

Overview of the 1989th Com Group at Torrejon AB

Written By James Hill



The 1989th Com Group took care of all communications equipment and then some. On the far side of the runway were the transmitter & receiver sites. Inside the transmitter site not only were there transmitters that transmitted normal air traffic information to the aircraft from the tower or GCA, but also a top secret SAC transmitter & receiver that sent & received coded messages from and to the tankers and fighters. It's hard to get gas if you don't know where the gas station is. Also Inform Radio another top secret transmitter and receiver for coded messages between the bases. Not to forget the top secret transmitter used by the crypto teletypes. We maintained and operated all the equipment in this building.

The receiver site had receivers for normal air traffic and would direct it to the tower or GCA. It also had top secret receivers that received encrypted messages that were directed to the crypto teletypes in the basement of the headquarters building. We maintained all the equipment in this building.

Between the flight line and the runway was the GCA unit. A radar and communications unit for directing air traffic in flight. TANGO JULIET 128 Heavy, Please decrease your altitude to 10000 feet for noise evasion. This is TANGO JULIET 128 Heavy, don't you mean increase? TANGO JULIET 128 Heavy, have you ever heard the sound two aircrafts make when they collide at 20000 feet? TANGO JULIET 128 Heavy, decreasing altitude. We maintained the communication equipment and the voice recorders.

Also between the flight line and the run way was a mobile tower, a little olive drab trailer with tower like windows on top. We maintained it – we checked the communication gear, made sure the light gun worked, and that the flairs were within date. But it was never used in the five years I was at the base. Its purpose was in case something should happen to the tower.

The tower had some local radios, voice recorders and phones that we maintained and operated.

We also maintained the weather equipment. Back then the chart receiver was as large as a two draw filing cabinet. It was called a MuFax machine and it had tubes, no transistors, no ICs, just good old vacuum tubes. It had electric sensitive paper and produced the weather maps that the pilots used. Boy we've come a long way since then.

Base radio and its maintenance shop were in a Quonset hut over by the junk yard. It had a pot belly stove for heat. And there was a coffee pot on the stove.

We maintained some top secret radios hidden away in the combat room in the head quarters building. And we manned and maintained the crypto gear in the basement.

We also maintained the radio and television equipment for the 7722nd Detachment 6 AFRTS. The 7722nd supplied its own operators. Or should I say DJs.

We also had a quick response communication team with portable antenna towers, generators, tents and Inform radios in case of a disaster. We practiced often. Sorry to say we were activated once to respond to a crash site of a KC-135 tanker. I was on that team and I don't think I'll ever forget what I saw.

At some point in my five years at the base I worked at each and every one of these places.

Or at least that's the way I remember it when I was there. 1974 thru 1979

Jim