

124 FIGHTER WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

124 Fighter Interceptor Group, 15 Apr 1956

124 Wing

124 Fighter Wing

STATIONS

Boise, ID

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

F-89

A-10

Support Aircraft

C-26

COMMANDERS

Col Martin H. Johnson, # Dec 1958

Col William B. Richy, 2012

Col Michael A. Nolan, Aug 2012

Col Chris Rood

Col Sherrie McCandless, 2014

Col Shannon D. Smith

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

The emblem is symbolic of the group and its mission. The gold field alludes to the sky the primary theater of Air Force operations and also to the group's excellence in the performance of its mission. The flying spears symbolize air power, speed, and the willingness to defend the rights of freedom. Idaho, the state where the group was constituted in 1955, is represented by the blue wings denoting the State Bird and the snowcapped mountain peaks referring to the Indian meaning of Idaho, Light on the Mountains. The emblem bears the National colors and the Air Force colors; gold and ultramarine blue.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

On April 14, 1956 the 190th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron became reorganized within a larger 124th Fighter Group, which allowed expansion to more than one flying squadron, or for assigning the 190th to another Group in wartime. 124th Fighter Interceptor Group and was headed by LTC Martin Johnson. The 190th Fighter Interceptor Squadron was still the flying squadron within this larger Group. This Group-size expansion was brought on by the enlargement and re-designation of existing support functions of the 190th. These newly-designated squadrons were the 124th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, the 124th Air Base Squadron, and the 124th USAF Dispensary.

This expansion and reorganization meant the Group was a self-supporting organization which could mobilize, operate independently and fight from any assigned base. 190th commanders were Bill Coburn and Kenneth Nordling, under the Group Commander Martin Johnson. These three officers had been in the squadron leadership from early days, and would see even more change and growth in their original unit. In 1955 Colonel Trail returned to the Idaho Air Guard, where he assumed a series of command assignments culminating in his appointment as Assistant Adjutant General, Air. Trail was the first Idaho Air Guardsman to hold this position, and with that job came the star of a Brigadier General.

As the 124th Fighter Interceptor Group grew in size with a bigger mission and the bigger F-89B weapon system, its officer and enlisted numbers rose to 731 total (76 and 617 for 693 by year end). Additional flying training periods (AFTPs) for ANG flight crews were authorized in 1956.

In 1958, the unit completed construction of a new Headquarters building. This building combined a fully equipped kitchen and dining facility in one wing, and a medical clinic in another. It provided much-needed office space, and also served as 124th Fighter Interceptor Group headquarters.

On 2 February 1959 a civil airliner carrying 25 IDANG recruits to basic training at Lackland AFB hi San Antonio Texas, crashed near Kerrville, Texas. The crew of the Central Airways DC-3 had made an enroute stop in Pueblo Colorado for fuel, then continued toward San Antonio. Encountering bad weather with moderate icing, they continued, only to lose altitude and gain more ice as they next encountered severe icing conditions.

This caused extra fuel consumption, prompting the crew's decision to make an instrument approach for an emergency landing at Kerrville. Central Airways 17314's flight crew had been talking to Air Traffic Control and to an Air Force aircraft acting as radio relay. It was evident their situation was a severe emergency, and the Kerrville fire and police departments, fire apparatus, and several ambulances were standing by at the airport. The pilot recognized that the aircraft performance was severely degraded by the heavy ice accumulation, and the fuel state was such that a forced landing may occur at any moment.

He opted to make a gear-up landing gear if the engines should quit or they made ground contact. On their first approach, they couldn't see the field through the iced-up windscreen, so they attempted another approach in visual conditions, recognizing their critically low fuel state would put them back in the icing and consume their remaining fuel. During this second attempt, the engines failed from fuel exhaustion, and the crew crash-landed the DC-3 in hilly, wooded terrain about 6 miles southeast of Kerrville airport.

People saw the aircraft passing over the airport, and about 9:40 a person living near the crash site called to report the DC-3 passed over his house and then he heard an explosion. The ambulance and fire equipment was dispatched to the accident scene, and arrived, put out the fire, and took survivors to area hospitals. Top: Central Airways' Number 17314 DC-3; Portland Rose Bottom: The Surviving 24 IDANG Recruits and Four Others. Killed were the two flight crew members and an IDANG airman from Ola Idaho, Robert C. Griffith. The other 24 Idaho airmen were injured but survived the crash. One of them, Robert P. Sharpies, was in Aviation Cadet training a year later, and upon graduation and F-86L training, was serving as an F-86L pilot with the IDANG. Unfortunately, he became involved in yet another aircraft accident in June 1961, this time in an F-86L, with more severe consequences.

A Dual Deputy System was devised and implemented in 1964, giving the Group Commander two deputies. One oversaw the operations-related units 190 FIS and 124th CAMRON, and the other supervised base support activities. This arrangement was short-lived.

In addition to F-102As, the 124th still had 3 T-33As for support flights and as target aircraft. These 'T-Birds' were configured to carry a chaff-dispensing and an electronic jammer pod for intercept training. The venerable old C-47 number 058 was used extensively, but in March 1966, this loyal 124th member since 1947, was transferred to the South Dakota ANG. The 124th

received as replacement a larger, faster, four-engine C-54 which the unit kept until 1972, when it too was replaced, this time by a C-131.

Airmen of the 124 participated in an atmospheric nuclear test series code-named "Operation Plumb bob," conducted in 1957 at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.³⁵ This project consisted of launching the 124 T-33s from Indian Springs AFB, Nevada, and flying through the blast clouds shortly after each the atmospheric test. In this project, they collected close-in particulate cloud samples to measure the atmospheric radiation from five nuclear tests. Our T-33 flew close to the particle clouds following the atomic blasts, and collected samples on specially designed collectors on the aircraft. After flying through the blast cloud, the aircraft recovered at Indian Springs, where personnel removed the samples, decontaminated the aircraft, and evaluated the residue for radioactive content.

The increased unit staffing under this new organization meant extra recruiting, more training in new systems, and retraining for some individuals. The 124th's new Unit Manning Document (UMD) gradually increased the number of personnel. During this F-102 era the Group's officer and enlisted numbers grew about eighteen percent over F-86L levels, rising to 92 and 771, respectively, for a total of 863,

The Group designed a new emblem that was approved in March 1966,³⁶ and on 1 April 1966 the 124th was re-assigned to the 26th Air Division, headquartered at Adair Air Force Station, Corvallis Oregon. This change was just one of the reorganizations within the ADC's command structure which affected the 124th. This relationship with the 26th AD lasted until 30 September 1969.

Guardsmen were allowed to take rides on the unit's U-3B and C-54 aircraft during cross-country or local training flights, on a space-available basis. The purpose of their trip couldn't be for personal gain or business, and if the member was on UTA status, the member's supervisor must approve their flight.

Effective 1 October, ADC re-designated all ANG Air Defense Wings and Fighter Groups to Fighter Interceptor Wings and Groups. Col Nordling also announced that the 124th FIG is now assigned to the 144th FI Wing at Fresno, as part of a nationwide NGB revised wing alignment. The other units hi the 144th FIW were the F-102'units-at Ontario and Fresno. This 'name game' continued with the May announcement that the 124th Dispensary was renamed the 124th Clinic.

1968- A nuclear exercise was held during March UTA, and its recall brought out most 124th members before 0600. This test evaluated the unit's "ability to perform under nuclear attack conditions." The exercise was a follow-up to the training for about 90 people during the February UTA. The training was in 5 different specialties used in case of nuclear attack: Shelter managers, Shelter monitors, CBR team members, buddy care assistants, and shelter recorders. "They learned how to plan for and survive during long periods in fallout shelters and how to provide for the well-being of others confined to the shelter under these unique conditions".

Also included was a mobilization test for the officers and airmen of the 190th similar to what they would encounter if they were called to active duty.

1970 The Chief of ADC, MGen R. W. Burns awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award to 124 Fighter Interceptor Group, honoring it 'based on the 124th's establishing and maintaining unusually high standards in its air defense mission. The award's citation said, in part "The initiative and aggressiveness of the members of the 124th Fighter Group have contributed significantly to the air defense of the United States". Adding to the list of honors behind the 124 selection for the award were the last 3 'Outstanding' ratings on Tac Evals, being the first ANG unit to earn 'Outstanding' in all areas rated, receiving 'Outstanding' on its last ORI, and winning the ADC 'A' Award.

Personnel news was plentiful in early 1970, with the Defender reporting the 124s pilot strength at 100% for the first time in many years.¹⁰ The Try One program piloted by the 124th a few years earlier was extended Guard-wide in February,¹⁰³ and the 124th had gained 10 prior service personnel from Try One.

Col Kenneth E. Nordling made the announcement when, once again, the 124th was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, "It is with great pleasure that I make this announcement, for it has been my desire over the years to promote teamwork and coordination to such a degree that our motto 'First Class or Not at All' cannot be challenged. Let me be the first to congratulate my team on a job well done and the continuing efforts to do better. " MG Archie M. Burke, Commander, 25 AD, expressed his appreciation in a letter to the 124th, "The achievement of this award is especially noteworthy in view of the fact the unit received the AFOUA for the two year period immediately prior to the receipt of this decoration. For the past four years this unit has undoubtedly established and maintained one of the highest standards of professionalism in mission accomplishment in the Aerospace Defense command. The distinctive accomplishments of the 124th Fighter Group are a credit to this Division, the Aerospace Defense command, the Air National Guard, and the United States Air Force.

1974-Col Nordling announced a command-directed 'stand down' of flying, and explained that he was unsure how long it will last. He foresaw problems if it continued very long: pilot proficiency, transition training for units converting, effects on pilot and navigator training schools, and a degradation of training for weapons controllers. He also pointed out that problems can occur within aircraft maintenance due to airframe inactivity.

In January, the Group learned that Ltc Sam Corn would replace Col Ken Nordling as 124th FIG Commander. 'Sam' and 'Nord' had flown and worked together for many years in the ID ANG, so Sam was ready to hit the ground running. Corn's staff now included Ltc Leland Bernasconi, 124th Director of Operations, and Maj Bill Goodwin, Commander, 190th FIS.

The wing traded its Wild Weasels, the last in the U.S. Air Force, for two new aircraft; the A-10 and the C-130. Idaho's A-10s proved their worth during Operation Allied Force in 1999, where our pilots flew hundreds of combat missions in NATO's battle for Kosovo. The C-130, workhorse

of military air transport worldwide, is used to move people and cargo into and out of rough, undeveloped airfields. Idaho's Herks have flown flood relief missions in northern and eastern Idaho, delivered hay to starving cattle and carried several California Condors, an endangered species, to safety at the Birds of Prey center. The new century brought a new focus for the 124th Wing.

As part of the Aerospace Expeditionary Force established by the Air Force, the Idaho Air Guard took part in AEF 7. Nearly 500 Idaho Air National Guard members went to Kuwait, Oman and other countries throughout the region over a three-month period in the summer of 2000. Changes and challenges of the past half-century have consistently produced positive results, thanks to the dedicated efforts of thousands of men and women who have

Approximately 100 Air National Guardsmen from the 124th Fighter Wing out of Gowen Field, Idaho, accompanied A-10 Thunderbolt IIs to Spangdahlem AB, Germany, to support the Combined Resolve II training exercise. The US Army Europe-directed multinational exercise is conducted in partnership with 15 NATO and European partners, including Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and the US. It will be May 15 to June 30, according to a May 20 release.

"This is an interoperability exercise working on partnership tasks, because this is the way we are going to fight in the future," said Christian Marquardt, Joint Multinational Training Command spokesman. The "A-10s will support ground troops participating in force-on-force maneuver training at the US Army's Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany," states the release. The mission "is the same mission that we do back home. We provide close air support for friendlies on the ground when they are receiving effective fire from the enemy," said 1st Lt. Kristen Daigle, officer in charge of intelligence. "The A-10s will roll in and try to get the enemy off their back." 2014

Two Air Force units and a Marine Corps squadron are deploying to assist in the US-led fight against ISIS. A-10s and more than 500 airmen from the Idaho Air National Guard's 124th Fighter Wing deployed on April 12 for the wing's first major mission in support of Operation Inherent Resolve, according to a wing release. F-16s and about 300 airmen from the 480th Fighter Squadron on April 7 also deployed from Spangdahlem AB, Germany, to join the fight. 2016

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 6 Jan 2021
Updated:

Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.