

## 159 FIGHTER SQUADRON



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

352 Fighter Squadron constituted, 29 Sep 1942  
Activated, 1 Oct 1942  
Inactivated, 18 Oct 1945  
Redesignated 159 Fighter Squadron and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946  
159 FS (SE) extended federal recognition 9 Feb 1947  
Redesignated 159 Fighter Squadron, Jet, 1 Aug 1948  
Redesignated 159 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 1 Nov 1950  
Redesignated  
Redesignated 159 Fighter-Bomber Squadron (Augmented), 1 Dec 1952  
Redesignated 159 Fighter Interceptor Squadron  
Redesignated 159 Fighter Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

### STATIONS

Mitchel Field, NY, 1 Oct 1942  
Richmond AAB, VA, 7 Oct 1942  
Langley Field, VA, 2 Nov 1943  
Millville AAFld, NJ, 4 Mar 1943  
Richmond AAB, VA, 27 Apr-26 May 1943  
Goxhill, England, 8 Jun 1943  
Metfield, England, 6 Aug 1943  
Raydon, England, 14 Apr 1943-c. 11 Oct 1945  
Camp Kilmer, NJ, 16-18 Oct 1945  
Thomas Cole Imeson Airport, FL  
Jacksonville, FL, 24 Oct 1968

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

353 Fighter Group, 1 Oct 1942-18 Oct 1945

125 Operations Group

## **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

### **Mission Aircraft**

P-40, 1942

P-47, 1943

P-51, 1944

F-80, 1 Aug 1948

F-84, 1951

F-51, 1952

F-86, 1954

T-33

F-102, 1960

F-106, 1974

F-16, 1987

F-15



### **Support Aircraft**

T-6

B-26

C-47

C-54

C-131

## **COMMANDERS**

Maj Bill D. Haviland, 1947  
Maj Arthur H. Bridge, 1950  
Lt Col Daniel F. Sharp, 1951  
Maj Lawrence Poutre, 1952  
Maj Leon A. Moore, Jr., 1952  
Lt Col John M. Taylor, 1956  
Lt Col James R. Higgins, 1964  
Lt Col Robert G. Mason, 1965  
Lt Col Dean T. Biggerstaff, 1974  
Lt Col Douglas D. Bright, 1980  
Lt Col Homer L. DeWeese, 1984  
Lt Col Emmett R. Titshaw, Jr., 1988  
Lt Col Forrest C. Clarke, 1990  
Lt Col John G. Aldous, 1990  
Lt Col Theodore N. Kraemer, 1992  
Lt Col Richard S. Ritter, 1994  
Lt Col James D. Thompson, 1995  
Lt Col Siegfried G. von Schweinitz, 1996  
Lt Col Chris N. Michalakakis, 1997  
Lt Col James A. Firth, 1999  
Lt Col James W. Agee, Jr., 2001  
Lt Col Robert M. Branyon, 2002  
Lt Col Scott A. Studer, 2003  
Lt Col Thomas B. Cucchi, 2004  
Lt Col Robert J. Wetzel, 2006

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

#### **Campaign Streamers**

Offensive, Europe

Air Normandy

Northern France

Rhineland

Ardennes-Alsace

Central Europe

Air Combat, EAME Theater

#### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

#### **Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citation

Holland, 17-23 Sep 1944

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award  
1 Jun 1977-30 Apr 1979

### **EMBLEM**



On a disc Azure, a lightning flash bendwise sinister throughout Or, overall an alligator Vert, eyed and armed of the second, detailed Sable, wearing boxing gloves of the last, detailed Azure, standing on an aerial bomb ascending bendwise in base of the fourth, highlighted of the second; all within a narrow Black border. Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The alligator, a formidable fighter, represents the home location of the unit. The lightning flash represents the ability to strike at a moment's notice. The missile represents the fighter air-to-air mission.

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

### **CALL SIGN**

### **OPERATIONS**

Air defense prior to overseas duty. Combat in ETO, 9 Aug 1943-25 Apr 1945.

At the conclusion of World War II work began toward the organization of air National Guard unit of the state of Florida. In the reorganization of the National Guard the United States the state of Florida was offered the 159 Fighter Squadron with authorized strength of 50 officers and 303 enlisted men. The governor accepted the unit on 30 August 1946. Full Federal recognition was to occur on 9 Feb 1947 with an assigned strength of eight officers and 10 enlisted men. The 159 fighter squadron was composed of four flights as follows the 159 Fighter Squadron the utility flight the 159 weather station and detachment C, 217 air service group.

At that time in 1946 facilities for housing the units were made available by the federal government in temporary World War II buildings that the air corps had used on the west side of Thomas Cole Iversen airport in Jacksonville, FL. With the arrival of the units first aircraft, the P-51D the Florida air National Guard moved into facilities provided.

During its second year of operation, the Florida Air National Guard became one of the first six Air National Guard squadrons to be equipped with jet aircraft. Conversion from the P-51D to the new F-80C became official on 1 August 1948 when the unit was redesignated the 159 Fighter Squadron, Jet. 1949 saw the addition of the 114 aircraft control and warning squadron established at Opa-Locka Florida as part of the Florida air National Guard.

The United Nations' decision to resist Communist aggression in South Korea in the summer of 1950 resulted in the call-up of most of Florida's Air National Guard. Florida's 159 Fighter-Bomber Squadron remained in active federal service from October 1950 to July 1952. The 159 trained and received orders for service in one country and went to another. The squadron received factory-fresh aircraft only to see them shipped to where it 'wasn't going. It defended one country and attacked another. It was a busy 20 months for the 159.

Ordered to active duty 10 October 1950, the 159 became part of the 116th Fighter-Bomber Wing and began nine months of intensive training at George Air Force Base in California. It exchanged its F-80 fighter planes for newer, more modern F-84s. In the late spring of 1951, the 159 was ordered to France. After accepting factory delivery of brand new F-84E aircraft and after seeing most of them "pickled" for overseas shipment and loaded aboard a navy carrier in Newark, New Jersey, the 159 received new orders: Japan.

The men of the 159 reversed direction, were issued older and much-used F-84 aircraft and loaded aboard the U.S.S. Sitkoh Bay bound for Yokahama, Japan. By early August, the 159 was again in training, this time at Misawa Air Force Base. Housing conditions, equipment, and work schedules were extremely grim and a serious morale problem was solved only when these conditions were corrected-and after a gigantic squadron beer party.

The 159 was assigned to duty as part of Japan's Air Defense Command, but continued its training as a ground attack force, and, at the end of November, 1951, was ordered to Korea. Between the 2nd and 6th of December, the squadron flew 92 combat sorties, approximately four missions per pilot. They expended 141 rockets, 50 1000-pound and 161 500-pound bombs, and 40,115 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition against enemy controlled ground targets in North Korea. Four of the 159's aircraft received battle damage.

Returned to Japan immediately following the combat missions, the 159 resumed their air defense role. Then, on the 23rd of January, 1952, they were recalled to Korea to participate in a multi-unit air strike on Communist positions in support of a major U.N. offensive.

One pilot of the squadron almost didn't make the mission. His aircraft flamed-out over Japan

and after a routine bail-out, and a brief stay in a Japanese village, he rejoined the squadron in time to fly the mission.

Back once more in Japan, the 159 were principal participants in an Air Force exercise, Operation Hi Tide. This involved in-flight refueling of fighter aircraft during actual operational air defense sorties. The squadron was also busy training new men who replaced those transferred home or to other fighter squadrons. By April of 1952 most of the squadron's original complement of Florida Air Guardsmen were gone. Also in April occurred the strangest of events associated with the squadron's Far Eastern deployment. Late one night a young Airman 1st Class convinced a Japanese guard he was a pilot, boarded an F-84, fired it up, took off, crashed at sea and was killed moments later.

In Late June, the 159 was ordered home for release from active duty. It was officially returned to civilian and National Guard status on 9 July 1952. After 20 months in jet fighters, the squadron's pilots were issued P-51 piston-engine aircraft. Only after the Korean War ended would the 159 become a jet squadron again, and so remain to this day.

The Florida ANG was called to active duty on 10 Oct 1950 and ordered to report to George AFB, CA. On arrival at George AFB, the 159 Fighter Squadron, 158th FS and the 196th Fighter Squadron of the California Air National Guard to form the 116<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group On 1 November 1950, the group and squadrons were reorganized under the Wing Base Plan and redesignated the 116th Fighter Group commanded by LTC Howard L. Galbreath After nine months of training at George, during which time the original F-80s were replaced with the F-84E, the group was ordered to the Far East over riding original orders for Europe 28 November 1951. Elements of the Florida ANG's 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron, including 13 F-84s, arrived at Teagu AB, Korea from Japan for a short combat tour and began flying combat missions that same day. They bombed rail lines near Wonsan, North Korea as part of the campaign to interdict the flow of communist supplies to the battle front.

By 10 July 1951 the first elements of the group sailed aboard the aircraft carrier Sitkoh Bay with the balance of the group following two days later on the carrier Windham Bay. By 10 Aug 1951 the group was in operation at its new home at Misawa AB, Japan. On 14 Aug through 2 Sep 1951 saw the balance of the FANG home stationed units annual training at Orlando AFB. This included the 114 ACWS and some air section personnel assigned to the HQ. A primary mission of the FANG during the Korean Conflict was on of Air Defense coupled with combat over Korea. In flying combat mission from its base in Japan to Korea, the wing was the first to participate in inflight refueling in combat. This was codenamed Operation High Tide. For their part in the Korean Conflict the unit was presented the Korean Service Citation with bronze service stars. 2 December 1951. The 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron dispatched 16 F-84Es, pilots, and support personnel from Japan to Teague AB, Korea where they flew their first combat mission that same morning. On 9 Jul 1952 159 was released from active service and returned to Jacksonville.

On 9 January 1952, the unit, now released from federal active duty, returned to the Imeson Municipal Airport in Jacksonville. By now, these old facilities had far outlived their planned life,

were not adequate for the purpose for which they were now to be used, and were beyond the state of economical repair. The adjutant general prepared for a long-range plan for development of a new facility, and assisted United States in negotiation of a long-term lease for tract of land in the Northeast corner of Thomas Cole Imersen airport. The tract consisted of 32.34 acres. Federal funds were obtained and construction began on this new Air Base facility the only cost to the state being for planning and supervision. The Florida air National Guard would now have an Air Base facility that was second to none consisting of all utilities, paving, aircraft parking apron, and warehouses in addition to motor service shop, paint, and dope building, fuel facilities, and other buildings, the total cost the federal government for the facilities was just over \$1 million.

All of the unit's F-84s and all ground equipment had been turned over to the United States Air Force and left in Japan, so on 10 July 1952, the 159 Fighter Squadron, Jet was redesignated the 159 Fighter Interceptor Squadron. On 25 July 1952, the 205 Tow Target Flight control was not returned to the state after having its allotment withdrawn. Headquarters Florida air National Guard performed its annual training at Hunter Air Force Base Georgia from 17 through 31 August 1952. Then on 1 December 1950 the 159 change to the 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron (Augmented). Augmentation consisted of the following units: maintenance squadron, motor vehicle squadron, air police squadron, food service squadron, installation squadron, a composite medical group, in addition the squadron had pilot trainees and aviation cadets.

The 159 performed its annual training at Hunter AFB, GA 17-31 August 1952

By Dec 1954 the squadron consisted of 43 officers and 472 enlisted men

The 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron (Augmented) was reequipped with P-51Hs. Support aircraft received were T-6 for instrument training, B-26 for target towing, and C-47 and C-54.

Maj Leon A. Moore Jr. assumed command of the 159 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, on July 1, 1952.

Upon release from active duty, the unit returned July 9, 1952, with their new commander to Imeson Municipal Airport. The unit's F-84Es and all its ground equipment were turned over to the U.S. Air Force and left in Japan. On July 10, 1952, the 159 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, was re-designated the 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron, dissolving the 159 Utility Flight and integrating it into the unit.

Six months later, the 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron was re-equipped with F-51H and redesignated the 159 Fighter Bomber Squadron Augmented (FBSA). The unit integrated various support aircraft into its inventory during this period. The unit received T-6s for instrument training, B-26s for target towing, and C-47 and C-45. During the early 1950s, the U.S. Air Force was in the process of rebuilding its squadrons with jet fighters and jet bombers and changes to the Florida Air National Guard aircraft inventory were constant, fast and furious.

For example, from October to December 1954, the 159 FBSA was equipped with nine different types of aircraft including the T-6, B-26, C-45, C-47, C-54, F-51H, T-33, F-80, and F-86A. By the end of December 1954, things settled down and the 159 FBSA had an entire squadron of F-80Cs for the second time. There were 43 officers and warrant officers, and 472 enlisted men in the unit. Dec 1954: Converted from F-51D/Hs to Lockheed F-80Cs.

In July 1955, while still equipped with F-80Cs, the unit was re-designated the 159 Fighter Interceptor Squadron with a mission change to Air Defense. By July 1, 1956, the unit reorganized into 125th Fighter Group (125 FG). The activation of the 125th coincided with the conversion to the F-86D, an all weather interceptor. The F-86 made the 125th a self-sustaining unit capable of performing the Air Defense mission in all types of weather, day or night.

In July 1955. Equipped with F-80Cs, the 159 was redesignated and its mission changed to air defense.

Florida's 159 FIS based at Imeson Field flew F-80C from 1955. On 1 July of 1956, the unit's first F-86D, 51-5915. arrived from Fresno. By the end of August nine F-86Ds had arrived from NAA's Fresno line, though all subsequent deliveries came from McClellan AFB. The 159 FIS operated twenty-five F-86Ds.

On 1 Jan 1957 the Florida air National Guard assumed the air defense command alert commitment for the Jacksonville Florida area. The objective of the program was to supplement the regular air defense force and to improve crew proficiency. This commitment began with approximately 14 hours per day participation then on 1 Oct 1958, the commitment was change to around-the-clock basis every day.

During 1957, the approximately 88 full-time technicians of the Florida air National Guard serviced an average of 86 transit aircraft each month as well as both filling their commitment of air defense command alert duties. The professional attitude of the men and a high state of maintenance of aircraft by these men contributed greatly to the 125 Fighter Group being awarded the Air Force flying safety award for 1957.

On Jan 1, 1957, the FLANG assumed the Air Defense Command alert commitment for the Jacksonville area. The objective of the program was to supplement the regular Air Defense force and to improve fighter crew proficiency. That commitment began with 14-hour-day participation, and eventually evolved into a round-the-clock mission Oct. 1, 1958.

In 1958 the Missile Team from the 125th Fighter Group, represented the ANG in the sixth World Wide Weapons Meet at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. They competed against the best teams in the U. S. Air Force, and fired the first perfect score in the history of the event. Team members Col. Robert Dawson, LTC Leon A. (Buck) Moore, Maj. John M. Taylor, Capt. Robert L. Southwell and 2nd Lt. Dean T. Biggerstaff brought home the Richard I. Bong Trophy for winning the 1958 USAF Weapons Meet in the F-86 division.

In 1959 and 1960, the 125th underwent two aircraft conversions which greatly increased the unit's inventory and operational costs. In June 1959, the unit converted from the F-86D to the F-86L. F-86Ds were retained until mid-June of 1959 when they began to be ferried out for storage at Davis-Monthan. Concurrently, on 19 June 1959, the first F-86Ls were assigned to the 159 FIS, from the 329th Consolidated Logistics Maintenance Squadron at Stewart AFB. The unit was fully re-equipped by the end of July. The last three F-86Ds departed for storage on 16 July, although 51 5908 was retained until 22 July and donated to the town of Gulfport, MS, for display.

The replacement F-86Ls did not serve for long and Convair F-102As arrived in June 1960. The final Sabres had left by the end of March. Another major conversion began July 1, 1960, when the unit converted from the F-86L to the F-102A supersonic fighter. The new F-102A provided new challenges for the unit; throughout the conversion the maintenance section of the 125th Fighter Group faced and successfully solved the challenges of training its personnel for the advanced and highly technical weapons system of the F-102.

During the transition to the F-102, the unit continued operation of the F-86L aircraft to perform the Air Defense Command Alert mission. Due to the scope of the technical challenges involved in this transition, many unit personnel deployed to various U.S. Air Force technical schools for two to four weeks. A U.S. Air Force Mobile Training Detachment deployed to Imeson Airport for six months to ensure all members of the unit successfully completed training in their respective fields. The new fighter wasn't an all weather interceptor but provided many obstacles and new challenges to the unit.

Throughout this conversion the maintenance section of the 125 Fighter Group was faced with and successfully solved the problems of training its personnel for the much advanced and highly technical weapon system of the F-102. During the transition period to the F-102, it was necessary to continue operation of the F-86L aircraft to perform Air Defense Command alert status on a 24-hour basis. Due to the scope of the technical changes involved in this transition many of the maintenance personnel of the unit were sent to various technical schools. A United States Air Force mobile training detachment was brought to the base for six months to ensure that all members of the unit had successfully completed training in the respective fields.

Although there were numerous upgrades to FLANG facilities since its inception, the years 1961 and 1962 were significant years of expansion. During the period the airbase facilities at Imeson Airport gained approximately \$500,000 worth of additions that included a new engine shop, alert hanger, supply and equipment shed, weapons calibrator shelter, ammo maintenance shop and a new electrical distribution system.

A new procedure of "in place" training was also initiated in 1961 whereby unit members remained at home station to perform annual field training. In 1962, that plan was further modified to the "Texas Plan" enabling Guardsmen to schedule their annual training during special exercises and peak workloads throughout the year. In addition to benefiting the unit, it also gave individual Guardsmen a choice as to when they could perform annual field training.

The new Air Guard Base was located on 157.6 acres adjacent to the new Jacksonville International Airport. The new base was the first Air National Guard facility to be designed and constructed specifically for Air National Guard use. The new base became a model for future Air National Guard base construction projects around the country. Seventeen years later, the FLANG would secure another 174.36 acres, and currently the FLANG holds a lease for a total of 343 acres with the Jacksonville Aviation Authority.

About this time the Florida air National Guard was selected to participate in operation Silk Hat. This exercise was held at Tyndall Air Force Base Florida and was a display of all Air Force capabilities for the president of the United States.

The 125 Fighter Group upon request of the National Guard Bureau assumed the Puerto Rico air defense mission during the period from 27 July until 12 August 1968. The assumption of this mission required the 125 to deploy 14 pilots, 28 enlisted men and six aircraft to Puerto Rico.

In addition to normal aircrew functions performed during 1969, the 125 Fighter Group provided personnel for number of special assignments which included ferrying F-102 aircraft from the Netherlands to United States, provided F-102 aircraft for project Coronet East, ferrying F-102 aircraft to Turkey and provided for F102 aircrews to augment NORAD alert forces at Homestead Air Force Base Florida.

A significant realignment of Aerospace Defense command also took place during the latter part of 1969 when the 32nd Air Division and the First Air Force was inactivated. The inactivation of these two units, the operational control of the 125 Fighter Group was assigned to the 20th NORAD region at Fort Lee Virginia.

In 1972 Aerospace Defense command called upon the Florida air National Guard to assume the mission of air defense along the Gulf Coast states in the union establish a detachment of aircraft to operate on alert status from New Orleans. Aircraft are maintained locally and detachment one personnel rotated to New Orleans. This mission was ultimately assumed by the regular Air Force. The det consisted of 40 personnel

The most significant action of fiscal year 1974 was in-house conversion of the 125<sup>th</sup> from the F-102 to F-106. This conversion was begun in the first part of 1975 when the 125<sup>th</sup> completed transition to the F-106 and assumed its alert status at Jacksonville international Airport.

To support the increased maintenance activities inherent with the F-106 a program to improve and expand the air base maintenance facilities was formulated in 1974 and new construction stated in late 1975. A new consolidated Maintenance Facility was completed in 1977 to house jet engine shop the non destructive inspection lab and the AGE shop. In the deal a covered storage building for powered support equipment and the POL building to house the fuels section.

The Florida ANG received the F-106 in 1974, replacing the F-102. Although scheduled to transition out of the "Six" in 1983, plans were changed, and the unit will fly the Delta Dart for a while longer.

By the end of 1975, the F-106 was fully incorporated into the Florida air National Guard weapons inventory. Pilots and crews received extensive training in the operation and maintenance of the new aircraft. They soon gain the expertise needed to handle the sophisticated all whether supersonic aircraft. To support the increased maintenance activities inherent with F-106, a program to improve and expand the Air Base maintenance facilities was formulated in 1974 and new construction started in late 1975. A new consolidated maintenance facility was completed in 1977 to house the jet engine shop, the nondestructive inspection lab, and aerospace ground equipment shop. Included in the consolidated maintenance facility structure package was a covered storage building for powered support equipment and POL building to house the fuels section.

During the 1976 bicentennial period, the FLANG flew a specially painted F-106. During the conversion to the F-106, the unit received aircraft tail number 8076. With the 200th anniversary of our nation coming up, the unit decided to paint the '76' F-106 red, white and blue with the words "City of Jacksonville" on the fuselage. 125<sup>th</sup> personnel completed the paint job in one day. The "Easter Egg" plane, as the painted F- 106 was called, scrambled several times to include a scramble to intercept a Russian Bear. The enemy pilots were probably not sure what to think of the colorful plane and immediately turned and left U.S. air space. The bicentennial aircraft received wide publicity, and was featured by national and international aviation magazines. It flew every bicentennial event and Fourth of July holiday event held in Jacksonville that year.

The 125th Fighter Interceptor Group flew the F-106 for 12 years, but by the end of 1986 the U.S. Air Force began to phase out the F-106 and convert the units flying the Delta Dart to the F-4 Phantom. The F-4 was not ideal for the 125<sup>th</sup> mission and the Air National Guard Bureau decided to transition the 125th to the F-16. In January 1987, the unit converted to the F-16A. On April 1, 1987, the 125th jets became the first F-16 unit to sit alert in an Air Defense role as a fighter interceptor. That conversion marked the 11th fighter aircraft conversion for the unit. On Friday April 17, 1987, less than three weeks after assuming alert responsibilities, two F-16s from the 125th intercepted two Soviet TU-142 Bear-F anti-submarine warfare aircraft about 350 miles off the coast of Jacksonville.

On April 1, 1988, the 125th Fighter Interceptor Group alert mission at Homestead AFB, Fla., was re-designated Detachment 1. The mission continued without change as a second alert facility for the 125th. The 125<sup>th</sup> supported the drug interdiction mission in Florida. In April 1989, the 125th began providing support to the U.S. Customs Service.

The Florida air National Guard's 125 fighter interceptor group began replacing its F-106s with F-16 in formal ceremonies in September at the units Jacksonville International Airport base. The unit is the first to receive F-16A in a dedicated North American continental air defense role.

The unit flew another General Dynamics aircraft the F-102 for 14 years before it received its F-106. That makes 26 years and counting in General Dynamics aircraft. The ceremony was highlighted with an F-16 air show and air defense scrambled demonstration by 2 F-106 Delta Darts. Col. Dean T. Biggerstaff, 125 Group commander opened the ceremony with a description of the crucial air defense mission.

He said the unit keeps two airplanes on alert at all times ready to scramble within 5 minutes to intercept and identify unknown aircraft. Col. Biggerstaff said the 125 FIG has been performing the air defense mission with two aircraft on constant five alert 5 min. alert since 1956. To demonstrate, a scramble horn sounded and two Delta Darts were taxied from a hangar where they're kept ready at all times. As the aircraft took off in the simulated air defense response, Col. Biggerstaff explained that two additional F-106 remained in a hangar on alert status ready in case of a real scramble order. Brig. Gen. James M. Rhodes commander of the 23rd air division said the selection of the 125 group as the first air defense F-16 unit bears testimony to the weight of the group's responsibility to its outstanding performance in building its mission. The unit has an enviable record in its long years in many millions of hours of alert. He said adding I'm very proud to see the arrival of the F-16. It is truly in amazing fighter. It has been a long-standing goal of the Air Force and air National Guard to increase the capability of air defense forces. Maj. Gen. Robert F Ensslin, Jr. adjutant general of Florida called F-16 the finest fighter aircraft in the world and the unit is prepared to continue outstanding performance in yet another first line US Air Force machine.

An F-16 flight demonstration was performed by the US Air Force's East Coast demonstration pilot Col. Smokey Bauman of the 363 TFW following the demonstration Baumans F-16 and another flown by Capt. Steve Ritter the 125's first qualified F-16 pilot joined 2 F-106s for a symbolic flyover of old and new aircraft. In another ceremony highlight. Col Biggerstaff referring to this fine display and to row of F-106s on the tarmac said this is probably the last opportunity you ever have see this.

Everyone at Jacksonville has enjoyed working with the F-106. Which has been the workhorse for air defense command and an outstanding airplane as well as a very safe airplane. Distinguished guests at the event included Brig. Gen. Otha R. Smith, Jr. assistant adjutant general of Florida, Brig. Gen. Homer H. Humphreys, Jr. Chief of Staff of Florida. Ritter BG Robert S. Dotson 23rd air division and officials from state and local government.

5 April 1987. Detachment 1 of the Florida Air Guard's 125th Fighter Interceptor Group, located at Homestead AFB, Florida, scrambled its new F-16 for the first time in the air defense alert mission that the unit had assumed on April 1st.

On 7 Jun 1988 LTC Sam Carter of the FANG was returning from a routine training flight in his F-16. Unbeknownst to Carter, 2 wild pigs were out for an evening stroll on the runway. As the aircraft touched down it struck the two unfortunate animals at approximately 150 MPH. The impact sheared the left landing gear from the aircraft causing it to veer sharply to the left, leave

the runway, travel through a ditch, become re-airborne and ultimately crash in a grove of pine saplings. Just as a fighter left the runway Carter ejected and parachuted safely back to Earth.

The Florida air National Guard was not about to accept such a loss of one of the aircraft. Carter who's the deputy chief of maintenance at the 125 fighter interceptor group and the skilled maintenance personnel of the 125 consolidated aircraft maintenance squadron elected to do what few air National Guard units have previously attempted rebuild the aircraft at home base. Recently F-16 number 713 returned to the skies over Florida that this aircraft flew again is testimony to the skill of the 125 fighter interceptor group as well as to the hard-working folks from the 2952 combat logistic support squadron from Hill Air Force Base Utah.

The 125th was re-designated the 125th Fighter Wing (FW) on Aug. 1, 1995. In 1995, the 125<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing converted from the F-16 to the F-15 as its primary fighter aircraft. Five years after the conversion to the F-15, Fighter Data Link (FDL) technology was incorporated into the F-15 allowing the pilots to link flight data with multiple users, providing realtime information on air and ground threats.

Since the days of the Air Defense F-16 conversion, the 125th has accomplished a series of "firsts" in the air defense community. The 125th was the first operational Air Defense F-16 unit to employ the AIM-7 missile and destroy a drone during Combat Archer at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla. Also, it was the first unit to deploy to Howard Air Base, Panama, for the Joint Chief's counterdrug mission "Coronet Nighthawk," and the first unit ever to complete a transition from one fourth-generation fighter to another when it converted from the F-16 to the F-15 in August 1995.

The 125th Fighter Wing deployed to Keflavik, Iceland, in April 1998 where it sat its first ever OCONUS 24-hour alert with F-15s as a part of a long-standing NATO treaty with the Iceland government. From May - July 1999, the unit deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey for Operation Northern Watch. The 125<sup>th</sup> deployed six F-15s and approximately 115 personnel over a seven-week period. In the spring of 2000, the 125th deployed 98 personnel to Laage, Germany, where the unit participated in Agile Archer 2000. During the deployment the unit conducted combat training against the German MiG-29 Fulcrum. In fall 2000, the 125th deployed to Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia, for Operation Southern Watch.

On Sept. 11, 2001, several loaded F-15 aircraft lined Runway 13/31 for the first time in history. The unit also simultaneously conducted numerous combat air patrols throughout the state for several months after the attacks. Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the 125th has supported several missions in the Middle East: security forces, communications specialists, pilots, engineers and others have all deployed overseas to support the war effort.

5 December 2001. As part of Operation Noble Eagle, Florida Air Guard F-15s from the 125th Fighter Wing patrolled the skies over the Kennedy Space Center as the space shuttle Endeavor was launched.

2005 27 Aug The 159 Fighter Wing, Louisiana ANG, evacuated seventeen of its twenty-one assigned F-15 aircraft from NAS New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina.

A dozen Florida Air National Guard F-15Cs and around 200 Air Guardsmen from the 125th Fighter Wing deployed as part of the second European theater security package sent to the continent, marking the ANG's first TSP deployment in support of US Air Forces Europe-Air Forces Africa. "This is a team effort and the addition of a National Guard unit demonstrates the Total Force Integration of our Air Force around the world," said Lt. Gen Darryl Roberson, 3rd Air Force commander, in a March 27 release. "The TSP is a strategic capability that allows the Air Force greater flexibility against evolving threats. It reassures our allies and partner nations that our commitment to European security is a priority," he added. Heightened tensions with Russia prompted USAFE-AFAFRICA to commence TSPs in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve this year, dispatching A-10s from Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., to Spangdahlem AB, Germany. The F-15s will forward deploy to Leeuwarden AB, Netherlands, and Graf Ignatievo AB, Bulgaria, during the six-month TSP beginning mid-April. 2015

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USAF Unit Histories

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