



The classic form of the Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker has graced USAF bases for over 50 years, but is relatively new to the Oregon reservists. Its service in the state is due to be brief, however, as the 939th ARW is scheduled to have given up its tankers by September 2007 – a victim of the 2005 BRAC review.

Kingsley Field also organises its own exercise and, every other year, the 173rd runs Exercise Sentry Eagle, in which 40 to 50 fighter aircraft from the different services are gathered. The goal is to undertake a large force air-superiority training exercise that lasts between four and five days. It starts out small with 4v4 engagements but then expands to 8v8 and then 12v12 scenarios.

In addition, this year the exercise Sentry Lion 2006 saw six F-15s and more than 100 members of the 173rd Fighter Wing going to Bulgaria. This air-to-air combat exercise was held between the 173rd FW and the Bulgarian Air Force, from 2 to 15 June, in which the 173rd flew more than 70 sorties against MiG-29, MiG-21 and Su-25 aircraft. It was also a chance for the United States to build a military relationship with Bulgaria. The nation has recently joined the North American Treaty Organization (NATO), and members of the Bulgarian Air Force and the Oregon Air National Guard recently completed a two-part Joint Contact Team Program (JCTP), sponsored by European Command. JCTP is a programme designed to help new NATO nations learn how to train and fight with their new allies.

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Wedan explains: "We sit and talk to our students every single day on how it is like to fight a MiG-29, or what a MiG-21 can do in a slow speed fight – and to read it in a book is different to practising it for real. This exercise gave the instructors a great opportunity to enhance the instruction at Kingsley Field."

A land with a bright future

As wing commander Colonel Schiess explains: "Back in the early 1980s, one of the things the students were impressed with when they finished

the course was not only how accountable the students were held to solid performance, but also how the instructors held each other accountable for their own performance. This actually was the genesis for the unit's motto: The land of no slack.

"It is about the training of culture and that is why Kingsley Field has been in the training business for 23 years now and will continue to be so for many years to come. This was also recognised when in 1995, as a result of the BRAC findings, General Don Sheppard confronted then-commander Colonel Billy Cox with the option to either convert and fly C-130s or that the base was to be closed. General Sheppard himself passed through Kingsley Field as a student and he knew that the unit had the facilities, the right mindset, and the airspace, but more importantly, he remembered that the base had something more valuable to offer, this culture of training: the land of no slack. This outspoken recognition resulted in the BRAC plan being changed and, instead, the unit became the second Eagle FTU in the country.

"The future of the wing looks bright with this stepped increase in 'iron' [aircraft]. However, at some point in the future, our goal is to be the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and/or F-22 training base and there are three viable reasons: one, it is cheaper. Currently, the fully burden cost of training a pilot at Kingsley Field is about 60 to 80 percent of what it would cost when an active-duty unit would train the same pilot. Two, the guard has a more experienced instructor cadre with on average twice as many flying hours and, third, we have proven that we keep ahead on the leading edge of the newest equipment, introducing modifications and upgrades first before line units would introduce them."

939th Air Refueling Wing Air Force Reserve tankers

Commanded by Colonel William N. Hanigan since June 2004, the 939th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) was established on 5 April 2003 in a ceremony converting the primary mission of the 939th Rescue Wing, a unit with a long history of service in northwest Oregon and southwest Washington, from pararescue to air refuelling. This was a consequence of the USAF decision to consolidate all pararescue aircraft at active-duty installations while Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) units were to fulfill primary missions traditionally assigned to active-duty USAF units. To increase overall force readiness, the Reserve Wing at Portland was assigned the air refuelling mission with the KC-135R Stratotanker, providing force enhancement and deployment capability to support global reach and global power for America.

Up to that point, the Air Force Reserve's mission in Oregon had been air rescue and the air force reservists had done so for more than four decades. This air rescue mission was first established in Portland in 1957 with the 304th Air Rescue Squadron, while the first unit designated as the 939th was the 939th Troop Carrier Group (Medium), established on 15 January 1963. The Group underwent several conversions until being inactivated on 1 July 1976.

It was reactivated as the 939th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group on 1 April 1985, rising from the 304th Rescue and Recovery Squadron. Several reorganisations and conversions followed until the unit was designated the 939th Air Rescue Wing on 1 April 1990, and