

The 916th Air Refueling Wing

As North Carolina's first Air Force Reserve flying wing, the 916th has a rich and growing history in the Goldsboro area, but its real history started nearly 65 years ago.

While the current 77th Air Refueling Squadron assigned to the 916th Air Refueling Wing can date its history back to the days of World War II, the number 916 was assigned to the unit from the 916th Troop Center Group, deactivated at Carswell AFB, Texas, in 1972.

Reincarnated as a refueling group, the 916th was a Reserve associate unit flying KC-10 Extenders side-by-side with the 4th Fighter Wing. They were called to active duty for Operations Desert Storm, Desert Shield and Proud Return, offloading more fuel than any other Air Force refueling unit.

On Oct. 1, 1995, the group, now a wing, officially gained an independent refueling and airlift mission with KC-135R Stratotankers. Concurrently, the tanker mission became part of the Air Mobility Command.

The conversion process was completed in April 1997 when the 916th Air Refueling Wing officially became mission ready. The Air Force and Air Force Reserve tested the mettle of Reserve Airmen even before the unit was on line. The wing was tapped to refuel domestic and global exercise and operational flights; they flew cargo and passenger missions in support of Join Endeavor (Bosnia) and both Atlantic and Pacific supply missions; they were alerted for short-notice missions and crews stood alert duty for several days, ready to support U.S. military response in Southwest Asia.

Early in the conversion process, the Reserve wing supported refueling and airlift for 4th Fighter Wing F-15E deployments, including hurricane evacuations and off-station exercises. During Operation Allied Force, volunteer aircrews and support personnel served for nearly four weeks, providing air refueling support for strike and surveillance aircraft. More than 3.5 million pounds of fuel were passed to a wide variety of allied aircraft.

The 916th's aircraft are the most recent version of the predecessor to Boeing's 707 airliner and sport new CFM-56 turbofan engines equivalent to the newest commercial power plants. New on-board auxiliary power units allow the Stratotankers to take off from remote airfields without ground support.

The latest modification to the KC-135R was completed in the spring of 2000. Called Pacer CRAG, for Compass, Radar and Global Positioning System, it adds flight control systems equal to modern commercial airliners. Pacer CRAG will extend the life of these vintage aircraft well into the 21st century.

Today, nearly 250 full-time civilians and Air Reserve Technicians and 700 traditional reservists work diligently to continue the mission of the 916th Air Refueling Wing. Hundreds of Airmen of the Tarheel state unit have deployed in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, New Dawn, Odyssey Dawn and Homeland Defense.

With the Base Realignment and Closure Act announced in 2005, the 916th gained eight additional tankers and more than 280 active duty personnel as the first KC-135R Active Associate Wing in Air Force history.

As an Active Associate the 916th earned four trophies in 2009 at Air Mobility Command's RODEO competition, to include Best Tanker Wing. In early 2010, the 911th Air Refueling Squadron was named the Best Tanker Squadron in Air Mobility Command after only being established with the 916th for two years and in late 2010 the wing was named Best Air Force Reserve unit by the Air Force Association.

With reservists and active duty Airmen coming from various counties across North Carolina and multiple states across the U.S., they dedicate their weekends and time off from civilian jobs in order to serve their country.

Working in the operations group, mission support group, maintenance group, aerospace medicine squadron and wing headquarters, our Airmen are able to deliver rapid, global mobility- on time, every time!