



Western Air Defense Sector

Unit Location: Joint Base Lewis McChord

Personnel: 326

Breakdown:

220 - Full-Time Guardsmen

61 - Traditional Guardsmen

22 - Title 5

15 - Canadian Forces

5 - Contractors

3 - Navy

Mission:

Federal: The Sector's primary mission along with the Eastern Air Defense Sector (EADS) is "Guarding America's Skies." This 24/7 role involves the use of radar and communications systems to monitor air traffic from the Mississippi River west to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Canadian border south to the Mexican border. The Sector reports to Air Combat Command and NORAD in its federal role.

State: WADS reports to the governor through the Washington National Guard headquarters at Camp Murray. The Sector works with state agencies to provide rapid response in the event of natural or manmade disasters, and participate in disaster preparedness exercises. The Sector is able to provide an air picture to help in rescue operations in the event of disasters.

History of the Western Air Defense Sector

The WADS predecessor unit, the Seattle Air Defense Sector was established by the USAF Air Defense Command on Jan. 8, 1958 with a mission to train and maintain tactical flying units in state of readiness in order to defend the Seattle area, assuming control of former ADC Western Air Defense Force units located in western Washington west of the Cascade Range. The Sector was inactivated on 1 April 1966 as part of an ADC consolidation and reorganization; and its units were reassigned to the 25th Air Division.

Beginning on July 1, 1958 it began operations of a SAGE (Semi-Automatic Ground Environment) Direction Center DC-12 47°07'18"N 122°30'14"W at McChord AFB. It also operated a SAGE Combat Center (CC-03). SAGE inactivated 31 August 1983

On April 1, 1966, SEADS was inactivated, as were the other 22 sectors in the country. Most of its assets were assumed by the 25th Air Division. The DC-12 SAGE Direction Center was assigned to the 25th Air Division, remaining in operation until Dec. 31, 1969. Today it is used as the Western Air Defense Sector (WADS) Joint Surveillance System (JSS) Sector Operations Control Center (SOCC).

On July 1, 1987, the Seattle Air Defense Sector (SEADS) became the Northwest Air Defense Sector or NWADS, and was assigned to 25th Air Division, co-locating with the 25th AD. The 25th Air Division was inactivated on Sept. 30, 1990, transferring its assets and responsibility for atmospheric defense to NWADS.

On Jan. 1, 1995, the Northwest Air Defense Sector consolidated with the Southwest Air Defense Sector; its counterpart at March AFB, California, to become the Western Air Defense Sector (WADS). WADS assumed responsibility for the air sovereignty of the western United States from Texas around the west coast and across to North Dakota. Its area of responsibility is approximately 1.9 million square miles, about 63 percent of the continental United States.

On Oct. 1, 1997, the Western Air Defense Sector completed a seamless transition from the active duty Air Force to the Air National Guard. Citizen-soldiers of the Washington Air National Guard are currently guarding America's skies. The Continental NORAD Region (CONR) has responsibility for the Western Air Defense Sector and Eastern Air Defense Sector. It is headquartered at Tyndall AFB, Florida.

At the end of 2005, the outdated Q-93 radar system was replaced with modernized computer systems, which was a major shift in how CONUS is defended since the Q-93 system had been in use since 1983. Also, in 2005, Western Air Defense Sector assumed responsibility of more airspace shifting from down the center of the US. to east of Mississippi totalling roughly 75 percent of the US airspace. There have been a few system updates since 2005 but only upgrades to the firmware and program versions, not the hardware itself like what happened in 2005.



Col. Peter Stavros



CCMSgt Daniel Rebstock



2014 Highlights:

In 2014, WADS actively tracked more than 4.3 million flights over the United States. Nine-hundred of those tracks were identified as tracks of interest, causing additional action by WADS personnel to identify these aircraft. WADS personnel also initiated 45 fighter jet scrambles to frequently intercept unknown aircraft. Throughout the year, operations also worked to closely monitor 22 temporary flight restrictions (TFR's) over major US cities in the western sector.

WADS participated as the lead ground-based Tactical Command and Control (Tac C2) for Exercise Red Flag 14-3 at Nellis AFB from July 11-25. The exercise simulated a deployment and involved two control and reporting center crews supporting air dominance operations that included Defensive Counter-Air, Global Strike, Dynamic Targeting, High Value Target hunt, Air Interdiction, Combat Search and Rescue and Tactical Airlift missions.

In October, WADS participated in a week-long multiagency exercise called Vigilant Shield. WADS participated along with units from Alaska, Canada, NORAD and the Eastern Air Defense Sector to ensure streamline communication between the many agencies and to test operational effectiveness.

A full design and build of a new Classified Network Control Center was completed in 2014. The project, a \$2 million contract, provided all new secure servers and modernized the facility. The new CNCC runs 19 different computer systems, the foundation of the WADS mission. The previous system was at capacity with no backup power system and a climate control system running at capacity. The critical upgrade standardized and organized the servers, generated improved redundancy, a backup power system, an environmental monitoring system and protection from earthquakes and gives WADS 25 percent capacity for future growth.

The Airmen of WADS earned a "highly effective" rating during a Unit Effectiveness Inspection in August. The rating highlights the accomplishments of the unit as well as the appointed Inspector General team and Wing Inspection Team in preparing the unit for the new requirements. In just nine months the IG and WIT members conducted five self-inspections covering 19 criterion. The rating placed WADS as the first highly effective rating for an Air National Guard unit and tied WADS with an Active Duty base for 1st place in UEI performance ratings.

A ceremony was held on Sept. 11 establishing an official memorial to the attack on the World Trade Center. A piece of the building is now encased in a display on the first floor of WADS to remind its members and visitors that the heart of the WADS mission is to prevent another aerial attack on American soil.

In 2014, WADS members participated in a multitude of community relations and building events to include civic group tours, an ESGR Boss Lift, flag detail for Seahawks and Sounders games, Thanksgiving turkey donation deliveries, Holiday ham donation deliveries, and a Habitat for Humanity women's build.



The inside display at the Western Air Defense Sector Headquarters Bldg on JBLM. On the left: Flight 93 Memorial debris; center: Pentagon stone; right: steel from WTC. (Photo by PFC Brianne Patterson)



Canadian Army Brigadier General Carl Turenne addresses a room full of U.S. and Canadian members of the Western Air Defense Sector (WADS), Washington Air National Guard during the inaugural National Day of Honour ceremony on May 9th, 2014 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. (Photo by Spc. Samantha Ciaramitaro.)



Col. Dave Harmon, vice commander, Western Air Defense Sector, talks with U.S. Congressman Denny Heck about the Western Air Defense Sector and the mission that WADS conducts for the United States and Washington state.