

183rd FIGHTER WING



LINEAGE

183rd Tactical Fighter Group, 1 Oct 1961
183rd Fighter Wing

STATIONS

Springfield, IL,

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

Col Michael Meyer
Col Richard M. Eslinger
LTC Richard E. McLane II, 25 Nov 1983

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award
1979, 1991 and 1999

EMBLEM

The light and deep blue field with nebuly, a symbol of clouds, alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations, and the group's day and night capabilities. The tomahawk, an American Indian ax which was also used as a weapon, represents striking force, while the wing

refers to air power. The placement of the bars on the handle one eight three signifies the group's numerical designation. The tomahawk also refers to the state of Illinois (Indian meaning tribe of men) and our renowned President, Abraham Lincoln, who resided there. The star within the annulet denotes Springfield, the State Capital, where the group was constituted in 1962. The emblem bears the National colors and the Air Force colors - gold and ultramarine blue.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

In October of 1962 the 170th was reorganized from the single squadron concept to that of a tactical fighter group with four support units newly organized. Colonel Ralph A Bush was 183d Tactical Fighter Group commander with Major Richard M Eslinger named to command the 170th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Major Robert F Herigodt to command 183d Materiel Squadron, Major H.W.R. Fluckiger, our Flight Surgeon, to command the 183d Dispensary, and Major Ernest W. Chumley to command the 183d Combat Support Squadron, Maj Harold G Holesinger, past commander of the 170th was elevated to the post of Deputy Commander for Operations of the Group.

In June 1964 plans for a \$300,000 office building were being formalized for submission and approval. Construction began in 1965. In November of 1965 another reorganization came about. Lt Col Vernon C. Beier assumed command of the 183d Supply Squadron and Lt Col Norman F. Wagner took over the 183d Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance (CAM) Squadron.

During April of 1967 about 100 members of the 183d participated in a joint amphibious and airborne training exercise called Clove Hitch III in Puerto Rico. Ten F-84s were flown from Springfield and took part in this immense exercise. Our troops and equipment were flown to and from Puerto Rico in C-130s. In all some 21,000 personnel from all services participated.

Our new office building was ready for occupancy in the summer of 1967 and the move was eagerly made. We now had our first separate dining hall and medical facilities, as well as new office space for our varied administrative and personnel service functions.

Our second big operation in three years found us participating in ACID TEST III/PUNCH CARD XII, a ten day exercise held in Alaska during December 1970. Eight of our F-84s flew to Elmendorf Air Force Base; the F-84 flying time from Springfield required two air-to-air refuelings and took just over seven hours to reach Anchorage. As a point of interest, Colonel Bush's ETA filed from Springfield for his flight differed by only 30 seconds from the actual arrival time. That's really calling the shot, as they say.

Early in 1971 came an announcement that really enhanced the Guard's image. The Air Force announced that it was assigning some of its F-4 Phantom fleet to the ANG, and the 183d was to be the first Guard unit to receive the F-4. When we recovered, we realized what a singularly tremendous honor and vote of confidence this was for past performance and consequently, we felt justly proud.

The year 1971 marked the first year, except for years we were on extended active duty, that we did not go to annual training as a combined unit. With the advent of the F-4 and the tremendous training load we would immediately absorb, the Group began year around home station training to more effectively utilize people at different periods during the year. This concept was prevalent throughout 1972 and again in 1973.

The 31st of January 1972 was another memorable day as the first of our F-4 Phantoms was flown in and now we could pride fully say we were an F-4 outfit. In April of 1972 we received four more Phantoms flown here by our own pilots. By this time we were headlong into retraining. Many of our flight crews, both pilots and Weapons Systems Officers (WSOs), had been through check-out training at George AFB and Luke AFB. A Field Training Detachment (FTD) came in and set up a training program on the F-4 at the State Fairgrounds. Training and plain hard work followed and in the months to come we became more and more familiar with the new aircraft. The air technician detachment was increased to help cope with the added maintenance workload. Additionally, the Air Force Advisor's Operating Location was augmented with an additional 28 specialists, to assist in the conversion and training program.

A major personnel change took place on 19 January 1975 as Colonel Ralph A. Bush retired as Group Commander ending almost twenty-two years as a full timer with our unit. During his tenure we really came of age as a full-fledged member of the jet air force with the F-86/F-84 assignment up through receipt of the F-4Cs. Colonel Bush moved to the Adjutant General's office. Lt Col Harold G. Holesinger then assumed command of the 183d Tactical Fighter Group.

The most memorable deployment to date found us involved in Exercise Coronet Quail deploying to Ghedi Air Base, Italy in May 1978. The duration of the exercise was twenty-two days. Twelve F-4C Phantoms made the approximate six hour uninterrupted flight with five air to air refuelings, to this base in Northern Italy where no ANG unit had previously deployed. Personnel deployed with most people traveling by C-141 aircraft. Rain plagued part of the operation but considerable experience was gained by aircrews flying in the NATO environment. Personnel were fed at Ghedi in a field dining facility, but quarters were contracted in the town of Desenzano, a few miles away. The experience gained by all, from this momentous undertaking, would help us greatly later in similar deployments.

Not long after our return from Italy Col Holesinger was named the commander of the 126th Air Refueling Wing at O'Hare IAP in Chicago. Lt Col Richard M. Eslinger was the new commander of the 183d Tactical Fighter Group effective 19 June 1978, having previously served as Deputy Commander for Operations of the Group.

In March and April of 1979 the 183d participated in a Red Flag exercise at Nellis AFB, Nevada. We were tasked with two periods of two weeks duration and a total of one hundred sixteen people supported each tour. Ten F-4Cs were deployed. Participating in a Red Flag increases unit capability and operations in a tactical scenario as part of a composite strike force. The experience gained by our aircrews in this environment was invaluable. As a sidelight to this operation the troops were billeted in contract quarters in Las Vegas which needless to say was an experience in

itself and a far cry from the tent cities of years gone by.

The group and all assigned units were awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for exceptionally meritorious service for the two year period ending 30 April 1979. This is a prestigious award and we are very proud of it.

In late July 1979 the 183d became the first Air National Guard unit to participate in the Air Force's Weapon System Evaluation Program (WSEP) at Eglin AFB, Florida. The purpose of a WSEP exercise is to fire live missiles in verifying a unit's combat capability and the system integrity of unit aircraft. Eighty personnel took part supporting seven F-4s with an overall outstanding performance rating being determined in competition with active units.

In March 1981, the 183TFG hosted the Northeastern Region Personnel Systems Management Conference. It was termed an outstanding effort and success by Headquarters USAF (AFMPC) and the National Guard Bureau.

In June 1982, for the second time in four years, we were tasked with another overseas deployment. This time we went to RAF Finningley in the United Kingdom participating in Coronet Brave. Finningley is near the city of Doncaster, England. F-4 Phantoms once again performed outstanding in their flights across the ocean. Sixty-nine officers and one hundred eighty-one enlisted troops made the trip, transported mostly in C-141. A great deal of experience was gained in all areas by operating in the environment of. actually working with our counterparts daily. A highlight of our visit was Colonel Eslinger exchanging a memento with the Lord Mayor of Doncaster in his mansion. The English people were very receptive to our visit and Finningley personnel could not have been more gracious.

An outgrowth of the exercise was a trip in April 1983 by two RAF officers to our base in an after action visit and update of plans. Our personnel worked with them and also gave them a tour of Springfield highlights as well as a trip to St. Louis.

Early in 1983 the F-4Ds commenced a conversion program to the smokeless engine eliminating the smoke trail making it safer in a combat situation and, of course, it becomes more environmentally pleasing. The Phantoms of the 183d are the first in the nation scheduled for this program.

Major deployments in 1984 found us at Holloman AFB, New Mexico with twelve F-4s participating in a Snowbird exercise. Thirty-eight officers and ninety enlisted troops made the trip which was highly successful as two hundred thirty sorties were flown. In August of 1984 twenty-two F-4s and approximately six hundred personnel moved to Volk Field Wisconsin to conduct an Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE), a practice rehearsal for our upcoming ORI.

We supported a Maple Flag at Cold Lake Canada with six F-4s in early October 1985. Major exercises in 1985 were geared to our impending ORI with twenty F-4s and six hundred fifty troops at Volk Field in August 1985 and seven F-4s with support personnel at Gulfport, Mississippi in December of 1985.

The year of 1986 was to be a busy and memorable year. Late February into early March saw us deploy to Gulfport for the Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) that we had been preparing for the previous two years. Twenty-two F-4s, more than eight hundred men and women and considerable equipment made the move southward. Results given us by 12th Air Force indicated what we already knew; that we were fully capable and ready to deploy and fulfill all mission requirements tasked of us as our overall rating indicated. Concluding events of the ORI caused all of us to witness a spectacular event; two unit aircraft collided on short final to landing. The subsequent actions by many heroic unit members demonstrated an even more dedicated and professional response than demanded by the IG inspection. An expeditious recovery of all involved personnel and aircraft once again, proved the in depth character possessed by the unit. Most of us were amazed at Construction of base facilities, our own stamina and will that prevailed throughout the better part of one week, placing new meaning to the words "mission ready". This story ends on a happy note, as there were no serious injuries or deaths.

The summer of 1986 had been very hot and dry in the southern states in particular and an appeal went out to central Illinois farmers to donate hay to be transported to the drought stricken areas by air. Operation Haylift was performed on 19 July 1986 when six C-141 s flew from our base to designated locations in the south. Farmers had responded with thousands of bales of hay and trucked them to Capital Airport to be flown out. Southern farmers expressed their gratitude on national television as their starving stock survived as a result of this unusual effort.

In August of 1986 we were tasked with our third overseas deployment in eight years. This trip found us going to RAF Wildenrath in West Germany for Coronet Wichita. Wildenrath is a British base located in Northwestern Germany near Belgium and the Netherlands. Twelve F-4s again performed outstanding in their flights across the ocean. Approximately three hundred personnel were transported round trip in C-141 aircraft. Experience gained working with our British counterparts in the actual environment we would be assigned adds a realism to our very existence. How quickly everyone adapted was commendable. The German Citizenry were very receptive to us and the entire exercise was considered outstanding with everyone returning home without serious incident.

In 1987 we returned to small exercises and annual training again as our inspection and deployment year was behind us. In March 1987 we deployed six F-4s to Nellis AFB, Nevada participating in a Green Flag. In May of 1987 eight F-4s and support personnel deployed to Nellis again participating in Exercise Constant Peg. Annual training was at Volk Field, Wisconsin in August with fourteen F-4s and approximately four hundred fifty personnel involved.

After five days of intense scrutiny in all areas of the unit we were rated overall excellent in our management, organization and mission capability. We were justifiably proud.

In March 1988 we deployed to Gulfport, MS with twenty-four F-4s and more than eight hundred men and women in an annual training exercise directed at preparation for the next ORI.

Major Lee Spradlin was named Commander of the 183rd CAM Squadron effective 5 Mar 1988

replacing Lt Col Herbert R. True who was designated Deputy Commander Maintenance replacing Lt Col Barker who announced plans to retire. Loading bombs at Gulfport

In a joint release Aug. 26, Sen. Dick Durbin (D) and Sen. Barack Obama (D) said that the firefighters who worked with the 183rd Fighter Wing have received a one-year extension to September 2009. The BRAC 2005 shake-out cut the F-16s of the 183rd FW, but, according to Blum the wing will be working to help ease the Air Guard's F-16 phase maintenance backlog. In his letter, Blum wrote that the wing "volunteered to perform this much needed capability through the summer of next year. This critical maintenance work will clear our backlog and will also require a firefighting capability to remain on station while the work is performed." , on the issue of finding a new flying mission for the 183rd FW, Blum was less positive. He noted it is an Air Force decision and must be "made in the context of decisions already made under the 2005 BRAC and current budget realities." Undeterred, both Durbin and Obama vow to continue to urge the Air Force to find the wing a new flying mission, which would also preserve the firefighting unit, which, in Obama's words, "provide invaluable support to Illinois' security, readiness, and emergency preparedness."

The Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing and 183rd Fighter Wing will take on three new non-flying missions. Army Maj. Gen. William Enyart, the state adjutant general, announced Dune 30. Springfield's 183rd FW, which under BRAC 2005 is scheduled to relinquish its F-16s before the end of the year--even though Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich has been resisting the loss of the aircraft mission—will stand up an air and space operations center designated as the 183rd Air Operations Group and a centralized intermediate repair facility for the General Electric F110 engine, Enyart said. The repair facility will support five ANG F-16 flying units across the country. Conversion to the new missions will begin in Fiscal 2009; both should be fully operational two years later. The 126th ARW at Scott AFB, 111.., will add a "global logistics or regional supply squadron" that will be designated as the 126th Regional Supply Chain Squadron, according to the release. No stand-up date was given.

As the 183rd Fighter Wing transitions to its new non-flying missions after operating fighters for nearly 60 years. Springfield's State Journal-Register reports that \$20 million in construction projects are already underway, including renovating a 1950s-era hangar into a state-of-the-art facility for repairing F-16 engines and erecting a new base entrance. Next year, work is slated to commence on a project worth upwards of \$17 million to renovate existing buildings into a new air and space operations center for these Air Guardsmen, according to the newspaper. The wing relinquished its F-16 flying mission as part of BRAC 2005. Its last F-16 departed in September 2008. The wing now repairs F110 engines for F-16s. The hanger and base entrance are scheduled for completion next year. 2010

Since BRAC, the 183d has been given an additional follow-on mission. The Component Numbered Air Force (CNAF), including an air and space operations center (AOC) and an Air Force forces (AFFOR) staff, is an aerospace operation planning, execution, and assessment system for the Joint Forces Air Component Commander. It is the primary tool for commanding and executing air, space and cyber power. The 183d Air Operations Group (AOG) will augment Air Force headquarters staffs in planning, coordinating, allocating, tasking and controlling air, space and cyber operations in a theater of operations. Besides the AOG, the unit consists of the

Mission Support Group, the Medical Group, the Maintenance Squadron, and the Wing Headquarters Staff. Since 1997 the 217th Engineering and Installation Squadron has been collocated with the 183d.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources

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