

SIGNAL COMPANY, AIRCRAFT WARNING, HAWAII ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY

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Signal Company, Aircraft Warning, Hawaii (SCAWH) was organized at Schofield Barracks, Territory of Hawaii (T.H.) on August 14, 1940 per Paragraph 2, General Order Number 24, Headquarters Hawaiian Department (HHD). Its personnel were transferred from the 11th Signal Company, Schofield Barracks, T.H. and the Hawaiian Division. The first Commanding Officer was First Lieutenant (1st Lt.) Wilfred Tetley.

Emphasis was given on training the men in the fields of radio, telephone, plotting, and the basic principles of Radar, which stood for radio detection and ranging. Wire, Motor and Plotting Sections were formed under non-commissioned officers and training of the cadre began.

The first mobile radar sets (SCR-270B) arrived on Oahu in August 1941, and less than a month were deployed to positions at Kawailoa, Waianae, Koko Head, Kaaawa and Fort Shafter in the order mentioned.

An Information Center was constructed under the direction of Master Sergeant Coleman at the Signal Corps Area, Fort Shafter, Honolulu, T.H. with materials purchased from the Plans and Training Fund. The Wire Section under Lieutenant White wired the telephones at the Information Center, and established telephone communication with the radar units in the field. The Information Center was in operation in the latter part of October 1941.

In October 1941, installation of the Opana Radar began under the direction of 1st. Lt. Hogan, which necessitated the building of an access road to the site. Lt. Hogan borrowed a bulldozer and other equipment and began construction of the approach road.

The SCR-270B radar stations operated for a period of 24-hours a day from Thanksgiving to December 3, 1941. Then they operated from 3:00 AM to 7:00AM until December 7, 1941 per order of the HHD. All units — including the Information Center at Ft. Shafter — were in operation within thirty minutes after the first Japanese aircraft commenced hostilities upon Oahu's military installations.

Telephone communications with the Waianae Unit was severed due to bombing, Lt. Robinson (OIC) sent a detail to nearby Waianae town to locate, and return with a radio transmitter. They came back with a 40 watt transmitter — and its operator — within thirty minutes and began transmission to the Information Center in the blind.

The strength of the Company at the beginning of the war was 375 men and 12 officers, the Table of Organization called for 450 men. The six radar stations in operation on Oahu operated with gasoline powered generators for 24 hours daily. Commercial electrical power was being sought to provide a more economical approach towards providing power to the field units.

The Information Center, utilized an old warehouse at the Signal Corps Cable Area, which became the heart of the Hawaiian Department's Air Defense network (codename *Little Robert*), the SCR-270B radars and the Antiaircraft Intelligence Service provided the eyes.

Puu Manawahua, located in the Waianae Mountain Range, was the site of a radar unit that Lt. Hogan borrowed from the Marine Corps on December 17, 1941. It was believed that this was an SCR-268 unit (author's emphasis). Lt. Sugg, USNR, installed another radar unit in the hills behind Fort Shafter — this was a Navy CXAM radar — removed from the Battleship U.S.S. *California* (BB-44) heavily damaged during the December 7, 1941 attack of Pearl Harbor.

Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment Hawaii Organized

On December 19, 1941, SCAWH was ordered to relocate to the Ft. Shafter Signal Corps Area per General Order No. 76, HHD dated December 10, 1941.

Additional personnel were transferred to the organization on December 24, 1941 in the form of 300 privates from infantry, engineer, and artillery Units on Oahu. SCAWH was redesignated as Signal Aircraft

Warning Regiment Hawaii (SAWRH) per General Orders No. 80, HHD, dated December 17, 1942. Captain Norman L. Tittle was placed in initial command. On January 19, 1942, Major Rudolph L. Duncan assumed command and Captain Tittle became the Executive Officer of the regiment

On January 22, 1942 an SCR-271 fixed Radar unit began operation at Haleakala, Maui under Lt. A. F. Krancus. Another SCR-271 began operating at Kokee, Kauai on February 6, 1942 under command of Lt. R. K. Caceres.

The SAWRH was comprised of following companies activated on February 15, 1942, with station at the Signal Corps Area, Fort Shafter, per General Order No. 15 HHD, dated February 15, 1942:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Company
- Company "A" (Plotting, Signal Corps Area)
- Company "B" (Communications, Signal Corps Area)
- Company "C"
- Company "D"
- Company "F" activated with station at Haleakala, Maui
- Company "G" at Kokee, Kauai.

On February 16, 1942, Private Joseph L. Lockard (of Opana radar fame) was appointed to the grade of Staff Sergeant, and selected to attend the Signal Corps Officers' Candidate School at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey for his meritorious example of duty on the morning of December 7, 1941.

The Women's Air Raid Defense (W.A.R.D.) was organized under the direction of Colonel Tindall, Mrs. Gwendlyn Williams, Mrs. Kathleen Hamlin, and Mrs. Mary Erdman, and trained under the direction of Lt. Ardie A. Konkel. Training started on January 1, 1942, and after an eleven-day period of indoctrination, the first group of W.A.R.D. members reported for duty at the Information Center located at Fort Shafter. By February 1, 1942, over 90 women had been trained and began to replace enlisted men at the Information Center, who were needed for other duties.

On February 1, 1942 the Information Center was moved to a newly built bomb-proof tunnel at Fort Shafter (codename *Lizard*). The W.A.R.D. was attached to Company "A" (Plotting) for administrative and operational purposes.

515th Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment

On April 17, 1942, SAWRH was redesignated as the 515th Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment (Sp) per General Order No. 64, HHD. Lieutenant Colonel Duncan became its first Commanding Officer. Additional radar stations were established when SCR-270B radars were located at Lanai City, Lanai and Kailua, Maui in May 1942..

The Regiment's medical detachment was organized on June 2, 1942 with Captain Jeter in command of 45 enlisted men with Lieutenants S. Ginsberg and M. Kleinfeld as the Dental and Medical Officers. respectively

Captain Uhl and Lt. Upson were transferred to Hilo, Hawaii to lay the groundwork for a new SCR-271 base camp at Pahoehoe. The Molokai units were converted to SCR-516 radars on June 18, 1942, and the Puu Ohuku unit was moved to Moomomi Beach, Molokai.

Regiment Reorganizes

On July 3, 1942, certain companies were redesignated, and new ones activated. Company "A" (Plotting) became Company "B" (Communications); "B" Company became "A" Company. Company "C" and "D" combined to become Headquarters Company, Reporting Battalion. The enlisted men of the Headquarters Section of the old Company "C", together with the Molokai and Lanai Detachments formed the new Company "F."

Company "F" was redesignated and became Company "D," Company "G" became Company "C" and Company "E" was activated with station at Pahoia, Hawaii, per General Order No. 66, Headquarters Seventh Air Force, dated July 3, 1942. Lieutenant Colonel Duncan was relieved of assignment by Lt. Col. Tasso W. Swartz as Regimental Commander on July 15, 1942.

The Maui Filter Center was completed on July 30, 1942 and processed information received from radar stations and ground observers stationed on the islands of Maui, Molokai and Lanai.

A permanent radar station equipped with an SCR-271 radar was completed on July 31, 1942 at Pahoia, Hawaii.

The organizational strength of the Regiment was 39 Officers, 2 Warrant Officers, and 1258 Enlisted Men.

515th Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment Disbands

Per General Order No. 35, Headquarters Hawaiian Department, dated April 1, 1943, the 515th Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment was disbanded. On the same date, General Order No. 7, Seventh Air Force, and General Order No. 12, VII Fighter Command, Army Air Force, activated the 580th Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion (Sp) with Companies "A", "B", "C", "D", and "E.", Battalion Headquarters and Battalion Headquarters (Medical Section); and the 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion, with Companies "A", "B", "C", Battalion Headquarters and Battalion Headquarters (Medical Section).

Total strength of the 515th Signal Aircraft Warning Regiment at time of disbandment was 93 Officers, 1 Warrant Officer, and 1694 Enlisted Men.

Lieutenant Colonel Tasso Swartz was relieved of command per Special Order No. 47, Headquarters VII Fighter Command, AAF, and Lt. Col. Raymond E. Large became Commanding Officer of the 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion.

Morning Reports for the 580th Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion commenced on April 7, 1943 as the order activating the 580th and 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalions did not reach the headquarters of the former 515th Aircraft Warning Regiment until April 6, 1943.

General Order No. 28, VII Fighter Command, AAF, dated August 9, 1943 attached the 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion (composed of Companies "A", "B", and "C") to the 580th Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion (Sp) for administration and duty.

Special Order No. 135, VII Fighter Command, AAF dated August 9, 1943 relieved Lt. Col. Raymond E. Large from the 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion, transferring him to Headquarters, VII Fighter Command, AAF. The same Special Order transferred Major Ardie A. Conkel to the 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion where he became the Commanding Officer.

As operations increased in the forward areas of the Central Pacific, the Battalions were called upon to furnish trained personnel for newly-formed Task Forces. As the demand for trained personnel increased, new Signal Aircraft Warning Companies began arriving from the Mainland to help solve the acute shortage of personnel.

The first of the new Companies attached to the battalion were the 704th, 759th and 763rd Signal Aircraft Warning Companies per General Order No. 37, Headquarters VII Fighter Command, AAF dated November 27, 1943.

Additional Companies attached to the Battalion were:

- 726th Signal Aircraft Warning Co. (Gen. Order No. 4, Hq VII Ftr. Command, AAF dated Feb. 20, 1944)
- 680th Signal Aircraft Warning Co. (Gen. Order No. 6, Hq. VII Ftr. Command, AAF dated March 1, 1944)
- 746th Signal Aircraft Warning Co. (Gen. Order No. 10, Hq VII Ftr. Command, AAF dated March 17,

1944)

- 748th Signal Aircraft Warning Co., (Gen. Order No.10, Hq. VII Ftr. Command, AAF dated March 17, 1944)
- 696th Signal Aircraft Warning Co., (Gen. Order No.11, Hq. VII Ftr. Command, AAF dated March 18, 1944)
- 697th Signal Aircraft Warning Co., (Gen. Order No.11, Hq. VII Ftr. Command, AAF dated March 18, 1944)

Battalion strength of the 580th Signal Aircraft Warning Bn. (Sp.) and the 581st Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion on March 31, 1944 were: 580th: 79 Officers, 12 Warrant Officers, 1417 Enlisted Men; 581st: 47 Officers, 4 Warrant Officers, 837 Enlisted Men.

Concluding Remarks

This report does not reflect the entire recorded history of the Signal Company, Aircraft Warning, Hawaii as contained in the transcript, but is the author's presentation of the important highlights of the organizational history of the unit and its successor organizations.

Much thanks goes to Wray B. K. Taylor, II for his research into the history of the employment of Radar in Hawaii during its infancy in the 1940's which blossomed after the tragic December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor and the other military installations on Oahu.

The SCR-270B mobile unit at Opana in Kahuku proved the worth of early Radar detection of aircraft, which tragically went unheeded. The difference between the SCR-270B and the SCR-271A radars was that the 270B was transportable with the antenna mounted on a trailer and the associated equipment was mounted on vans, whereas the SCR-271A antenna rig was permanently mounted on a 100-foot steel latticed tower mounted on concrete piers, and the operations equipment and emergency generators were housed in tunnels dug into hillsides, i.e., Kaena Point, Opana, Koko Crater and Ulupau Head with some 40-feet of overhead rock cover making them relatively bombproof.

Sources

1. Taylor, Wray B.K., II, employee of the Parks Department, City and County of Honolulu, author of unpublished report titled, *Koko Head's Military Chronology 1934-1969*. Copy of the report was furnished this writer in January 2001. Taylor is a member of the Coast Defense Study Group and has researched the early beginnings of the Signal Company, Aircraft Warning, Hawaii and its successor commands.
2. _____ furnished this writer a printed copy of the *Organizational History, Signal Company, Aircraft Warning, Hawaii* that was obtained in microfilm form as contained in microfilm roll A 7601 from the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 600 Chennault Circle, Maxwell AFB, AL 36112-6424.

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