



AIR COMBAT COMMAND

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Air Force Distributed Common Ground System

Current as of July 20, 2023

MISSION

The Air Force Distributed Common Ground System (AF DCGS) refers to the AN/GSQ-272 SENTINEL weapon system that is operated by active duty (AD) and Air Reserve Component (ARC; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command) personnel. It is the Air Force's primary intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) Analysis and Exploitation weapon system. The weapon system employs a global communications architecture that connects multiple intelligence platforms, sensors, and sites. Airmen assigned to AF DCGS produce actionable intelligence from data collected by a variety of data sources, to include sensors on the U-2 Dragon Lady, RQ-4 Global Hawk, MQ-9 Reaper and other ISR platforms.

FEATURES

AF DCGS active-duty units are assigned to 16th Air Force (Air Combat Command), however AF DCGS employs a total force integration (TFI) concept for expanded capacity, using both Air National Guard units assigned to their respective states, until activated by presidential order, and classic associate Air Reserve intelligence units. The 480th ISR Wing, headquartered at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, is the AF DCGS lead wing and is responsible for executing worldwide AF DCGS operations.

Individual AF DCGS sites are regionally aligned and paired with corresponding Air Force component numbered air forces to provide critical analysis, exploitation and dissemination of intelligence collected within the numbered air force's area of responsibility; however, globally networked capabilities enable other AF DCGS sites to execute missions beyond their numbered air force's geographic area of responsibility as needed due to prioritization or capacity shift.

The 480th ISR Wing AF DCGS Operations Center relies on daily coordination to ensure current knowledge of dynamic capacities. This ensures the weapon system remains operationally aligned to specific theater collection priorities, and intelligence missions are executed in keeping with the combined forces air component commander (CFACC), joint force commander air component commander (JFACC) and the joint force commander for ISR (JFCC-ISR) apportionment and allocation to fully satisfy joint and coalition intelligence needs.

AF DCGS participates in operations throughout the world, including those led by the U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Forces Korea, U.S. Northern Command, U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Southern Command, the UN, and NATO.

AIR COMBAT COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

115 Thompson St., Ste 121
Langley AFB, Va. 23665-1987

ACCPA.operations@us.af.mil
757-764-5007



Twitter: @aircombatcmd



Facebook: @aircombatcommand



Instagram: @aircombatcommand





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BACKGROUND

AF DCGS evolved from ISR programs dating back to the late 1960s, however the current weapon system traces its direct lineage to the Contingency Airborne Reconnaissance System (CARS) established in 1992 at Langley AFB, Va.. CARS was housed in approximately 27 deployable shelters and undertook deployments to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Saudi Arabia. In October 1994, ACC and the Pacific Air Forces signed an Organizational Change request (OCR) that stood up DGS-1, Langley AFB, Va., DGS-2, Beale AFB, Calif., and DGS-3, Osan AB, South Korea. In 1996, CARS became AF DCGS. In 2003 and 2004, respectively, the expanding weapon system added units at DGS-4, Ramstein AB, Germany and DGS-5, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

Since its early inception, AF DCGS has evolved from a deployable system to a distributed ISR operation capable of providing world-wide, near-real-time simultaneous intelligence to multiple theaters of operation through a robust reach-back communications architecture. The system integrates data collected by ISR platforms with analysis and exploitation performed by intelligence professionals to provide critical and actionable intelligence to leadership and supported commanders worldwide.

Through a federated/distributed architecture, AF DCGS can move data between worldwide sites. Over the years, the AF DCGS weapon system and its predecessor systems have supported ISR operations in every major conflict in which U.S. forces have been involved. In addition, AF DCGS has provided intelligence analysis and exploitation during humanitarian and coalition partner operations via specialized products specifically cleared for release.

Characteristics

Primary function: Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance

Major system contractors: Raytheon, Lockheed-Martin, L-3 Technologies Inc., Northrop Grumman, Leidos, BAE Systems, CACI and Booz Allen Hamilton

Major support contractors: Northrop Grumman, Booz Allen Hamilton, TASC, MITRE, CACI, Leidos, BAE Systems, General Dynamics, and Iron Bow Technologies

Daily operational tempo: Analysis and Exploitation of 50 critical lines of effort in support of Air Operations Commanders; near-real-time/command, control, and exploitation of 25+ ISR sorties and 500 hours of motion imagery

Operational crew size: Analysis and Exploitation Teams (AETs) consist of 15 crew members specializing in different intelligence disciplines, providing analysis and exploitation from whatever data sensor/source is required to address a critical intelligence need (also known as an Analytic Line of Effort or ALOE). Mission Management Teams (MMT) and Operational Management Teams (OMT) provide oversight and coordination for AETs at the Group and Squadron level (respectively). In addition to AETs, near-real-time (NRT) full motion video (FMV) and Command and Control (C2) mission crews are postured according to mission demands. Weapon System crews are supported by maintenance, network communications, logistics, and contractor personnel.

Initial operating capability: DGS-1: July 1994; DGS-2, July 1995; DGS-3, November 1996; DGS-NV, October 2001; DGS-4, February 2003; DGS-5, October 2004; DGS-KS, July 2006; DGS-AL and DGS-AR, November 2006; DGS-IN, September 2009; DGS-MA, December 2009, SE-UT, Oct 2014

Inventory: Five active duty Air Force DGS sites (DGS-1 through 5) and five active duty DMS sites (DMS-GA, -MD, -HI, -GE, and -TX); Air National Guard provides eight total DGS sites consisting of six unit-equipped sites (DGS-AL, -AK, -NV, -IN, -KS, -MA) and two collocated with active duty sites. Additionally, there are three Air National Guard DMS sites; Air Force Reserve provides four DGS units (all collocated with active-duty sites), and one AFRC DMS site.

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