

173 AIR REFUELING SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

401 Fighter Squadron constituted, 25 May 1943
Activated, 1 Jul 1943
Inactivated, 7 Nov 1945
Redesignated 173 Fighter Squadron (Single-Engine), and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946
Federally recognized 26 Jul 1946
Redesignated 173 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, 1 Aug 1948
Redesignated 173 Fighter Squadron (Jet), 1 Aug 1949
Redesignated 173 Fighter Squadron (Single-Engine), 18 Dec 1950
Redesignated 173 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 1 Jan 1953
Redesignated 173 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 1953
Redesignated
Redesignated 173 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 15 May 1957
Redesignated 173 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Photo Jet
Redesignated 173 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 1 May 1964
Redesignated 173 Reconnaissance Squadron, 16 Mar 1992
Redesignated 173 Air Refueling Squadron

STATIONS

Westover Field, MA, 1 Jul 1943
Suffolk AAFld, NY, 20 Oct 1943
Groton AAFld, CT, 5 Nov 1943
Bradley Field, CT, 5-20 Jan 1944
Aldermaston, England, 12 Feb 1944
Andover, England, 29 Feb-21 Jul 1944
Cardonville, France, 31 Jul 1944
La Vielle, France, 15 Aug 1944

Lonray, France, 6 Sep 1944
Roye/Amy, France, 12 Sep 1944
Florennes/ Juxaine, Belgium, 27 Sep 1944
Zwartberg, Belgium, 27 Jan 1945
Gutersloh, Germany, 20 Apr 1945
Sandhofen, Germany, 27 Jun 1945
Fritzlar, Germany, 6 Aug-Sep 1945
Camp Myles Standish, MA, 6-7 Nov 1945
Lincoln, NE

ASSIGNMENTS

370th Fighter Group, 1 Jul 1943-7 Nov 1945

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

P-47, 1943-1944
P-38, 1944-1945
P-51, 1945
F-51, 1946
F-80, 1948
F-51, 1952-1953
F-80, 1953-1955
F-86, 1955
RF-84, 1964-1972
RF-4, 1972-1992
KC-135, 1992

Support Aircraft

B-26
C-47
T-6

COMMANDERS

LTC John M. Campbell
LTC Fred H. Bailey, Jr.
Maj M L Hagelberger
Maj C Christensen, Jr.
Maj R D Daniell
LTC R J Lamb, #1981
LTC D D Thomssen
LTC Jon Fago,
LTC Steven Adams
LTC Adam J. Dabrowski
LTC James R. Stevenson, 2008

LTC Thomas Dalton Jr.

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

Hurtgen Forest, Germany, 2 Dec 1944

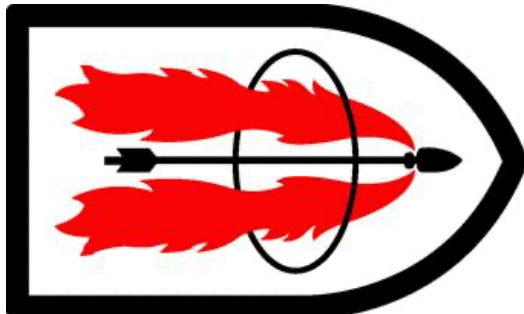
Cited in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army

6 Jun-30 Sep 1944

16 Dec 1944-25 Jan 1945

Belgian Fourragere

EMBLEM



The sable black arrow centering the throat of two flaming gules interlaced with an elliptical circle in sable black, surmounted on a projectile field of white. The arrow, a missive weapon of offense, and the flames, emblematical of intensive strength and force, represent symbolically the aims of the unit in successfully accomplishing the mission. The elliptical circle symbolizes cooperation and loyalty, attributes of a Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 401st departed for the European Theater on 20 Jan 1944. They flew air offensive missions from two bases in England until 21 July 1944. From 31 July 1944 until Sept 1945 They participated in the Ardennes, Northern France, Normandy, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns. The unit was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation for outstanding service in the Hurtgen Forest, German offensive in December 1944. In early Nov 1945 the 401st returned to Camp Miles Standish, Mass and was inactivated on 9 Nov 1945.

The 401st was allotted to the National Guard on 24 May 1946: redesignated the 173 Fighter Squadron and assigned to the State of Nebraska. The Adjutant General, BG Guy N. Henninger asked LTC (reserve) John M. Campbell to organize the Nebraska Air National Guard and to proceed as quickly as possible. To gain federal recognition and funding, twenty-five percent of the authorized strength of 350 had to be recruited. Lt Robert E. Hopkins was hired on a temporary basis in the TAG's office to coordinate the effort. Space for the Nebraska Air National Guard was obtained in the old Lincoln Aviation Institute located at 24th and O Streets. Some of the early recruited officers: Maj Harnly, Ayres and Captains Coy, Bailey spent their evenings interviewing prospective members. By late June sufficient numbers of personnel were signed up and word was forwarded to the National Guard Bureau.

On 26 Jul 1946 a Federal Inspection was conducted by the Second Air Force, Offutt AFB, NE. The inspection was made by a team of three officers headed by Col William R. Sweeley. It consisted of interviews of the officers and an in ranks inspection of enlisted personnel. We were the second unit in the country to be federally recognized after World War II.

The original Nebraska Air National Guard units and their commanders were: 173 Fighter sqdn, LtCol John M. Campbell; Detachment "C", 222d Air Service Group, Maj William E. Ayres; Utility Flight, 1st Lt Wayne F. Rawson and 173 Weather Station, 1st Lt John C. Angle. Total number of personnel in the units was 17 officers and 100 enlisted men. The units were assigned to the 140th Fighter Group, Buckley Field, CO which incidentally was the first federally recognized unit.

Drills were conducted every Monday for two hours at the armory at 24th and "O" streets. In Sep 1946 the 173 began receiving their aircraft, the unit moved to the recently deactivated Lincoln Army Air Field. The original assigned aircraft were twenty-two P-51s, seven B-26s, two C-47s and three T-6s. Shortly thereafter a L-19 and a Navion were assigned. The Base Detachment of full time Air Technicians was organized from Sept to Nov and consisted of three officers and 40 enlisted personnel. The original officers were Capt C. J. Davis, Maintenance Officer; 1st Lt James Shipps, Supply Officer and 2nd Lt Robert L. Wadley, Operations Officer. The installation consisted of: one single hangar, one double hangar, one machine shop (converted to a supply building), three classroom buildings, a parachute building with loft and an aviation fuel facility. Flying activities commenced and the instructor pilots were LTC Campbell C-47, Capt Sullivan T-6, P-51, Lt Hunter P-51 and Capt Bailey, all types. The flying program can only be termed as primitive. The pilots could fly as often as desired and on any day of the week. Sometimes only a mechanic was there to stand fire guard and launch him. This was the then

normal mode of operation as there were a minimum of written directives due to the Army Air Corps being in a constant state of flux and reduction. In Jun 1947 with the creation of the U.S. Air Force things began to change with more guidance and directives continuing to the present.

In Dec 1947 the 173 began conversion to P-80C. Fifteen pilots were sent in groups of five to Williams AFB, AZ for jet transition training. an indication of the newness of the Air National Guard program; the pilots at Williams were allowed to wear either civilian attire or uniform. In April or May the unit began receiving brand new P-80C direct from Lockheed Until the end of 1948 the jet flying was very limited due to a lack of JP-1 fuel storage. A pilot would take off, fly fifteen minutes in the local area and then go to Kearney AFB, to land and refuel. Then take off and return directly to Lincoln. They could make navigational flights to Air Force bases. It was not unusual to land at a base, have the base commander there watching this pilot take off his flying suit with civilian clothes underneath. Our "crash helmets" were locally improvised with an Army Guard helmet liner strapped to the issue canvas flying helmet.

On 1 Aug 1948 the tactical unit was redesignated the 173 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled. Also that month the first "summer field training" period was conducted. All personnel stayed on base in Lincoln with a detachment at Rapid City. Pilots and P-51s were deployed to Rapid City for air and ground gunnery. The P-80s were flown at Lincoln for currency flights. B-26s were used to tow targets for air to air gunnery and the C-47s to support the deployment. Also on 1 Aug 1948 the position of Base Detachment Commander was authorized. Captain Bailey was assigned to it and 1st Lt Milton L. Hagelberger was employed as the Operations Officer. In Dec 1948 the Nebraska ANG had 400 personnel (about 30 pilots), 44 air technicians and 48 aircraft assigned. The Tenth Air Force at Selfridge AFB, Mich was the supervisor organization

On 9 March 1949 the Nebr ANG hangar was destroyed by fire. All records and equipment were lost and the units moved into the remaining double hangar. Two B-26s were also lost but there were no personnel injuries. In April 1949 personnel were called to state duty for Operation Snowbound in the western part of the state. Food and hay were dropped from a C-47 to farm families and livestock which had been isolated by a severe blizzard. The units of the Nebr ANG were transferred to the 132nd Fighter Group-Des Moines, IA and the 131st Fightr Wing at St. Louis, MO. The field training for 1949 was conducted at Oscoda, Mich. The Nebr units were the first guard units to be airlifted to a field training location. The Air Force Reserve Troop Carrier unit at Offutt AFB, NE provided the flying C-46s.

The year of 1950 was pretty much a continuation of 1949. The summer field training was at Oscoda and airlift again utilized. On 1 Nov 1950 all Air National Guard Groups were reorganized into wings under the "wing base" concept. This action deactivated the Det C, 222nd Air Service Group and 173 Utility Flight. , the new 132nd Fighter Wing at Des Moines allowed the 132nd Air Base Group be allotted to Nebraska. At the time, this was the only group Hqs in the Air National Guard not co-located with the wing headquarters. The total number of personnel authorized was about 750.

In late 1950 the Nebr ANG was notified they were to be activated into federal service due to the

Korean Conflict and be re-converted to P-51s.

The early months of 1951 were spent in the aircraft conversion and getting ready for mobilization. The 132nd Fighter Wing including all units in Iowa and Nebraska were called to active duty on 1 April 1951 for a period of 21 months. The Wing immediately moved to Bangor, ME and was assigned to the Strategic Air Command. Their mission was long range escort for bomber aircraft. The 173 spent the majority of the time increasing the proficiency of the pilots. They participated in two major Air-Ground exercises in New York state called "Operation Snowfall" and "Operation Coldspot". During the eight month period when the 132nd Wing was assigned to SAC only a few personnel were transferred to other units.

On about 1 Jan 1952 the 132nd Fighter Winger was reassigned to the Tactical Air Command and redesignated the 132nd Fighter Bomber Wing. Starting at this time many personnel were transferred to units worldwide and the Wing moved to Alexandria AFB, LA. While there the units participated in "Operation Longhorn" in Texas and many smaller maneuvers and fire power demonstration.

On 31 December 1952 the units of Nebr ANG and Iowa Air Guard were deactivated and returned to National Guard status effective 1 Jan 1953. Due to having been transferred to other units many personnel did not return from active duty until later on and a sizeable number stayed on active duty.

The initial major task confronting the unit commanders was to rebuild their organizations from the skeleton force which had returned from active duty. The 132nd Fighter Bomber Wing (Nebraska and Iowa Air National Guard) was stationed at Alexandria, Louisiana at the time it was demobilized. All members of the National Guard, electing to do so, were released from active duty and returned with their units to National Guard status. Colonel John M. Campbell returned and was appointed the Chief of Staff for Air. Major Fred H. Bailey, Jr. was stationed in Japan and returned to his previous duties as the Tactical Squadron Commander and also as Base Detachment Commander. The 132nd Air Base Group (Support units) was also released from active duty and reorganized to support their respective tactical organizations. Colonel Donald E. Coy was appointed as Nebraska's Commander of the 132nd Air Base Group.

The members of the Nebraska Air Guard returned from twenty-one months of active to occupy essentially the same facilities on the municipal airport at Lincoln, Nebraska. The main hangar on the west side of the airport had been kept in excellent condition. It was constructed entirely of wood during World War II, but the beams were in good shape, and the roof and windows were intact. An adjacent building was renovated and served as the headquarters for elements of the 132nd Air Base Group.

Most of the attention was focused on recruiting personnel and obtaining tactical aircraft. The P-51 had once again found itself back as the first-line fighter for the Nebraska Air National Guard.

The National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C. deferred the Air National Guard Annual Field Training for 1953.

Progress was slow, but gradually the units began to develop. Donald E. Coy, Albert L. Nolan, and Richard Gillen provided the leadership in rebuilding the air base group units. Fred H. Bailey and Milton L. Hagelberger were busy accepting newly assigned jet aircraft and arranging training sessions to fly and maintain them. Nebraska was one of the first Air Guard units to receive new F-80 directly from the factory in 1949, but not nearly as fortunate when receiving aircraft this time.

The F-80 received during the summer of 1953 were the "A" model version of the jet fighter. This type of aircraft did not have an ejection seat to enable the pilot to eject from his aircraft during extreme emergency situations. Captain Fritz Craig lost his life on December 16, 1953, while flying a F-80A near Lincoln, Nebraska. The cause of the accident was not immediately known, but the turbine wheel was never found, despite an extensive ground search in the Crete, Nebraska area. Six weeks later, January 24, 1954, Lt Alden D. Ike was killed in a similar type accident. The cause of this accident was immediately determined to be a failure of the turbine wheel which severed the control rods connected to the rudder and elevators on the tail section.

The Nebraska Adjutant General, MG Guy N. Henninger, grounded all of the Nebraska jet aircraft immediately. The Air Force and the National Guard Bureau then grounded all of the F-80 in the nation for inspection of turbine wheels in search of cracks and weakened areas. The aircraft were eventually flown to California for Lockheed installation of ejection seats and new turbine wheels.

The fortunes of the Air Guard began to improve when the tactical aircraft began to return from the Engine Overhaul Depot. It was business as usual again. There were many young men on the waiting list to enlist, so the recruiting effort was more of a waiting game to fill the vacancies as they opened up. The support units were functioning in a superb manner. Food service, as an example, was simply outstanding. WO Barney Fisher was a tower of strength in the mess hall; they were a proud group of people. Chandler McDonald, Jack Magorian, and Leonard Kouma were casting their shadows in influence on the flight line. Much of the effort was being expended in preparation for the first annual field training since the return of the units from extended active duty.

There were several notable changes in organization early in 1954. The 8173 Replacement Training Squadron, commanded by Captain Lloyd L. Johnson, was organized as a training squadron assigned to the 173 Fighter Squadron. The tactical squadron was redesignated as the 173 Fighter Interceptor Squadron and was given the primary mission with the Air Defense Command.

This was also a year of change for the facilities at the home base, Lincoln. The United States Air Force reactivated the Municipal Airport at Lincoln and designated it as the Lincoln Air Force Base. It became a permanent Strategic Air Command Base and an operational base for the B-47. The Air

Force had an urgent requirement for all of the building and other facilities in Lincoln, which necessitated a move by all National Guard units into different facilities as On July 1, 1956,

The Nebraska Air National Guard assumed an active role in the aerial defense of the United States. Pilots patrolled the skies daily and were on constant alert in search of unidentified intruders. Pilots and their aircraft, when not flying on a mission, were on a "five minute alert," which meant they had to be airborne within five minutes after the alert was given.

Several aircraft were left in Lincoln for this "alert responsibility" and the remainder of the Air Guard force attended annual field training in Casper, Wyoming during the period July 28-August 11, 1956. Nearly 800 military personnel were transported to Casper again, but this time Nebraska trained without the assistance/interference of the other squadrons in the Wing. Several F-80's were borrowed from the Colorado Air Guard to replace those aircraft left in Lincoln.

In January, 1957, the F-80s gave way to the F-86D/L and continued the ADC mission of 14-hour runway alert begun 1 July 1955. This was increased to 24-hour alert on 1 July 1961, requiring nine pilots each day ready to be "scrambled" and airborne in five minutes.

Many hours each year were spent on practice scrambles against our own F-86 D/Ls and T-33 or SAC B-50s, B-47s, and even B-52s, using flashbulbs instead of rockets. This enabled the crews to simulate firing, check out the circuitry in the rocket pod, and insure that the aircraft was capable of performing its mission. A magnetic tape recorded the radar scope display throughout the firing pass and documented the pilot's maneuvering which enabled training officers to score the attempt and verify his accuracy on airborne Delmar targets.

General Campbell was very instrumental in obtaining new facilities for the Air Guard in March 1958. The Naval Air Station, just north of the facility occupied by the Air National Guard, was acquired by the Nebraska Air Guard. This five million dollar installation was considerably larger than the facility previously occupied.

The unit performed field training 25 July-8 August 1959 at Phelps Collins ANG Base, Alpena, Michigan. This was the first time that the 173 FIS conducted annual training at Alpena Field Training Site. The encampment was conducted in conjunction with the 132nd Air Defense wing from Des Moines, Iowa and the 124th FIS. The tactical squadrons achieved their goals of requalification or initial qualification of tactical aircrews in aerial rocketry. Two rocketry ranges over Lake Huron were available during the two weeks, which provided a separate range for each squadron. In addition, each range was controlled by separate aircraft control and warning sites (radar). This arrangement minimized problems of congestion on the ranges and provided considerable flexibility in scheduling missions by the tactical squadron.

The 173 Fighter Interceptor Squadron and the Nebraska units of the Des Moines based 132nd Fighter Interceptor Group were reorganized to form the 155th Fighter Group of the Nebraska Air National Guard on 1 July 1960.

The reorganization to the Fighter Group provided for an authorized strength of approximately 900 officers and men, which necessitated a step up in recruiting and cross-training assigned personnel into new career fields.

1967 was the first year that the 155th Fighter Group performed annual field training at home station in Lincoln, Nebraska. The majority of training was conducted at the Air National Guard Base from 12-26 August 1961. The aircrews rotated on deployment to Volk Field, Wisconsin for rocketry qualification from 13-23 August 1961, supported by 56 maintenance, operations, photography, weapons, supply, medical and refueler personnel. They were transported by C-54 airlift and motor convoy.

A full scale exercise was conducted by the Sioux City Air Defense Sector on 24-25 August 1961 during field training to test the runway alert and response capability of the unit. Twenty-four hour alert was maintained throughout the period, supplemented by additional crews during the exercise.

The unit continued to perform 24 hour alert during 1962 with a minimum of two aircraft and pilots constantly capable of being airborne within 5 minutes of notification by the Sioux City Sector SAGE site. At least one practice scramble or Combat Air Patrol mission was accomplished during each 8 hour shift.

It was during one of these practice scrambles that Capt Dick Wade was dispatched to intercept a B-47 at 41,000 feet on 19 July 1962. Fifteen minutes after takeoff, as he leveled at "Angels 41" an explosion in the engine of his F-86L turned the aircraft into a glider. Being unable to recover at an airfield, he ejected at 2,500 feet and parachuted to safety, while the aircraft crashed in a cornfield near Scribner, Nebraska. A few months later Major Bill Holmes experienced a similar situation when an explosion ripped through the belly of his aircraft forcing him to eject from the aircraft. He, too was able to parachute safely and recovered without injury.

Annual Field training during this year was again conducted at home station from 11-25 August 1962. Flight deployment to Volk Field, Wisconsin provided the range for rocketry requalification. Aircrews also cross-trained at Sioux City Air Base at the SAGE Center with ground controllers to become more familiar with the personnel and radar equipment used to establish contact with their targets. Twenty-four hour alert continued to be maintained and a full scale exercise was conducted during the last week of training. This was a NORAD directed exercise (Surfcoat Thinkahead III) and referred to as the "Moment of Truth" by Col Milt Hagelberger: "When target aircraft saturated the airspace over Nebraska.

At midnight, 30 April 1964, the unit ended its alert commitment to the Air Defense Command with F-86Ls and accepted a new challenge. It was now to be part of the Tactical Air Command to gather reconnaissance data in the RF-84F.

The unit transferred to the 127th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing headquartered at Detroit.

A field training detachment was dispatched to Lincoln during May and June of 1964 to train crews and maintenance personnel during evenings and weekends. The unit's resources during this period were minimal to say the least. It had only three or four technical manuals (Dash-1) and less than half a dozen checklists, but since most of the pilots considered themselves "super jocks," the lack of books did not seem to bother anyone.

During the time that the weekenders were in Lincoln, hitting the books and getting occasional flights in the F-86, most of the technicians were in Detroit, Michigan checking out in the new aircraft. These technicians would occasionally come to Lincoln in their Thunderflashes and would spin tales about the new aircraft that would leave the homefolks wide-eyed and full of anticipation.

Summer camp was held at Lincoln in August during which most of the squadron pilots completed their checkout and transition training. What a change! The crews were now flying with their heads out of the cockpit instead of looking into a radar scope. They were flying at 500 instead of 40,000 feet, and instead of firing rockets they were killing them with film!

The 84s that were assigned to Lincoln had been sitting in an outside storage area, had been seldom flown, and had had minimal maintenance. It is no overstatement to say that they were in sad shape! During that first year, the definition of a cross-country was a standard joke: out in an 84 and back in a T-Bird.

During the check outs and initial training period, several 84s ran off the runway for various reasons. Invariably the nose gear would collapse and the Hog would dig a furrow until it came to a stop in a kneeling position with a wrinkled nose. After one such occasion at a base in Tennessee, then Major Clarence Christensen had the dubious honor of flying one home with the nose gear chained down and locked.

By 1965, the unit had come a long way in getting ready to go to war with the Tactical Air Command. All of the aircraft had now been camouflaged. In addition, the crews were now proficient in all types of photography and they were going on gunnery missions at Smoky Hill Range near Salina, Kansas.

Annual training was held in August of 1966 at Alpena, Michigan. It was a welcome change of locale since the unit had spent five consecutive years at home station. The primary objective of flying training at Alpena was to practice going over the Great Lakes at low altitude beyond sight of land, do some maneuvering, and then return so as to landfall at a precise place and time.

In March of 1967, a number of aircraft and crews along with operations and maintenance support deployed to Nellis AFB, Nevada, for several days of gunnery practice. It would be the unit's last gunnery exercise. Shortly after returning home, removal of the 50 caliber guns from the RF-84 was directed. Now, along with the recce guys in RF-101s and RF-4s.

In June of 1971, the unit received its first tangible indication of what had been talked about since earlier in the year: Major Ronald D. Snyder and his RF-4C arrived in Lincoln as our new Air Force Advisor. Then in September it was off to the Pentagon for a pre-conversion conference and on the 28th of November the first RF-4C, tail number 65-828, was delivered to Lincoln.

The end was near for the RF-84. During 1972 they disappeared one by one: some to the boneyard at Davis Monthan AFB, Arizona, others to act as ground targets at gunnery ranges near Gila Bend, Arizona, and China Lake, Nevada.

On 28 November 1971, RF-4 tail number 65-828 was delivered and the RF-4C era began.

Earlier in 1971, when Colonel Bailey was notified of the conversion to the "Phantom" he set wheels in motion. The unit now had an immediate requirement for navigators to act as weapon system officers, J-79 engine mechanics, RF-4C crew chiefs, system specialists, etc. Countless hours were spent advertising, interviewing, and hiring for these new positions. The unit was converting from pre-Korean War RF-84Fs to the most modern reconnaissance aircraft available.

In the fall of 1971, a cadre of crew members began RF-4C training at Shaw AFB, South Carolina. Some would return to Lincoln as instructors, some fully qualified, and others would receive only basic aircraft transition training. At times, more than fifteen crew members from Lincoln were assigned to Shaw AFB.

Back in Lincoln, maintenance was being trained by an Air Force field training detachment. The training consisted of classroom and "hands on" training. Civil engineering was also busy because the jet engine shop was too small for the new J-79 engines. Plans were drawn and a budget request was sent to the National Guard Bureau for a new engine overhaul building. Construction actually began in July 1972. CBPO was busy in processing the newly required personnel, tracking training requirements, realigning personnel, etc. Supply tackled the tremendous task of converting its inventory and listings to support the Phantom.

In February 1972, the operational RF-4Cs began to arrive. They came from Shaw AFB, Bergstrom AFB, Texas, and from as far away as Alconbury AB, England. And, we received twelve photo processing and interpretation (PPIF) vans. These portable and transportable vans contained everything required to develop and interpret the film, maintain a quality control program, submit the required reports, and maintain all of the associated equipment.

In April 1973, Nebraska was selected to represent the Air National Guard in a fly-by at Fort Hood, Texas, for the newly appointed Secretary of Defense, Elliott Richardson. The four Phantoms operated from Bergstrom AFB, Texas. In the same month the unit was tasked to provide tactical reconnaissance support to a joint Army/Air Force exercise known as Gallant Hand. One hundred thirty-five personnel were transported to Dyess AFB, Abilene, Texas, in six C-141s, the C-54, and a truck convoy of eight vehicles. Nine of the new WS-430B PPIF vans were deployed in order to process, interpret, and report on the acquired targets.

During the summer of 1973, numerous missions were flown in support of an Army exercise at Fort Riley, Kansas. These missions involved low level visual and optical reconnaissance of the range. The unit located tanks, vehicles and personnel on the range and reported their location to a command post.

On 7 September 1974, 135 personnel and their equipment deployed to Elmendorf AFB, Anchorage, Alaska, on three C-141s and one C-130. The next day, a flight of four RF-4Cs departed Lincoln for a non-stop flight to Elmendorf. They were refueled inflight three times by Strategic Air Command KC-135 and reached Elmendorf in about six hours. Once in position, the unit participated in exercise Ember Dawn.

The targets were scattered throughout the state of Alaska. Some were within reach, but others required inflight refueling from KC-135s. The targets were often identified by Eskimo villages, airports, Dew line radar sites, etc. They had unusual names such as Kotzebue, Unalakleet, Cape Romanzof, and Unrnak. Some were located on the Aleutian Islands as far as 750 miles west of Elmendorf AFB.

From 4 to 11 November 1974, the NEANG participated in Brave Shield X, a joint task force exercise. The NEANG sent 77 personnel, equipment, and three Phantoms to Buckley ANG Base near Denver, Colorado with 70,000 pounds of equipment (including six PPIF vans) in three MAC C-141s.

During the fall of 1975, the unit flew a number of missions for SAC in the interest of energy conservation. SAC was conducting a heat loss survey of buildings at several bases. These missions were flown at 500 feet using infrared sensors. The film was returned to Lincoln, processed, and then forwarded to SAC for assessment.

For the first time in several years the NEANG had a large scale annual training deployment to Alpena, Michigan, 2-16 August 1975. The 400 personnel and over 115,000 pounds of cargo were transported aboard five ANG C-130s, two MAC C-141s, the NEANG C-131, and nine Phantoms. Many maintenance personnel stayed home because a lot of the test equipment was not readily transportable. In order to provide training for those at home station, RF-4Cs were shuttled to Lincoln and replacement aircraft returned to Alpena. Much was accomplished in Alpena in 1975, including low-level missions, advanced handling characteristics training, water survival, small arms qualification, and the normal "hands-on" training.

1976 began with another deployment to Alaska, this time to Eielson AFB, near Fairbanks. The exercise was properly named Jack Frost and was from 13 to 25 January. The 169 personnel and over 150,000 pounds of equipment were transported aboard four C-141s and a C-130. Six RF-4Cs went non-stop with three inflight refuelings provided by KC-135.

The Phantoms were kept in a heated hangar. When ready for a flight, the crews would strap into the cockpit and maintenance would then tow the plane outside for engine start. As soon

as an aircraft landed and the engines were shut down, maintenance would refuel it and tow it back into the hangar. With the wings folded it was possible to keep all six inside.

The six PPIF vans were kept in the same hangar. Due to the extreme cold, the vans had to be inside to prevent the water and sewer lines from freezing.

As the six Phantoms were taxiing out for the redeployment to Lincoln, one of the aircraft developed a severe hydraulic leak in the utility system. This required the aircraft to abort and remain at Eielson. The crew had to return to their civilian occupations so another crew returned to Eielson on 28 January 1976 via commercial air. The aircraft was finally flown from Eielson AFB to Cold Lake, Canada, and then to Offutt AFB for customs clearance. The aircraft returned to Lincoln 2 February 1976.

In August 1976 it was Brave Shield XIV at Fairchild AFB, Spokane, Washington. The NEANG supported both the defenders and the aggressors during the exercise. The deployment involved 151 personnel, six RF-4Cs, and 110,000 pounds of equipment. The personnel and equipment were transported aboard the C-131 and four C-141s. The deployment was from 16 through 28 August 1976. Both day and night missions were flown in the Yakima, Washington, range.

In September and October 1977, four RF-4Cs deployed to San Juan, Puerto Rico. The Puerto Rican ANG was conducting an operational readiness exercise and had requested that the NEANG RFs act as target aircraft penetrating its airspace. The two deployments were five days each and only the crew members participated.

On 20 November 1977, shortly after a 0400 takeoff, a tragic aircraft accident took the lives of the pilot, Captain Nolan Voigt, and the WSO, Captain Raymond C. Hesse. They were participating in an operational readiness exercise and were descending into a low level corridor when the aircraft crashed near Dodge, Nebraska, at 0411 hours. The accident investigation team was not able to determine the cause of the accident.

Another small force was deployed to Bagotville, Canadian Forces Base (CFB) near Chicoutimi, Quebec, Canada. LtCol Howard Vest was the task force commander. The deployment was 16-18 June 1978 and consisted of six phantoms and a C-130 from the Wyoming ANG to transport the forty-five support personnel and equipment. A total of 36 sorties were flown during the three day deployment which provided valuable aircrew training in high speed, low level flight in an unfamiliar area.

There was another deployment in July 1978 to Alexandria AFB, Louisiana, for an exercise named Corsair Rouge I. It involved three Phantoms and the C-131 with the maintenance, PPIF, and other support personnel and their equipment. The unit photographed a number of targets on the range at Alexandria and flew some strike control and reconnaissance missions with the Air Force A-7 unit at Alexandria. The deployment and exercise lasted one week.

In April 1979, three more PPIF vans were received from the depot. This gave the unit a total of 15

vans which is the normal ANG allocation.

Also in April 1979, there was a deployment to Hurlburt Field, Florida. Three Phantoms and crews participated in Corsair Rouge II which was a joint Air Force — Army exercise at Fort Polk, Louisiana. Most of the targets were assigned by ground and airborne forward air controllers when within the range complex. Photo processing was done by an Air Force unit at Hurlburt Field.

The unit's first foreign deployment. Colonel Bertrand and four of this staff officers conducted a site survey of Eskisehir Air Base, Turkey. They attended USAFE briefings, tours, planning conferences, and an in-depth survey of the base itself. After their return from Turkey almost everyone's time and efforts were devoted to planning the deployment. The deployment and re-deployment were named Coronet Cannon and the NATO exercise called Dawn Patrol 80. The unit was to provide photographic and visual reconnaissance of targets selected by the Turkish Air operations center (AOC) as well as some tactical air support of the maritime operation (TASMO) missions in the Aegean Sea, west of Izmir, Turkey. While deployed, the 155th flew 104 sorties totaling 142 flying hours. The missions were fragged for photography of airfields, towns, harbors, ruins of the Ottoman Empire, mosques, radar sites, etc. The Nebraska crews frequently had a Turkish RF-4E either leading or as a wingman.

In April 1992 the unit was directed to convert to the KC-135R mission when the U.S. Air Force decided to begin retiring the last of the F-4. The conversion to the aerial refueling mission began in January 1993 with the arrival of the first tanker aircraft.

In April 1999, the unit flew its first-ever combat missions. It was the first Air Guard tanker unit to be asked to support Operation Allied Force, the NATO bombing campaign of Serbia and Kosovo. The unit successfully deployed two aircraft and more than 80 personnel to Germany in less than three days and soon became the lead unit for all American tanker operations from the German air base.

During the course of the unit's involvement in the campaign, Nebraska aircrew successfully downloaded more than 800,000 gallons of fuel. They also helped successfully recover a downed F-16 pilot during the operation.

The aircraft and personnel returned to Nebraska in May 1999 when they were replaced by fellow Air Guard and Air Force Reserve units called to federal active duty by President Bill Clinton.

The Nebraska Air Guard's biggest modern challenge came on Sept. 11, 2001, during the moments following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Within hours after the attacks, members of the Air National Guard began voluntarily reporting to the base for expected duty. Among these airmen were members of the 155th Security Forces Squadron who immediately help take the base to its highest security level in the base's history. The Air Guardsmen would remain on duty for nearly two years.

The Nebraska Air Guard flew its first combat missions in support of the Global War on Terrorism on the afternoon of Sept. 11, 2001, when tanker crews flew two support missions over the continental United States, refueling aircraft patrolling over American cities as part of the Operation Noble Eagle – the defense of the American homeland.

Nebraska Air Guard crews and support staff were mobilized for duty in October 2001 when they were ordered to Moron, Spain, to begin supporting the air bridge over the Atlantic Ocean as the United States and allies began preparing for Operation Enduring Freedom and the initial bombing campaign of Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in Afghanistan. Air Guardsmen would remain in Spain until May 2002 when the aircraft and crews were released back to Lincoln.

Because of a scheduled transition of the KC-135R to the Global Air Traffic Management system in 2003, Nebraska Air Guard crews and aircraft did not participate in the opening stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom in February 2003. The 155th Air Refueling Wing completed its transition to the GATM system in late 2004 – the first Air Guard unit and among the first Air Force units to transition to the system – and deployed to Incirlik Air Base Turkey from October – December 2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While in Turkey, 155th ARW air crews refueled cargo and combat aircraft directly involved in the continuing effort in Iraq.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization Air Base in Geilenkirchen, Germany. Working from a small building adjacent to miles of concrete, their books were Air Force technical manuals, their transportation KC-135R. During their Aug. 8-20 deployment, members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Nebraska Air National Guard, successfully supported air refueling missions in an unfamiliar environment for the E-3A Airborne Warning and Control System's training mission. Deploying to western Germany gives Guardsmen unique experiences not available in the United States. The value of deployments is improved readiness and enhanced combat capability, as well as the opportunity to work with allied service members from 17 different countries. The deployment gave the Airmen a chance to learn about each others' specialties and see maintenance functions, overseen by the production supervisor and expediter, come together. The ground crew arrived in Germany ready for challenges that require flexibility and creativity. Their goal was to provide working "tanker" aircraft so the aircrew could fulfill the AWACs' E-3A training requirements. They strive to prevent a Red X aircraft – grounding an aircraft for maintenance reasons. Should they run into any problems, Tech. Sgt. Tom Heller is ready to go to work. Because there is not a supply force for the KC-135s operating at Geilenkirchen, the unit brings along basic equipment and parts to keep aircraft flying safely. When the need arrives, Heller said he taps the Air Force supply system for parts. If that doesn't work, one can be shipped from a Guard unit in the U.S. "That's just one big stock number out there," said Heller, pointing to a tanker on the ramp. He said the job requires persistence, creativity and good persuasion and bartering skills, some of which he draws upon from his Air Force experience. During this particular deployment, maintenance specialists encountered only minor problems. In order to get one particular part, Heller called Mildenhall Air Base, England. The part was available so during one of the mission flights, Nebraska flew one of its tankers to pick it up. The action averted a potential grounding. Avionics specialist were also busy with

another “hiccup” in the newly installed Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) system. Along with improved accuracy in avionics, the equipment enables communication with air traffic controllers through datalink and satellites. Since the 155th is the first KC-135R organization in the Air Guard and second unit in the Air Force to have its aircraft modified with the system, there aren’t many places to get parts for the system. They have to rely on each other to fix the problems they encounter. These challenges are considered training opportunities, especially for Conboy, who is training to qualify in his avionics specialty. During their time in Germany, Conboy, Frey, and McCune had the opportunity to watch an aerial refueling. They watched the delivery of about 10,000 pounds of fuel to E-3A AWACS aircraft over an hour-and-a-half – a small amount in comparison to some missions. Fully loaded, the “flying gas station” is capable of carrying 300,000 pounds of fuel. While the pilots orbited the aircraft in a 112-mile-long air refueling track, Tech. Sgt. Andrew Thimgan, a boomer operator, was lying down in the belly of the aircraft peering out his “window to the world” while waiting for an AWACS aircraft “receiver” to arrive. The air refueling ballet requires delicate maneuvering between the tanker and AWACS flight crew. The boomer has the critical job of safely guiding and connecting the receiving aircraft to the boom, which extends about 20 feet below the tanker, while both aircraft travel through the sky at 300 miles per hour. Frey watched his first air refueling with curiosity, interest and concern. Frey said he was a little concerned at first about the E-3A AWACS aircraft which seemed to hover about 20 feet below the tanker. “It looked kind of risky. The other plane was wobbling so much down there. One false move...but once I saw it three or four times, I knew it was safe,” said Frey. While Conboy saw his first air refueling, including a simulated emergency boom disengagement, the aircraft avionics specialist was fascinated by how the avionics equipment worked during flight in the cockpit. McCune, who has seen an air refueling one time before, related the maneuvers made by the boomer to that of playing a video game. McCune said he envies and is impressed by the job pilots and boom operators have. “I like listening to the lingo of the pilots back and forth and I like the teamwork between the pilots, boom operator and flight crew in the AWACS aircraft,” said McCune.

Thirty-one members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing provided aerial refueling support for the E-3A Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) Aircrew Training Squadron at North Atlantic Treaty Organization Air Base, Geilenkirchen, Germany. The squadron provides basic and upgrade aircrew training, as well as operational tasking for AWACS crews. The Aug. 8-20 deployment across the Atlantic was the Nebraska unit’s first overseas deployment using the newly installed Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) system. Along with improved accuracy in avionics, GATM enables flight crews to communicate with air traffic controllers through datalink and satellite systems. The 155th is the first unit in the Air Guard and second unit in the Air Force to have its tankers modified with the new system. Lt. Col. Steve Burke, pilot and deployment commander for the Geilenkirchen mission, said the deployment went well. “I like the opportunity to work with international folks and NATO operations, as well as flying in the different air traffic system,” said Burke, who works for Lockheed Martin Corporation as a civilian contractor exercise planner. Burke said GATM worked extremely well in the oceanic airspace over to Europe. “It’s greatly reduced our workload. In the past, we had to give position reports with high frequency (HF) radio to air traffic controllers every 10 degrees latitude. (Now) we don’t have to listen to all the static on the HF,” Burke said. Aircrews also had an opportunity

to practice auto pilot off and emergency breakaway procedures. McMahon said breakaways are emergency maneuvers that enable the tanker and receiver to quickly disconnect from the refueling boom and fly away from each other. The action is taken for a variety of reasons, including an event where either aircraft become unstable or if the receiver approaches the tanker

too close or fast. "Operationally, we don't do auto pilot off on a regular basis," said Maj. Mark McMahon, pilot. "This is practice for us to manually maintain our airspeed, heading and altitude. It also is good training for the receiver pilots so they can see the difference in order to become

comfortable with it." The deployment also offered 1st Lt. Hank Piening, pilot, the chance to fly his first overseas mission. "The overseas deployment was a great experience," Piening said. "I was finally able to leave the training environment that I was used to and learn about and operate in a completely different air space." Two of the most challenging things about flying in Europe, said McMahon, are the language barrier — English is not some the air traffic controllers' first language — and congested airspace. "It takes time to get used to. The other stuff we can handle...the language difficulty is the biggest challenge," McMahon said. In terms of air traffic congestion, he compared congestion in Europe to that of rush hour traffic in Washington, D.C. "It's like bumper-to bumper at 50 mph on a six lane highway each way," he said. "It gets so bad here that you're given time for takeoff. If you can't make that time, you have to go to the end of the line." "It's like waiting to leave your house to go to work." Lt. Col. Adam Dabrowski, pilot and civilian airbus airliner pilot, found flying with GATM especially valuable. "This rotation provided an outstanding opportunity for a workout of the Block 40 (GATM) equipment in a multi-faceted environment," Dabrowski said. "As a traditional Guard member, I rarely have recourse to use the entire range of GATM equipment flying from home station. Our sorties for NATO provided the necessary repetition to build a good comfort level." McMahon and his colleagues agree that deploying to foreign environments is critical for readiness. "It's important to prepare for and fly in an environment we're not comfortable with," he said. "We cannot allow ourselves to get complacent." "The more and varied experience we have, the more knowledge we have to draw upon when we see something new. It makes our flying safer and our mission more effective," McMahon said. 2004

2004 he 155th Air Refueling Wing deployed 6,300 miles to Incirlik Air Base in south central Turkey, Oct. 28-Dec. 4, to support Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. About 230 Nebraskans were embedded with the 385th Air Expeditionary Group., part of the Air Force's 39th Air Base Wing based at Incirlik. Adana, which is about seven-and-a-half miles east of the base, has a population of more than 1 million and is the fourth largest city in Turkey. This was the unit's third major overseas deployment with aircraft in support of a wartime operation since the aerial refueling unit was formed in 1994. The 155th served in Operation Allied Force (1999, Ramstein Air Base, Germany) and Operation Enduring Freedom (2001, Moron Air Base, Spain). Nebraska was part of Air Force Aerospace Expeditionary Force Cycle 1, which included aircraft maintenance personnel From Mildenhall, England, and a handful of mostly maintenance people from the Tennessee and Pennsylvania Air Guard. Providing 24- hour aerial refueling support to aircraft going in and out of Iraq and Afghanistan, the 385th refueled Air Force C-5 and C-17 cargo aircraft carrying supplies, cargo, military personnel, as well as the

remains of American service men and women killed in the war. Under the command of Air Force Lt. Col. Jerry Martinez, commander of the 385th Air Expeditionary Group, Lt. Col. Dennis Hayward served as commander of the 90th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron during the first half of the AEF rotation. Air Force aerial refueling units served there before and after the Guard rotation. Personnel conducted and supported aerial operations over the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, said Hayward, refueling everything from fighters and bombers to cargo aircraft hauling cargo and people. Hayward said the crews realize that the mission they're conducting is vitally important. "For every 24,000 pounds of gas we provide, that means there is one less fuel truck exposed to danger convoying in Iraq," Hayward said. "We look at what the 385th and 90th are doing as saving lives." Hayward said that since the build-up for refueling operations at Incirlik began in August 2003, more than 100 million pounds of fuel has been delivered to receiving aircraft. The biggest challenges of the deployment, he added, include the high operations tempo - or high volume of flying operations. "We're asking our aircrew to fly a lot and our maintainers to turn the jets faster to meet the missions," Hayward said. The busiest time for flying, said Hayward, was 4 p.m. to 2 a.m. "At night, aircraft taking off and landing are less visible. The threat is reduced in the (area of responsibility)," he said. "We're going to get the job done no matter what we have to do." The mission is unique partly because air missions can get cancelled at any time and things can change minute-by-minute, said Hayward. 'Slips' - situations that cause aircraft to be unable to make their takeoff or air refueling rendezvous times - can happen anytime. Such situations include bad weather, danger to aircraft on the ground trying to launch, maintenance and other causes. "When something slips somewhere, there's a ripple effect. We're a service provider to get airplanes from point A to point B," Hayward said. Hayward said Guard and Air Force personnel worked well together. "I don't know how you can talk about active supporting the Guard or Guard supporting the actives. I don't know how much more seamless the total force can get than what we have here." For Nebraska Air National Guard pilot 1st Lt. Matthew Siemsen, the Turkey mission was his first major deployment overseas. He said the deployment wasn't much different than the typical training missions he flies back in Lincoln. "The missions are pretty simple in nature; they're not complex, but are of high importance," said Siemsen, who flew a variety of missions and also worked in tanker operations, a "nerve center" of sorts where coordination between the tankers and receiving aircraft takes place. "I was surprised that the missions are more routine than what they would seem to be. Our biggest battle is complacency more than anything," Siemsen said. "A mission can get cancelled at any point in time," he added. Probably the biggest difficulty, said Siemsen, happens when a tanker takes off on a mission to meet a coordinated rendezvous. Then, the operations center will receive a message saying that the receiving aircraft is unable to take off because of some danger at the base there. "Things change very quickly...minute-by-minute," he said. "We're here to provide a service. We need to be accommodating. We're at the end of the whip. We need to be very flexible." Siemsen and commanders said the Nebraska team improved efficiency of air and support operations during their time in Turkey. "I think our unit has vastly improved the service and efficiency of some of our services. We've improved upon the scheduling in tanker operations. We have qualified and talented people," Siemsen said. "There are so many Guard tanker units that our reputation is quickly increasing with the quality of the product we provide. The active and Reserve units are getting to know the Guard," Siemsen said. Like others who talked about the unique mission in

Turkey, Lt. Col. Bob Athan, who served during the second rotation as commander of the 90th EARS, said the deployment is unique in that there aren't set air tasking orders. "We do know what air refueling taskings we'll have, but the schedule is much more fluid," Athan said. "That means crews have to be flexible. Their mental attitude is perhaps the most important asset. The crews understand why they are sitting in their Qs (quarters) in kind of a continuous alert status. Maybe that's the hardest part ...waiting." Not only does the environment demand a lot of aircrews, Athan said, it also asks a lot of maintenance. "Our maintenance is doing a fantastic job," Athan said. "We're turning jets at least three times a day. That says volumes about the quality of our maintainers. These aircraft are in tip-top condition and it really shows on a deployment like this." Nebraska leaders lauded the leadership of 385th Commander, Martinez, saying he was easy to work for and concerned about taking care of the people. Athan said he's seen a lot of teamwork and camaraderie. "Everyone understands why we're here. It could mean the difference between life and death to that Marine out there on the battlefield," he said. "No matter how much we would like to have a day off, we have to think about the folks out there. It makes us realize what we're doing is important," he said. The last major Nebraska deployments to Turkey were with the unit's former RF-4C Phantom II aerial reconnaissance aircraft in the 1980s to Eskisehir Air Base, Turkey

2005 Nebraska Air National Guard's recent Oct. 28 -Dec. 4 Air Expeditionary Force deployment to Turkey tested the Cornhuskers' expertise, pride and maintenance skills like never before. "On this deployment we really asked a lot of not only our aircrews, but also maintenance," said Lt. Col. Bob Athan, vice commander of the 90th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron, during the

deployment to Incirlik, Turkey. Maintenance is doing a fantastic job. We're turning jets three times a day or more. That says volumes about the quality of our maintainers. These aircraft are in tip-top condition and it really shows on a deployment like this." Lt. Col. Daryl Bohac, commander of the 385th Expeditionary Maintenance Squadron during the first of two rotations,

said the biggest challenge for maintenance was the fluctuating flying schedule that "slips and slides." "What we see coming out in the morning is not what we will have by night fall. It can change a lot," Bohac said. "Other than that, it's been really good. Folks have been busy. Most have said their time has gone by fast." Bohac said some of the slippage was caused by American aircraft on the ground in Iraq receiving fire. "Nighttime flying has added another safety risk," Bohac said. "We don't launch our aircraft unless the receiver's in the air. We're sometimes turning aircraft right back into the air." Like everyone, Bohac said the squadron takes pride in knowing they are directly supporting what's happening in Iraq. "We know we refueled transport aircraft that took 200 injured Soldiers to Germany to get necessary medical care," he said. "We're glad to be able to contribute." Everyone here has been top notch and performing well to get the job done," he said. As the first major deployment with the newly installed Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) and other avionics components, Bohac said they anticipated more problems than they had. The system is necessary for military aircraft to comply with coming changes in worldwide air traffic management. "GATM has not been a show-stopper," he said. "But we had more fuel cell issues than we thought we'd have." Chief Master Sgt. Marvin Leners,

maintenance superintendent who took over the second rotation following Chief Master Sgt. Dale McIntosh, said deployed maintenance specialists rose to the occasion. "This is an intense mission for a two-week period," Leners said. "It's not your normal two weeks. You have to be so flexible." Col. Ron Malousek, commander of the 155th Maintenance Group, said the work schedule — typically 12-hour shifts — was one of the most demanding the maintenance crews had faced in recent memory. "The facilities are good and the airplanes held up. A lot of home station work was done. We're working folks pretty hard. Some are barely getting a day off. Some aren't," he said. "The only challenge for the Guard is the rotations. But it's gone smoothly.

We haven't missed a beat. I think that's one of the things that has impressed our active duty colleagues here," Malousek said. "I am very proud of our deployed volunteer Airmen and their accomplishments on this demanding deployment. Our reputation as a professional and successful unit continues to grow." Master Sgt. Nathan Kucera, jet engine specialist who has deployed many times over the years, said when he and his colleagues weren't busy fixing engine problems, they were helping other maintenance specialists. "If we're not doing anything, we'll help other shops. If it's night, we'll hold flashlights for specialists or go wrestle up parts for someone else," he said. "During deployments there's a very strong emphasis on teamwork. This is an excellent deployment for young traditional (Guard members). It gives them a real mission environment. It has an added sense of urgency." Bohac said Air Force aircraft and maintenance personnel from Mildenhall Air Base, England, blended well and supported Nebraska during the deployment. Several maintenance specialists from the Tennessee Air National Guard and Pennsylvania Air National Guard also worked with Nebraska. War Readiness Kit sergeant Tech. Sgt. Michael Anderson of the Tennessee Air National Guard, said working with Nebraskans was "just like working back home." "The main thing is to take care of the mission," he said. Senior Airman Joshua Sears, a traditional Guard jet engine mechanic, said the experience gave him an opportunity to hone his skills and do a little different work than he's used to as a car mechanic. "With an aircraft, you have to check things several times over. You can't pull over off the road if something goes wrong," Sears said. "You skip a step and that could cost lives." "I never thought I'd be working on jet engines. I think the Guard is one of the best things I've ever done,"

2005 Air Force Lt. Col. Jerry Martinez, commander of the 385th Air Expeditionary Group, said one example of the success of total force was demonstrated at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, recently. About 200 members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing of Lincoln, deployed there Oct. 28-Dec. 4, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Of the 133 people under Martinez's command during the second half of the deployment, 119 were Air Guard. As commander of the 385th, he has 10 units small and large under his command. Six of the 10 are Air National Guard organizations, he said. Martinez, an Air Force C-5 Galaxy pilot and deputy operations group commander from Dover Air Force Base, said he's proud of the successes of the 385th and the seamless total force environment. "It's a true testament that when you mix forces like that, we can be a total combined force and we can learn from each other and be successful in our mission," Martinez said. "I don't know when I look out on my troops everyday on the flightline who is Reserve, Guard or active duty... it doesn't matter to me. Each does a professional job. Their performance is what I care about. "Everyone has

families and responsibilities at home, but when they get over here, their attitudes are just tremendous. They're so positive, they're happy in what they do and proud to serve their country and perform exceptionally. It says something not just about the Guard, not just about the active duty, but it says something about being an American," he said. Martinez, who was serving a four-month tour in Incirlik, said the biggest challenge he faces is keeping continuity with the continuous rotation of people. Guard units typically serve 30 days in deployed locations. Midway through the deployment, personnel typically are changed-out — called a midweek rotation. "This week, three aircraft - and pretty much the entire support staff - will rotate out," Martinez said. "Keeping continuity in a deployed environment is tough. But the fact that we rotate is not a bad thing. The reason we do that is to try to limit the temporary duty and deployments that the folks undergo back at other bases." "We're providing air refueling support to ensure planes get in and out of theater so they can return to supply bases and get reconstituted and then go back to the theater again," said Martinez. During the Nebraska Air Guard's time in Turkey, the 385th refueled a variety of aircraft, including those carrying wounded and deceased Soldiers and Marines from the battle of Fallujah, he said. "These are very important missions...their families want them home. It's a tough time for them and everyone around them so we do our best to get the planes onto Europe and then to the U.S.," Martinez said. 2nd Lt. Drew Webb, a recent graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, learned a lot about the Guard as Martinez's executive officer. Webb's job is to execute the commander's instructions, "put out fires" and ensure continuity during the rotation process. "I didn't realize how often the Guard deploys," he said. "Without their help, we wouldn't get to see our families much." During the time Nebraskans were deployed, there were a

handful of people who experienced family emergencies and tragedies. Martinez recalled one story that brought tears to his eyes. A sergeant received a call from his wife while she was enroute to the hospital in an ambulance with their daughter. The daughter had quit breathing and was receiving cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). The sergeant needed to get home. As luck would have it, former Secretary of the Air Force James Roche, Ph.D., and Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force Gen. John P. Jumper, were visiting the base that day. They were in their aircraft getting ready to leave when a request was made to get the sergeant onboard. "We asked if the sergeant could go back with them. They said, 'absolutely, yes,'" Martinez said. A team of people pitched in to pack the sergeant's bag, check him out of billeting, clear him through customs, arrange transportation and carry his luggage. "It was an incredible sign that our top leadership cares for and takes care of our people," Martinez said. "When your command will do that for their people...that says a lot. We heard when the daughter woke up, the first thing she asked was, 'Where's my dad.' I like to think we had something to do with that," he said. During the deployment, Martinez said he only had one major problem working with Nebraskans. "It's not maintenance-related, it's not ops-related ... I'm from Oklahoma," he said, smiling. "The University of Oklahoma and Nebraska played football a couple nights ago. It's rough when you're around a bunch of Cornhuskers and you're the commander and the only guy around from Oklahoma. That was a tough time. "We won, but I will tell you I locked myself in my room and

I did not go out for a while. I did not feel safe and did not run around doing the Boomer Sooner song."

2005 The sight of Cornhusker Red took its place amongst the jungle green and ocean blue of Guam as members of the Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Air Refueling Wing traveled nearly half-way around the globe to support American aircraft as part of the Andersen Air Force-based Pacific Tanker Task Force. The Guardsmen, who hailed primarily from Nebraska, supported the ongoing American show of force mission in the region throughout May. Approximately 250 Guardsmen were involved in the deployment, which was split into two two-week rotations. The deployment was part of an American show of commitment in the western Pacific region. Along with the tankers, B-2s from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., and F-15 Eagles from Mountain Home Air Force Base, Calif., were stationed at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, one of the most strategic air bases in the Pacific region. The Guardsmen say the deployment to Guam was a rewarding experience. "I think it's been going great," said Lt. Col. Keith Schell, deputy commander of the 506th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron. "We've done way more than we were planning to do. It's phenomenal what we're doing over here." The 155th Air Refueling Wing is a KC-135R Stratotanker unit based in Lincoln, Neb. As part of its global air refueling mission, the Airmen are no strangers to deployments, having recently served in Incirlik, Turkey last October and at Istres, France, in 2003. What made this particular deployment to Guam unique, was the fact that it was only the second time the unit has taken it newly modified tankers overseas. The modification included the installation of the Global Air Traffic Management (GATM) system, an addition that allows aircraft to fly tighter refueling patterns while giving the aircrew access to more data than they had in the past. The Nebraska Air Guard was the first Guard tanker unit and only the second in the entire Air Force to have its aircraft equipped with the system. Although important while flying in the cluttered airspace over Europe, the system is even more crucial when flying over the wide expanses of the Pacific Ocean, said Col. Jon Fago, commander of the 506th EARS. "This is our first operational deployment into the Pacific with the GATM airplane," said Fago, an MD-88 captain with Delta Airlines based out of Salt Lake City in civilian life. "I think that GATM is probably more designed for use in the Pacific than it is in the Atlantic because of the nonradar environment. We spend more time where we are not in radar contact (here)." According to Fago, who last traveled to Guam approximately 20 years ago as a young KC135A pilot, the current mission has been diverse. Along with helping refuel F-15s, B-52s and B-2s involved in the current show of force, Nebraska Air Guard crews refueled Navy and Marine F-18s operating from a nearby aircraft carrier. The crews were also involved in supporting American aircraft flying into and out of Korea, Japan and Thailand. That was quite a change compared to the mission the Guardsmen performed while in Turkey last fall. "This one is much more relaxed than the one in Turkey because this is a show of force," said Fago. "Our operations tempo was much higher there because we were refueling strategic airlift, which was reducing the number of convoys that had to be in Iraq." That doesn't mean that the deployment was all fun and games, though. For members of the unit's maintenance squadron, keeping the tankers flying became a daily battle as refueling flights were occasionally cancelled with little or no notice when the receiving aircraft suddenly canceled their missions. The Guardsmen, seemed to take it in stride, said Lt. Col. Steve Plamann, who shared maintenance officer duties with fellow Nebraska Air Guardsman Lt. Col. Ken Husted "The maintenance folks have been incredibly cooperative with the flexible schedule and getting the mission done," said Plamann. "They've been working split-

shifts and sharing the duties. They've also been working on other unit's aircraft that have been transient through here and developed maintenance problems." For example, during the second rotation, the Nebraskans helped repair three other aircraft belonging to Guard and Reserve units based in New Hampshire, Washington and Oregon. "We've seen everything from landing gear problems to other hydraulic problems," said Plamann. "We have all the specialties necessary to get the job done, whether it's an engine problem, flight control problem or whatever it might be." That was particularly evident when a New Hampshire plane developing landing gear problems while operating in the area. Initially, the Nebraska maintenance crews estimated that it would take approximately a day to put the aircraft on jacks, repair it and then lower the jet back to the ground. The Guardsmen —despite the fact that it was a down day on Andersen due to the Memorial Day holiday — completed the job in less than half the time than they'd originally projected. "That's totally due to the collective ambitions of the 155th Maintenance," said Plamann. "The folks we have here are extremely motivated and talented," he added. "We saw that over in Incirlik last fall, we saw it when we were in Istres in October 2003 and we're seeing it here again." Additionally, Plamann said, the unit's younger maintenance crew members — many of whom were first-time deployers — gained valuable training while in Guam. "They see how our senior noncommissioned officers are handling situations while they're on the road. Plus, (these younger maintenance members) don't have what they're used to having in Lincoln in the way of available equipment, response times, vehicles and transportation...and they're learning how to deal with it," he said. "It's going to make them all that much more ready to go the next time we deploy." Along with supporting the aircraft, the 155th Maintenance crews also worked closely with the Andersen Air Force Base maintenance and logistics staffs to identify equipment shortcomings to help the base prepare for a planned permanent influx of new tankers that will occur in the near future, said Plamann. He added that Andersen AFB logistical and maintenance staffs and the Nebraska Air Guard developed a strong relationship, which helped both organizations track down important equipment from other bases to help cover the shortfalls. "I definitely feel like we're going to leave this place better than we found it," said Plamann. Which is important, considering that tankers — while not the most romantic aircraft of the Air Force inventory — are vital. "We're a huge cog in the projection of force here in the Pacific," Plamann said, adding that the presence of tankers greatly enhanced the operating range of the Andersen Air Force Base fighters and bombers. "Considering the neighborhood we're in and the situations in Indonesia, Taiwan on North Korea, that's pretty important," said Plamann. "We give (the fighters and bombers) the range they need to make this show of force realistic." "This is an important mission.

The last of approximately 230 Nebraska Air Guardsmen from the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln Neb., returned April 4 from a 34-day deployment to Souda Bay, Greece. In typical fashion, the 155th ARW delivered over 4 million pounds of fuel to C-5 and C-17 transport aircraft supporting operations in Iraq. They also left the base a better place than what they found it.

2006

After becoming the first Air National Guard refueling unit to have its aircraft modified with a new communications and navigation system, member of the 155th Air Refueling Wing are now stepping to the forefront of the Guard in another way as they help other refueling units

transform to the system. According to Lt. Col. Keith Schell, 155th ARW executive officer, the Nebraska Air Guard unit worked hard to complete the modernization of its KC-135R fleet to the new "Block 40" modification and the addition of the Communication, Navigation, Surveillance/Air traffic management (CNS/ATM) system. The system was formerly known by the acronym GATM, which stood for Global Air Traffic Management. "What the new CNS/ATM system had done for us is we now have datalink capability where the aircraft, via satellite, reports its position periodically or on demand by the controller. So, we no longer have to make the radio position report," said Schell. This allows more aircraft to fit into the same air space, which is very important in crowded flying areas such as the northeastern United States, Pacific area countries and Europe, said Schell. Along with being the first Air Guard KC-135R unit – and only second in the Air Force – to switch to the new system, the 155th ARW was also the first unit to become completely operational with its modified aircraft. "We were the first Air Force platform (airplane) to be certified and trained in the Pacific and the north(east)," said Lt. Col. Bob Stevenson, 173 Aerial Refueling Squadron operations officer. Since the systems were new, a revised training program had to be developed for aircrews to become proficient in using the CNS/ATM. Members of the 155th ARW solved this challenge by developing new training modules for flight and maintenance crews. "We developed, designed and executed a training program that had never been done before...(to) take E model Block 30 crews and train them in the R model block 40 all at the same time." said Stevenson. Previously air crews were trained from the E-model to R-model aircraft and then from the Block 30 to Block 40 modification. "We combined the two into a single training program." said Stevenson. 155th ARW communication and navigation personnel have offered their expertise to other units as well. "We communicate with other units for training requirements. In some cases units request the opportunity for hands on training and we provide that," said Senior Master Sgt. Gene Trausch, Avionics Element supervisor. So far two units have come to Lincoln for CNS/ATM training in guidance and control, and avionics, said Trausch. Other units have contacted the unit's avionics section for possible future training as they receive their newly modified aircraft. "We are the lead unit for this change." said Master Sgt. William Rowell, Communication/ Navigation Shop chief. Rowell said that being the lead unit means the avionics section has helped review technical manuals and procedures to fix and upgrade the new systems. "We review (Time Compliance Technical Orders) and advise the writers of changes," said Trausch. "This helps other units avoid difficulties and problems with their CNS/ATM systems." Lincoln communication and navigation technicians also talk frequently with the software engineers about difficulties with the CNS/ATM systems, especially when the system upgrades cause other aircraft systems to work incorrectly. As a result, the 155th ARW has become a model for other bases. "The Air National Guard in Washington (D.C.) looks to us as the CNS/ ATM experts in the Guard." Said Stevenson. "The training load is heavy for the active duty and.... we are in a position where we are trying to help alleviate some of that for them."

2007

More than 25 members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing recently spent two weeks helping train new North Atlantic Treaty Organization pilots with aerial refueling maneuvers. Starting Feb. 19, Nebraska Air Guard members helped train E-3 crew members based at Geilenkirchen Air Base, in western Germany. It's a mission the Nebraskans are extremely familiar with. "We do it

annually,” according to Maj. Jeff Briere, 155th ARW pilot. According to Briere, Air Guard units from across the United States support the NATO mission 44 weeks out of the year with the Nebraska Air Guard pulling a different two-week stint every year. Briere said it provides a great opportunity for new NATO pilots to learn how to refuel the AWACS in a variety of conditions. “They’re not usually as experienced as American receiver pilots are,” Briere said. While flying in Europe, the Nebraska crews were able to gain valuable experience learning how to overcome obstacles involved in helping Allied nations. “It’s good training for us,” said Briere. “It’s a foreign airfield and you have to work with German nationals.” Also complicating matters was the fact that the Guard crewmembers had to adjust to different procedures including parking the aircraft with direction given through a slight language barrier. The weather also created some difficulties as well because the unit arrived during the German spring rainy season. “It rained everyday there and with the rain came the winds. It was a challenging flying environment from the weather perspective,” said Briere. According to unit pilots, the flying went off without a hitch. The only challenge was adjusting to the inexperienced AWACS pilots. “I thought it went well,” said Capt. Bryan Scholtes, 155th ARW pilot. “Some of the sorties are a bit nonstandard because the NATO pilots are new.” The Lincoln team consisted of air crew members, maintainers and supply members, said Senior Master Sgt. Eugene Trausch, 155th Maintenance Squadron Avionics Element supervisor. Trausch said the deployment included 18 support personnel including 16 maintenance and two supply members. “We had a skeleton crew, because of a tight budget, but we had plenty of people,” he said. “We weren’t able to take extra folks so they could learn in that environment.” The maintainers’ experience allowed them to keep the number of people to a minimum and keep costs low. “I couldn’t find anybody better to take on those trips. I was truly honored to work with the maintenance crews who went,” said Rausch. Their ability to provide coverage was even apparent to the aircrews “The maintenance crews gave us 100 percent mission capable aircraft all hours of every day.” said Briere. “The trip went pretty flawless.” The ability to provide coverage was put to the test when one of the maintainers had to leave early because of a family emergency. Instead of causing problems Trausch said the Nebraskans simply rallied together to get the job done. “They all picked up the slack,” he said. 2007

2007 lying through the darkened skies above a rugged Afghanistan landscape, eight Nebraska Guardsmen made history in April when they became the first members of the Nebraska Air Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing to land a unit tanker in Afghanistan. The Airmen were participating in a week-long mission to move wounded American service members out of Afghanistan to a hospital in Germany, part of a new aeromedical evacuation mission for U.S. tanker crews. According to Maj. Bob Hargens, Nebraska Air Guard pilot, the April 29 – May 6 mission was an incredible experience for him and the rest of the Nebraska flight and maintenance crew. “It was a great opportunity,” said Hargens. “We’ve had some limited opportunities within the unit to support the war, but this mission was different because instead of flying high above we were actually landing and helping out wounded Soldiers who needed to be evacuated out of the country to receive medical attention.” The mission, said Hargens, is relatively new for the tanker community and only a “handful” of tanker crews in the entire Air Force had made the long flight between Germany and Afghanistan prior to the Cornhuskers’ participation. As such, the mission had a variety of unique challenges the crew had never dealt

with before. For example, prior to departing for Germany, seating and cargo bins within the tanker were reconfigured to hold patient litters and accompanying medical equipment. The crew then departed for Andrews Air Force Base where they picked up an Air Force aeromedical team and then flew on to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. Once in Germany, litter bearing equipment was set up within the aircraft and a new aeromedical team came on board from nearby Landstuhl Medical Hospital. According to Maj. James Dalton, pilot, the aircraft had to land, load and takeoff from Afghanistan in a matter of a few short hours. That meant for a long flying day for the crew. "A late in the day take off is pretty normal for your body clock, but it was a pretty long duty day," said Dalton, adding that it took approximately 22 hours from the time the air crewmembers left their billets in Germany until the time they arrived back. "We were tired by the time we got back." While assigned to the mission, Dalton said, the crew made two separate flights into Afghanistan, transporting a total of 23 patients back to Germany. According to Master Sgt. Jeff Van Nortwick, boom operator, unlike typical air refueling missions, the aeromedical evacuation operation tested he and Senior Master Sgt. Mel Kaup in different ways. "For us, it was more of a passenger handling mission," said Van Nortwick. For example, said Van Nortwick, he and Kaup had to make sure that the plane was configured correctly to handle all of the patients, equipment and baggage and that all of the floor rollers were installed and operating correctly. "They have different configurations for AE missions depending on how many pallets they want to put on," he said. "The biggest preparation for this one was that we were going into Bagram, so we had to deal with body armor, water...things that we normally don't deal with during normal missions." Space aboard the aircraft was also an issue, Van Nortwick said. "It's not like the tanker has a lot of space to deal with in the first place, but just dealing with the more confined space and narrow passageways between the front and back of the aircraft because of the patient pallets really made it challenging," he said. Flying into Afghanistan was also a challenge, said Hargens. "The terrain there is higher than any other place that we typically deal with," he said. "There are definitely some large mountains around that you have to be aware of." "Fortunately, the new system that we have on our aircraft has a terrain avoidance system on it," he said. "That really helped us keep track of where the mountains were in relationship to our aircraft." According to Hargens, once in Afghanistan the accompanying maintenance crew had completely serviced the aircraft before bringing the patients onboard. Considering the limited time available, Hargens said the maintenance crews had to work extremely hard. "They did a fantastic job... fueling... inspecting... everything," he said. "I just can't say enough about how hard they had to work." Dalton said he and the rest of the crew felt enormous satisfaction knowing that they were helping fellow Americans get the help they needed. "You're doing something that's real world. You're helping the war effort," he said. "It's satisfying to know that you're helping wounded Soldiers by getting them out of the (Area of Responsibility.)" Van Nortwick agreed. "It's a huge satisfaction, actually, seeing those who are fighting a war, who have been injured...and being able to get them out of the country and to a hospital where they can get some help." "We had a critical care patient on the second flight who, we knew when we hauled him out of there, that he needed more advanced help than he could get at the field hospital," Van Nortwick said. "You knew you were really doing something worthwhile." For Kaup, who was flying his last overseas mission before retiring from the Air Guard, the assessment was much clearer. When asked what he thought of the mission, he said simply: "It was, without a doubt, the most important and satisfying mission of my

career.” For Hargens, the mission was also part of a family and community effort to tell wounded service members thanks for all that they’d done. Prior to leaving for the mission, Hargens said he told his three daughters about what he was about to do. They then told their teachers at Malcolm Elementary. “The students made about 60 get well cards and a big banner that we hung inside the aircraft for them,” said Hargens. “It became kind of a community effort to tell them thanks for all that (the wounded service members) are doing.” Making the historic missions were: Maj. James Dalton, Maj. Bob Hargens, 1st Lt. Andy Thimgan, Senior Master Sgt. Mel Kaup, Master Sgt. Jeff Van Nortwick, Tech. Sgt. Kenny Vodicka, Staff Sgt. Justin Ingle and Staff Sgt. Mark Zordel.

2007

Hundreds of 155th Air Refueling Wing members returned recently after being deployed throughout July to Anderson Air Force Base, Guam, to refuel B-52s as the bombers flew 22-hour missions to Alaska and back again. The unit was supporting a B-52 exercise called Polar Lightning that is designed to test the long range capabilities of the bomber. Each mission typically involved two bombers and two tankers taking off with the refueling taking place about two hours out from Guam. Then the B-52s would continue on to Alaska and meet up with two tankers from the Alaskan Air National Guard. After being refueled there the tankers would turn around and head back to Guam. “We would meet up with them about 4-5 hours out from Guam,” said Lt. Col. Steve Plaman, 155th Operation Support Flight commander. At that point they would complete the last refueling for the B-52s before they came on back home. The mission called for a lot of flying, but it has to be done to ensure the bomber crews are mission ready, said Plaman. “Our refueling missions were 5.5 to 9.5 hours long.” With the great distances the bombers had to fly every contingency had to be planned for so that tankers would always be available to gas up the bombers. Along with following the B-52s out, the unit also had to maintain an alert aircraft on the ground at all time. “It was really critical to have the (alert aircraft ready) at all times,” said Chief Master Sgt. Ken Nauert 155th Maintenance Group. “If for some reason we couldn’t refuel the B-52, we had to scramble the alert, otherwise they would have to put it (the B-52) in the ocean.” The initial Nebraska Air Guard members began deploying at the end of June with rotations every 15 days, with some serving the entire duration of the mission. The mission was completed on Aug. 1 when the final aircraft and crew returned home. The experience gave many the opportunity to keep skills honed while others were able to experience a deployed environment for the first time. “What an awesome experience,” said Senior Airman Brent Frohner, a scheduling technician with the 155 Maintenance Support Group. Frohner was especially impressed with how the whole organization came together to get the mission accomplished. “We were really dedicated. It didn’t matter if we had to be there early or stay late at night. Everybody’s there to do a job and we aren’t going to leave until we can get it done.” Frohner’s sentiments were echoed by many in the organization including Nauert, who said: “Our maintenance kept up really well even though it was our fourth deployment this year and many of the positions were filled by some of our junior Airmen,” said Nauert. “We didn’t miss a sortie and we didn’t delay a sortie.” The unit’s performance was even more amazing because of the hours that were required to be maintained. “We sustained 24/7 operations,” said Plaman. “With phenomenal support from maintenance, we didn’t miss a mission.” While in Guam, the wing performed 33 sorties while

off-loading 3,378,900 pounds of fuel which is equivalent to 355,000 gallons. To reach these numbers the air crews had to fly over 200 hours.

When the members arrived at the end of February, they found sparse surroundings with only basic office furniture, lights, tables and chairs. "We walked into a bare base situation and had to stand up the entire operations from scratch," said Lt. Col. James Stevenson, commander of the 90th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron who also serves as the 173 Air Refueling Squadron commander in Lincoln. There were challenges to setting up shop in facilities that hadn't been used for a while. "Lots of pigeons when we got there," said Staff Sgt. Isaac Cepek, an aircrew fight specialist with the 155th ARW. "There was nothing there, so we set it up ourselves." Like most of the sections that worked on the base, Cepek had to bring everything he would need with him from his Lincoln shop. He then set up working facilities as best he could. "We pack everything we need for the road. We can repair there if needed, but if we can make it work until we get back, we do," said Cepek. Overall, the unit recorded 286.5 flight hours during the 61 sorties it flew during the 34-day deployment. Most members were deployed for 15- or 30-day rotations, running 12-hour shifts around the clock. According to the Air Guardsmen, the refueling efforts saved many Soldiers, Marines and Airmen from having to travel in dangerous convoys. "Essentially our KC 135s refueled those other cargo aircraft to make sure our troops made it home safely or that our troops on the ground were able to ensure that they received the

tools and equipment to be successful in their mission," said Capt. Jemmell Carter, a new maintenance officer with the 155th ARW. "We kept a lot of the long convoys – that would have normally put them in harms way – off the roads. The aircraft can take all their equipment and get it there quickly and safely for them," said Carter of his first deployment with the unit. Carter, who served in the active Air Force for 12 years prior to transferring to the Air Guard in December, said he was proud of the service the whole unit provided while deployed. "We met 100 percent of missions," said Carter. "That really is the nuts and bolts of it." Carter had been on deployments with the active duty Air Force, but this was his first with the Air National Guard. "I appreciate how the Guard looks out for their troops," said Carter. "You definitely look out for the troops a whole lot more than active duty in the sense that we have guys that have been here so many years and a good culture on how we do business." The 155th ARW also had a chance to lend a hand to other units on the base. "The host Air Force unit from the 488th Intelligence Squadron worked hard to help us set up our (communications) network. When that was done, our Comm folks then went to work for them and helped pull computer lines and software things they had on the back burner for a while," said Stevenson. On the maintenance side, Detachment 1, 95th Reconnaissance Squadron, had aircraft generation equipment that was awaiting parts or had been inoperable for some time. Members of the 155th ARW repaired some of their equipment and got it working. The 95th RS is out of Mildenhall Air Base, England, but belongs to 55th Wing at Offutt Air Force Base, a base that the 155th ARW frequently works with in Nebraska. The Nebraskans' efforts left positive impressions on many people and units that interacted with the 155th ARW while deployed, said Stevenson. "There is no greater compliment essentially than being complimented by another commander," said Stevenson.

“We discharged ourselves in a manner that people in Nebraska can be proud of. Our folks really knocked that one out of the park. They made my job easy and fun by going over and above, which is typical of our members.” 2008

2008 Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing recently received word that it has been awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 2007, the ninth time that the organization has earned the prestigious award. According to unit officials, the unit received word in late January that Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley, director of the Air National Guard, had approved the award earlier that month. The 155th is one of 17 Air Guard wings nationwide to receive the award. In the citation accompanying the award, the 155th ARW was commended for its “exceptionally meritorious service from May 1, 2005 through April 30, 2007.” “During this period, the 155th distinguished itself by successfully employing its mobilized and volunteer unit members in support of Homeland Defense, Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi freedom and a host of Expeditionary Combat Support deployments,” the citation reads. “The unit’s tankers and personnel performed brilliantly in the execution of world-wide missions of vital importance to our strategic national interests. In addition, the unit excelled in operational readiness, environmental protection, compliance inspections, community involvement and flying safety.” According to Col. Rick Evans, commander of the 155th ARW, the award speaks volumes about the unit and its members. “The 155th Air Refueling Wing members have a long tradition of working together to achieve excellence on a daily basis, so this award comes as no surprise to me,” said Evans during the unit’s drill unit, Feb. 2. Brig. Gen. Tim Kadavy echoed those comments. “I just wanted the wing to know how proud we are of them and their performance,” Kadavy told members of the organization, Feb. 2.

2010 Nebraska Air National Guard’s 155th Air Refueling Wing has been named a recipient of the 2009 Air Force Outstanding Unit Award. This marks the 10th time that the Lincoln-based organization has earned the award in its 64-year history. The 155th Air Refueling Wing is one of only 14 Air National Guard wings from across the United States to earn the award this year. In earning the award, its first since 2007, the 155th Air Refueling Wing was commended for a number of accomplishments including: 800-plus members of the 900-member unit filled Operation Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom air expeditionary force taskings to over 40 locations worldwide. Flew 5,700-plus hours on operational training, 1,200 hours of which were combat or combat support missions for Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Additionally, 155th Air Refueling Wing volunteer crews flew 225 combat hours to and from Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, supporting high-risk medical evacuation missions. Transported more than 270 Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsmen to and from Louisiana during the Hurricane Gustav relief effort. Supported numerous national combat and homeland security exercises. Participated in the “Beyond the Horizon” humanitarian mission to Honduras in 2008, providing medical and dental support to local Honduran citizens. Maintained 100 percent or greater personnel end strength for the entire period. The 155th Air Refueling Wing was also lauded for its performance during recent Air National Guard evaluations and U.S. Air Force operational readiness inspections, and its work in helping other KC-135R units upgrade to modernized navigation systems. Also noted were the unit’s family support and

energy conservation programs, and its level of community involvement. The unit was also recognized

for its flying and ground safety efforts, having recently surpassed more than 115,000 hours of Class A mishap-free flying. According to Col. Rick Evans, commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, the unit is honored to be able to add another award to its already long and distinguished record of achievements and outstanding service to state and nation. In his announcement to the unit, Evans noted that “while this is a team award it is enabled by the pride, dedication and purposeful service of each unit member.” He added that “the 155th has once again lived up to its motto of ‘Ready and Able,’ proving that it is among the very best units in the entire U.S. Air Force.” 2010

Annual Training

1947	Lincoln, NE	P-51	
1948	Lincoln, NE	P-51 and 80	Aircrew and aircraft rotated to Rapid City, S.D. for gunnery
1949	Oscoda, MI	P-80	First airlift of ANG unit to SET. C-46s from Offutt AFB, NE
1950	Oscoda, MI	P-80	
1951			Nebraska Air National Guard units on Active Duty.
1952			Nebraska Air National Guard units on Active Duty.
1953	Lincoln, NE	F-51	
1954	Casper, WY	F-80	Personnel moved by train to Casper, WY.
1955	Casper, WY	F-80	
1956	Casper, WY	F-80	
1957	Casper, WY	F-86	
1958	Gulfport, MS	F-86	Commercial airlift.
1959	Alpena, MI	F-86	
1960	Alpena, MI	F-86	
1961	Lincoln, NE	F-86	deployed to Volk Field, for rocketry
1962	Lincoln, NE	F-86	deployed to Volk Field, for rocketry
1963	Lincoln, NE	F-86	
1964	Lincoln, NE	RF-84	
1965	Lincoln, N E	RF-84	Middle weekend 8 aircraft deployed to Bangor, ME.
1966	Alpena, MI	RF-84	C-121 Airlift.
1967	Lincoln, NE	RF-84	16 aircraft deployed to Otis AFB, MA due to weather split into flights of 4 and went to various locations.
1968	Alpena, MI	RF-84	C-130 airlift
1969	Lincoln, NE	RE-84	Aircrews, aircraft and support deployed to Mt Home AFB, ID
1970	Savannah, GA	RF-84	8 aircraft deployed to Rainey AFB, Puerto Rico C-97 and C-130 airlift C-54 to Ramey AFB
1971	Lincoln, NE	RF-84	
1972	Lincoln, NE	RE-4	
1973	Lincoln, NE	RE-4	
1974	Alpena, MI	RE-4	C-130 airlift.
1975	Alpena, MI	RE-4	C-130 airlift.
1976	Lincoln, NE	RE-4	

1977 Lincoln, NE RF-4
 1978 Savannah, GA RE-4 First ANG unit to have an Operational Readiness Inspection in a deployed status C-130 airlift
 1979 Lincoln, NE RE-4
 1980 Lincoln, NE RE-4
 1981 Gulfport, MI RE-4

Deployments and Exercises

Aug 1948 Rapid City, South Dakota P-51 – Gunnery
 Jan 1949 Fargo, North Dakota, 4 P-80s, Movie "Jet Pilot"
 1953 thru 1956 Casper, Wyoming Various weekends for gunnery
 1955 Hurlburt Field, Florida, 4 F-80s, Gunnery practice
 1955 Boise, Idaho ANG Worldwide Gunnery Meet
 1956 Wendover AFB, Utah, Gunnery Team Practice.
 1956 Nellis AFB, Nevada F-84s USAF Gunnery Meet
 1956 thru 1963 Various locations in the U.S.A. and Canada, T-33s as target aircraft for Air Defense Command Exercise
 Jul 1965 Fort Hood, Texas In support of U.S. Army Flown from Lincoln with 2 air-to-air refuelings
 Aug 1965 Bangor, Maine, 8 RE-84s
 Apr 1966 Nellis AFB, Nevada, 8 RE-84s Gunnery
 Jun 1966 Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, 4 RE-84s Exercise Snows AAR - 4 going: 3 on redeployment
 June 1967 Detroit/Alpena, MI 4 RF-4s from Lincoln to Michigan to Lincoln
 July 1967 Detroit/Alpena, Michigan for ANG Exercise Guard Strike I. Frequent missions with 2 Air to Air Refuelings.
 Jul 1967 El Paso, Texas Support for U.S. Army
 May 1968 Homestead AFB, Florida 12 RF-84s
 Jun 1970 Ramey AFB Puerto Rico 8 RF-84s from Savannah, GA 1 AAR each way
 Dec 1970 Elmendorf AFB Alaska 4 R F-84s Exercise Punch Card XXII
 Apr 1971 Elmendorf AFB, Alaska 4 RF-84s Exercise Punch Card XIV
 Apr 1973 Dyess AFB, Texas RF-4Cs Gallant Hand
 Aug 1973 Fort Riley, Texas Reforger in support of U.S. Army
 Aug 1973 George AFB, California Support for U.S. Army
 May 1974 Buckley ANGB, CO 4 RF-4Cs Air Force Academy Graduation flyby
 Sep 1974 Elmendorf AFB, Alaska Exercise Ember Dawn AAR - Buddy KC-135
 Nov 1974 Buckley ANGB, Colorado Exercise Brave Shield X at Fort Carson, CO
 May 1975 Buckley AFNB, Colorado 4 RE-4s AFA Graduation fly-by
 Jan 1976 Eielson AFB, Alaska 6 RF-4s Exercise Jack Frost
 Aug 1976 Fairchild AFB, Washington 8 RF-4s Exercise Brave Shield XIV
 Jul 1977 Little Rock, Arkansas Exercise Boldfire 1-74
 Sep 1977 San Juan, Puerto Rico ORE Assistance to Puerto Rico ANG
 Mar 1978 Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ 4 RF-4Cs Mini Deployment for Training
 Jun 1978 Bagotville, Canada Mini-deployment and Joint Training

with Canadian Air Defense Command.

Jul 1978 England AFB, Louisiana Exercise Corsair Rouge I.
Oct 1978 Bagotville, Canada Mini-deployment and Joint Training with Canadian
Air Defense Command
Apr 1979 Hurlburt Field, Florida Exercise Corsair Rouge II
Oct 1979 Boise ANGB, Idaho Photo Finish 79
Jan 1980 Niagara Falls, New York 8 RE-4Cs — Exercise Empire Glacier 80.
May 1980 Eskisehir, Turkey 8 RE-4Cs — Exercise Dawn Patrol 80. Rest stop at
Torrejon AB, Spain. 8 AARs going, 8 returning

440813	P-38	43-28749		
440901	P-38	43-28408		
441224	P-38	42-67942		
431110	P-47D	43-8358	FLEF Childs, Marvin E	Groton AAB, CT
431118	P-47D	42-8218	LAC Schultz, Herbert R	Groton AAB, CT
431119	P-47D	42-8172	KCREFF Reed, Willie S., Jr	Vicinity of Groton AAB, CT
431218	P-47D	42-8649	LAC Burr, Marvin F	Suffolk County AAF, LI, NY
440102	P-47C	41-6559	FLEF Cargill, George H.	Hillsgrove AAF, RI
440225	P-38J	42-67937	KCREFF Gosselin, Raymond P	Aldermaston/Sta 467
440304	P-38J	42-67283	KCRL Loffredo, Ralph A	Andover/Sta 406
440304	B-17G	42-31187	FL Garrett, Donald W	Newmarket/nr
440306	P-38J	42-67299	LAC Huguenin, Joseph F	Andover/Sta 406
440313	P-38J	42-67958	CBLEF Powers, Richard T Jr	Andover/Sta 406
440426	P-38J	42-67456	TAC Burr, Martin F	Thrupton/Sta 407
440426	P-38J	42-67430	TAC Childs, Maarvin E	Thrupton/Sta 407
440428	P-38J	42-67420	LAC Forman, Herbert (NMI)	Andover/Sta 406
440608	P-38J	42-67985	LAC Parry, Robert K	Andover/Sta 406
440723	P-38J	42-67456	KMAC Burr, Marvin F	Isle of Wight
440723	P-38J	42-67943	BOEF Murphy, Leonard (NMI)	Isle of Wight/1mi Brading
440808	P-38J	42-104093	FLEF Cargill, George H	St Pierre-du-Mont/A-1
441029	P-38J	42-104172	TOA Murphy, John F Jr	Florennes/A-78
441213	P-38J	42-67502	BOW Nelson, Claron R	Florennes/A-78
441213	P-38J	42-68108	CBLW Greenwood, George (NMI)	Florennes/A-78
441214	P-38J	42-68017	LAC Heppler, Harold S	Florennes/A-78
450328	P-51K	44-12150	TOACBL Greenwood, George (NMI)	Ophoven
450420	P-51D	44-72321	FLEF Wingrove, Marvin V	Ophoven/Y-32 {E-4473}
450511	P-51D	44-72225	KLAC Newman, Warren B	Gutersloh/Y-99
450516	P-51D	44-72261	GL Vencill, Charles H	Gutersloh/Y-99
450710	P-51D	44-15065	BOEF Martin, John R	Michelstadt {9020}
450816	P-51D	44-72224	TOAEF Osborne, Roy E	Fritzlar/Y-86
440102	P-47C	41-6559	FLEF Cargill, George H.	Hillsgrove AAF, RI
450815	P-38J	4- KCRW	Evans, Fred W Jr	Todtmoos {WW-1907}
510622	F-51D	44-73348	LACGL Blumer, John F.	Dow AFB
510904	F-51D	44-72724	KBOMAC Stewart, Donald W.	Plum Island
510904	F-51D	45-11383	MAC Packett, Bernard L.	Plum Island
500402	F-80C	48-0899	LAC Reinhardt, Lewis K.	Lincoln MAP
500918	F-80C	48-0868	MF Hart, Jack W.	Ryan
501008	F-80	49-0442	LAC Hart, Jack N.	Hunter AFB
510226	F-51D	44-73348	TAC Bailey, Fred H.	Lincoln MAP
470623	P-51D-25NA	44-73016	MAC Gallagher, Francis B	Council Bluffs/ 1 1/2mi N
470623	P-51D-25NA	44-72929	KMAC Black, Paul H	Council Bluffs/ 1 1/2mi N

The National Guard Bureau preliminarily evaluated Omaha's airport and Offutt Field at Fort Crook as two possible host facilities for the state's Air National Guard. Further investigation revealed the War Department planned to declare a portion of the Army aviation facility, on the northwest end of the Lincoln Airport, as surplus. Henninger argued that these facilities were far superior to any in Omaha. Moreover, he believed the state's aviation assets would serve the command better if they were in the same city as the adjutant general and governor. He convinced Miltonberger to relocate the state's proposed Air Guard unit to Lincoln.

Shortly thereafter, temporary space became available at the old Lincoln Aviation Institute at twenty-fourth and "O" Street. Colonel Campbell used these facilities as a base of operation to begin recruiting. Each night Campbell, Major David E. Hardly, Captain Fred H. Bailey, and Captain Donald E. Coy interviewed prospective members. Most applicants were veterans from World War II.

Colonel Milton L. Hagelberger, a retired pilot, explained that "National Guard units were put together by increments." The National Guard Bureau mandated units have 25 percent of their required officer strength and 10 percent of their enlisted force prior to being recognized. This was "Stage I" in an eight-step reorganization . Every three months a unit had to recruit an additional 10 percent of its total force structure or federal recognition could be revoked. This program gave organizations two years to recruit 90 percent of their officers and 70 percent of their enlisted personnel. The state's Air Guard reached this magic number in late June 1946.

On 26 July 1946, after a flurry of inspections, the National Guard Bureau officially recognized Nebraska's Air Guard. It became part of the 140th Fighter Group headquartered at Buckley Field, Colorado. Nebraska's Air Guard has the distinction of being the second National Guard aviation unit, and the first organization in the state, to be federally recognized after World War II. It consisted of the 173 Fighter Squadron; Detachment C, 222nd Air Service Group; a utility flight ; and the 173 Weather Station.

When the 173 gained federal recognition, it did not have any aircraft. Air Guardsmen spent their first few "drills," two hours every Monday night, at their armory on Twenty-fourth and "O" Street, in classes and recruiting new members.

Colonel Hagelberger, then a captain with combat experience in World War II, became interested in the Air Guard after he saw an article in the local paper about the National Guard starting an aviation unit. "It really caught my eye," said Hagelberger, "because I suspected they were going to get P-51s, so I put my application in." Although Hagelberger was a captain in World War II, Nebraska's Air Guard accepted him as a first lieutenant in the second reorganization stage. "I knew that I would get to fly more if I was a lieutenant versus a captain," explained Hagelberger, "so took an administrative reduction in rank."

By the end of the Air Guard's second reorganization stage, Henninger had successfully petitioned both the War Department and city of Lincoln to acquire the Army Air Forces' excess property at the Lincoln Airport. These facilities included two hangars, a large portion of the warehouse area, and all but two of the gasoline storage tanks. The state was responsible for paying the heat, light, and water while the federal government provided the equipment, supplies, and aircraft.

In September 1946, Nebraska received its first aircraft, twenty-two P-51 fighters, seven B-26 bombers, two C-47 transports, and three T-6 trainers. Shortly thereafter, the state hired its first full-time aviation unit employees, consisting of a maintenance officer, supply officer, operations officer, and forty enlisted personnel. This core group moved into the old Army Air Force hangars in late September 1946.

The military's expansion for World War II necessitated the construction of thousands of inexpensive, semi-permanent facilities at small bases all over the United States, including eleven in Nebraska. The War Department only built these structures to last for the duration of the war. The hangars that the Air Guard originally occupied in 1946 were old wooden "seven year hangars," rapidly reaching the end of their life span. Veterans remembered these facilities as being very drafty in the winter and barely meeting the Army Air Force's minimum standards.

The National Guard Bureau and Army Air Force did not initially provide the Air Guard with a lot of guidance regarding flying hours, training, or uniforms. Pilots could fly as often as they desired, on any day of the week, without notifying the operations officer. Consequently, "us Guardsmen had a lot of opportunity to fly," said Hagelberger, "and that's what made it so much fun." Critics of the early Air Guard accuse it of being a Sunday afternoon flying club. "We might well have been," admitted Hagelberger, "but we just wanted to fly. America's reorganization of its military structure and creation of the Air Force as a separate entity, with its own rules, contributed to a loosely regulated Air Guard immediately following World War II.

By December 1947, Nebraska's Air Guard had met the National Guard Bureau's reorganization requirements. The last unit in the country, however, was not reconstituted until the end of May 1949. The Air Guard's tactical organizations consisted of seventy-two fighter and twelve light bomber squadrons. Its non-tactical units included thirty-six aircraft control and warning units, three tow target squadrons, three air service group detachments, and three weather stations.

Conversion to F-80C Jets While Nebraska's Army Guard trained with World War II surplus equipment, the Air Guard had taken a step forward by exchanging its P-51 piston driven "Mustangs" for brand-new F-80C jet-powered "Shooting Star" fighters. Pilots were sent in groups of five to Williams Air Force Base in Arizona for jet transition training while the ground crews were retrained in Lincoln. Conversion to the F-80C was a long process because the National Guard Bureau expected pilots and ground crews to continue flying and performing maintenance on P-51s while learning about F-80Cs.

On 27 July 1948 the first two of the state's allotted twenty-five F-80Cs, the Air Force's newest aircraft, arrived in Lincoln. The 173 received its first F-80Cs directly from the Lockheed factory in California with only six recorded flight hours. The F-80C flew in the six-hundred-mile-an-hour class, about fifty miles an hour faster than the earlier B model. Its armament included six .50 caliber guns and had the capability of carrying two one-thousand-pound bombs. The "silvery speedster, with its wing-tip drop tank," wrote an enthusiastic reporter for the Lincoln Journal when he described the aircraft as "resembling a giant sea gull waiting to drop on a fish, as it flew low over the field.

The Air Guard faced several obstacles after it took possession of the F-80C. Machine crafted tools, manufactured specifically for the aircraft, were supposed to have been sent with the jets. This ancillary equipment was missing, forcing ground crews to make their own tools in order to perform operational maintenance.

The Air Guard also lacked sufficient quantities of JP-1 (jet propellant) fuel, limiting pilots to fifteen minutes in the local area before having to fly to the Kearney Air Force Base to refuel. Makeshift crash helmets consisted of Army helmet liners strapped on top of Army Air Force canvas flying helmets.

Air Guardsmen continued to wear Army Air Force uniforms until the Air Force began issuing new uniforms, flight suits, and helmets in late 1948. Some pilots initially wore civilian clothes under their flying suits, or did not bother to wear flight suits. "To see a man walk away from a jet plane in civilian clothes," explained Milton Hagelberger, "was quite startling to some observers, particularly those who had never seen a jet plane." The National Guard Bureau put an end to flying in civilian clothes as soon as they found out about it. "They said that if you fly," said Hagelberger, "you will be in uniform, 'PERIOD. "

On 1 August 1948, Nebraska's Air Guard was redesignated as the 173 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, to match its new equipment. The National Guard Bureau authorized a full-time base commander during the transition and Captain (later Colonel) Fred Bailey filled the post. The Air Guard is unique in that it has had only three group commanders (variously called "base detachment commander," "group commander," or "air commander,") in forty-five years. Bailey served from 1948 to 1976, Colonel (later General) Richard E. Bertrand took over in 1976 and Colonel Bruce M. Schantz became the commander in 1985. The reorganized 173 completed its first annual training period, with F-80s in Lincoln during August 1948.

Operation Snowbound The timely completion of the Nebraska National Guard's reorganization enabled it to meet its first major test of the post-World War II era. By New Year's Day 1949, Nebraska had been hit by some of the heaviest snowstorms in its history. Many people in the western part of the state had not dug out from the 18 November and Christmas Day snowfalls when the forecast called for more snow. On 2 January, at approximately 5:30 P.M., high winds and heavy snow hit Chadron. In the next thirty hours, Chadron recorded thirty inches of new snowfall. The worst blizzard ever recorded in the state lasted three days and buried western and central Nebraska in drifts exceeding forty feet in some areas.

Governor Val Peterson (1947-1953) activated the first National Guard companies on 5 January. The Air Guard immediately flew medical supplies, food, and equipment to Alliance, "where we were stationed during the entire operation," said Hagelberger. Pilots acted as spotters for ground crews, airdropped needed supplies to beleaguered farmers and ranchers, and flew hay to stranded cattle. The Air Guard's mission was made more difficult because the Alliance Airport did not have adequate fuel supplies and pilots were restricted to daylight flying. After every mission, pilots had to fly to Denver, Colorado, or Rapid City, South Dakota, to refuel before heading back to Alliance, slowing the relief effort.

While the Air Guard hauled in supplies by air, Army Guardsmen cleared roads, rescued stranded farmers, and distributed blankets, generators, and supplies via convoys of two-and-one-half ton trucks. By 12 January, when Governor Peterson declared eighteen counties disaster areas, hundreds of Guardsmen from fifteen units were on active duty. The state legislature appropriated \$500,000 as a storm emergency fund while the rescue operations continued on a state level.

A new storm brought more snow, further hindering the Guardsmen's rescue operation and enlarging the disaster area to include several surrounding states. Shortly thereafter, President Truman declared sixty-two of Nebraska's ninety-three counties federal disaster areas. By the end of January, the federal government had taken charge of the situation by established a command post for Operation Snowbound in Lincoln. It coordinated local, state, and federal relief efforts.

Some of the assets provided by the federal government included numerous "Weasels" and over one hundred snowplows. Weasels proved to be one of the most valuable assets for rescuers. The Studebaker-powered, two-seated, tracked vehicle, a little larger than a jeep, had a rear area capable of carrying substantial quantities of equipment, supplies, and food. The lightweight Weasels could travel on top of snowdrifts, providing rescuers access to any part of the disaster area regardless of road conditions. One of the National Guard's missions was to organize and disperse rescue teams throughout the large disaster area. Each team consisted of one quarter-ton jeep, two two-and-one-half-ton, six-foot-by-eight-foot cargo trucks, at least one Weasel and eight men, commanded by an officer or senior enlisted man. Some groups had ambulances assigned to them while additional trucks, plows, and Weasels augmented others.

Each team carried rations, coal, fuel, food, and medical supplies provided by the Red Cross. National Guard material included water cans, extra chains, squad stoves, mountain cooking sets, spare parts, shovels, and other miscellaneous items.

Those coordinating Operation Snowbound, committed Nebraska's seventeen Guard rescue teams to the most critically affected areas. Their mission was to give all possible aid to "relieve human suffering and loss of livestock." They accomplished their objectives by working with spotter planes, which relayed distress signals and locations of stranded civilians and livestock to

the rescue teams.

By the end of February, Operation Snowbound was beginning to wind down. Over five hundred Army Guardsmen in fifteen units had participated in eight weeks of relief operations. The Air Guard, meanwhile, employed six types of aircraft in over 120 flight hours over the area of operation. Although Nebraska eventually dug itself out from the Blizzard of 1949, the aftermath of such heavy snowfall was spring floods and more rescue work for Guardsmen.

The use of the National Guard for Operation Snowbound was the beginning of a noticeably increased reliance on Guardsmen for state emergencies. Prior to 1949, Nebraska had only activated its National Guard for sixteen state emergencies. From 1946 to 1960, Nebraska's governors mobilized portions of the National Guard twenty-four times. From 1950 to 1959, the National Guard answered twenty-two emergencies, totaling 52,372 man-days (one man working for one day). Nebraska's Guardsmen spent almost twice as much time on state duty during the 1950s than they had in their combined previous history. "I don't remember a year that went by," recalled Sieck, "that we were not called out for some emergency-either a flood, snow or tornado.

Operation Snowbound was by far the largest state emergency during the 1940s and 1950s. Other incidents included the Missouri River Flood, 1952; Hebron Tornado, 1953; Lincoln Prison Riot, 1955; Milford Tornado, 1957; and Operation on Guard, 1960. Some of the National Guard's most bizarre state duty consisted of the search for a murder weapon in 1954, security for a corn picking contest at Columbus in 1956, and to search for mass murderer Charlie Starkweather in 1958. Portions of the Nebraska National Guard were also on active duty for the Korean War.

The Air Force was willing to depend more on the Air Guard than the Regular Army wanted to use the Army Guard. By the end of 1952, President Truman had mobilized twenty-two Air National Guard combat groups and their support units, representing 84 percent of the Air Guard's strength. Nebraska's 173 Fighter Squadron, Jet Propelled, was placed on alert in late 1950 and activated on 1 April 1951. As the unit prepared for activation, it found out it would be converting back to P-51s. The 173 was one of only four units in the National Guard that flew F-80Cs. Since none of the four maintained a full fleet, one of the squadrons had to distribute its aircraft to the other three. "So they took our resources," said Milton Hagelberger, "and put them with the other three-Bangor, Maine; Jacksonville, Florida, and Tucson, Arizona.

In April 1951, the 173 flew its F-80Cs to Bangor, Maine, and reconverted to P-51s. Shortly thereafter it became part of the Strategic Air Command, where its mission changed to long-range bomber escort. Over the next eight months the 173 participated in a number of exercises to sharpen its fighting capabilities, including Operation Snowfall and Operation Colds pot in New York.

On 1 January 1952, the 173 was reassigned to the Tactical Air Command, where it became part of the 132nd Fighter Bomber Wing. Later that month, the unit moved to Alexandria Air Force

Base, Louisiana.

Shortly thereafter the Air Force gave some of the 173's pilots an opportunity to join other organizations. Hagelberger, for example, transferred to a unit at Langley, Virginia, because its aircraft were fitted with an atomic weapons delivery system. "It looked like it was something that I would enjoy," said Hagelberger, "so I transferred.

Those who remained with the 132nd participated in several training exercises, including Operation Longhorn in Texas. National Guard units began reverting back to state duty at the end of 1952. The 173 returned to Nebraska on 1 January 1953, after twenty-one months of federal service. Most airmen activated with the unit, including Campbell, Hagelberger, and Bailey, returned to the state after their tours ended. Only a few chose to remain on active duty.

The Korean War was the Nebraska Air Guard's first war and marked a crucial turning point in its short history. Once the Air Guard overcame its initial mobilization deficiencies, it proved if properly equipped, that it could effectively augment the Air Force in a wide array of missions. Air Guardsmen's gradually won the respect of their active duty counterparts through their impressive performance. Air Guard units serving in Korea flew over 39,530 combat sorties, received over thirteen hundred medals and citations, four became aerial aces, and 101 were either killed in action or listed as missing-in-action.

The outstanding service of the Air Guard during the Korean War laid the base for its sound working relationship with the Air Force and ensured its continued development. Federal appropriations to the Air Guard more than doubled, from \$106 million in 1953 to \$223 million in 1960. Its prewar strength ceiling of forty-four thousand increased to over sixty-seven thousand immediately after the war, and reached seventy-one thousand by 1960.

When the 173 returned to the state in January 1953, the Air Force deactivated the 8173 Utility Flight. The 8173, commanded by Captain Elmer E. Herron, had remained on active duty in Lincoln to serve as administrators and property custodians while the 173 was on federal service. It maintained only one aircraft, a C-47 used by the adjutant general and governor. Recruiting new members to replace those who chose to remain on active duty was the 173's first priority.

The unit was able to fill its ranks quickly due to a vigorous recruiting program known as Operation Understanding. The National Guard's public relations campaign informed citizens that the 173 had returned.

By July 1953, the unit was once again at full strength. Shortly thereafter it converted back to F-80s. This time the 173 received F-80As instead of the newer F-80C.

Transition Back to F-80s The older F-80As were a problem from the beginning. On 16 December 1953, less than six months after the first F-80A arrived, Captain Fritz Craig died when his plane crashed between Crete and Lincoln. The cause of the accident was not immediately known.

During an extensive search in and around the crash site, however, the jet engine's turbine wheel was not found. Six weeks later, on 24 January 1954, Milton Hagelberger was following Lieutenant Alen D. Ike shortly after takeoff.

As Ike attempted to bank right out of traffic, his jet engine's turbine wheel suddenly came apart, cutting the control wires of his aircraft. "I could see it (the turbine wheel) come apart," said Hagelberger, "the plane did a spin-and-a-half and crashed." The National Guard realized after Ike's accident, that there was a serious problem with the aircraft's turbine wheels.

The thirty-inch turbines in the F-80A's 133 engines had fifty-four blades that turned at six thousand revolutions per minute, explained shop maintenance supervisor Ken Orr, a retired senior master sergeant. The blades developed cracks after prolonged use and had a tendency to break when the aircraft made a hard maneuver.

"When it came apart," said Orr, "these large pieces literally cut the back end of the aircraft off, including the control wires used to steer the plane. Hagelberger contended that cracked turbine wheels were just one of F-80A's problems. He believed the canopy, which had to be rolled back by hand in order to get in and out of the aircraft, coupled with its lack of an ejection seat, were design flaws that contributed to the two Air Guardsmen's deaths. Hagelberger explained that when an airplane loses its tail, "it usually goes into a pretty heavy, flat, spin," giving the pilot only a few seconds to exit the aircraft before it crashed.

Since the planes lacked ejection canopies and ejection seats, "the pilot had to crank the canopy open, by hand," said Hagelberger, "and hope the 'G' forces weren't too bad that he could make it." The Air Force grounded F-80As after Ike's crash until maintenance crews could test each turbine wheel for cracks.

Orr explained that in the 1950s a large facility at McConnell Air Force Base took care of all major maintenance on Air Guard engines. Units had to pull engines out of aircraft and send them to McConnell for periodic checks. Maintenance crews at Lincoln were the ones testing the F-80As' turbine wheels.

"The first turbine I tested," claimed Orr, "had fifty two broaches on it. The Air Force transported the F-80As back to the Lockheed factory in California where mechanics installed new three-piece turbine wheels and added ejection seats. The F-80As returned to the 173 after six months of maintenance.

Shortly thereafter Nebraska established its own engine shop in Lincoln, enabling the Air Guard to work on its own aircraft instead of sending them to maintenance facilities outside the state. This dramatically increased the capabilities of the maintenance section and boosted unit morale. The improvements to the F-80A, combined with the development of an engine shop, was critical in the Air Guard's continued development.

Charles Gross, in *Prelude to the Total Force: The Air National Guard 1943-1969*, described the

National Guard 's seven years of service after the Korean War as a period of "integration with the active duty Air Force." Air Guardsmen participated in Air Force gunnery meets and exercises, became involved in the everyday business of running the Air Force, and continued to assume new missions.

The Air Guard's most important and difficult challenge was augmenting the Continental Air Defense Command's (ADC) runway alert force. In 1953, the Air Force experimented with two squadrons to see if the Air Guard was capable of fulfilling its new role.

By 1954 it was evident that the National Guard was prepared for its new mission and the program expanded to include the 173 Fighter Interceptor Squadron in July 1955.

Units selected for the ADC mission had to maintain four aircraft on alert status at all times to deal with the Cold War threat posed by the Soviet Union. Their primary mission was to keep a twenty four-hours-a-day , seven-days-a-week runway alert to protect the United States from Soviet intercontinental bombers possibly carrying atomic weapons. "That was one of the most man-day consuming missions we ever had," said Orr.

Many Air Guardsmen took advantage of this opportunity by going to college during the day while remaining on alert at the Air Guard Base in the evenings. "Any eight-hour shift," explained retired Colonel Cecil F. Metzger, "resulted in a full day's pay and allowance for a Guardsmen." Students were eager to take the night shifts because they could study if they were not "scrambled" for an emergency or a test. 'The National Guard produced a lot of lawyers and dentists this way," claimed Metzger.

By 1960, twenty-two Air Guard fighter interceptor squadrons were part of the ADC mission. The Air Force believed the National Guard became a better organization because of its participation in the ADC program, and found it increasingly responsive to its requirements and regulations. This cooperation between active and reserve components contributed to the continued development of the Air Guard and construction of a new aviation facility.

In the summer of 1955, the federal government authorized the building of an Air Guard base in Lincoln. Earlier that year, the Air Force reactivated the Lincoln Municipal Airport and designated it as the Lincoln Air Force Base. Shortly thereafter it became a Strategic Air Command Base housing long-range B-47 bombers. The Pentagon was in the middle of dispersing its long-range bomber assets around the country. This was part of America's Cold War military strategy to make it more difficult for the Soviet Union to destroy all of the United States ' intercontinental bombers during the first wave of any attack. The Air Force's expanded presences in Lincoln meant the Air Guard had to find a new hangar.

The National Guard Bureau secured 160 acres of land south of the commercial air terminal on which to build the new facility. By September 1956, the state had completed building a hangar, warehouse, storage facility, and motor vehicle shop. The Nebraska Air Guard continued using portions of the Lincoln Airport by constructing a taxi way from the airport runway to its aircraft

parking ramp. The Navy Reserve, meanwhile, built a large \$5 million hangar between the Lincoln air terminal and new Air Guard base.

The F -86D/L Sabres

The 173 transitioned from F-80As to F-86D/L Sabres four months after moving into its new hangar.

The all-weather Sabres had a new radar system capable of identifying targets thirty miles away and could lock onto enemy aircraft within fifteen miles. The F-86's afterburners and electronic fuel control made it capable of high altitude intercepts, above forty thousand feet, and acceleration through Mach 1 (620 miles per-hour). The F-86's weapon system had the capability of firing up to twenty-four air-to-air rockets.

The 173's difficulties in transitioning from F-80s to F-86s was primarily associated with maintenance. When the aircraft arrived in Lincoln, they did not come with any of the operational maintenance tools unique to the jet, as was the case with the F-80. According to the paperwork, "the aircraft were supposed to have been transferred with associated ground equipment," said retired Brigadier General Lloyd L. Johnson, a captain at the time. "Well, that turned out to be nonsense," added Johnson. "Those critically needed items never showed up.

Maintenance crews had to manufacture some of their own tools. "Many times our homemade tools," claimed Orr, "worked better than the Air Force's."

New technologically advanced radars also caused problems for maintenance crews. "We did not have a radar man in the unit," explained Hagelberger. "It was a whole new concept." The 173 sent a cadre of people to the Air Force's radar school, who returned and taught the rest of the maintenance personnel. About the time Nebraska's Air Guard became proficient in flying and maintaining F-86s, it once again acquired new facilities.

In early 1958, the Department of the Navy abandoned its newly constructed Navy Reserve hangar because it decided to "disestablish" its flying operations in the Midwest. Colonel Campbell and General Henninger successfully lobbied the Pentagon to take control of the facility, and the Air Guard moved into its new hangar in March 1958. Nebraska's Army aviation, previously housed at Camp Ashland, eventually took over the vacated Air Guard hangar.

From the end of the Korean War, until 1960, Nebraska's Air Guard participated in seven two-week annual training periods, including four at Casper, Wyoming. Its other summer camps included Gulfport, Mississippi, in 1958 and Alpena, Michigan, in 1959 and 1960. During its training, the 173 racked up an impressive number of nationally prestigious awards.

In 1954, Captain Billy J. Pegram and Captain Dale H. Hueske won the Air Guard Gunnery Meet at Boise, Idaho, qualifying them for the World Gunnery Meet at Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nevada. However, the Nebraskans had to transition to F-84s prior to the world competition

because their F-80 had an obsolete gun sighting system that could not be used in the meet. Pegram and Hueske went through familiarization training at Wendover Field, Utah, a few weeks prior to the contest. The World Gunnery Meet included teams from the National Guard, Reserves, all three branches of the United States military, and several Allied countries.

The Nebraskans placed fourth. "It was a real achievement because they had a totally different aircraft than what they started with," boasted Lloyd Johnson. "It was quite a feather in their hat." Captain Clarence Christensen won perhaps the most coveted award of the day, the Ricks Trophy, in 1958.

It was a competition that combined maintenance, speed, and gunnery. Christensen and his ground crew trained for several weeks to prepare for the contest. The maintenance crew even put a new engine in Christensen's plane. "We turned that engine inside out," explained Orr, "and polished it from front to back to ensure we got the best performance out of it." By the time Captain Christensen entered that competition said Orr, "he knew his limits and he knew the limits of his aircraft." On 21 September Christensen flew his F-86 Sabre over an 850-mile course, which included the interception of an enemy target near Panama City, Florida, ground refueling at New Orleans, Louisiana, and a dash to the finish line at Dallas, Texas. He beat his nearest competitor by eighteen seconds, with a total elapsed time of one hour, forty-eight minutes, and twenty seconds.

On the heels of the 173's successes came reorganization and an increase in its strength. On 1 July 1960, the National Guard Bureau reorganized the unit as part of the 155th Fighter Group and increased its manning to nine hundred. The new organization consisted of the Headquarters 155th Fighter Group, 155th Consolidated Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, 155th Materiel Squadron, and 155th Dispensary. The new 155th was part of the 132nd Air Defense Wing stationed at Des Moines, Iowa.

The Air Guard in the 1960s While Nebraska's Army Guard reorganized, its Air Guard was celebrating one of its most successful periods. The 173 Fighter Interceptor Squadron began the 1960s by continuing its twenty-four-hour alert status as part of the Air Defense Command (ADC). During the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, when Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union had heightened over nuclear missiles being based in Cuba, Air Guard pilots on alert status at ADC units doubled from four to eight.

The culmination of the 173rd's alert status in 1964 marked an end to one of the Nebraska Air Guard's most successful years. It received the National Guard Bureau's General W. P. Wilson Trophy, presented each year to the outstanding fighter interceptor unit, for the third consecutive year and for the fourth time in the last six years. The 173 also received the Spaatz Trophy in recognition as the best tactical flying unit. It rounded out its triple crown by being named the Air Force Association's Unit of the Year.

Much of the Air Guard's success in the early 1960s was credited to the leadership of its longtime base commander, Colonel Fred H. Bailey.

In May 1964, the Air Guard ended its alert status with the ADC and reorganized, based on the lessons learned from the Berlin mobilization . Although the Air Guard's overseas deployment in 1961. Operation Stair Step, was highly successful, it was not without a few problems. Prior to 1964, the Air Force had allocated most of the Air Guard 's assets to support the premise of a short-term nuclear exchange.

The Air Force's new emphasis, as part of McNamara's overall strategy, was to have more tactical aviation units capable of prolonged service. This brought a change in the Nebraska unit' s mission, to tactical photoreconnaissance, designation, to the Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron and 155th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, and aircraft, to the RF-84F "Thunderflash." "The RF-84 was not a step ahead," according to Metzger, "but a different mission.

British single-stage J-65 engine powered the Korean War era RF-84. "It was a less complicated system than the F-86," claimed Orr, a retired senior master sergeant and former shop maintenance supervisor, "but it was also underpowered." The RF-84 garnered the dubious nicknames "the fastest tricycle on wheels," and "the lead sled" because it required a long runway in order to take off. "It just ran, and ran, and ran, and ran on the ground," explained Orr, "before the pilot could get the plane Up.

The 155th's new photoreconnaissance mission and RF-84Fs were gradually phased in because none of the pilots had prior photoreconnaissance experience, the unit had no photo-processing equipment, and maintenance personnel, and technicians knew nothing about the RF-84 or photoreconnaissance accoutrements.

Colonel Bailey headed a team of six pilots and twenty airmen for a month 's transition training at Detroit, Michigan, in early 1964. They returned to the unit to train the remaining personnel. The Air Force also dispatched instructors to Lincoln, from May to June 1964, to help train M-Day (part-time Air Guard) maintenance crews and pilots during weekends and evenings. "Since we went from armament to cameras," said Metzger, "we did not need those people who were highly skilled in armament.

"The 155th's radar repair shop was phased out, for example, because the new aircraft had no radar system. These personnel converted to camera technicians and photograph interpreters. By the end of the 155th's 1964 annual training, held for the fourth consecutive year in Lincoln, most of its pilots, maintenance personnel, and technicians had completed transition training. "Pilots had to make the biggest adjustments," according to Metzger, "because they had to change from a fighter pilot attitude to a reconnaissance mode."

Pilots flew at five hundred feet with their heads out of the cockpit instead of forty thousand feet gazing into a radar scope. More importantly, they were shooting the enemy with film instead of firing rockets. Pilots became completely vulnerable in 1967 when the RF-84s .50 caliber guns were removed. The Nebraskans quickly learned the meaning of the reconnaissance air crews' motto "alone, unarmed, and unafraid ."

Air-to-air refueling was another new aspect of the reconnaissance mission. Pilots trained on linking up with a two-foot basket (called a drogue) on the end of a hose dragged behind a KC-135 refueling tanker. This "probe and drogue" operation was particularly difficult because the drogue, due to the location of the RF-84's refueling probe, was not in the pilot's line of sight. It took a lot of practice, but the Guardsmen eventually became extremely proficient in air-to-air refueling.

The unit participated in some diverse training exercises throughout the United States during its eight years with RF-84s. This was part of McNamara's and the Air Force's increased emphasis on Air Guard operational readiness. In 1965, the 155th participated in air-to-air refueling training in Texas with units bound for Vietnam. In 1966, it photographed installations for the Alaskan Defense Command during Operation Snowsweep.

During the Air Guardsmen's 1968 home station annual training period, the 155th proved its proficiency by competing head-to-head with an Air Force unit flying the new RF-4 "Phantoms" in a "reconnaissance shootoff." The Nebraskans won the overall competition and took top honors in most of the individual categories. Yet in spite of its proven operational readiness, Nebraska's Air Guard was never used in the Vietnam War. President Johnson decided to rely primarily on the Regular Army and Air Force, only federalizing eleven thousand Air Guardsmen.

During the 1960s, the Air Guard's priority had gradually changed from an air-defense mission to a variety of tactical aviation missions. In June 1969, Nebraska's Air Guard consisted of nearly one thousand men while the entire Air Guard had eighty three thousand, nine thousand above its 1963 level. By 1970, the Air Guard had clearly evolved into the Air Force's first-line combat reserve force capable of flexible missions.

In early 1971, the 173 learned it would transition from RF-84s to the most modern reconnaissance aircraft in the Air Force's arsenal, the RF-4C. It was a supersonic, long-range, all-weather, multiple sensor, reconnaissance airplane designed by McDonnell-Douglas for all-weather, high-low, day night selective reconnaissance. The aircraft's two General Electric J-79 engines enabled it to fly faster than twice the speed of sound (over sixteen hundred miles per hour), and over eight miles above the ground. Most of its tactical flying occurred at speeds of five hundred to six hundred miles per hour. Its range was slightly over one thousand miles and, with the Phantom's refueling capabilities, the aircraft's range was only restricted by the crew's endurance.

The RF-4C's multiple cameras were able to take either forward, side, vertical, or panoramic views. The photo-intelligence gathered by this aircraft could be used for target information, mapping, and bomb damage assessment (BDA).

Most of the transition training to RF-4Cs occurred at Shaw Air Force Base (AFB), South Carolina. Since the RF-4C was a two-seater, the unit's immediate requirements were for navigators. J-79 engine mechanics, RF-4C crew chiefs, and system specialists were also needed. The Air Force

trained a core group, as in previous transitions, who returned as instructors to train the weekend Guardsmen.

On 28 November 1971 the 173rd received its first RF-4C. By February 1972 transition training was nearing an end as more RF-4Cs began arriving from Shaw AFB; Bergstrom AFB, Texas; and Alconbury Air Base, England. In early 1972 the 155th received a full complement of twelve photo processing and interpretation (PPIF) vans. Personnel used these vehicles as a mobile base from which to develop and interpret film, maintain a quality control program, submit reports, and store ancillary equipment.

The 173's transition to RF-4Cs was a direct result of the Total Force Concept/Policy . "Prior to 1972 we got equipment that was transitioned out of the Air Force," said Lloyd Johnson, "so we did not always get first line equipment." The unit's new RF-4Cs were proof of the Air Force's acceptance of the Total Force Policy.



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