

GT&T News



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A 5th Combat Communications Group Supplement to the Robins Rev-Up

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July 1, 1964 is not a particularly historic day. The Cincinnati Reds beat the Chicago Cubs 6-5 behind Pete Rose's home run in the 10th inning. The Beach Boys were atop the charts with their hit "I Get Around." And it was a full five years before Neil Armstrong became the first man to step on the moon's surface. However, it was a significant day for the Air Force. That day was the formation of the 5th Combat Communications Group, which makes this July 1 important for the group because it signifies...

40 years and counting

First commander's letter highlight's group's strengths

Editor's note: The following excerpts are from a 1967 letter written by Col. Billy Millis, the first 5th Combat Communications Group commander. The letter was to Air Force Communications Service Headquarters in response to a request to tell how the group had gone through a week-long inspection without a single derogatory item.

Training and upgrade program

With respect to our upgrade program, we have been fortunate in having large numbers of students within the same AFSC's in training which has allowed us to run a rather formalized training course. For the formal training portion, we use highly qualified instructors as lecturers who cover in detail the theoretical portion as covered in the CDC's. They also give periodic tests to assure that the students are assimilating the material.

Concurrent with the academic phase, we conduct a practical phase with the students working approximately one-half a day each day in the various shops under the guiding hand of an experienced supervisor. Again, the practical phase is not a hit or miss affair, but is set up as a progressive program which assures that each student is thoroughly schooled in all facets of the practical side.

I don't think there is any particular magic to this approach, however, it does require that a schedule be developed and the followed. It could be done with one man as well as a hundred; the training of larger groups is just more efficient.

Morale

Explaining how we have been able to achieve and maintain a relatively high reenlistment rate is harder and much less precise. It goes without saying that high morale—and esprit de corps—is necessary. While there is no magic formula for achieving this, I feel a few policies and practices we have are at least partially responsible and are enumerated below.

Sponsorship program

To the extent possible, each new man is sent a letter of welcome and assigned a sponsor who also writes him a letter of welcome. The sponsor also requests information on housing needs, etc., and tries to make arrangements for such housing or other special needs before he arrives.

New personnel briefing

On Tuesday of each week, I give a formal slide briefing to all personnel who have arrived during the preceding week. This briefing includes mission, command structure from MAC (Military Airlift Command) on down, information on the host base, and—most important—what I expect of each individual. Safety practices, wearing of seat belts, financial responsibility, Commander's Open Door policy, and many other similar items are covered.

Morning Formation

From the first days of the organization, we have held a Morning Formation of the complete Group. While there are those who would say that it costs many manhours each day, I feel experience has shown that it provides a cohesiveness or organization and effort nothing else could give. It is through this media that we pass out daily information on safety, mission directives, sports events, fund drives, etc.

Retaining Contact with Deployed Personnel

I require each team commander or individually deployed man to send me a written report weekly, briefly outlining how he is getting along and whether any problems are being encountered. I feel this report is absolutely necessary. If the deployed personnel feel you have lost interest in them after they are deployed, morale is bound to suffer. We have stopped many potential rhubarbs by correcting problems early.

Taking Care of Our Own

The 5th Mobile Communications Group has developed quite a reputation on the base for taking care of its personnel, including the families of deployed personnel. Also, we have a single point of contact—the First Sergeant—for families having trouble and needing help. Although I have been warned against such a system because of abuses, so far it hasn't been so. Both the Red Cross Director and the Family Services Coordinator say they have less business from the 5th Mobile Communications Group than from any other organizations its size on base.

Sports Program

From the first, the 5th Mobile Communications Group has had a very active sports program and has made a good showing in all competitive sports. We always have a good "fan" turnout, possibly because of the announcements at the Morning Formation. I feel the sports program has had a very favorable impact on morale and esprit de corps.

Information Program

We have a very active information program and try to get the organization and its personnel's names and accomplishments in the news as often as possible. We also publish a local pamphlet on a monthly basis. Although the information program requires a great amount of effort, I feel it has been and is worth the effort.

Mission Accomplishment

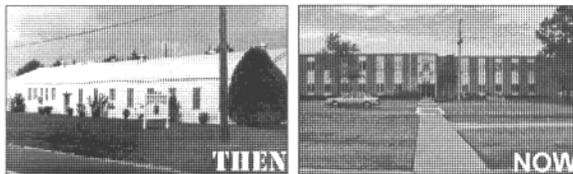
Finally, our personnel are proud that they have always been able to do better than just a good job on all missions. I expect my men to do an outstanding job and let them know it. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, they respond admirably.

Contrary to popular belief, I have found almost no correlation between the amount of TDY and morale. In fact, some of the men with a very high reputation of TDY are the organization's highest achievers.

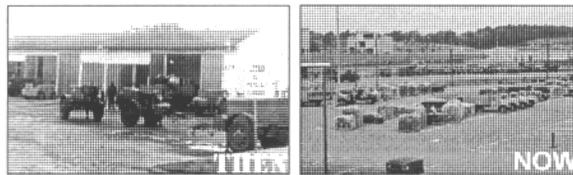
Pictures show MOB Then vs. Now



Group shield



Group headquarters



Motor pool/backyard



Newspaper

Did you know?

Group commanders

The group commanders, all colonels, with dates they served, are:
Billy Millis, 1964-1967
Joseph Solomon, 1967-1969
Lloyd Bergman, 1969-1970
Joseph Solomon, 1970-1971
George Madara, 1971-1973
Clifford Allison, Jr., 1973-1974
Patrick Frickleton, 1974-1975
Robert Rayfield, 1975-1978
John Kopsick, Jr., 1978-1981
John Livengood, 1981-1983
Donald Hicks, 1983-1986
Edgar Knowing, 1986-1989

Michael Moehlenkamp, 1989-1992
Walter Jones, 1992-1994
Michael Smiley, 1994-1996
Richard Jensen, 1996-1998
William Stuart, 1998-2000
David Schreck, 2000-2002
David Cotton, 2002-2004
John Lent, 2004-Present

Group's name

The 5th Combat Communication Group's original designation was the 5th Mobile Comm Group.
The name was changed to 5th Combat Communications Group

in 1976; to 5th Combat Information Systems Group in 1984; and back to 5th Combat Communications Group in 1986.

The group is called the "MOB" because the group's first designation was as a mobile (or "mob") communications group.

Outstanding unit

The group has earned nine Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards. Two were earned during the 1970s, five were earned during the 1990s and two during the current decade.