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388TH FIGHTER WING HISTORY

"History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life and brings us tidings of antiquity." -Cicero

World War II Era

On 24 December 1942, the 388th Bombardment Group (Heavy), (BG) (H), precursor to the 388th Fighter Wing (ACC), activated at Gowen Field, Idaho. The 388 BG (H) underwent extensive training on the B-17 Flying Fortress at Wendover Field, Utah. In June 1943, the group transferred to Knettishall, England, flying its first combat mission on 17 July 1943 over the Netherlands to bomb an aircraft manufacturing facility. During World War II, the group successfully flew 306 combat missions, earning two Distinguished Unit Citations which were later bestowed upon the 388th Fighter Wing. With the war coming to an end, the 388 BG (H) deactivated on 28 August 1945 at Sioux Falls, South Dakota.



DAYTON, Ohio -- 388th Bomb Group (H) plaque in Memorial Park at the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

French Flyboys Era

On 23 November 1953, the wing activated for the first time as the 388th Fighter-Bomber Wing (388 FBW), at Clovis AFB, New Mexico and was equipped with F-86 Sabre. On 22 November 1954, the 388 FBW relocated to Etain-Rouvres AB, France, where it provided air defense and participated in NATO exercises. These "French Flyboys" went operational with a nuclear-weapon capability. Beginning on 27 February 1957, the wing converted from the F-86 Sabre to the F-100 Super Sabre. On 10 December 1957, the Air Force deactivated the 388 FBW.

McConnell AFB Era

On 1 May 1962, the wing activated as the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing (388 TFW) under the Tactical Air Command (TAC). On 1 Oct 1962, the wing was reorganized at McConnell AFB, Kansas, under the Twelfth Air Force, as a tenant unit under the 4347th Combat Training Wing. Initially, the wing flew the F-100 Super Sabre and then converted to the F-105 Thunderchief. On 8 February 1964, the wing deactivated for the second time.

Southeast Asia Era

On 14 March 1966, with an aerial bombing campaign raging over North Vietnam, the 388 TFW activated under the Pacific Air Forces, Thirteenth Air Force, and was assigned to Korat Royal Thai AFB, Thailand. During the wing's 9-year tenure at Korat, it flew over 93,000 combat hours and participated in numerous air-offensives, downing 17 MiGs and participating in all major aerial campaigns in the Vietnam War. The wing flew a wide variety of aircraft during the Vietnam conflict: F-105 Thunderchiefs, F-4 Phantom IIs, EC-121 Super Constellations, EB-66 Destroyers, A-7 Corsairs, C-130 Hercules, and AC-130. In April 1975, the wing provided cover and escort during the evacuation of Americans and allies from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and Saigon, South Vietnam. The following month, between 13 and 15 May 1975, the wing conducted over 100 strike and close-air support sorties during the successful recovery of the SS Mayaguez, (an American-registered cargo ship seized by the Cambodian communist regime). For these operations and its wartime service, the wing earned a total of eight Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards and a Presidential Unit Citation.

Hill AFB Era

On 23 December 1975, the 388 TFW relocated to its current home of operations at Hill AFB, Utah . The wing started its conversion to the F-16A Fighting Falcon on 23 January 1979, becoming the USAF first fully-operational F-16 Fighter Wing. In March 1981, the wing conducted its first overseas deployment to Fleslan AS, Norway. In May 1989, the first F-16C Block 40 aircraft arrived at Hill AFB, Utah. The new model F-16, designed to accommodate the Low Altitude Navigation and Targeting Infrared for Night (LANTIRN) pod, allowed targeting and bombing in adverse operational conditions.

Gulf War I and II

The 388 FW was the first unit to fly the F-16 into conflict with the Low Altitude Navigation and Targeting Infrared for Night (LANTIRN) system over the skies of Iraq and Kuwait during Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, and continued to employ the LANTIRN in Operations DESERT CALM, DESERT FOX, and NORTHERN and SOUTHERN WATCH. Since September 2001, the 4th, 34th, and 421st Fighter Squadrons and the 729th Air Control Squadron have actively engaged in Operations ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM and NOBLE EAGLE, defending the nation at home and abroad. The wing continued to develop its role of Forward Air Control-Airborne. Assorted support personnel were deployed en-mass or individually from within each unit of the 388 FW.

Present Day

Approximately 1,500 Airmen and 54 F-16 Fighting Falcons make up the 388th Fighter Wing. In addition to operating and maintaining this fleet of combat-ready F-16s, the wing manages the **Utah Test and Training Range**. Hill Air Force Base was selected as the new home for the Air Force's first operational F-35A Lightning IIs in the Fall of 2013. Hill's preparations for the F-35A, total more than \$100 million, with 23 construction projects to be completed between now and July 2015. Thirty-six total projects will be finished once construction concludes in 2019. The timeline to renovate facilities has been compressed significantly, as the start time to base the jet was pushed back by the delayed record of decision.

Hill's 388th Fighter Wing and the Air Force Reserve 419th Fighter Wing will become the Air Force's first operational units to fly the F-35A, with the first jet projected to arrive in the fall of 2015. The 388th FW is scheduled to receive 72 F-35A jets total. The wing will receive an initial cadre of pilots from the F-35 test and training units at Eglin AFB, Fla., Luke AFB, Ariz., and Nellis AFB, Nev., while also gaining F-35 qualified pilots from other fighter wings, and retraining some F-16 pilots currently in-house. Hill will likely receive 83 F-35 qualified maintainers by December 2015 and transition more than 100 legacy technicians to F-35 maintainers within the first year of operations.

Today the men and women of the 388th Fighter Wing stand ready to deploy anywhere, anytime, with the knowledge, training, and equipment to ensure total air superiority over any adversary - Liberty or Death!