The AC-119 Gunship Association is a combat veterans’ group composed of 3 Units who served in Vietnam and held their first reunion in Fort Walton Beach on September 2000. They formed a 501c (19) Non-Profit AC-119 Gunship Association and continued to hold annual reunions throughout the country. They will return to Fort Walton Beach October 18 – November 1, 2020 for their 21st Reunion.

 The 71st Special Operations Squadron (SOS), known as Shadows, was the first AC-119 Gunship unit in country and composed of Reservists who flew the AC-119G model. This unit was eventually joined then replaced by the 17th SOS active-duty Squadron, and both Squadrons’ aircraft were known as “Shadow”. The 18th SOS was the 3rd unit, who flew the AC-119K aircraft and were known as “Stinger”.

Both the Shadow and Stinger units flew until they were turned over to the Vietnamese, who continued the AC-119 Gunship missions on their own.

The AC-119 Gunship Association is composed of flight crews, maintenance, and other support personnel who served in Vietnam, and includes many of their family members.

These troops were stationed at Tuy Hoa AB, Tan Son Nhut AB, Phan Rang AB, Phu Cat AB for the 71st and 17th. The 18th troops were stationed at DaNang AB, Phu Cat AB, and Phan Rang AB in Vietnam, and Nakhon Phanom AB in Thailand.

The 71st SOS Shadows were deployed to Vietnam in 1969 with a total of 26 AC-119G gunships in country. This was a Reservists unit that flew combat. They returned home and the 17th SOS took over the Shadow mission as an active-duty Squadron. Both Squadrons provided close air support, and in 1971, after the Cambodian Invasion, the Shadows played a significant role in daytime and night support of the Cambodian government’s armed forces. They also provided air support for troops in contact in Vietnam. Two Shadow aircraft and 11 crew members were lost. In 1972 all the Shadows were turned over to the Vietnam Air Force.

The 18th SOS Stingers flew combat missions in Southeast Asia for 3 years, 3 ½ months between 1969 and 1971; with a total of 26 AC-119 K gunships in country. Their primary mission was the interdiction of enemy supply lines on the Ho Chi Minh Trails in Laos while also providing ground support and site defense in Vietnam as needed. Three K models and 6 air and ground crew members were lost. Well over 1000 trucks in the enemies’ supply chain were destroyed by Stingers assigned to NKP who flew interdiction missions on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Although lf, the troops on the ground remember well the Shadows and Stingers who flew overhead to keep them alive. No ground unit of base was ever lost to enemy action while an AC-119 was overhead.

The flight crews for the 3 Squadrons trained at Lockbourne AFB in Ohio and Hurlburt Field in Florida prior to deployment.

Several books have been written by those who served in these units: Shadow Charlie Chasers, Elton Fletcher; Shadows of Saigon, Elton Fletcher; The Shadow Spirit, Elton Fletcher; and The Gunship Chronicles Stinger 41, Larry Barbee.

A video shown at the 2019 reunion, depicting the AC-119 mission is on The Association website at ***[AC-119 Gunships – Our Story](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SS0yYcIA0XU&feature=youtu.be" \t "_blank)***

The Association also compiled a History Book that includes the history of the three U.S. Air Force units that served in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam Era, with brief biographies and memories written by over 175 air and ground crew as well as a Final Flight Memoriam of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country The Association continues to provide comradery as well as healing for air and ground crew, as well as family members that include many whose loved one was Killed In Action