a cheaper, smaller scale solution. (22:16-18) TAC performed another study on the situation and in November Gen Weyland again presented his proposal, emphasizing the criticality of "mobile headquarters" to the overall success of the force. In Gen Weyland's opinion the Ninth was incapable of training for or accomplishing this mission--considering its already extensive responsibilities. (22:18) On 16 November 1954, when USAF agreed to this proposal, it did so with the understanding that the Nineteenth would be an "operational headquarters" and not a numbered air force as TAC desired. General Weyland broke this deadlock on 7 February 1955, when he proposed the USAF plan be an interim solution until sufficient resources existed to raise the Nineteenth to a full numbered air force. (22:19) General White, USAF Vice Chief of Staff, accepted the proposal on 15 February 1955. (22:20) Many problems would arise from this plan; the most critical being manning. According to the USAF plan TAC would have to man the Nineteenth from its own resources. (22:23) Also, the USAF approved the "activation of an operational headquarters and the attachment of tactical units for operational control only." (22:23) These various problems can be summarized by saying: "What TAC actually derived from these prolonged negotiations was an additional numbered tactical air force headquarters in name only." (22:23) Thus it was no surprise when the Nineteenth was activated--under control of Ninth Air Force--on 8 July 1955, at Foster AFB, TX, with only one officer and one airman. (22:24) The Nineteenth would remain in this state--with no attached units and only slightly better manning--until April 1956. (24:8-9) TAC Headquarters would make the first test of 19 AF in September 1956, with Exercise Mobile Baker. (25:24)

The mission assigned to TAC had not really changed and could still be broken into three overlapping statements of: (1) "the achievement and maintenance of air superiority; (2) the interdiction of the battle area; and (3) close support of the surface forces." (19:1) However, the threat which faced tactical air forces conducting these missions had significantly increased. TAC sought "equipment that would permit the command to effect maximum damage on the enemy while experiencing minimum damage." (19:28) This assessment compelled TAC to strive for six objectives:

1. Better aircraft performance.
2. Less vulnerable bases.
3. Powerful weapons.

4. Mobility, versatility, and coordination.
5. Low logistic and maintenance requirements.
6. Accurate all weather bombing capabilities. (19:28)

It was these objectives which allowed new aircraft to enter the TAC inventory, such as the F-84F, F-86H, F-100, B-56, and B-66. They also led to the development of the C-130, F-101, F-104, and F-105 during this period. These aircraft are pretty simplistic by today's standards, but in the 1950's they were the "leading edge" of a supersonic, nuclear capable, air refuelable, tactical force. To put it into TAC's own words: "In an effort to meet the requirements imposed by a highly dynamic military climate, the command has become an integral part of a revolutionary industrial activity aimed at the maximum exploitation of technological potentials." (19:18)

During this period the F-86 formed the "backbone of the Tactical Air Command fighter force. . . ." (21:15) The F-86H was the newest model of the F-86 line yet it was only "an interim measure designed to fulfill USAF day fighter requirements pending the assignment of the F-100." (21:22) This need for a day fighter was to fill the air superiority and close support roles of TAC's mission. The F-84F was coming into the inventory at the same time--1954--as TAC's first air refuelable fighter--mainly as a fighter-bomber. (21:1) The F-84F experienced numerous performance deficiencies and production slippages which caused the USAF "to recommend, in January 1954, that the F-100 be included in the fighter-bomber program." (21:26) TAC and the USAF were basing much of the future on the F-100 whose first appearance in October 1953, at Palmdale, CA, "was made spectacular by the aircraft's achieving a speed of approximately 750 mph, shattering windows and splitting door frames." (19:1) The F-100 became operational on 27 September 1954 but still exhibited problems with logistics, instability, and landing difficulties. (21:30-33) By the end of 1954 TAC, "although not completely satisfied, was depending on the F-100 to fill the role as an interim fighter-bomber until a completely acceptable one could be produced." (21:33) This new fighter-bomber would be the F-105 with considerations made of the F-101 and F-104 in the same role. General Weyland appealed to HQ USAF--to maintain funding of the F-105--by stating: "The F-105 was the first airplane specifically designed as a fighter-bomber aircraft with the primary mission of carrying an A-Bomb at a speed of over Mach 2 at the target and still retaining a conventional weapons delivery capability." (21:39) The B-57 was likewise accepted as an interim light bomber and reconnaissance aircraft until the B-66 could be delivered in 1956. (21:48)

Throughout this period TAC was constantly reaching for new weapons, new missions, and the improvement of established missions. With the new weapon systems in the inventory and the accompanying increased capability, TAC, as well as the USAF, went

"record crazy." Distance records, speed records, and flights over the Poles were but some of the events which captured the public's attention as well as proving some of tactical aviation's capabilities. Fighter deployments were now able to go non-stop with air refueling enroute and prove the rapidity with which tactical airpower could respond to a global crisis. TAC had assumed more of a training orientation than previously--despite the Nineteenth Air Force. (26:5) Still, TAC realized that it was organizing, equipping, training, and developing the weapon systems to prepare tactical forces for combat. (24:1) General White, USAF Vice Chief of Staff, summarized it well: "Our Tactical Air Forces, with enormous fire power, global mobility, operational invulnerability and versatility, have become a deterrent to. . . aggression and a decisive force in war." (26:7)

1954

Assigned Resources (As of June)

Personnel. 49,280 total (5,355 officer, 39,063 airmen). (32:92)

Aircraft. 1345 total with inventory composed of B-26, B-29, C-45, C-47, C-117, C-119, C-124, F-80, F-84, F-86, RB-26, RB-57, and RF-80. (32:39)

Units. Fourteen wings(4 fighter-bomber, 1 fighter-day, 1 tactical reconnaissance, 1 bombardment, 7 troop carrier). (32:12)

Bases. Thirteen. (32:5)

Leadership

General John K. Cannon commanded through 31 March when he retired after 35 years of military service. General O. P. Weyland assumed command on 1 May.

Organization

There were only minor changes to TAC compared to previous years but these changes were significant none the less. They included the activation of TAC's first air refueling units the 420th and 429th Air Refueling Squadrons. The 420 ARS was activated on 18 March at Alexandria AFB, Louisiana, and the 429 ARS was activated in July at Langley AFB, both with the KB-29. (20:12) The only other unit activations were the 11th Pilotless Bomber Squadron at Orlando AFB, Florida, on 1 September, and the 309th Troop Carrier Squadron (Assault-Rotary Wing) at Donaldson AFB, South Carolina. Also during this year 9 AF moved to its present day headquarters of Shaw AFB, South Carolina, from Pope AFB, North Carolina.

Operations

The year began with TAC on a goodwill tour of South America by five F-86's appropriately called Project Will Tour, from 11 January to 19 February. TAC continued stretching the limits of aviation on exercises such as TACAIR 54-2, where it accomplished the highest altitude paratrooper drop yet recorded, and then, Operation Windchill; the northernmost joint exercise to date.

TACAIR Exercise 54-7 started on 20 April and ran through 6 May as a joint Army-TAC "Atomic Exercise." Still focusing on nuclear capabilities, TAC conducted Project Run In from 15 October to 15 November. The sole purpose of this project was to determine the suitability of the new F-84F for special weapons delivery. Another TAC project was Night Hawk, which started on 15 July and ran through 15 October, and tried to determine the capability of day fighter-bombers in night attack role. F-86's were used in this project which represented TAC's desire to keep multiple roles for its weapon systems. The day fighter-bomber designation was the result of TAC's implementation of the "Day-Fighter" program with the renaming of the 479 FBW as the 479th Fighter-Day Wing, on 15 February.

TAC began, on a regular basis, using major exercises to evaluate the mobility and combat capabilities of individual units. Two such exercises were Operation Box Kite, on 8 April, which tested the mobility of the 21 FBW, and Operation Sandstorm on 12 July, which tested the 461st Bombardment Wing.

TAC's devotion to competitions continued with the first annual Troop Carrier Rodeo at Sewart AFB, Tennessee, on 25 August, and the 9th Air Force Fighter Weapons Meet at Eglin AFB, Florida, on 19-21 April. The winner of the 9 AF meet was the 366th Fighter-Bomber Wing.

TAC rounded out the year with several new weapon systems in its inventory. In June TAC received not only its first F-86H's but also its first B-57's. Previously, on 12 May, TAC took possession of its first air refueling capable aircraft: the F-84F. Still not in the TAC inventory, but experiencing its first test flight, was the YC-130.

1955

Assigned Resources (As of May)

Personnel. 53,529 total (6,938 officer, 41,154 airmen).
(33:88)

Aircraft. 1632 total with the inventory composed of F-84, F-86, F-100, RF-80, RF-84F, C-124, C-119, C-47, B-26, B-57, and KB-29. (33:28)

Units. Thirteen wings (6 troop carrier, 4 fighter-bomber, 1 fighter-day, 1 tactical reconnaissance, 1 bombardment). (33:8)

Bases. Thirteen. (33:8)

Leadership

General O. P. Weyland, Commander.

Organization

The most significant change, for the year, was the addition of another numbered air force, 19th Air Force, on 8 July, at Foster AFB, Texas. The 19th's mission was to be capable of rapid global deployment but at this time it had only one officer and one airman assigned. Other activations include: the 310th Troop Carrier Squadron (Assault-Rotary Wing) on 8 February, the 516th Rotary Wing Assault Group on 8 March, 622d Air Refueling Squadron on 18 July, the 323 FBW on 8 August, the 17th Tactical Missile Squadron on 8 September, and the 513th Troop Carrier Group (Assault, Fixed Wing) on 8 November.

Operations

TAC exercises continued including simulated "atomic play" when possible in 1955. Exercises such as TACAIR 55-8, in January, and Exercise Blue Bolt, on 13 February, had primary objectives of nuclear warfare. The newest innovation occurred in Exercise Sage Brush, 15 November to 10 December, which was "the largest exercise since WW II, and also the first use of simulated atomic weapons." (3:70)

TAC made it into the record books again when on 9 March Lieutenant Colonel Robert R. Scott set a new transcontinental speed record, from Los Angeles to New York, of 3 hours 46 minutes 33.6 seconds. The operation was called Speedball and Lt Col Scott averaged 649 mph in his F-84F using air refueling. On 4 September Colonel Carlos M. Talbott won a Bendix Trophy Event in an F-100C when he raced 2325 miles, from George AFB to Philadelphia International Airport, in 3 hours 48 minutes 24.4 seconds.

TAC didn't ignore the conventional side of warfare; it still conducted several large tactical exercises for this purpose. One was Exercise Apple Jack, 1-10 May, a "joint Army-TAC test of air control, isolation of the battlefield, and close air support."(3:67) On 24 September Exercise Mobile Able tested TAC's concept for rapid deployment of a strike force to an

overseas location. F-84F's of the 405th FBW at Langley AFB were used. Additionally, TAC conducted operational suitability tests on the F-100C during Operation Hot Rod, from 30 July to 2 September.

The Eighteenth Air Force kept busy and cold with two exercises. The first was Operation Lodestar which involved resupply of Army mountain units on 16 August. The second was Operation Deep Freeze, 20 November to 28 February 1956, the airlift of scientific research personnel and equipment to Antarctica.

Mission

As stated in AFR 23-10: "Tactical Air Command will command, organize, equip, train, and administer the forces, assigned or attached, to participate in tactical operations, including light and tactical bombardment, day fighter, fighter-bomber, tactical missiles, troop carrier, reconnaissance, and support units in accordance with directives and policies issued by Headquarters USAF." (24:1)

TAC defined Nineteenth Air Force's mission as: "To deploy any or all units anywhere and exercise immediate operational control upon arrival in the combat zone." (3:71)

1956

Assigned Resources (As of June)

Personnel. 57,851 total (6,951 officer, 44,082 airmen). (34:83)

Aircraft. 1690 total with the only new aircraft in the inventory being the B-66. (34:29)

Units. Fifteen wings (4 fighter-bomber, 2 fighter-day, 2 bombardment, 1 tactical reconnaissance, and 6 troop carrier). (34:13)

Bases. Sixteen. (34:5)

Leadership

General O. P. Weyland, Commander.

Organization

This year brought numerous changes to TAC with a strengthening of 19 AF and an extremely large number of unit activations/deactivations. The 19 AF was assigned its first

units on 20 January when all five of Ninth Air Force's combat wings located west of the Mississippi were transferred to it. On 1 July the 405 FBW and 345 Tactical Bombardment Group were reassigned from Hq TAC to 9 AF. The only other command level change was the activation of Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, on 1 April and renaming Myrtle Beach Municipal Airport as Myrtle Beach AFB.

TAC's expansion resulted in many unit activations including the following:

1. 386th Fighter-Bomber Group--Bunker Hill AFB, IN, on 8 April,
2. 83d Fighter-Day Wing--Seymour Johnson AFB on 8 July,
3. 419th Troop Carrier Group (Assault, Fixed Wing)--Ardmore AFB, OK, on 8 July,
4. 20th, 21st, 23d, and 24th Helicopter Squadrons (Support) on 8 July,
5. 342 FDW and the 455 Fighter-Day Group--Myrtle Beach AFB on 25 July,
6. 427th Air Refueling Squadron--Robins AFB, GA, on 7 September,
7. 345th and 346th Troop Carrier Squadrons--Sewart AFB, TN, on 8 October,
8. 347th Troop Carrier Squadron--Pope AFB, NC, on 8 October,
9. 402 Fighter-Day Group--Greenville AFB, MS, on 15 October,
10. 4505th Tactical Missile Wing (Training)--Orlando AFB, FL, on 18 October.

The Ninth Air Force also reopened its USAF Advanced Flying School, for tactical reconnaissance, on 2 April.

The number of units deactivated by TAC were far less than those activated and included: the 309 TCS on 8 July, the 456 TCW on 9 July, and the 342 FDW on 18 November. The 342 FDW, only activated on 25 July, was replaced by the 354 FDW.

TAC brought many new aircraft into its units during the year which greatly increased their combat capability. On 6 January the 513th Troop Carrier Group (Assault, Fixed Wing) received its first C-123's while, on 31 January, the 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron and the 363 TRG became the first TAC units to receive the RB-66C. Additionally, on 16 March, the 17 BW converted to the B-66. Langley AFB received its first KB-50's, on 11 July, which were capable of probe-drogue refueling. The first F-100C's with inflight refueling capability were assigned to Foster AFB, Texas, on 7 August, while the first F-100D's arrived at the 405 FBW, Langley AFB, on 29 September. Finally, the first C-130 became operational at the 463d Troop Carrier Wing, Ardmore AFB, Oklahoma, on 9 December. The C-130

became the first prop-jet aircraft in the USAF inventory and the backbone of USAF tactical airlift for the future.

TAC was again setting new aviation records. On 9 January First Lieutenant E. A. Schmid, of the 63 TCW, became the "first USAF member to fly over the South Pole and both Poles." (3:80) He was performing as a navigator on a Navy C-54. Then on 19 April three TAC F-84F's, led by Colonel Charles F. Blair, covered the 3145 miles from McGuire AFB, New Jersey, to Whethersfield RAF Station, England, in 6 hours 50 minutes. This was done to "prove the feasibility of non-stop deployments to Europe as well as test new celestial navigation equipment." (3:75) On 26 October, Major General Chester E. McCarty, 18 AF Commander, piloted a C-124 over the South Pole and became the first USAF aircraft to do so. Finally, the toughest record of all was set when Technical Sergeant Richard Patton, of TAC's First Aerial Port Squadron, made the first parachute jump over the South Pole. He jumped from 1500 feet in minus 25 degree temperatures.

The most significant exercise of the year occurred on 20 September and was called Exercise Mobile Baker. This was a 19th Air Force deployment of a "Composite Air Strike Force" to Europe. "Making up the force were: 16 F-100C's, 16 F-84F's, 4 RF-84F's, 4 B-66's, and they were refueled by KB-29's and KB-50's." (3:78)

Mission

TAC's mission was amended from the previous year to read "prepare tactical air forces for combat" instead of "participate in tactical operations." (25:7)

The Nineteenth Air Force had its mission amended with the additional responsibility for "detailed planning and implementation for the Composite Air Strike Force." (3:77) To obtain its required operational capability, the Nineteenth was relieved of normal training responsibilities and "ordered to maintain a Highly Mobile, Combat-Ready Basis." (3:76)

Chapter Five

SUMMARY

The Tactical Air Command, since its formation on 21 March 1946, has been the leader in tactical airpower. TAC experienced many setbacks, such as its subordination to CONAC in 1948, but still maintained its status as the innovator, the trainer, and the leader. In an attempt to consolidate and clarify TAC's history, this study has taken the first ten years of TAC and separated them into distinct periods: 1946 through 1948, 1949 through 1950, 1951 through 1953, and 1954 through 1956. While the differences separating these periods are not always distinct, they do represent the effects of world events, changes in leadership, changes in doctrine, and changes in technology.

Organization

TAC's organization has varied greatly over this ten year period. TAC's formation, on 21 March 1946, brought it five numbered air forces. TAC sought a three numbered air force structure, with the intent of East and West Coast tactical forces, plus the third force of troop carriers for support. The subsequent reductions to two numbered air forces--Ninth and Twelfth--allowed TAC to still have tightly controlled East and West Coast tactical forces, but troop carrier assets were assigned to the Ninth. This diversity of missions, within the numbered air forces, was not ideal. TAC's major setback--its subordination to CONAC--came in 1949, and wasn't resolved until December 1950. While TAC's growth and advancement suffered greatly, during this two year stagnation, the tactical experience and knowledge of its personnel allowed rapid recovery. TAC was restored, as a major command, in December 1950, with only the Ninth Air Force assigned. When the Eighteenth Air Force was assigned, in March 1951, TAC remembered its previous problems with diversification of missions. Thus, the Ninth possessed the fighters/bombers; the Eighteenth, troop carriers. The addition of the Nineteenth Air Force, in 1955, was TAC's early version of the "Rapid Deployment Force." At the time, it was called the "Composite Air Strike Force" and provided a highly mobile, responsive, operational force to TAC.

Operations

Of all the numerous changes which occurred, during 1946-1956, no area was affected more than TAC's operational capabilities. In these ten years TAC went from an all propeller driven, subsonic force to an all jet, nuclear capable fighter force, with a third of its fighter inventory capable of supersonic flight. Advances in air refueling, night attack, improved tactics, and greatly improved training methods were equally important. When considering this huge leap in combat capability TAC was experiencing, it is partially understandable TAC would also experience some organizational confusion.

CONCLUSION

These periods in TAC's history are not necessarily the best examples of managerial organization. To the contrary, during many of these periods there were clear examples of uncontrolled attempts at rapid growth. These could often be seen by numerous activations/deactivations of units and the often confusing realignment of the command. Regardless, these ten years of TAC represent those "glory years" of the rise of the USAF to its present stature. The spirit was one of aviation pioneering augmented with significant combat experiences. To attempt to capture that spirit behind the history is as much the intent of this paper as the actual recording of the facts.

The final assessment of the Tactical Air Command is not yet written and won't be written in the immediate future, but when it is it will have to include TAC as the pioneer of tactical airpower. Throughout its first ten years, TAC was the model for the other commands in the development of the newest technologies into viable, operational weapon systems. Though TAC's structure and inventory have varied greatly throughout this period, it still carried out its missions and established the basis for tactical airpower in the USAF.

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