

SMDC/ARSTRAT becomes operational with creation of brigades to protect

By Mark Hubbs
SMDC/ARSTRAT Historical Office

The Army's first space brigade, serving the war fighter

On April 11, 2003, an activation ceremony was held at U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command headquarters on Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. The ceremony marked the creation of the Army's first and only space brigade - 1st Space Brigade (Provisional). Army Lt. Gen. Joseph M. Cosumano, then the commanding general for the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/U. S. Army Space Command, presided over the ceremony. Cosumano observed that the activation "[represented] a huge step forward in the normalization of Space."

The creation of the 1st Space Brigade was to provide warfighters with civilians, equipment and access to a variety of space-based products and services. The 1st Space Brigade has three battalions: the 53rd Signal Battalion, 1st Space Battalion and the 193rd Space Support Battalion.

The 53rd Signal Battalion is the oldest battalion in the brigade and traces its heritage to five satellite control detachments under the MILSATCON Directorate of ARSPACE.

The U.S. Army converted these detachments into the 1st Satellite Control Battalion on May 1, 1995.

This is the first battalion, in the history of the Army, whose operational mission is directly tied to the control of space systems and capabilities. The battalion plans and controls the payload of the Defense Satellite Communications System satellites. It was reflagged as the 53rd Signal Battalion (SATCON) on Oct. 26, 2005.

With this move, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Horne, then deputy commander for Operations, SMDC/ARSTRAT, noted that "the Army formally recognizes the unit's operational warfighting mission." The 53rd carries on the satellite control mission with six companies at various locations across the globe. Those companies are located at: Headquarters, Peterson Air Force Base; Headquarters Company, Schriever Air Force Base; A Company, Fort Detrick, Md.; B Company, Fort Meade, Md.; C Company, Landstuhl, Germany; D Company, Camp Roberts, Calif.; and E Company, Fort Buckner, Okinawa, Japan.



Satellite communications facility, Delta Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, Camp Roberts, Calif.

The 1st Space Battalion was activated on Dec. 15, 1999 with a mission to provide existing and emerging space support to the warfighter and to provide tactical ballistic missile warning. The mission expanded in April 2001 to include space control operations for American and Allied forces with the addition of a Space Control Detachment. The 1st Space Battalion officially unfurled its new battalion colors when it was transitioned to a full-fledged battalion organization on July 8, 2004. The battalion was organized with three companies, with plans to expand to five companies by 2008.

Much of the battalion's space support mission had been ongoing for several years before the activation of the battalion.

In 1994, ARSPACE formally assumed a new mission - Contingency Operations (Space), now known as the Army Space Support Teams (ARSSTs). With this mission, the teams are to "provide worldwide space operations support to Army forces during operations as well as operations other-than-war."



An ARSST team member assists a 1st Infantry Division Soldier with satellite images.

The 2nd Space Company is composed of ARSSTs which have been deploying in assistance to Army and Marine Corps ground units since 1995 as the on-the-ground space experts in satellite communications, weather, terrain analysis and 3-D visualization, mapping, and satellite coverage analysis.

Commercial Exploitation Teams (CETs) provide similar services by arranging for the use of commercial satellite assets. ARSSTs and CETs of the 2nd Space Company have been repeatedly deployed in support of OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM since its early phases.

The 1st Space Company of the battalion has the mission of theater missile warning with the Joint Tactical Ground Stations (JTAGS). The 1st Space Company is headquartered with the brigade but mans three JTAGS detachments. Sections of these three detachments are located in Colorado Springs, Stuttgart Germany, Qatar, and Osan Air Base, Korea.

When activated in 2008 the 2nd and 5th Companies will be manned by Army Reserve soldiers and will have the ARSST and CET mission.

The 193rd Space Battalion is the third battalion of the 1st Space Brigade and was activated in 2001. Manned by full- and part-time Colorado National Guardsmen, its organization and missions mirror the 1st Space Battalion.

The 193rd has also been a continuous ARSST and CET presence in the Persian Gulf region since the beginning of OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. The 193rd will be redesignated as the 117th Space Battalion October 2007.

The 100th Missile Defense Brigade, Protecting the Homeland

The 100th Missile Defense Brigade was activated in Colorado Springs on Oct. 16, 2003. The brigade is a multi-component unit staffed largely by active Colorado National Guardsmen and a contingent of active duty soldiers. In fact, the brigade gets its name from the fact that Colorado is often called the "Centennial State" as it was admitted to the union in the centennial year of the American independence. The Brigade includes five Missile Defense Elements (MDEs) and the 49th Missile Defense Battalion.

An MDE is a five man element commanded by an Army lieutenant colonel. The MDEs rotate duty at the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) control and launch center at Schriever AFB. This control center is connected to GMD launch facilities at Fort Greely, Alaska, and test launch facilities at Vandenberg AFB, California. All launch functions at those locations can be controlled remotely by MDEs from Schriever, where one MDE is continually on duty. Commanders of the MDEs answer directly to the 100th Missile Defense Brigade commander.

The 49th Missile Defense Battalion is also an element of the 100th. The 49th was activated at Fort Greely, Alaska on



A JTACS crew off-loads a JTACS during its initial deployment to Germany.

Jan. 22, 2004 and is completely staffed by Alaska National Guardsmen. The 49th provides launch control and site security of the GMD missile launch facility at Fort Greely. The 49th is named in honor of Alaska, as the nation's 49th state.



A Soldier from the 49th Missile Defense Battalion secures the GMD perimeter fence at Fort Greely, Alaska.