

Michael J. Cook



Colonel Michael J. Cook, USAF Retired, served four tours with the *Fightin' Fifty-Fifth*, totaling over 15 years in diverse positions of aircrew and staff duties of significant impact on the Wing's global missions during critical periods in the Wing's history.

From 1974-76, as an RC-135 aircrew commander and instructor pilot with the 343rd SRS at Offutt, his responsibilities included training, standardization, and operational mission accomplishment. As a squadron instructor pilot (IP), he spearheaded the difference and qualification training for pilots in the RC -135, and in getting the squadron successfully through a no-notice evaluation by the SAC evaluation team.

After attending graduate school and a tour at HQ SAC, he returned to the 55th SRW in 1982. Then-Maj Cook served as an IP where he advanced to the Stan/Eval RC-135

Branch Chief, and then to Stand/Eval Division Chief. He then moved to the 38th SRS as the Operations Officer until 1987. During this time, he was a leader in establishing the first full motion RC-135 Flight Simulator at Offutt.

Later, he assumed command of 922nd Strategic Squadron, Hellenikon AB, Greece in 1989. In this position, he served as Area Commander for SAC reconnaissance operations in the Mediterranean and Southwest Asia. Lt Col Cook met the challenges with initiative, dedication, and superlative leadership. He was in the process of closing the 922nd Strat Sqd at Hellenikon, and moving all assets to NAS Souda Bay, when Kuwait was invaded in 1990. He immediately received orders to receive and support a tanker task force at Hellenikon in addition to the RC-135 assets. Add to that executing the first RC-135 SIGINT mission into Saudi Arabia to cover the invasion. Lt Col Cook then structured the squadron into a rear-area supply depot, and an air terminal for deploying and redeploying RC assets and logistical support aircraft. He was the leader in initiating RC-135 missions against Northern Iraq.

LtCol Cook was directed to continue support to the Kuwait invasion while expeditiously moving the entire unit to NAS Souda Bay, Crete. In ten days, he directed the move of all personnel, material and maintenance equipment, vehicles, and two RC-135s and crews. This was accomplished for the remainder of the conflict at 100 percent mission effectiveness.

Back to the 55th as the Operations Group, Deputy Commander in 1991, Col Cook was the point man on the base closure and relocation of the 24th Recon Sqd and the Cobra Ball mission from Eielson AFB, AK, to Offutt. He was then sent to Kadena AB, Okinawa, to engineer the standup the 82nd RS, the newest squadron of the 55th.

Col Cook guided the standup of the new OC-135, OPEN SKIES (treaty inspection) mission. He led the first mission into Russia providing invaluable information about the operating environment. He later deployed to Saudi Arabia as Deputy Commander, 4409th Ops Group (Aug-Dec 1994) as the overseer for reconnaissance and tanker operations. This was the largest deployment of US forces to South West Asia since the Gulf War began Operation SOUTHERN WATCH operation over Iraq. Col Cook flew eleven missions if those missions.

In 1995, Col Cook became the US Air Attaché to Greece. In this position, he obtained diplomatic clearances for RC-135 operations with the Greek military and government to insure continued RC operations. When

the opposition party in Greece sought to close down RC ops at NAS Souda Bay, Col Cook provided information to the US Ambassador that proved the operations to be in full compliance with established and agreed upon protocols and military agreements. Operations were allowed to continue then and to the present.

Col Cook again returned to the 55th in 1998 as the Chief of Staff until his retirement in 1999 after 30 years of distinguished and honorable service.

He subsequently was hired as the site manager for a new contract responsible for all ground training and ground/flight simulator training for 55th crewmembers in the RC-135 Rivet Joint, Combat Sent, Cobra Ball, OC/WC-135, and all communications personnel in the E-4B. Attached to the 338th Combat Crew Training Sq, the contract workforce under his leadership trained over 1100 students. This formalized training facilitated a guaranteed crew force stability enabling the 55th to meet all of its operational requirements.

In 2006, Col Cook took the position in the 55th Wing as a RC-135 Simulator Instructor Pilot, Quality Assurance, and BIG SAFARI Logistics Representative. He has come full circle, once again training crew members and crew chiefs in the basics.



The new RC-135 flight simulator