



The Tactical Air Command

INCREASING importance of tactical airpower as an instrument of national military policy was dramatically reflected in Tactical Air Command's busiest year since its inception in 1946. Fiscal year 1964 was an unchanging pattern of dynamic growth for TAC—in resources, responsibilities, and combat capabilities.

It was the year that more than 1,000 TAC aircraft crossed the Atlantic and Pacific, the year of birth of the Tactical Air Warfare Center, an unprecedented effort to improve across-the-board support for the Army. It was a year of rapid buildup of resources for coping with any contingency ranging from subtle insurgency to all-out limited war, and a year of growing awareness of TAC's emerging role as a fast-reacting, flexible combat force within the framework of the United States Strike Command (STRICOM).

Too much happened during FY '64 to point out any one single development as the outstanding event of the year. However, establishment in November of the Tactical Air Warfare Center (TAWC) was the focal point for all TAC activities. TAWC's establishment reflects implementation of a basic policy laid down by Gen. Walter C. Sweeney, Jr., when he assumed command of TAC in the fall of 1961. At that time, General Sweeney declared that the first order of TAC business was to increase the command's combat capabilities in quality and quantity in order to ensure maximum support for the Army.



Gen. Walter C. Sweeney, Jr., a 1930 West Point graduate who won his wings in 1935, was named Commander of Tactical Air Command in 1961. A native of West Virginia, he took part in Pacific combat in World War II, later served as SAC Director of Plans and Commander of Fifteenth and Eighth Air Forces before his assignment to TAC.

Everything accomplished since then came into sharp focus at TAWC. Operating in the vast Air Force Proving Ground complex at Eglin AFB, Fla., TAWC has a vital mission, one that can be stated in simple terms: To test, evaluate, refine, and improve TAC's capabilities for providing the ground forces greater battlefield mobility, firepower, and survivability.

Organized as a result of the Secretary of Defense's directive to improve use of aviation in support of ground forces, TAWC's job is to test and evaluate every aspect of air-ground combat operations: fire support, aerial reconnaissance, command and control, strategic and tactical air movement, and logistic support. Working with elements of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, TAWC is conducting a series of realistic exercises code-named Indian River. Each of three Indian River phases will increase in size, scope, and importance, from a command-post exercise (CPX) involving 650 Army personnel, to a battalion-size test with 2,725 soldiers, to brigade-level with 5,500 ground personnel. TAC will utilize comparable personnel and every type of tactical aircraft and equipment necessary for actual battlefield operations. New equipment, techniques, tactics, and procedures will be employed in the Indian River series, after which STRICOM will direct an advanced series of tests, dubbed Gold Fire, to make final evaluation of Air Force doctrine and concepts in joint air-ground tactical operations.

Maj. Gen. Gilbert L. Meyers, Commander of the Tac-

Supersonic RF-101 Voodoo swoops over an Army tank column during Exercise Polar Siege in Alaska. The swift reconnaissance aircraft provide combat intelligence for air and ground commanders.



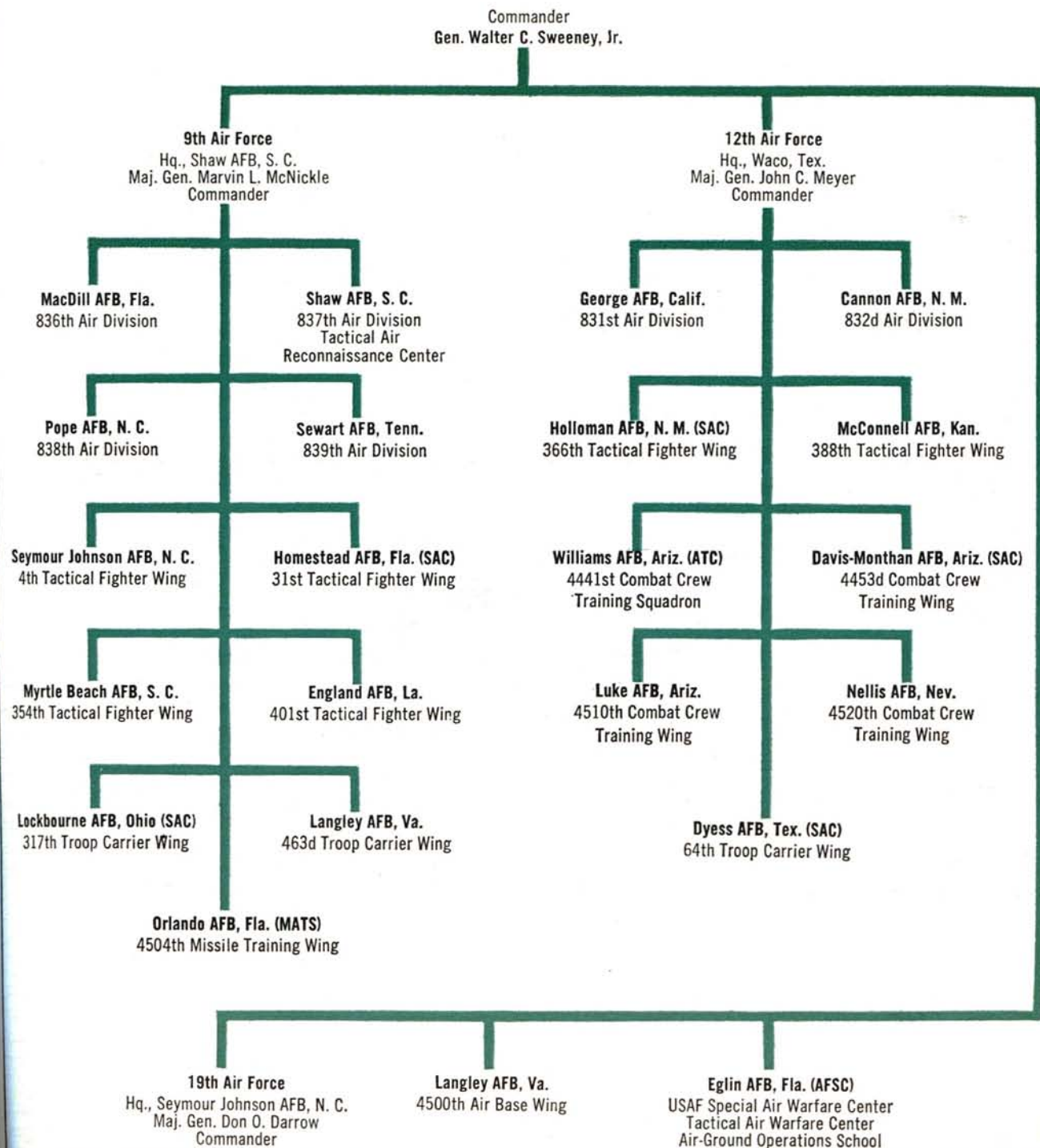
tical Air Warfare Center, recently summed it up thus:

"The current test-and-evaluation program . . . will be of great assistance to us in improving our combat capabilities. We in the Air Force are fully aware that the test program may bring to light some gaps in our total capability to fulfill our responsibilities within the Joint Force—this is the purpose of the program and we welcome it. We stand ready to fill the gaps with additional or totally new equipments and techniques. We look upon these tests as an opportunity to work toward an even more successful air-ground team."

Behind this expression of determination—and confidence—stand long years of devoted effort on the part of tactical air experts to improve TAC's combat effectiveness and responsiveness to an ever-increasing level of responsibility. This effort started in Korea when an acute shortage of tactical airpower proved a dangerous liability. Wartime acceleration helped fill the glaring gap, and afterward TAC began a slow uphill climb. The advent of supersonic jets, coupled with refined in-flight refueling, permitted TAC to meet the need for

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TACTICAL AIR COMMAND
Headquarters, Langley AFB, Va.





Pilots of TAC's 354th Tactical Fighter Wing of Myrtle Beach, S. C., race for their F-100 Supersabres. Since Lebanon crisis of 1958, TAC fighter units have supported US commitments overseas on rotation and played major roles in exercises in US under direction of Strike Command.

a global striking force to deter or fight limited war. The Composite Air Strike Force—a packaged tactical air force tailored for worldwide deployment—was developed in 1954 and proved in 1958 in Lebanon and Formosa. Thus, TAC had become a global force with emphasis on nuclear striking power.

In 1961 there came a change in national emphasis. The late President Kennedy called for a buildup of flexible, mobile "general-purpose" forces to meet any level of threat in the lower spectrum of conflict. Actions were swift and purposeful—the unified US Strike Command was created to blend tactical air and ground combat-ready forces into a first-class team, TAC became for the first time in its history an integral part of a combatant command, and the expansion-modernization program quickly got under way. This was FY '62, the beginning of a new era for TAC and US tactical airpower.

Programs initiated that year were further developed and improved upon the following year, and FY '64 saw TAC move forward at an accelerated pace in growth and combat efficiency. Here are some highlights of expansion in FY '64:

- Three tactical fighter wings were added, to make a current total of fifteen.
 - One assault airlift wing was added to make a total of five, with a sixth approved.
 - A second air-reconnaissance wing was approved.
 - An average twenty-five-percent increase in personnel strength for a total of approximately 70,000.
 - Conversion of two fighter wings to F-105s and equipping of the first F-4C wing.
 - Conversion of an assault airlift wing from C-123s to C-130s.
 - Activation of two A-1E squadrons for 1st Air Commando Wing and addition of a C-123 squadron.
 - McConnell AFB, Kan., added to TAC inventory and an F-4C Combat Crew Training Wing transferred from MacDill AFB, Fla., to Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz.
 - Expansion and reorganization of 507th TAC Control Group and approval for 1st Aerial Port Group.
 - Addition of five new Air National Guard groups.
- These are only the quantitative manifestations of

TAC's growth pattern. The qualitative side of the story is equally dramatic.

For instance, the concept of making all of TAC's numbered air forces—Ninth, Twelfth, and Nineteenth—ready for immediate deployment and combat action now is a reality. Nineteenth has, of course, always had the unique distinction of being poised for deployment—that is its basic purpose. Now the Ninth and Twelfth, with Mobile Component Command Post, Tactical Air Control Center, and Direct Air Support Center "personnel packages" assigned, are similarly ready for worldwide actions.

In the same way, TAC's Command and Control (Command Post) at Langley AFB headquarters has significantly advanced the art of positive control over TAC forces worldwide. Eventually, the system, in concert with TAC's Airborne Command Post, will provide maximum responsiveness and permit rapid changes in plans to cope with the ever-widening range of the command's commitments.

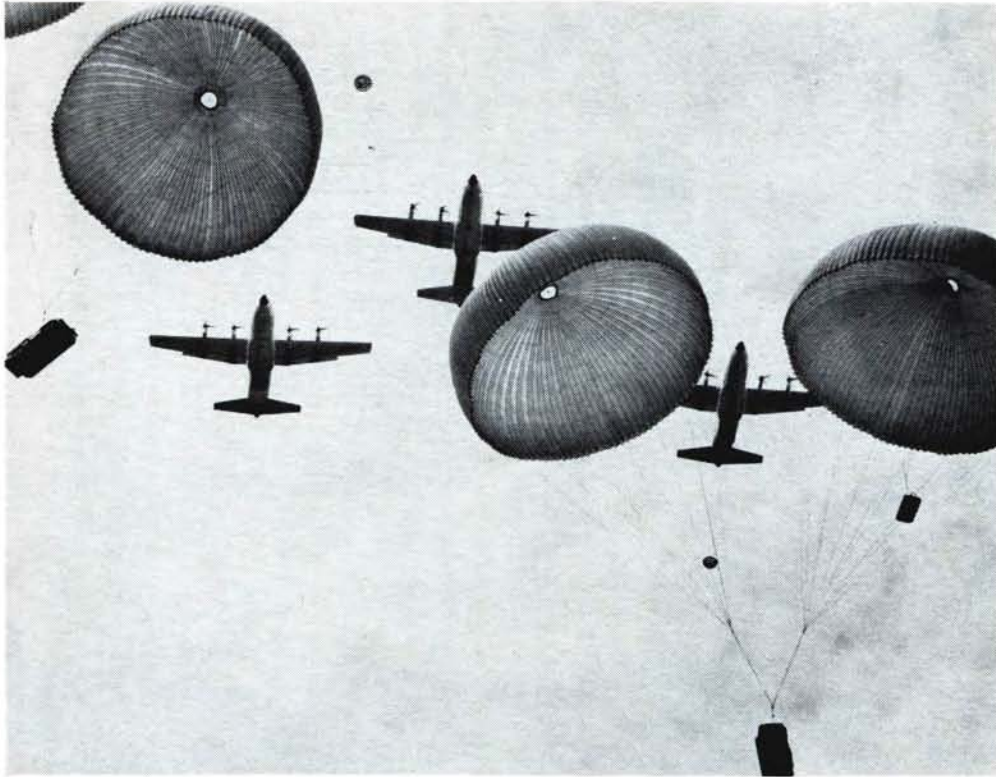
This increased capability was tested repeatedly during FY '64 when TAC forces—including Air National Guard units—were deployed overseas with greater frequency than ever before. In addition to the normal flow of rotational squadrons to support USAFE and PACAF, TAC participated in four major overseas training exercises involving strike forces and the TAC Airborne Command Post element: Big Lift (Europe), Delawar (Iran), Shiksha (India), and Northern Express (Norway). The TAC ACP also controlled five separate deployments of Air National Guard units to Alaska, Bermuda, and Puerto Rico.

Perhaps the most significant of TAC active force deployments, in terms of reaction and mobility, came in January and February, when two normal rotational Fox Ables established nonstop distance and time marks. In Fox Able 159 a squadron of eighteen F-104s flew nonstop from California to Spain, a distance of 6,150 miles, in ten hours and twenty-four minutes. A month later, Fox Able 160 sent eighteen F-100s from Florida to Turkey on a 6,600-mile nonstop journey in just under twelve hours. In both cases, the TAC Airborne Command Post maintained positive control throughout the mission, from takeoff to landing.

These two historic feats served to highlight TAC's vastly improved reaction time using KC-135 jet tankers from the SAC fleet, which enables the fighter force to maintain altitude and speed during refueling. In the California-Spain flight there were six in-flight hook-ups, and in the Florida-Turkey deployment there were seven.

Despite an increased number of overseas deployments and exercises, TAC was no less engaged in domestic unilateral and joint training activities. Though the volume of joint maneuvers was below other years, the size and significance of war games in FY '64 were greater. From the scrub-pine sandhills of the Carolinas to the frozen wilderness of Alaska to the dusty, scorched desert of California-Nevada-Arizona, TAC and its Army counterpart in STRICOM were involved in tough, uncompromising exercises necessary to per-

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Delivery of supplies and heavy equipment into the airborne drop zone is a primary task of TAC's assault airlift crews. These big C-130 transports can also operate from crude, unimproved airstrips in battle zone.

fect an air-ground fighting team ready for any combat environment. They were Swift Strike III, Polar Siege, and Desert Strike; and, though the scenarios were similar, techniques and tactics were different to meet special demands of terrain, weather, geography, and circumstances.

In each case, TAC applied lessons learned from continuing unilateral tests to provide an improved quality of support for ground forces in close-air support, aerial recon, and assault airlift—and particularly in immediate responsiveness to Army battlefield requirements. To cite a few examples:

Projects Match Point, Trail Blazer, and Night Owl are designed to sharpen the skill with which tactical fighter pilots locate and attack hard-to-find and camouflaged ground targets. Match Point is a competitive test wherein fighter pilot and Forward Air Controller teams vie for top honors on a regular basis under extremely realistic conditions. Trail Blazer is a continuing test of identification and attack skills against targets along regular low-level flight routes, requiring gun-camera evidence of successful attacks from every conceivable angle. Night Owl, as the name implies, is aimed at improving nighttime strikes against similar targets and demands the utmost in coordination between flare-equipped aircraft and attacking fighters.

Tactical aerial reconnaissance likewise made steady progress in FY '64 by constant development, testing, and practice. Some of the innovations include a rocket launcher permitting an F-100 to deliver recon films at 400-knot speeds within a 150-foot circle to ground units, a strobe-light system for better night photography, high-quality sensors with data-link transmitters for quick readout to ground stations, and airborne television enabling ground commanders to actually see

what the recon pilot sees. The new sensors include infrared, side-looking radar, television, framing cameras with in-flight processing, and panoramic cameras.

Assault airlift, a vital role in TAC's ground-support mission, has enjoyed continued advancement. The versatile C-130 has been improved with beefed-up landing gear for greater proficiency in operating from short, hastily prepared strips. It also has received better navigational equipment for day-night, low-level deliveries, and dual cargo rails for handling bulky and heavier payloads. The "ground proximity" extraction technique of yanking cargo, by hook and parachute, from low-flying C-130s over front-line positions has been refined. The "pop-up" technique of troop delivery—flying in low and climbing quickly to jump altitude over the drop zone—also has been extensively exercised during the year.

In the continuing effort to devise better weapons for tactical fighters, the TAC-industry team has produced a number of innovations in recent years. One of the most significant is the 20-mm. "gun pod" to be carried externally by the new F-4C aircraft, thus adding appreciably to the aircraft's attack capabilities. As part of the same updating program, TAC has assigned Munitions Maintenance Squadrons (MUMS) to each fighter wing to enhance the wing's ability to deploy to any theater of the world ready to fight with nuclear or non-nuclear weapons.

Continuing the close coordination between TAC and the Army on a day-to-day basis, the Air Liaison Officer and Forward Air Controller program has been accelerated. In addition to ALO/FAC teams assigned to Army corps and division level with STRICOM, TAC has a reservoir of 500 squadron-assigned FACs im-

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Republic F-105D Thunderchief roars over an advance ground forces position on pine-dotted Alaskan plain during Exercise Polar Siege last winter, conducted by US Strike Command to test joint Army-Air Force operations under extreme cold-weather conditions.



Veteran North American F-100 Supersabre, shown at left in low-level pass, has been TAC fighter mainstay for ten years. Above, Lockheed C-130 Hercules demonstrates low-level delivery technique in Exercise Polar Siege, in which cargo is extracted by parachute while plane flies at minimum speed over drop zone.

diately available for duty with Army forces. The majority are jump qualified, as well as being experienced fighter pilots with cross-training in recon and assault-airlift requirements.

During FY '64, TAC flew an increased number of sorties in direct support of the Army, both in joint exercises and in unilateral training: 2,376 fighter, 322 reconnaissance, and 13,696 airlift sorties were flown in the period.

Behind the scenes, quality-control programs also received high priority during FY '64. TAC withdrew from the Tri-Command Standardization and Evaluation Program to permit greater concentration on upgrading the standards of its complex mission. The 4450th Standardization/Evaluation Group made a total of 156 formal visits to Regular and Reserve units, accumulating 1,328 flight checks and 3,596 written examinations for aircrews operating some thirty different weapon systems, in an intensified effort to develop a higher degree of individual and unit professionalism.

Significant improvements in flight and ground safety were noted in FY '64. The major accident rate decreased from 12.3 last year to 10.3. In ground safety, TAC won for the second straight year the National Safety Council's "Award of Honor" for a twenty-two-percent net reduction in ground accidents.

TAC's involvement in unconventional warfare (more commonly called "counterinsurgency" but termed "Spe-

cial Air Warfare" by the Air Force) with activities at the Special Air Warfare Center at Eglin AFB, Fla., moved at an accelerated pace throughout FY '64. In addition to adding new squadrons (A-1E and C-123) and more people, SAWC expanded its training program to provide instructor and advisory personnel to commando units in Southeast Asia, European Command, and US Southern Command. Meanwhile, the 1st Combat Applications Group continued to develop, test, and provide new weapons, techniques, and tactics in a steady effort to improve the free world's ability to cope with the modern application of history's oldest form of warfare. The degree of TAC's support in the Republic of South Vietnam is clearly evident by the fact that in 1963 personnel of the 1st Air Commando Wing received a total of 230 combat decorations: twenty-three Distinguished Flying Crosses, two Airman's Medals, six Bronze Stars, one Joint Services Commendation Medal, seven Air Force Commendation Medals, sixteen Purple Hearts, and 175 Air Medals. In 1964 there were more, including the Air Force Cross, second in rank only to the Medal of Honor.

By any standard of measurement, TAC had a busy year in FY '64, and the year signified the real start of a new era in which tactical airpower will play an ever-increasing role in the nation's response to threats of aggression, at whatever level of violence the aggressor chooses to employ.—END